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Leonard Wentz

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THE NONPARTISAN LEAGUE:
A QUEST OF COMMUNITY

by

Leonard Wentz

B.S. in History, Minot State College 1963

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

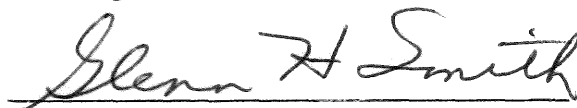
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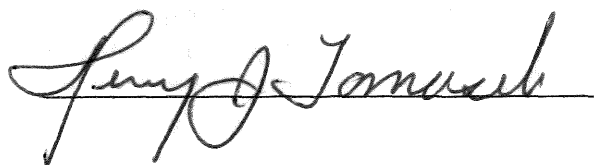
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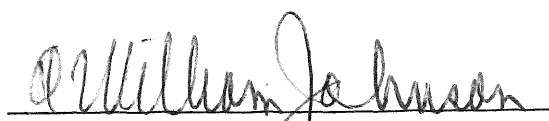
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is the examination and appraisal of the rise and decline of the Nonpartisan League as a mass movement in North Dakota. Previous interpretations have been mostly economic in nature. This study interprets the League members' situation from the socio-psychological view. This thesis will attempt to show the editorial directions of leading newspapers with regard to the agrarian situation from 1916 to 1920.

The procedure involved a study of the sociological conditions of the North Dakota farmers before they accepted the Nonpartisan League ideology. The Nonpartisan Leader's editorial policy was viewed to show its interpretation of the farmer's situation and its attempt to solve the farmers' problems. A similar analysis of the Bismarck Daily Tribune, the Fargo Forum, the Grand Forks Herald, and the Minot Daily News demonstrated their ideological interpretation of the farmer's situation.

The results of the studies revealed that the Nonpartisan Leader and the four leading daily newspapers reflected dichotomous ideologies. Neither ideology examined and appraised the farmers' sociological conditions.

In conclusion, the editorial policies of the Leader and the four leading dailies did not sense the sociological conditions of the farmers. The editorials of the Leader reflected an ideology of economic oppression requiring an economic solution, while the four daily newspapers interpreted the economic conditions as basically operating to the tenets of laissez faire.

INTRODUCTION

Historians have written much about the rise and decline of the Nonpartisan League in North Dakota. Their interpretations have been predominantly economic in nature.¹ They linked the League's beginning to the farmer's dissatisfaction with an economy of exploitation. Economically, the farmers believed that they were the victims of unfair dockage and grading practices; that the railroads charged excessive freight rates; that the millers and the grain inspectors rigged the markets; that the bankers charged high interest rates on farm mortgages; and that big business profited at the expense of the farmers through the manipulation of prices on products. Such evil conditions caused farmers to join the Nonpartisan League because it proposed to eliminate these economic abuses through government regulation and state ownership of industries.

In 1916, the North Dakota State Legislature passed reform measures

¹Robert Morlan, Political Prairie Fire: The Nonpartisan League, 1915-1922 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955); Theodore Saloutos and John Hicks, Agricultural Discontent in the Middle West (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1951); Russel B. Nye, Midwestern Progressive Politics: A Historical Study of Its Origins and Development, 1870-1958 (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State College Press, 1951); Paul R. Fossum, The Agrarian Movement in North Dakota (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1925); Charles E. Russell, The Story of the Nonpartisan League: A Chapter in American Evolution (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1920).

abolishing the abuses of the railroads and setting up a just grain-grading system. By 1919, the legislature had enacted laws providing for a state bank, a state mill and elevator, and state hail insurance, but adequate funds were not available to put into effect the program of government regulation and state ownership of industries. Soon after the Nonpartisan League lost its following.²

The historians who linked the Nonpartisan League's origin with the farmers' economic grievances failed to explain the farmers' prosperity during the League movement. Statistics show that the prices of all commodities, crops, and livestock were higher between 1916 and 1920 as compared to the prices before and after the decline of the League. The prices for many of the farm products were twice as high during the League movement.³

In seeking to account for the rise and decline of the League, historians have neglected to consider the social aspect of the North Dakota farmers. The farmers suffered from uprooted, alienated, and isolated conditions. This study will relate the rise of the League to the farmers' sociological conditions and reflect the League's failure to understand them.

²Morlan, pp. 87-89, 132-33, 211-14; Russell, pp. 249-78.

³U.S., Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States. 1920, pp. 146-48; 1930, pp. 682-83; North Dakota Crop and Livestock Reporting Service, Price Trends in North Dakota (Fargo, North Dakota, January, 1964), pp. 9, 19, 26.

The Nonpartisan League promoted an ideology with a definite belief and program of action. The North Dakota farmers embraced the League's belief and participated in its program. As a result of the success of the agrarian movement, the Nonpartisan Leader, later called the North Dakota Leader, a weekly newspaper, remains today the most authoritative newspaper on the Nonpartisan League. An analysis of the editorial opinion of the Leader will be made to demonstrate whether the Leader sensed the sociological conditions of the farmers. The Leader's editorials revealed a definite ideology which will be shown. Selections were taken from the Leader's editorials at the height of the Nonpartisan League, from 1916 to 1920.

The editorial opinion of four leading daily newspapers in North Dakota during the same period will also be reviewed. The purpose is to see if the editorials of the newspapers reflect a similar ideology as that of the Leader. If these four dailies did reflect a different ideology or belief, what ideological label did they embrace? Did they recognize the sociological conditions of the North Dakota farmers? What solutions did they propose?

CHAPTER I

THE LOSS AND QUEST OF COMMUNITY

When mass behavior becomes organized around a belief and program and acquires a certain continuity in purpose and effort, it takes on the characteristics of a mass movement. Some mass movements mobilize uprooted and alienated populations.¹ The Nonpartisan League can be studied and interpreted as such a mass movement. The movement caused many men to shift their views and actions concerning the political and economic conditions in North Dakota from 1916 to 1920. John M. Gillette, a contemporary professor of sociology at the University of North Dakota during the height of the Nonpartisan League activity, witnessed the League movement and asserted that its ideology became so well rooted that it had become impossible to "reason with" the farmers.²

A mass movement is characterized by three phases: (1) the loss of community--growing alienation; (2) the quest of community--

¹Herbert Blumer, "Collective Behavior," New Outline of Principles of Sociology, ed. by A. M. Lee (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1946), p. 187.

²John M. Gillette, "The North Dakota Harvest of the Nonpartisan League," The Survey, XLI (March 1, 1919), p. 755.

widespread readiness to embrace new ideologies; and (3) domination by a pseudo-community.³

The expression, the loss of community, means that the role, the social function, and social authority of the family, community, region, state, or church is diminished or altered. Such a state can be caused by the presence of many races or ethnic groups in an area, the experience of migration, or the isolation of the individual from society. The loss of community creates a state of anxiety in which individuals are alienated. When a mass of individuals are alienated, they become available for mobilization by leaders with ideologies. Other words that are used to describe loss of community are atomization, disorganization, instability, uprootedness, dislocation, disintegration, and meaninglessness.⁴ Oscar Handlin's study of immigrants, The Uprooted, touched upon the aspects of the loss of communities or alienation--broken homes, interruption of a familiar life, separation from known surroundings, becoming a foreigner and ceasing to belong to a community.⁵

³William Kornhauser, The Politics of Mass Society (Illinois: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), pp. 30-38; Robert A. Nisbet, Community and Power (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 3-22, 154-89.

⁴Nisbet, pp. 3-22.

⁵Oscar Handlin, The Uprooted (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1951), p. 4.

The loss of community describes the state or conditions of the North Dakota people prior to and during the organization of the Non-partisan League. An analysis of the North Dakota population reveals that it was new, uprooted, mobile, and composed of many diverse groups, nationally, ethnically, and culturally. The federal census showed that North Dakota received a great influx of people between 1890 and 1920. North Dakota's population grew from 190,983 in 1890 to 319,145 in 1900, an increase of 67.1 per cent. The largest gain came between 1900 and 1910, when the population jumped from 319,146 to 577,056, an increase of about 80 per cent. By 1920, the total population was 646,872, an increase of 12.1 per cent over 1910.⁶ Most of this population came before 1915. A state census put the population at 637,000 for the year 1915.⁷ From 1920 to 1930, the population increased only 5.3 per cent. Between 1930 and 1940, the population decreased 5.7 per cent.⁸ Therefore, most of North Dakota's population growth came between 1890 and 1920.

⁶U.S., Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910. Population, I, p. 30; U.S., Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920. Population, III, pp. 16-20, 752-65.

⁷Elwyn B. Robinson, History of North Dakota (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), p. 370.

⁸U.S., Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. Population, I, pp. 10-12; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940. Population, I, pp. 14-16.

According to the census of 1920, of the 646,872 North Dakota inhabitants, there were 131,503 foreign-born residents in the state. This immigrant population represented twenty-five nationalities in all. The principal groups having 1,000 or more such persons in the 1920 census were divided by nationalities as follows:

Norway	35,190
Russia	29,617
Canada	15,550
Germany	11,960
Sweden	10,543
Denmark	4,552
Hungary	2,519
England	2,287
Poland	2,236
Austria	2,059
Czechoslovakia	2,056
Romania	1,811
Ireland	1,660
Scotland	1,229
Finland	1,108 ⁹

North Dakota was one of the states having the largest percentage of foreign-born inhabitants. In 1920, about 22 per cent of its population was foreign-born. However, the foreign element in the population was 67 per cent if one also included both the children of foreign-born and those who had at least one foreign-born parent. In this respect, the foreign element in North Dakota numbered approximately 432,000 persons in 1920. The remainder of the population were native whites of

⁹U.S., Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920. Population, III, pp. 752-65.

native parentage, Indians, Negroes, and others.¹⁰

A further look at the population reveals that other states also contributed to the population of North Dakota, particularly to western North Dakota. The North Dakota State Planning Board asserted that North Dakota received many people from other states between 1900 and 1920.¹¹ In 1912, N. C. Abbott, field organizer of the Bureau of Educational Cooperation at the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks, related that only a small fraction of the North Dakota people were born on North Dakota soil and that hardly any two families have come from similar parts of the United States.¹² The editor of the Minot Daily News affirmed this movement. He wrote that "this section of the state is receiving just now a decidedly desirable class of farmers who have purchased land and are coming to make their home in North Dakota."¹³ The editor stated that the farmers came from Indiana, Iowa, and

¹⁰U.S., Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920. Population, III, pp. 752-65; John M. Gillette, "Economic and Social Background of the University of North Dakota," University of North Dakota, Quarterly Journal, XIII, No. 1 (October, 1922), p. 36.

¹¹North Dakota State Planning Board, "Emigration from North Dakota," University of North Dakota, Circular Report, No. 10 (Grand Forks, August 26, 1935), p. 1. This is a brief study of some population trends in North Dakota.

¹²N. C. Abbott, "Social Center Development in North Dakota," University of North Dakota, Quarterly Journal, II (Grand Forks, July, 1912), p. 335.

¹³Minot Daily News, October 9, 1915, p. 2.

Illinois.¹⁴

The census statistics for 1900, 1910, and 1920 showed evidence of people migrating to North Dakota from other states. The statistics indicate the origin and numbers of white people who migrated to North Dakota.

<u>State of Origin of North Dakota's White Population</u>	<u>1900</u>	<u>1910</u>	<u>1920</u>
Ohio	4,391	6,499	4,385
Indiana	4,658	9,416	6,802
Illinois	5,881	16,903	15,838
Michigan	5,178	6,677	5,104
Wisconsin	14,914	30,003	26,392
Minnesota	24,546	68,972	71,197
Iowa	<u>9,005</u>	<u>30,553</u>	<u>27,631</u>
Total	68,573	169,023	157,349
Total born in U. S. but outside of North Dakota	99,325	222,555	200,330 ¹⁵

These statistics demonstrate two facts: (1) most of the population came from Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa, (2) a great number of people migrated to North Dakota between 1900 and 1920. According to Theodore C. Blegen, some of the newcomers who came to North Dakota from other states were immigrants that were delayed at cities or "mother colonies"

¹⁴Minot Daily News, January 5, 1916, p. 2.

¹⁵U.S., Bureau of the Census, Twelfth Census of the United States: 1900. Population, I, pp. cxxvi-cxxx; Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910. Population, I, pp. 730-34; Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920. Population, II, pp. 626-30.

in Illinois and Wisconsin. These "mother colonies" served as centers from which immigrants would migrate to other states.¹⁶

Other newcomers were referred to as speculators representing 59 occupations.¹⁷ They sought free or cheap lands because they thought the rising value of land would quickly enrich landowners.¹⁸ Robinson characterized their activities as follows:

Many speculators left without ever having farmed; others farmed a while but soon gave up and sold out to their neighbors. Some had never farmed before; some lived in town, still plying their trades as teachers, carpenters, and businessmen, and did not even try to make a living on their claims. Many homesteaded land unsuitable for farming. Some tired of "batching it," others discovered that their farming experience in humid regions was not much help on the semiarid Missouri plateau.¹⁹

The bulk of the North Dakota population from 1890 to 1920 consisted primarily of people from other parts of the world. Such a great division of nationality and language groups clearly depicted the difficulty in obtaining a community spirit and demonstrated the diversity and resulting isolationism of the North Dakota people.²⁰ Whenever many groups from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds are thrown

¹⁶Theodore C. Blegen, Land of Their Choice (St. Paul: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), p. 11.

¹⁷Robinson, pp. 242-46.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 245.

²⁰Abbott, p. 356.

together in one geographical area, attempting to participate in the same political and economic system, an adjustment between the different groups is necessary in order to obtain a true sense of community. An absence of proper communications between various groups in society results in ignorance and unawareness which tends to make people of these groups an easy prey to rumor, suspicion, and stereotype.²¹ The immigrants' loss of ties with a larger social order made them more susceptible and available for mass movements.

The immigrants, upon leaving their previous country and coming to North Dakota, experienced a dislocation in their social life. Before the immigrants came to North Dakota, they lived in villages which provided them with strong social ties. Handlin maintained that "the village loomed so large in the peasant's consciousness that they were tempted to think in the whole of society, to behave as if it were entirely self-sufficient and self-contained."²² Upon their arrival in North Dakota, the immigrants settled on individual farms, which made the social ties characteristic of village life impossible. In 1910 and 1920, counting the immigrants and their children, the Norwegians and Germans made up

²¹Gordon W. Allport, The Nature of Prejudice (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1959), pp. 218-20.

²²Handlin, p. 14.

about 42 per cent of the population.²³ A study of two dominant immigrant groups, the Norwegians and Germans, that migrated to North Dakota will suffice to demonstrate the change in their social life.

The form of settlement in Norway was largely determined by topographical conditions. Massive mountains in the greater part of the area made settlement possible primarily in the valleys and on the slopes or in the narrow strips along the sides of the long fjords. Such conditions caused the Norwegians to live in separate rural villages or gaards. In consequence of the separate settlement, each gaard became a firmly knit, self-supporting, and self-governing community. Unity, collective identification, and social integration were characteristic of each gaard.²⁴

The gaards provided an opportunity for its villagers to integrate socially. The daily work was a community enterprise. The tilling, seeding, and harvesting of the small fields surrounding the gaards were done together. Fishing also demanded group cooperation. Their farm animals

²³U.S., Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910. Population, III, pp. 343, 348; U.S., Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920. Population, II, pp. 982-85; U.S., Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920. Population, III, pp. 752-65.

²⁴Peter A. Munch, A Study of Cultural Change: Rural-Urban Conflicts in Norway (Oslo: H. Aschehoug and Co., 1956), pp. 32-33, 60, 64, 65, 69; Hans Fay, "Economic Conditions in Norway," American-Scandinavian Review, XII (January, 1924), p. 19; Camille Vallaux, "Maritime and Rural Life of Norway," Geographical Review, XIV (October, 1924), pp. 508-11.

grazed as one herd along the practically limitless mountain sides.²⁵ The villagers produced and consumed, created and utilized the necessities of life within the same community causing a high degree of social integration.²⁶ Furthermore, each gaard developed a distinct and common dialect, architecture, wood carving, decorative painting, music, story telling and social norms. All of these aspects gave the villagers a feeling of collective identification.²⁷

Much of the social life in the gaards centered around church activities. The state church conducted a parish in each village supervised by local officers such as the pastor, district judge, doctor, sheriff, and magistrate. The villagers were obliged to comply to the laws and functions of the state church.²⁸ A Norwegian immigrant, Andrew Vatne, wrote about the state church's control over the lives of its parishioners. He asserted:

²⁵Vallaux, pp. 509-11.

²⁶Munch, pp. 33, 60, 77, 94.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 33, 35-36; Theodore C. Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America (Northfield, Minnesota: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1940), pp. 76-77; Einar I. Haugen, The Norwegian Language in America, Vol. II (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953), pp. 334, 345.

²⁸Munch, pp. 33, 60, 69, 77, 82; Byrnjolf J. Hovde, The Scandinavian Countries, 1720-1865, Vol. II (Boston: Chapman and Grimes Publishers, 1943), pp. 572, 772, 768, 769; Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America, p. 554.

The child had to be baptised or a fine must be paid. Then a little later it had to be vaccinated or another fine be paid. When 14 or 15 years old the child had to be instructed by the minister and be confirmed (conformeres). A year and a half later all the men had to appear at a certain place and register as possible candidates for becoming soldiers. When 22 years old, if in good health, they had to spend some time in military drill. If anyone for religious reasons refused to do this, he had to sit in jail while the others were drilling. So there was much restraint on the individual.²⁹

The clergymen also conducted national and local festivities which gave the villagers the opportunity for socializing. During the national celebrations, the villagers commemorated the names of saints. Local celebrations dealt primarily with the coming of seasons and the planting and harvesting of crops.³⁰

Illiteracy was almost unknown in Norway. The public schools, which were closely linked with the church, required the villagers to be familiar with Luther's Catechism, the hymnbook, and Bible. Local public libraries were numerous, and reading circles appeared in villages.³¹

Peter A. Munch stated that the social life of the Norwegian gaards could be compared to the social life of the Amish communities of Pennsylvania or similar utopian minority groups in America. Munch

²⁹Omon B. Herigstad, "Norwegian Immigration," North Dakota Historical Society Collections, II (Bismarck, 1908), p. 201.

³⁰Laurence M. Larson, "The Beginnings of the Norwegian Church," American-Scandinavian Review, XII (December, 1924), pp. 726, 732-33.

³¹Hovde, pp. 616, 693; Fay, p. 22; Munch, p. 57; Robinson, p. 283.

concluded that "the result was a firmly knit social system which was the product of a long process of adjustment to the social and ecological situation, where every person, every activity, and every social relationship had its rather unshakable place, rhythm, and form."³²

In 1865, the increased population in the gaards and the demands of industrialization and mechanization in Norway caused hundreds of thousands of villagers to leave their integrated gaards in search of free land and employment in the United States. Some left Norway immediately from such ports as Stavanger, Langesund, Christiana, Porsgrund, and Drammen, while others were delayed by longer pauses in Norwegian and American cities.³³

The first Norwegians migrated to North Dakota around 1870, but the greatest influx came between 1891 and 1910. At first, the Norwegians settled primarily in 21 eastern and northern counties of North Dakota. Later, they settled farther into the central, southwestern and western areas of the state, until they were represented in

³²Munch, p. 57.

³³Ibid., pp. 30-37; Hovde, p. 661; Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America, pp. 9, 465, 478; Olaf Morgan Norlie, History of the Norwegian People in America (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1925), pp. 23, 75, 77, 231-32; John Eric Nordskog, Social Reform in Norway (Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1935), p. 156; Herigstad, pp. 187-93.

every county.³⁴ There was only one county in which more than 50 per cent of the white population was Norwegian. In five other counties, the Norwegians represented from 36 to 45 per cent. Twelve counties had 22 to 30 per cent. In the remaining counties the Norwegian element represented from one to 20 per cent.³⁵ The Norwegian element dominated in certain North Dakota counties, but all counties contained mixed nationalities. Myrtle Bemis wrote about two typical Norwegian counties, Steele and Griggs, which were composed of five nationalities.³⁶

The Norwegian immigrants experienced a change in their social life in North Dakota. The Homestead Act required them to live on isolated farms, which were quite different than the Norwegian gaards. In the gaards, the villagers worked together and participated in community living for the welfare of everyone. In North Dakota, each farm family worked alone for its own ends. "Monotony," "loneliness," "insecurity," and "anxiety" characterized life on the individual farms. The process of adjusting to a new way of life caused an increase in

³⁴Norlie, pp. 232-38, 309-15; Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America, pp. 8-9, 464-65, 505, 507; Robert P. Wilkins, "North Dakota and the European War, 1914-1917; A Study of Public Opinion" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, West Virginia University, 1954), p. 3.

³⁵U.S., Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910. Population, III, pp. 348-56.

³⁶Myrtle Bemis, "History of Riverside Township, Steele County," North Dakota Historical Society Collections, II (Bismarck, 1908), pp. 202-18.

mental strain, sometimes, even to the point of insanity. The ratio of insanity was recorded as being higher among Norwegian immigrants than in Norway.³⁷

When the Norwegian immigrants found themselves in isolated settlements, they sought to transplant similar social institutions that were present in the gaards. In Norway, Norwegians used their language in developing and promoting the teachings and indoctrinations of their institutions. In North Dakota, the English language dominated the political, economic, and social scene. This meant that it was advantageous to learn English. This pressure to learn English diminished and altered the social function and authority of the family, local community and church. In consequence a controversy developed between those who wanted to preserve the Norwegian language and those who desired to substitute English.³⁸

As the demands for speaking English increased, since it was the language of politics, business, and social life, Norwegian parental

³⁷ Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America, pp. 64-65, 69, 224, 469; Laurence M. Larson, "A Century of Achievement," American-Scandinavian Review, XIII (June, 1925), pp. 336-38.

³⁸ Larson, pp. 338-39, 343; Norlie, pp. 93, 357; Blegen, Land of Their Choice, p. 9; Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America, pp. 69, 76-77, 99; Munch, pp. 32-35, 60, 77, 94; Omon B. Herigstad, "The First Norwegian Settlement in Griggs County, North Dakota," North Dakota Historical Society Collections, I (Bismarck, 1906), p. 146; Haugen, pp. 336, 369-72; Einar I. Haugen, The Norwegian Language in America, Vol. I (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953), pp. 233-34.

authority weakened. All the knowledge that parents possessed had come to them in Norwegian. This included nursery rhymes, proverbs, anecdotes, family sayings, prayers, and songs. But the impact of English upon children made it difficult for parents to transmit their knowledge to their children. When parents did transmit their knowledge in the Norwegian language, children often were rebellious because they had to learn a language representing a foreign outlook. Under such pressure parents had to yield and become first bilingual, then increasingly they began speaking only English.³⁹

The Norwegian immigrants desired to transplant the Norwegian Lutheran Church, but their attempt to re-establish the church resulted in a modification. In Norway, the church originally developed using the Norwegian language in her teachings and indoctrinations. In North Dakota, the impact of the English language forced the church to adopt English in her services and preachings to stay alive and carry on its spiritual message. The change in English services and sermons caused the church to lose some of her practices and effectiveness. In 1900, all the sermons in the Norwegian Lutheran churches were in Norwegian, but by 1920, about one-fourth of the sermons were in English. Furthermore, the English sermons were less effective because the clergymen

³⁹Haugen, The Norwegian Language in America, Vol. I, pp. 233-35, 246.

received inadequate training in English.⁴⁰

As the immigrants continued to settle in ever-increasing numbers in every county of North Dakota, the church had a difficult task in attempting to provide the Norwegians with services and sermons. Olaf Morgan Norlie asserted that "they [pastors] usually had three or more congregations each. The pastors would live near one congregation and then serve two or three or more congregations from 10 to 100 miles distant."⁴¹ The number of clergymen was insufficient to meet the demands of the rapidly growing Norwegian population in North Dakota. Many that received training often left the seminary with little knowledge of Norwegian literary traditions beyond the catechism and the hymnal book.⁴²

The Norwegians left Norway which had a state established church where everyone followed laws and traditions. In North Dakota, the immigrants were allowed religious freedom which lead toward secularism

⁴⁰Haugen, The Norwegian Language in America, Vol. I, pp. 233-41; Larson, p. 338; Blegen, Land of Their Choice, p. 9; Robinson, p. 283.

⁴¹Norlie, p. 258.

⁴²Frank G. Nelson, "When Two Cultures Meet," Common Ground, IV (1944), p. 27; C. S. Torvend, "Early Norwegian Emigration and Its Causes," North Dakota Historical Society Collections, III (Bismarck, 1910), p. 317.

and religious indifference.⁴³ C. S. Torvend stated that "here [North Dakota] everyone is allowed to have his own faith and worship God in the manner that seems to him right, but he must not persecute anybody because he has another faith."⁴⁴ Ole Lima, a farmer near Cooperstown in 1907, spoke of his religious life in the following way: "I discovered during my last visit to the fatherland that my mode of thinking and my spiritual life had changed so much during my thirteen years in America that I did not feel quite at home with my childhood friends."⁴⁵

Public schools also were less effective in their instruction of Norwegians than the public schools of Norway. Teachers had the problem of contending with immigrants of different languages and customs and bilingualism.⁴⁶ Theodore C. Blegen criticized North Dakota's public schools for the lack of good teachers. Blegen claimed that nine out of ten teachers were incapable of conducting a decent school because they were "ignorant" and "lacked experience."⁴⁷

The quarter century from 1890 to 1915 was a period when

⁴³Norlie, pp. 73, 357, 378; Blegen, Land of Their Choice, p. 8; Torvend, p. 313; Herigstad, pp. 200-01; Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America, pp. 544, 564.

⁴⁴Torvend, p. 317.

⁴⁵Herigstad, pp. 198-99.

⁴⁶Haugen, The Norwegian Language in America, Vol. I, p. 236.

⁴⁷Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America, pp. 251, 278.

Norwegian immigrants attempted to transplant their social institutions. But the pressure of Americanization diminished and altered the social functions and authority of these institutions.

A study of the German-Russian immigrants will demonstrate a similar trend. The German-Russians migrated from Germany to Russia during the reigns of Katherine II and Alexander I, who issued decrees to the German people to settle in the Volga and Black Sea areas. The decrees offered the Germans free communal lands, freedom of religion, and exemption from taxation and military service. Induced further by political suppression, economic distress, and religious persecutions in Germany, hundreds of thousands of Germans migrated to Russia between 1762 and 1832.⁴⁸

After the Germans arrived in the Black Sea and Volga areas, they set up *dörfs* or villages similar to those in Germany. Each village established its own government, welfare service, service for new colonization, police and fire protection, and an internal revenue bureau.

⁴⁸Karl Stumpp, The German-Russians: Two Centuries of Pioneering, trans. Joseph S. Height (New York: Edition Atlantic-Forum, 1967), pp. 9-11, 29; D. G. Rempel, "The Expropriation of the German Colonists in South Russia During the Great War," Journal of Modern History, V (March, 1932), pp. 49, 51; Adolph Schock, In Quest of Free Land (San Jose, California: San Jose State College, 1964), pp. 19-23, 95-97; William Godfrey Bek, "Some Facts Concerning the Germans of North Dakota," University of North Dakota Quarterly Journal, V (July, 1915), pp. 332-34; Joseph B. Voeller, "The Origin of the German-Russian People and Their Role in North Dakota" (unpublished M.S. thesis, University of North Dakota, 1940), pp. 10-11.

A village ordinarily numbered from 100 to 3,000 people. However, some villages contained as many as 10,000 inhabitants. Adjacent to the villages were the communal farms.⁴⁹

The colonists were primarily farmers, so life in the villages centered around farm activities. All the field work was a community enterprise. Plowing, harrowing, seeding, harvesting, and threshing were preformed together. By working together, villagers developed a sense of neighborly assistance and social solidarity. The villagers developed, on a cooperative basis, grasslands, pastures, and herders, gardens, fire and accident insurance, granaries, wine cellars, orchards, and a community stallion. All villagers worked for the community enterprises. The mayor kept a roster of the village householders. From it, he called the men to work in rotation. Community festivities also strengthened the social life of the villagers. The festivities included harvest thanksgivings, vintage time, hog slaughter feasts, corn husking bees, watermelon feeds, and horse racing contests. The villagers even had weekly bazaars, marketing days to which they grought their products for display or sale. The bazaars gave the villagers the opportunity for socializing.⁵⁰

⁴⁹Schock, pp. 30, 48, 55, 61, 96, 144; Stumpp, pp. 21-23; Voeller, pp. 37-47, 100.

⁵⁰Schock, pp. 49-55; Stumpp, pp. 32, 70, 82, 89-95; Voeller, pp. 39-48.

The church, located in the center of each village, sustained the social life of the German villagers. Usually, the inhabitants of each village were all of the same faith, either a particular protestant sect or Roman Catholic, which made for unity in church affairs. Traditionally, the villagers observed the Sunday and religious holidays as days of prayer and rest. Following the morning services, the villagers would gather in homes for religious devotions such as the reading of scriptures, communal praying, and the singing of hymns. Even the community celebrations began or ended with religious services. At first, the German villagers lacked pastors or priests of their own nationality, so they recruited Polish clergymen. By the last half of the 19th century, the villagers had their own pastors and seminaries. The pastor administered both the church and early school.⁵¹

During the Germans' early settlement in Russia, they placed little value on formal education because they were in the process of establishing village life and making a living. This caused them to emphasize material possessions, particularly land and farm animals. Such an attitude prevented the development of proper schools, and caused much of the early illiteracy. In 1840, all villages had schools which required attendance. By 1897, there were few illiterates in the German

⁵¹Stumpp, pp. 27, 82, 98-111; Schock, pp. 45-50, 55-60; Voeller, pp. 48-50.

villages.⁵²

In every respect, the German-Russians patterned their community farms or villages after German customs. They built their own schools and churches, municipal governments, and became homogeneous and self-sustaining cultural units within Russia.⁵³

Following the edicts of 1871 and 1881, the German-Russians migrated from Southern Russia, the Black Sea area, and settled in the central Dakota territory. The new edicts marked the end of the Germans' special privileges received under Katherine II and Alexander I.⁵⁴

North Dakota received more German-Russians than any other state. They settled primarily in the southern, western, and central counties. In 1910, the federal census showed the presence of the German-Russian element in every county of North Dakota. The German element composed more than 50 per cent of the white population in four counties, and 30 to 43 per cent in eight counties. Eight more counties

⁵²Stumpp, pp. 98, 112-21; Schock, pp. 45-46, 50, 55-60; Voeller, pp. 51-52; William C. Sherman, "Assimilation in a North Dakota German-Russian Community" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of North Dakota, 1965), pp. 75-76.

⁵³Schock, pp. 39-61.

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 31-34, 66, 97-111; Stumpp, pp. 26, 98; William Godfrey Bek, "Some Facts Concerning the Germans of North Dakota," University of North Dakota Quarterly Journal, V (July, 1915), pp. 330-35.

had 20 to 27 per cent. In the remaining counties, the German element represented from 3 to 17 per cent of the entire white population.⁵⁵

In North Dakota, the German-Russians found it impossible to establish dörfs or villages as they had in Russia. The Homestead Act required that each family live on its own homestead. Consequently, each farm family worked alone, which caused isolation and loneliness. Social life among the homesteaders was meagre. Primitive means of transportation prevented the farmers from socializing as they had previously experienced. The few casual meetings at the markets and towns could not satisfy the needs of the German-Russians for community life.⁵⁶ Adolph Schock, the son of a homesteader in Jewell, North Dakota, compared rural farm life to life in a dorf. He stated:

In contrast to a Russian Dorf, rural farm life in the U.S.A. seemed very lonely and monotonous, yet farm life had its charm, too. The far-spaced farms among the German homesteaders made for an immense solitude and sense of loneliness. At least in a Russian Dorf one had immediate neighbors and the community took on the complexion of liveliness with each new day. However, it was quite different on a rural farm in the Dakotas, for days and even weeks, in the heart of the winter even longer, no meeting of neighbors, no conversation except with your own household, no gossip across the proverbial back fence--just a loose type of concentration camp, self-imposed and self-administrated. So little could happen to

⁵⁵U.S., Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910. Population, III, pp. 348-57; Bek, pp. 330-31, 335; Schock, pp. 105, 109-10; Sherman, p. 46.

⁵⁶Schock, pp. 96, 105-06, 117, 119, 128, 130, 144, 147, 159, 164-65; Sherman, pp. 54-55, 146-47.

break the mood of solitude. Only the hard of soul could endure all this without murmur when man seemed so inconsequential and life became so stereotyped and routine.⁵⁷

The isolated settlements were not the only obstacles that the German-Russians faced in attempting to re-establish their social institutions. In Russia, the Germans used their language in developing and promoting the teachings and indoctrinations of their social institutions. In North Dakota, the English language dominated the political, economic, and social scene. This pressure to learn English diminished and altered the functions and authority of the German-Russian social institutions. The German-Russians realized that their social institutions depended upon the German language to promote their heritage. This caused them to become clannish and suspicious of anyone who could not speak German. When English gradually replaced the German language in the lives of the German-Russians, the family, church, and school lost much of their effectiveness for providing a strong sense of community.⁵⁸

The pressure of the English language on the German-Russian families diminished parental authority. The Germans learned folkways and customs in their native tongue. They feared their language would ultimately be replaced by English. Such a change would bring an end to the German heritage, and cause the children to be estranged from

⁵⁷Schock, p. 144.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 152-53; Voeller, pp. 56, 66; Sherman, pp. 81, 142, 145-46.

their parents. The German-Russians gradually accepted the English language but not as readily as the Norwegians.⁵⁹

The early conditions of the Catholic Church in North Dakota prevented the German-Russians from practicing their religion as they had experienced in Russia. All areas in North Dakota lacked a sufficient number of priests, especially German-speaking priests.⁶⁰ Louis Pfaller exemplified the situation in Morton and Stark counties in 1900, when he maintained that "there were few priests in the area, and those that were there either could not speak German or they did not care for these people because of the aggressiveness and their altercations with their pastors."⁶¹ Father Vincent Wehrle's visits to the Dickinson, Richardton, Mandan, and the Strasburg-Zeeland areas also showed similar situations.⁶² The shortage of priests caused the bishop to use a type of circuit rider to care for the congregations. Such was the case of Father Wehrle when he served as pastor of Devils Lake. Pfaller stated that "he [Vincent Wehrle] had more than 20 stations to care for and so he was almost constantly on the road visiting the scattered

⁵⁹Schock, pp. 61, 152-53; Sherman, pp. 145-46; Voeller, p. 66.

⁶⁰Louis Pfaller, "Bishop Wehrle and the German Immigrants in North Dakota," *University of North Dakota Quarterly Journal*, XXIX (Grand Forks, Summer, 1961), pp. 94-96; Sherman, pp. 54, 82.

⁶¹Pfaller, p. 95.

⁶²Ibid.

settlers by train, buggy or sleigh, gathering them in depots, schools, halls, frame churches, or even in sod houses on the plains."⁶³ Some pastors, particularly those who could not speak German, received harsh treatment by the German-Russians. This caused the pastors to leave their territories.⁶⁴ Bek maintained that the Evangelical German-Russians also had a shortage of clergymen.⁶⁵

The early public schools in the German-Russian settlements were inadequate in various ways. Reports on school property revealed a shortage of books, blackboards, maps, charts, and furniture.⁶⁶ In some areas, the school terms lasted only five months. Young men and women stayed home to help with seeding and harvesting because families lacked efficient machinery.⁶⁷ Many parents also feared that the use of English in schools would entirely replace German. This caused them to take a negative attitude with regard to school attendance.⁶⁸ Many teachers found it difficult to cope with the bilingual

⁶³Ibid., p. 94.

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 94-96; Sherman, pp. 54, 82.

⁶⁵Bek, pp. 337-40.

⁶⁶Schock, pp. 153-54; Sherman, pp. 76-77, Bek, p. 336; James E. Boyle, "Notes From an Agricultural Field Trip Across North Dakota," University of North Dakota Quarterly Journal, VII (January, 1917), pp. 117, 178.

⁶⁷Sherman, pp. 76-77; Voeller, pp. 66-67.

⁶⁸Schock, pp. 152-54, 159.

problem and did not care to stay and solve it.⁶⁹

The Norwegian and German immigrants experienced an actual change in their social life. Before they left their previous countries, village life gave them a sense of social solidarity. In North Dakota, the conditions made it impossible for the immigrants to re-establish a true sense of community. One may assume that all 25 national groups, upon leaving their previous countries, severed their social ties. When they settled in North Dakota, conditions prevented the immigrants from properly transplanting their former social institutions.

Various factors prevented the mixed nationalities from developing a true sense of community spirit. The arrival of every national group suggests that each group came from a distinct ethnic and cultural background. Their differences caused distrust and diminished the chances for social solidarity. The establishment of some social institutions by various national groups showed their desire to belong to a real community. But the dominance of the English language, the sparse settlements, and the absence of proper transportation and communication prevented these social institutions from providing a true sense of community.⁷⁰ Abbott experienced the rootlessness and loss of

⁶⁹Voeller, pp. 66-67.

⁷⁰Haugen, The Norwegian Language in America, Vol. I, p. 280; Robinson, pp. 280-81, 289; John M. Gillette, "Economic and Social Background of the University of North Dakota," p. 24.

community among the North Dakota people in 1912, when he alleged:

In a state as young as North Dakota, we can hardly expect to find for some time much evidence of permanency in the way of stratification of social classes or a settling down of social customs. Our population has hardly rooted itself firmly as yet and until it has time to do so and to develop a real community of spirit and to realize the identity of its interests along both social and material lines shall we have in this state very little social life that has the permanency of custom. As yet we have not outgrown the spirit of restlessness and change so characteristic of pioneer life.⁷¹

Sparse settlements prevented the farmers from developing a true sense of community. The 1910 census showed North Dakota as the least urbanized of all 48 states. Only 11 per cent lived in places of 2,500 or more. The small towns contained 17 per cent of the population. The people living on the 74,000 farms comprised 72 per cent of the population. In 1910, North Dakota's 577,056 people occupied an area of 70,665 square miles. This gave North Dakota a density of 8.2 persons per square mile. The sparseness of the population, living mostly on farms, made it difficult to establish and support social institutions.⁷² The farm families lived too remotely from one another to socialize properly. Furthermore, socialization within family circles was insufficient. John M. Gillette asserted:

⁷¹Abbott, pp. 355-56.

⁷²U.S., Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910. Population, III, pp. 348-57, 569-72; Robinson, pp. 247, 280-81.

Life under these conditions entails a degree of dehumanization. The fulness of personality which frequent social exchange brings is absent. If mind sharpens mind and ideas breed ideas, continuous confinement within the circle of a single family is insufficient to make a full-orbed mind and to incite mental variation.⁷³

The inability to socialize properly caused an increase of insanity among the North Dakota settlers. In 1900, there were 383 inmates in the State Hospital; in 1910, 653, and on October 28, 1914, 925. These figures included only those confined. Between 1890 and 1910 insanity in the United States increased by 140 per cent. During the same period, insanity in North Dakota increased by 195.4 per cent.⁷⁴ The record showed that between 1910 and 1913, there were 211 foreign-born persons admitted at the North Dakota Hospital and 194 native-born Americans. In 1910, the native-born made up 72.9 per cent of the population, while the foreign-born comprised 27.1 per cent of the population. The strains and shocks of being uprooted and adjusting among a mixed population in an isolated area caused an increase in insanity.⁷⁵

The conflicting and differing ethnic and cultural backgrounds of

⁷³John M. Gillette, "Mitigating Rural Isolation," University of North Dakota, Quarterly Journal, VII, No. 2 (Grand Forks, January, 1917), p. 114.

⁷⁴John M. Gillette, "Insanity of North Dakota," University of North Dakota, Quarterly Journal, V, No. 2 (Grand Forks, January, 1915), pp. 140-45.

⁷⁵Ibid.

the population in North Dakota influenced various legislators to introduce bills on moral issues. Between 1889 and 1914, 147 bills dealing with moral issues were introduced in the state legislature--an average of over 12 per legislative session. The moral issues included laws against cigarettes, gambling, drinking, dancing, Sabbath-breaking, profanity, and liberal divorce codes. The factors of varying ethnic and cultural backgrounds caused some legislators to look down on certain activities and support others.⁷⁶

The churches grew rapidly with the influx of immigrants into North Dakota. The immigrants, upon their arrival, established churches to fill their need for community life. In 1906, churches of 37 denominations were present in the state. Many denominations established churches which encountered problems of membership, money, and leadership.⁷⁷ By 1916, North Dakota had 2,520 local church organizations with 225,877 members. The population for the same year was 618,946. Of this population only 36.4 per cent of the inhabitants were registered members of some church.⁷⁸ Foreign languages were also

⁷⁶Mariellen M. Neudeck, "Morality Legislation in North Dakota, 1889-1914" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of North Dakota, 1964), pp. 1, 8, 35, 94, 98.

⁷⁷Robinson, pp. 294-98, 538-39.

⁷⁸John M. Gillette, "Church Membership in North Dakota," University of North Dakota, Quarterly Journal, XV (Grand Forks, April, 1925); Robinson, p. 295.

primarily used in services by various churches before 1915. Afterwards, the use of foreign languages in church services diminished.⁷⁹ In comparison, the rural people had fewer churches than the urban people. The churches of the rural people were also "anachronistic and semidecadent" and ministered by less able men than those in populated areas. Rural church activities were fewer and listless.⁸⁰

Schools and school enrollment increased with the settlement of North Dakota. But the schools encountered the problems of being too small, receiving little financial support, and receiving poorly trained teachers.⁸¹ The schools increased from 1,682 to 4,722 between 1890 and 1917. Enrollment also increased from 35,543 to 168,000 between 1890 and 1920. The number of teachers doubled from 1900 to 1920. Even though there were increases in schools, enrollment, and teachers, the typical country school was a backward institution. It was a one-room affair with an ill-adapted course of study, low school attendance, and too few children to create competitive interest. In 1911-1912, there were ten or fewer pupils in 40 per cent of the one-room schools. Sparse population and inadequate transportation caused small schools. The attendance of the pupils for the same school term averaged only 84

⁷⁹Robinson, pp. 538-39.

⁸⁰Gillette, "Mitigating Rural Isolation," p. 110.

⁸¹Ibid.

days, although the school term was 144 days. Pressure for young men and women to work on farms prevented proper attendance. In 1911-1912, only eight per cent of the rural students completed the eighth grade, and one per cent completed high school. At the same time, 80 per cent of the teachers received less than four years of education beyond the eighth grade. Low salaries made the teaching profession unappealing. Before 1910, rural schools did not receive any state aid. In 1919, the state legislature appropriated \$425,000 to aid rural schools.⁸² Neil C. Macdonald, a state inspector of rural and graded schools in 1917, wrote:

There are over 15,000 boys on farms in North Dakota, between the ages of 11 and 16 who only see four months' school each year, because those boys . . . are compelled to do the work of men on the farms. . . . The country boy, in the average country school, has a second-grade teacher--for the well-trained teachers won't go out to the country schools at the wages paid--and a schoolroom with medieval heating, lighting and ventilation, no library, and a term of seven months. And he is robbed of three months of that.⁸³

Gradually, social reforms aided rural communities by consolidating schools, training better teachers, lengthening school terms, and increasing state aid. The urban schools did not have some of the

⁸²U.S., Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920. Population, III, pp. 752-65; Robinson, pp. 299-301; Gillette, "Mitigating Rural Isolation," p. 110; George A. Lundberg, "The Demographic and Economic Basis of Political Radicalism and Conservatism," American Journal of Sociology, XXXII (March, 1927), pp. 719-32.

⁸³Robinson, p. 302.

problems created by sparse population, inadequate transportation, and farm work. Normally, they had more experienced teachers, better attendance, longer school terms, and better buildings and equipment.⁸⁴

The absence of proper transportation and communication--automobiles, roads, radios, telephones, newspapers, and libraries--left the rural people out of the activities of society. Inadequate transportation and communication made proper participation in the social institutions impossible. This loss of contact with the centers of power and communication caused alienation and anxiety.⁸⁵ The basic means of transportation before 1915 was the horse, wagon, and prairie trail. In 1910, there were only 7,213 automobiles and 577,056 people, a ratio of one automobile for every 80 persons. In 1915, North Dakota had 24,908 automobiles, one for every 25.6 persons. By 1920, there were 90,840 automobiles, one for every 7.1 persons. The number approximately doubled during the next decade, when North Dakotans owned 183,000 automobiles, one for every 3.7 persons. At this time, about 87 per cent of the farmers owned cars.⁸⁶

⁸⁴Robinson, pp. 301-02.

⁸⁵Kornhauser, pp. 208-09; Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform (New York: Alfred A. Knopf and Sons, 1955), p. 128; John M. Gillette, Social Economics of North Dakota (Minneapolis: Burgess Publishing Co., 1942), pp. 207-11.

⁸⁶U.S., Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States. 1915, pp. 24-25; 1921, pp. 354-55; 1922, p. 291; Gillette, Social Economics of North Dakota, pp. 207-11; Robinson, p. 379.

With the increase of automobiles came improved roads. In 1914, North Dakota had only 200 miles of surfaced roads, but by 1919, there were 1,160. By 1928, the surfaced road mileage totaled 2,953.⁸⁷ An automobile increase and improved roads made socialization easier and more frequent. E. A. Willson, a rural sociologist at the North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station, stated in 1928:

Improved highways are causing many changes in rural social life. Good roads improve rural mail service, making better educational facilities available to farm children, bring medical assistance to the farm home quickly, and make possible a broader social life. The automobile and improved highways are causing a re-adjustment in rural social organizations and agencies. They enable the farmer to do his trading, seek recreation and attend church at more distant cities and villages where more and better services are available than the small villages furnish.⁸⁸

The radio did not play any part as a means of communications in the lives of North Dakotans until 1922. By 1930, North Dakota had six radio stations and 40 per cent of the families had radios. This put many people in touch with public events and cultural activities.⁸⁹

The telephone also did little to break down the rural isolation and remoteness characteristic of North Dakota during the first two

⁸⁷U.S., Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States. 1914, p. 260; 1915, p. 307; 1930, p. 376.

⁸⁸E. A. Willson, "Social Organizations and Agencies in North Dakota," North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin 221 (Fargo, 1928), pp. 15-16.

⁸⁹Robinson, pp. 534, 564.

decades of the 20th century. In 1902, there were 6,762 telephones in North Dakota, but by 1927, the telephones numbered 86,198. Yet only 41 per cent of North Dakota's farms in 1930 had telephones.⁹⁰

Many newspapers came into existence during the influx of immigrants into North Dakota between 1890 and 1920. In 1909, the state recorded 333 weekly newspapers and twelve dailies. By 1919, the weeklies had an estimated circulation of about 200,000, while the dailies had less than 50,000. This showed that five-sixths of the people in North Dakota did not see a daily paper. However, the circulation of the dailies grew after 1920.⁹¹ Home newspapers were also published in Norwegian and German, but most of these had small circulation and were short lived.⁹²

Public libraries played a small part in the lives of rural North Dakotans for the first two decades of the 20th century. The rural people and the small towns lacked the population and tax base for the support of libraries. The larger towns had bigger populations for the support of libraries, and profited from the donations of Andrew Carnegie. The larger towns also benefited more from the traveling libraries set up by the Public Library Commission in 1918. In 1922, towns of 2,500 or

⁹⁰U.S., Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States. 1929, p. 360; Robinson, pp. 563-64.

⁹¹Robinson, pp. 316-20, 526-27.

⁹²Ibid., pp. 317-18.

more had 80 per cent of the library circulation in the state, yet they comprised only 14 per cent of the population. During the 1920's there was a growth in the number of libraries.⁹³

Whenever barriers of transportation and communications cannot be remedied, ignorance or unawareness tends to make a person an easy prey to rumor, ignorance, and stereotypes.⁹⁴ Inadequate transportation and communication facilities prevented the rural people from proper participation in society. This loss of community made them more susceptible and available for mass movements. A mass movement is most likely to occur if the unknown is also regarded as a potential threat or as the source for the evils of life.⁹⁵ N. C. Abbott maintained that this was the state of mind of the rural people of North Dakota in 1912. He asserted that "they are cautious by nature and look with suspicion on the city man with his ready made schemes for social uplift. Above all, farmers will rise in revolt against the supposition that they are in any sense benighted and inferior."⁹⁶

⁹³Ibid., pp. 321-25, 522.

⁹⁴Allport, p. 50.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Abbott, p. 255.

CHAPTER II

SELECTED NEWSPAPERS: CONTRASTING VIEWS

The agrarians in North Dakota experienced uprootedness, a loss of social ties, and isolated conditions. To solve these social problems, they attempted to re-establish their social institutions, but the mixed nationalities, sparse settlements, and inadequate transportation and communication prevented proper socialization.

In view of the farmers' social and psychological conditions, the author viewed the editorial policy of the Nonpartisan Leader for its interpretation of the agrarian problems in North Dakota. The Nonpartisan Leader, later called the North Dakota Leader, was the chief weekly organ of the Nonpartisan League, a popular farm movement between 1916 and 1920. A test of the editorial opinion of the Leader from 1916 to 1920 should determine whether its analysis concerning the agrarians was consistent with the farmers' actual conditions. Did the Leader sense the farmers' social conditions and provide a solution?

The Leader interpreted the problems confronting the North Dakota farmers economically. It stated that farmers suffered from economic abuses because certain conspiratorial forces exploited the agrarians.

The editorial section of the Leader held the position that the market system was theoretically based upon supply and demand, but in actual practice the market was one of speculation and manipulation.¹ The marketing system permitted the grain gamblers, speculators, elevator men, food gamblers, millers, and middle men to manipulate or take advantage of the farmers and consumers.² These men used unfair methods of dockage, grading, milling, and pricing resulting in a \$50,000,000 loss yearly by the North Dakota farmers.³ The editor cited five cases where North Dakota elevator managers manipulated wheat prices. The managers bought wheat as low grades and sold it as high grades. The grade of wheat determined its price.⁴ One editorial stated that the farmers sold most of their wheat for 'D-feed' or similar low grades. There was a wide spread in the buying price between high and low grades of wheat. However, the lower grades made flour almost equivalent to higher grades. Grain elevator men and millers made great profits in purchasing wheat as lower grades.⁵ The local elevators also docked the farmers for having "impurities" in their grain. Later,

¹Nonpartisan Leader, January 4, 1917, p. 12; March 1, 1917, p. 4.

²Ibid., March 29, 1917, p. 3.

³Ibid., February 10, 1916, p. 6; March 9, 1916, p. 6; March 2, 1916, p. 6.

⁴Ibid., August 17, 1916, p. 5; December 24, 1917, p. 10.

⁵Ibid., April 26, 1917, p. 4.

they sold the "impurities" to farmers as mixed feeds.⁶ The Leader considered agricultural methods adequate, but the market was a system of robbery and waste.⁷

The editorials also accused the railroads of high freight rates, inefficiency, and of barring cooperative elevators from railroad property.⁸ The Leader showed that the freight rates of a 60,000 pound car of wheat between Minot and Grand Forks were \$91.80, while the rates for a similar car from Moorhead, Minnesota, to Minneapolis, 25 miles farther, were \$61.80.⁹

The editor labeled the bankers, "business vultures," in reference to the usurious interests they charged.¹⁰ For instance, the Leader stated that the bankers charged high interest rates, from eight to ten per cent, to the people of McHenry County who had a debt burden of \$7,000,000.¹¹ The editors called the bankers the "Benedict Arnolds" of the farmers' cause, because they fought to secure big business in control of North Dakota.¹²

⁶Ibid., November 23, 1915, p. 7.

⁷Ibid., March 29, 1917, p. 3.

⁸North Dakota Leader, November 22, 1919, p. 6.

⁹Nonpartisan Leader, August 10, 1916, p. 4; North Dakota Leader, March 24, 1919, p. 5.

¹⁰Nonpartisan Leader, February 3, 1916, p. 7.

¹¹Ibid., January 13, 1916, p. 6.

¹²North Dakota Leader, June 8, 1919, p. 8.

The Leader also looked upon various trusts as evil forces. The editor charged Roosevelt's trust-breaking effort as being ineffective, because the trusts grew in power. Competition seemed to have been completely stopped leaving monopoly in full power.¹³ One editorial asserted that "the packing trust has declared war on the stomachs of America and is making a big drive to success. The farmers' price for pigs grows less and less, while the consumers' cost of pork, ham, and bacon continues to climb higher and higher."¹⁴ The Leader considered Upton Sinclair's book, The Jungle, a "revelation." The packing trust had poisoned our boys in Cuba and the Philippines.¹⁵

The Standard Oil Company had such a monopoly on producing and marketing oil that oil exchanges, boards of trade, chambers of commerce, middlemen, "jobbers," and railroads made profits for the company. As a result, John D. Rockefeller's annual income totaled \$60,000,000. The editorial cited Forbes magazine which mentioned that the composite fortune of the thirty richest men in the United States was worth \$3,680,000,000. Farmers' names could not be found on the list.¹⁶

¹³Ibid., September 20, 1919, p. 6.

¹⁴Nonpartisan Leader, January 6, 1916, p. 7.

¹⁵North Dakota Leader, September 6, 1919, p. 6.

¹⁶Ibid., April 27, 1918, p. 8; Nonpartisan Leader, March 29, 1917, p. 3.

Insurance men also made huge profits at the expense of the farmers. These men fought to protect their business and profits by denouncing the Nonpartisan League because of its desire for state hail insurance. The editor compared the 70 cents per acre that the private hail insurance companies charged to the state insurance rate of 27 cents per acre.¹⁷

The Leader even considered the American Book Trust as one of the most vicious forces, since it monopolized on school books and the reference library business. The trust worked through the state superintendent, county superintendents, school boards, and teachers. The editor supported the Senate Bill 134, which would provide for a Board of Administration, set up to exercise control over the educational system. The Board would control the state superintendent who had the power to prescribe and control courses of study.¹⁸ After a Board of Administration was established, it assumed the power that belonged to the state superintendent.¹⁹

Government officials were also corrupt. The editorial section referred to them as "political tricksters," the "gang rule," "political crooks," the "old gang," and "political parasites." Incompetence,

¹⁷Nonpartisan Leader, March 23, 1916, p. 6; August 2, 1917, p. 6; North Dakota Leader, November 22, 1919, p. 6.

¹⁸North Dakota Leader, June 7, 1919, p. 8.

¹⁹Morlan, pp. 252-54.

mismanagement, and extravagance were characteristics of these politicians. The editor firmly believed that an alliance had developed between big business and these "legal shysters." This alliance made it possible to reap unfair profits, halt competition and injure the farmer. The Old Gang got their start under the shrewd political dictator, James Hill. Even after the Nonpartisan League gained control of the state government, the Old Gang was still represented in the legislature. Railroad owners, bankers, telephone companies, money lenders, and elevator proprietors dominated the Old Gang. The "gang rule" objected to anyone who had farmer affiliation seeking office.²⁰

The Leader also asserted that several daily newspapers were the mouth-piece of big business. This list of dailies included primarily the Grand Forks Herald, the Fargo Forum, and the Bismarck Daily Tribune.²¹ The Leader affirmed that it carried the truth to the people, while the

²⁰Nonpartisan Leader, January 27, 1916, p. 6; February 3, 1916, p. 7; February 10, 1916, p. 6; February 17, 1916, p. 6; March 2, 1916, p. 6; March 9, 1916, p. 6; March 16, 1916, p. 8; March 30, 1916, p. 6; April 27, 1916, p. 3; February 1, 1917, p. 3; February 15, 1917, p. 3; April 12, 1917, p. 3; North Dakota Leader, June 22, 1918, p. 8; August 16, 1919, p. 6.

²¹Nonpartisan Leader, March 30, 1916, p. 11; April 20, 1916, p. 3; May 18, 1916, p. 3; May 25, 1916, p. 4; February 22, 1917, p. 4; April 26, 1917, p. 16; May 24, 1917, p. 5; June 14, 1917, p. 4; July 5, 1917, p. 4; June 28, 1917, p. 3; September 20, 1917, p. 7; North Dakota Leader, July 6, 1918, p. 6; May 3, 1919, p. 8; October 4, 1919, p. 6; September 6, 1919, p. 6; June 5, 1920, p. 4; August 14, 1920, p. 4.

opposition press publications were malicious and false.²²

The Grand Forks Herald, published by Jeremiah D. Bacon at Grand Forks, North Dakota, seemed to have been the League's primary journalistic opponent. The Leader regarded the Grand Forks Herald as the chief organ of the Old Gang and an advocate of big business, a perfect example of a "demagogue." Big business used various newspapers for its own interests.²³ The Fargo Forum allied itself with the Grand Forks Herald. Its editor, Norman Black, came from the East and received his training as editor of the Grand Forks Herald under Bacon. Black also served the Old Gang and business interests.²⁴

According to the Leader, the political boss, Alex McKenzie, controlled the Bismarck Daily Tribune which played an important part in the gang press fight on the League. Other gang press papers copied some articles directly from the McKenzie Bismarck newspaper.²⁵ Out-of-state newspapers, especially the St. Paul Dispatch, the Minneapolis Tribune, and the Minneapolis Journal also represented big business.²⁶

²²Nonpartisan Leader, April 19, 1917, p. 4.

²³Ibid., February 22, 1917, p. 4; May 24, 1917, p. 5; July 5, 1917, p. 4; September 20, 1917, p. 7.

²⁴Ibid., April 26, 1917, p. 16; June 14, 1917, p. 4; June 28, 1917, p. 3; North Dakota Leader, June 5, 1920, p. 4; August 14, 1920, p. 4.

²⁵Nonpartisan Leader, May 25, 1916, p. 4.

²⁶North Dakota Leader, July 6, 1918, p. 6; September 6, 1919, p. 6.

During 1919 and 1920, the Leader focused its attention upon a new enemy, the Independent Voters Association. The big bankers regulated the I.V.A., which contained renegade state officials, especially William Langer, Thomas Hall, and Carl Kositzky. These three men turned traitor and became the willing tools of the vested interests.²⁷ The Chamber of Commerce crowd of Minneapolis supplied the I.V.A. with money.²⁸ After their alleged perfidy, Langer, Hall, and Kositzky were continuously attacked by the League, because they were critical of the League's operations of the state owned industry.²⁹ One editorial considered Langer worse than Judas Iscariot. Judas repented and hanged himself, while Langer continued to slander and insult the League.³⁰ Another editorial stated that Kositzky had a "pathological condition," and Hall was going to be recalled in the next election.³¹

The Leader blamed various conspiratorial forces for exploiting the farmers and causing unfavorable economic conditions. The method that the editors used to understand the farmers' economic problems was by

²⁷Ibid., July 5, 1919, p. 4; November 15, 1919, p. 6; December 18, 1920, p. 4.

²⁸Ibid., April 5, 1919, p. 8.

²⁹Ibid., October 11, 1919, p. 8; September 11, 1920, p. 4; July 5, 1919, p. 4.

³⁰Ibid., November 15, 1919, p. 6.

³¹North Dakota Leader, October 4, 1919, p. 6; November 8, 1919, p. 8.

reviewing and referring to, in a fundamentalist fashion, the speeches and works of Nonpartisan League leaders and other well known men. These leaders included A. C. Townley, Dr. Edwin F. Ladd, Dr. John H. Worst, Governor Lynn J. Frazier, and William Lemke. These leaders were never in "error" nor were their teachings ever "questionable."³²

Dr. Edwin F. Ladd, professor of chemistry at the state agricultural college and food commissioner of North Dakota, had rendered a valuable service to the toilers of this state as a result of his investigations and tests concerning our marketing system. Dr. Ladd became state grain inspector in 1917, and began publishing his findings on the unfair practices of grading, weighing, and measuring grain. The Leader embraced his findings as absolute truth.³³ Closely allied to Dr. Ladd was Dr. John H. Worst, president of the Agricultural College of North Dakota. Dr. Worst declared, in one of his addresses to the Tri-State Grain Grower's Association, that according to Dr. Ladd's calculations the farmers of North Dakota lost more than 50 million dollars annually on the by-products of wheat alone. This excess money, according to

³²Nonpartisan Leader, January 6, 1916, p. 7; March 2, 1916, p. 6; March 1, 1917, p. 4; March 15, 1917, p. 3; April 5, 1917, p. 4; May 24, 1917, p. 3; June 14, 1917, p. 4; July 7, 1917, p. 8; North Dakota Leader, July 27, 1918, p. 6; August 24, 1918, p. 4; February 8, 1919, p. 8; July 10, 1919, p. 6.

³³Nonpartisan Leader, January 6, 1916, p. 7; March 2, 1916, p. 6; March 1, 1917, p. 4; March 15, 1917, p. 3; North Dakota Leader, August 24, 1918, p. 4.

Dr. Worst, went to millionaires in Minneapolis and Chicago, who lived in mansions and yachts while the farmers toiled in the heat and dust of summer and the bitter cold of winter.³⁴

The Leader regarded A. C. Townley as displaying a ". . . leadership that has no equal in the annals of political history in the United States."³⁵ Townley, a former flax grower near Beach, North Dakota, provided the initial leadership in the organization of the Nonpartisan League movement. In 1912, due to unfavorable weather conditions and low flax prices, Townley went bankrupt. Shortly after, he turned to the Socialist party in North Dakota and in 1914 became its candidate for the state legislature in the 39th district. The Socialist party complained about the existing economic conditions in North Dakota. It constantly urged the farmer and laborer to organize. Its platforms consisted of state rural credit, state-owned mills and elevators, state hail insurance, and unemployment insurance. After January, 1915, when the Socialist party had discontinued its program, Townley attended the American

³⁴Nonpartisan Leader, May 24, 1917, pp. 3-4.

³⁵North Dakota Leader, February 8, 1919, p. 8.

Equity Society Convention in Bismarck.³⁶ The Equity Society was a farmers' organization that sought to improve the farmer's economic conditions. The Society had acquired considerable strength in North Dakota by 1915. It promoted producers' and consumers' cooperatives.³⁷ While at Bismarck, Townley discussed his plan to form a new farmers' organization with A. E. Bowen, a former Socialist candidate for governor, and Fred B. Wood, a farmer and director on the Board of Equity. In February, 1915, Townley met Wood and his sons on their farm near Deering, North Dakota, and together they wrote a plan of their ideas and then began to convert the farmers to them.³⁸

Townley and his associates organized the Nonpartisan League on a very personal basis. Herbert E. Gaston described their system as follows:

³⁶Robert L. Morlan, Political Prairie Fire: The Nonpartisan League, 1915-1922 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), pp. 26-46; John D. Hicks, "The Third Party Tradition in American Politics," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XX (June, 1933-March, 1934), pp. 23-24; Theodore Saloutos, "The Rise of the Nonpartisan League in North Dakota, 1915-1917," Agricultural History, XX (January, 1946), pp. 43-61; Charles E. Russell, The Story of the Nonpartisan League: A Chapter in American Evolution (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1920), pp. 191-248.

³⁷Robert H. Bahmer, "The American Society of Equity," Agricultural History, XIV (January, 1940), pp. 33-63; Morlan, pp. 18-21, 42-43.

³⁸Morlan, pp. 26-46; Hicks, pp. 23-24; Saloutos, pp. 43-61; Russell, pp. 191-200.

An early convert becomes a "booster" in his township. He is persuaded to accompany the organizer and break the ice with his neighbors. Sometimes organizers during the busy seasons of farm work have been known to hire a capable farm hand and take him along. The farm hand takes his place on the plow or the hay wagon so that the farmer may have time to hear the organizer's talk. Sometimes the farm hand fills in while the farmer goes on a "boosting" excursion with the organizer.³⁹

Townley often talked to rural groups wherever they could come together. He spoke the farmers' language and could easily move his audiences. Ray McKaig, a League worker, wrote about Townley in the following way:

He speaks slowly and enunciates clearly; his gestures go out after you, reaching out to tear down your refusal to agree with his ideas. His voice is expressive, strong, and resonant. As irony, sarcasm or sympathy is hurled at his crowd, his voice betrays his mood before his words articulate the thought. He is one of the great native orators of America.⁴⁰

As membership increased, Townley recruited and trained a staff of Socialist organizers and bought dozens of Fords for transportation. He provided tips on salesmanship and applied psychology. His instructions included the following:

Arouse his interest with your very first statement. Your first statements are like the headlines of a newspaper. . . . Make this sentence fit the interests of the man to whom you are talking. . . . Then keep control of the interview. . . . Keep to the subject. Every farmer will agree to the fundamental principles of the League, a better marketing system, better

³⁹Herbert E. Gaston, The Nonpartisan League (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), pp. 57-58.

⁴⁰Ray McKaig, "The Nonpartisan Champion," Public, XXII (May 17, 1919), pp. 518-19.

prices for farm products, and more representation in the government. . . . Remember that you cannot force him to join either by physical force or force of argument. You must persuade him as well as convince him. . . . It is not altogether a matter of satisfying his reason--it is a matter of appealing to his emotions as well.⁴¹

The League organizers brought their salespitch to a climax by showing the farmer the signatures of neighboring farmers, and handing him a membership card and pen. Then they secured dues either in cash or a postdated check. Townley maintained that the payment of dues by the farmers would cause them to support the organization.⁴²

The farmers in North Dakota sought community, and the League ideology provided them with an opportunity for joint action in their state government.⁴³ Once the new members heard the League's ideology, they were ". . . like a man who had just gotten religion . . . [and] wants everyone else to have it."⁴⁴ Judge Charles F. Amidon of the United States District Court seems to have sensed the social problem of the people of North Dakota in 1919, when he asserted:

The people of North Dakota are farmers, many of them pioneers. Their life has been intensely individual. They have never been combined in corporate or other business organizations, to train them in their common interests or promote their general welfare. In the main they have made their purchases and sold their

⁴¹Morlan, pp. 28-29.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 27-30.

⁴³Ibid., p. 34.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 28.

products as individuals. . . . It is hopeless to expect a population scattered over a vast territory as the people of this State are to create any private business system that will change the system now existing. The only means through which the people of the State have any experience in joint action is their State government.⁴⁵

The League dues included a subscription of its own paper, to begin publication before the end of the year. Recognizing that an organizational newspaper was necessary to keep the members of the Nonpartisan League informed concerning their ideology, Townley and his associates started the Nonpartisan Leader, September 23, 1915. When the League began publishing a national newspaper in 1918, the state's newspaper changed its name to the North Dakota Leader.⁴⁶ By the winter of 1915 and 1916, the Leader had a circulation of nearly 30,000, about twice the size of the largest newspaper in North Dakota.⁴⁷

The Leader stated that big business, because of its exploiting activities, was evil, unrighteous, and unjust; while the activity of the agrarians was good, righteous, and just. Big business ruled through fraud, trickery, graft, and oppression. It was responsible for corruption, extortion, and exploitation. Under its rule, economic and political justice could never be attained. The farmers on the other hand, were

⁴⁵Canadian Reconstruction Association, The Nonpartisan League in North Dakota (Toronto: March, 1921), p. 7.

⁴⁶Morlan, pp. 36-40.

⁴⁷Ibid.

patient and silent. After many long hours of planning and toiling, their products became the sport of big business. As a result, the Leader proposed a different type of society in which the farmers would determine the course of events.⁴⁸

The editorials held that the farmers would overcome the autocracy of big business through organization. The editor insisted in his propaganda that the farmers should be organized like the industrialists. Once organization of the Nonpartisan League was completed, the League would "clean house" in county and state governments of the corrupt politicians who were hired by big business.⁴⁹ Railroad owners, trusts, and bankers had plenty of representatives in the legislature where they exercised their power for their own interests. The Leader told its readers that "the remedy is to elect a majority of farmers to all state offices and these farmers will have the power and the incentive to rightly represent the majority of the people of this state. . . ." ⁵⁰

The Leader urged the League members to attend meetings to get to know the farm candidates, to listen to League leaders, and to discuss

⁴⁸Nonpartisan Leader, March 30, 1916, p. 10; June 8, 1916, p. 4; February 22, 1917, p. 3; March 8, 1917, p. 3; March 29, 1917, pp. 3-4; April 12, 1917, p. 3; May 24, 1917, p. 4; North Dakota Leader, November 13, 1920, p. 4.

⁴⁹Nonpartisan Leader, January 20, 1916, p. 6; March 15, 1917, p. 4; March 29, 1917, p. 4; August 2, 1917, p. 7; North Dakota Leader, August 30, 1919, p. 6.

⁵⁰Nonpartisan Leader, February 10, 1916, p. 6.

economic and political problems.⁵¹ After the farmers became acquainted with the League candidates, the Leader told the farmers to vote for them. The ballot box became the weapon by which the farmers could bust the monopolies of big business. The revolt could not be bloody, but had to be a peaceful one.⁵² The editor tried to convince his readers:

North Dakota cannot develop into an intensively cultivated, diversified farming state until through legislative action it clears the way for the building up of the industries which will make that condition possible. Its greatest industry is held in an iron grip by outside capital and the profit which its rich soil yields is enriching citizens of other states instead of the men who are earning it.⁵³

Before the League could carry out state ownership of industries, a new constitution had to be drawn up, for the present constitution represented business interests.⁵⁴ The Leader called for state ownership of terminal elevators, packing plants, cold storage plants, hail insurance, and a bank.⁵⁵ To remedy the railroad situation, the editor suggested:

One management and ownership for all the railroads--the people; the roads operated for service and not profit, like our highways and bridges are operated (a railroad is a public highway); one

⁵¹Nonpartisan Leader, September 13, 1917, p. 4; North Dakota Leader, February 16, 1918, p. 4; October 18, 1919, p. 6.

⁵²North Dakota Leader, September 7, 1918, p. 4; September 14, 1918, p. 4; October 5, 1918, p. 4; October 9, 1920, p. 4.

⁵³Nonpartisan Leader, April 27, 1916, p. 3.

⁵⁴Ibid., January 25, 1917, pp. 3-4; March 22, 1917, pp. 3-4.

⁵⁵Ibid., January 25, 1917, p. 3; April 12, 1917, p. 3.

system of charges on freight and passengers all over the country --one standard of service, one set of rules; elimination of costly rival offices and solicitors that now make costs soar and hence increase rates; no duplication of tracks into territory where one line is sufficient (think of that savings); adequate service in territory now without railroads; no run-down, unsafe equipment; first consideration, service for the people, . . .⁵⁶

The Leader maintained that the farmer's revolt at the polls would deliver the farmers from evil and bring about a total regeneration of society by replacing the old state machinery with the farmers' own rule. Government by the farmers meant that state ownership of industries would replace industries owned by big business. Through politics, the farmers would eliminate the economic abuses facing them.⁵⁷

In the general election of 1916, all except one Nonpartisan League candidate for state office won. In the House the League had a majority, but in the Senate it had only 18 of 49 members. A minority in the Senate prevented the League from amending the constitution so that it might enact its program of state ownership of industry. The legislature did pass on some reform measures, forbidding of discriminatory "long and short haul" rates by railroads, permitting firms to construct elevators along railroad rights of way, setting up a state grain-grading system, producing a state bank deposit guarantee law, establishing a nine-hour

⁵⁶Nonpartisan Leader, August 9, 1917, p. 7.

⁵⁷Ibid., January 25, 1917, p. 3; April 12, 1917, p. 3; August 9, 1917, p. 7; North Dakota Leader, January 18, 1919, p. 6; November 8, 1919, p. 8; October 9, 1920, p. 4.

day for women, exempting farm improvements from taxation, and providing more state aid for education.⁵⁸

The election of 1918 gave the League a more substantial victory, enabling the 1919 legislature to pass laws providing for state ownership of industries. The new laws created the Bank of North Dakota, the North Dakota Mill and Elevator Association, the Home Building Association, and made provisions for state hail insurance. But since adequate financing was not available for these new laws, the result was a failure for part of the League's program. The League showed a decline in the 1920 election. The following year, the legislature investigated state industries, and thereafter the Nonpartisan League continually declined.⁵⁹

In answer to the agrarians' sociological conditions, the editorial policy of the Leader turned up editorials blaming conspiratorial forces and offering state ownership and regulation of industry. An analysis was also made of four well-known North Dakota daily newspapers showing their view of the farmers' situation between 1916 and 1920. The choice included the Bismarck Daily Tribune, the Fargo Forum, the Grand Forks Herald, and the Minot Daily News. The selection of these newspapers allowed a sampling of the editorial opinion concerning the farmers' conditions in four general areas in North Dakota. The Leader also

⁵⁸Morlan, pp. 87-89, 106, 132-33, 211-14; Russell, pp. 249-78; Gaston, 110-56.

⁵⁹Morlan, pp. 211-14; Russell, pp. 249-78; Gaston, pp. 252-84.

charged the Bismarck Daily Tribune, the Fargo Forum, and the Grand Forks Herald as being a voice of big business. If these dailies did not parallel the editorials of the Leader what ideology did they reflect? Did they recognize the sociological conditions of the North Dakota farmers? What solutions did they propose?

The Bismarck Daily Tribune, the Fargo Forum, the Grand Forks Herald, and the Minot Daily News did not blame conspiratorial forces for the farmers' economic conditions in North Dakota. All four newspapers stated that the North Dakota farmers were fortunate to live in a land of opportunity and prosperity.⁶⁰ The Grand Forks Herald asserted that "not only has North Dakota more wealth per capita than any other state, but that wealth is more generally distributed among the people."⁶¹ The Fargo Forum maintained that nowhere was there a better opportunity than in this land of great crops and that the farmers would go forward to still greater prosperity.⁶² Later, the Grand Forks Herald and the Fargo Forum also spoke of soaring wheat prices on the Minneapolis market which were the highest on record. The wheat crop was also considered

⁶⁰Grand Forks Herald, June 23, 1916, p. 4; August 19, 1920, p. 4; November 30, 1920, p. 4; Minot Daily News, February 9, 1916, p. 2; Fargo Forum, August 12, 1916, p. 4; Bismarck Daily Tribune, April 29, 1916, p. 4.

⁶¹Grand Forks Herald, January 29, 1916, p. 4.

⁶²Fargo Forum, March 24, 1916, p. 4; April 11, 1917, p. 4.

the largest.⁶³ Furthermore, the Minot Daily News contended that farmers were not dying of loneliness, but rather were living in an atmosphere of "contentment and good fellowship."⁶⁴

The four daily newspapers believed that capitalism caused the wealth in North Dakota. They considered the farmers capitalists. By capitalism was meant an economic system in which the government refrained as much as possible in the regulation and ownership of privately owned and operated industries. In a capitalistic society, supply and demand controlled the markets.⁶⁵ Charges of monopoly of markets were "bunkum," according to the Grand Forks Herald.⁶⁶ The editor of the Fargo Forum thought that supply and demand should continue to control the situation, and that arbitrary pricing would upset the balance of the economy.⁶⁷

The editors of the four dailies stated that supply and demand and

⁶³Grand Forks Herald, October 5, 1916, p. 4; October 12, 1916, p. 4; Fargo Forum, August 9, 1916, p. 4; August 12, 1916, p. 4.

⁶⁴Minot Daily News, February 9, 1916, p. 2.

⁶⁵Bismarck Daily Tribune, May 18, 1920, p. 4; Fargo Forum, July 24, 1916, p. 4; Grand Forks Herald, April 16, 1920, p. 4; Minot Daily News, October 23, 1919.

⁶⁶Grand Forks Herald, September 29, 1916, p. 4.

⁶⁷Fargo Forum, July 24, 1919, p. 4.

marketing determined prices.⁶⁸ The cost of distribution and the great amount of exports explained high prices of products. Transporting goods a great distance forced prices up. Increasing exports made products scarce, therefore increasing their value.⁶⁹ Surplus of products, heavy selling, and remoteness of raw materials from the manufacturing points caused low farm prices.⁷⁰ The Grand Forks Herald asserted that speculators forced the prices of wheat up because of their competitive bidding on wheat.⁷¹

With regard to profits, the Minot Daily News alleged that "every producer, whether corporation or individual, is entitled to remuneration for his own services in the production and a fair guarantee against loss by unforeseen conditions and uncertainties, . . ."⁷² Whenever profits were made, they were due to the efforts of the business or corporation or natural conditions. Armour, Swift, Morris, Wilson and Cudahy made

⁶⁸Bismarck Daily Tribune, November 5, 1916, p. 4; May 18, 1920, p. 4; Fargo Forum, July 24, 1916, p. 4; Grand Forks Herald, April 16, 1920, p. 4; Minot Daily News, October 23, 1919, p. 2.

⁶⁹Minot Daily News, August 17, 1916, p. 2; November 25, 1916, p. 2; January 20, 1917, p. 2; Grand Forks Herald, February 24, 1916, p. 4.

⁷⁰Fargo Forum, March 14, 1917, p. 4; May 3, 1920, p. 4; Minot Daily News, July 18, 1917, p. 2.

⁷¹Grand Forks Herald, August 9, 1919, p. 4.

⁷²Minot Daily News, August 8, 1917, p. 8.

profits based partly on increased volume of business by weight.⁷³ Meat packers also eliminated wastes, saved expenses, and made for greater efficiency, and therefore were deserving of profits.⁷⁴ Chicago bakers reduced the cost of wrapping which increased profits.⁷⁵ Standard Oil's profits were based on the great boom of gas engines.⁷⁶ Gains from charging high interest rates by bankers were justified on the grounds that risks deserved benefits.⁷⁷

Indebtedness or mortgages were not considered signs of poverty and recession, but rather indications of progress, ambition, prosperity and profits.⁷⁸ The Bismarck Daily Tribune reasoned that the farmer purchased his mortgaged land at a lower price than the present worth of it.⁷⁹

Bankers, speculators, big corporations, railroad owners, and middlemen were deemed honest, good, necessary and helpful because

⁷³Bismarck Daily Tribune, July 8, 1918, p. 4.

⁷⁴Minot Daily News, July 25, 1919, p. 4.

⁷⁵Ibid., May 11, 1917, p. 2.

⁷⁶Ibid., April 26, 1917, p. 2.

⁷⁷Grand Forks Herald, February 25, 1916, p. 4.

⁷⁸Bismarck Daily Tribune, May 6, 1916, p. 4; Minot Daily News, January 31, 1920, p. 2; Grand Forks Herald, March 22, 1917, p. 4; February 4, 1918, p. 4.

⁷⁹Bismarck Daily Tribune, May 6, 1916, p. 4.

they assisted in the development and prosperity of North Dakota. The Bismarck Daily Tribune told its readers not to "... be deceived into believing that the comparatively few sharks in business life are typical. They aren't! There's more downright good fellowship and decency among the mass of men than we know."⁸⁰ The Fargo Forum, Grand Forks Herald, and Minot Daily News agreed that bankers should not be criticized because of their power and branded with dishonesty. The amount of money lost through their services was remarkably small. The bankers performed a vital function in the community. They were not rolling in wealth but were merely the custodians of the funds of others.⁸¹

Railroads and their owners had just as much importance as bankers. They furnished the farmers with a means of transportation by which they could get their products to market. The editors thought it necessary that the railroads charge enough for their services not only to meet expenses, but also to further expansion and to pay dividends.⁸²

Speculators and middlemen were also a necessity in the economy because they performed estimable duties in handling the farm products. The editor of the Minot Daily News stated that "were it not that a great

⁸⁰Bismarck Daily Tribune, January 9, 1917, p. 4.

⁸¹Grand Forks Herald, February 24, 1916, p. 4; June 3, 1916, p. 4; May 12, 1917, p. 4; Minot Daily News, June 15, 1916, p. 2; Fargo Forum, July 10, 1917, p. 4.

⁸²Grand Forks Herald, February 24, 1916, p. 4; December 28, 1916, p. 4; Fargo Forum, August 6, 1919, p. 4.

body of men are [sic] always bidding for and buying his [farmer's] product, he would very often have to sell out at a very low price and get so small a reward for his work that a few people would care to go into farming."⁸³

The editor of the Grand Forks Herald held a similar view with regard to the middle man. He maintained that "when it comes to the marketing of the great bulk of our products the middleman is indispensable."⁸⁴

Popular prejudice against corporations and trusts was also unfounded. Trusts, according to the Fargo Forum, were myths, "the phantasy in the brain of the demagogue."⁸⁵ Owners of corporations were regarded as patriotic philanthropists since they spent millions for public works.⁸⁶ The Grand Forks Herald and the Fargo Forum, however, believed that if trusts stopped competition, government action would be necessary. The purpose of the government was to restore competition. In this way the government would facilitate our economy in promoting prosperity. War efforts also allowed the government to regulate and

⁸³Minot Daily News, January 28, 1920, p. 2.

⁸⁴Grand Forks Herald, April 24, 1917, p. 4.

⁸⁵Fargo Forum, September 13, 1916, p. 4.

⁸⁶Minot Daily News, November 11, 1916, p. 2; June 30, 1917, p. 2; Fargo Forum, February 9, 1916, p. 4; September 13, 1916, p. 4; Bismarck Daily Tribune, May 20, 1918, p. 4.

control.⁸⁷

Bankers, railroad owners, corporations, speculators, trusts, and middlemen were not causing the farmers' economic hardships. The daily newspapers blamed the farmers' economic problems on weather conditions causing crop failures, insects, unscientific farming methods, scarcity of labor, high cost of seeds, and unskilled workers.⁸⁸

To remedy the problems of the farmers, the daily newspapers suggested education for better farming. The Minot Daily News recommended ". . . , words of advice, suggestion, experience, discovery, invention, spoken by the county agent, . . ."⁸⁹ The Fargo Forum recommended that farmers learn about the marketing of grain and how to control pests.⁹⁰ The control of pests was vital since the best marketing conditions would not help the farmers of North Dakota if they would not have a crop to market. Diversification in farming, according to both the Grand Forks Herald and Fargo Forum, was the final answer for prosperity. If the

⁸⁷Fargo Forum, October 11, 1916, p. 4; January 5, 1917, p. 4; March 10, 1917, p. 4; April 20, 1917, p. 4; Grand Forks Herald, February 10, 1917, p. 4; August 16, 1917, p. 4; August 24, 1917, p. 4; August 24, 1918, p. 4; July 27, 1920, p. 4.

⁸⁸Bismarck Daily Tribune, May 11, 1917, p. 4; Fargo Forum, January 3, 1916, p. 4; July 26, 1918, p. 4; Grand Forks Herald, June 16, 1916, p. 4; December 3, 1920, p. 4; Minot Daily News, August 10, 1916, p. 2; August 2, 1918, p. 4; July 30, 1919, p. 4.

⁸⁹Minot Daily News, February 2, 1920, p. 2.

⁹⁰Fargo Forum, April 18, 1916, p. 4; July 12, 1919, p. 4.

farmers would rely on more than one type of crop, and on many different types of animals, hogs, sheep, and cattle, they were bound for success.⁹¹

The editors of the four daily newspapers believed that the farmers were living in a capitalistic economy which made them happy, contented, and prosperous. The editors assured their readers that a capitalistic economy provided the ideal conditions for obtaining wealth. With regard to the accumulation of wealth, the editors believed that men made their millions or billions as a result of their patience, frugality, initiative and virtue. Some of the more popular of these men of wealth included Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, Cornelius Vanderbilt, J. P. Morgan, Henry Ford, J. Ogden Armour, Edward S. Swift, and James Hill. The dailies labeled them self-made men.⁹² A few editorials with reference to the self-made men will suffice. The Bismarck Daily Tribune stated that "James J. Hill was a foe of extravagance. He believed that hard work and thrift were greater factors in success than genius. He was the greatest self-made man of the Northwest."⁹³ The

⁹¹Fargo Forum, August 7, 1916, p. 4; August 31, 1916, p. 2; September 8, 1919, p. 4; May 7, 1920, p. 4; Grand Forks Herald, July 1, 1916, p. 4; October 14, 1916, p. 4; August 15, 1916, p. 4.

⁹²Bismarck Daily Tribune, May 30, 1916, p. 4; August 12, 1919, p. 4; Minot Daily News, January 11, 1916, p. 2; June 17, 1916, p. 2; Fargo Forum, September 12, 1918, p. 4; August 12, 1919, p. 4; Grand Forks Herald, June 1, 1916, p. 4.

⁹³Bismarck Daily Tribune, May 30, 1916, p. 4.

Fargo Forum, in regard to Morgan, claimed that "he was one of the great men of this country in his life of endeavor. In fact, the world has never produced a greater financier."⁹⁴ The Grand Forks Herald asserted that "all of these men are the products of our time. They were born among us, have worked among us and have achieved right by our sides. They shed not tears over the opportunities others had seized but created opportunities for themselves."⁹⁵

These business leaders also contributed to our economic development in matters of production and in matters of finance, according to the dailies. These assistances even aided the United States during the war.⁹⁶ The Fargo Forum alleged that Armour ". . . was one of the pioneer advocates of encouraging production, improving distribution, preventing waste in the homes, licensing food merchandise of all grades and guaranteeing prices for single commodities."⁹⁷ The Bismarck Daily Tribune looked upon Hill as the "greatest human force" in developing the Northwest.⁹⁸ The editor of the Bismarck Daily Tribune also

⁹⁴Fargo Forum, September 12, 1918, p. 4.

⁹⁵Grand Forks Herald, December 12, 1916, p. 4.

⁹⁶Bismarck Daily Tribune, May 30, 1916, p. 4; December 2, 1916, p. 4; December 27, 1917, p. 4; April 22, 1918, p. 4; July 11, 1918, p. 4; April 1, 1918, p. 4; Fargo Forum, January 19, 1918, p. 4; Grand Forks Herald, June 1, 1916, p. 4.

⁹⁷Fargo Forum, January 19, 1918, p. 4.

⁹⁸Bismarck Daily Tribune, May 30, 1916, p. 4.

noted that Ford and Vanderbilt were great economic providers during the war.⁹⁹

Certain big business leaders, likewise, possessed trust and responsibility for administering their wealth and power. In certain instances, the Grand Forks Herald and the Bismarck Daily Tribune saw them as high-minded philanthropists, bestowing their wealth in the form of charity.¹⁰⁰ The Bismarck Daily Tribune spoke of James Hill as follows:

Because he never advertised his charities, is no indication that he was not charitable. The reverse is true. He contributed to churches, colleges, hospitals and a hundred other charities.¹⁰¹

Farmers in North Dakota also accumulated wealth through their own initiative and frugality. They did not receive assistance from the state or national government but rather made their money from their actual farming operations. Under the capitalistic economy, any man who was industrious, thrifty, and had the strength of character to deny himself many things that he would like to have would succeed in life.¹⁰²

⁹⁹Ibid., December 27, 1917, p. 4; July 11, 1918, p. 4.

¹⁰⁰Grand Forks Herald, August 4, 1917, p. 4; Fargo Forum, August 12, 1919, p. 4; Bismarck Daily Tribune, May 30, 1916, p. 4; August 12, 1919, p. 4; March 9, 1918, p. 4.

¹⁰¹Bismarck Daily Tribune, May 30, 1916, p. 4.

¹⁰²Grand Forks Herald, November 21, 1919, p. 4; January 24, 1919, p. 4; October 23, 1919, p. 4; Fargo Forum, February 10, 1916, p. 12; May 15, 1916, p. 4.

The editors of the dailies compared the capitalistic economy to socialism. Under the capitalistic economy, the conditions were considered ideal for becoming prosperous. The producer, the middlemen, the manufacturer, and consumer functioned like a machine for greater efficiency and economy. The middlemen, speculators, and railroad owners provided "indispensable" and "just" services which farmers and consumers desired. Their services added to the cost of the products. The only injustice that existed in a capitalistic economy was not taking advantage of opportunities.¹⁰³

Socialism, which signified state ownership and government regulation of industry to the editors of the dailies, was deemed undesirable and unjust. Such an economy halted initiative, thriftiness, and prevented individuals from becoming affluent. The Nonpartisan League's experiment of government regulation and state ownership resulted in a financial and economic failure involving the security and prosperity of the North Dakota people. For this reason the dailies showed opposition to state ownership of a bank, cooperatives, elevators, mills and

¹⁰³ Grand Forks Herald, November 17, 1916, p. 4; December 12, 1916, p. 4; April 24, 1917, p. 4; Fargo Forum, July 24, 1916, p. 4; March 14, 1917, p. 4; May 3, 1920, p. 4; Bismarck Daily Tribune, November 5, 1916, p. 4; July 29, 1920, p. 4; May 18, 1920, p. 4; Minot Daily News, August 17, 1916, p. 2; November 25, 1916, p. 2; January 20, 1917, p. 2.

packing plants.¹⁰⁴ The editors indicated that the state's financial problems could be linked directly with the operations of the bank of North Dakota.¹⁰⁵ All credit in North Dakota was in a "fluttery condition" due to the wildcat financing of the Nonpartisan League.¹⁰⁶ Cooperatives of any kind on the state level were sure to end in failure according to the Fargo Forum, Grand Forks Herald, and Minot Daily News.¹⁰⁷ Government regulations were also considered ridiculous and dangerous because government officials were governed by too many pressure groups.¹⁰⁸

Furthermore, men who advocated government regulation and state ownership were doing so for their own benefits. Attacks were made especially upon the Nonpartisan League, its leaders and philosophy, because it supported government regulation and state ownership. The

¹⁰⁴Minot Daily News, December 16, 1920, p. 4; February 2, 1916, p. 2; Bismarck Daily Tribune, July 15, 1919, p. 4; Fargo Forum, July 29, 1918, p. 4; July 26, 1918, p. 4; June 12, 1918, p. 4; November 1, 1919, p. 4; Grand Forks Herald, December 15, 1920, p. 4; June 9, 1916, p. 4.

¹⁰⁵Grand Forks Herald, December 15, 1920, p. 4; Fargo Forum, July 26, 1918, p. 4; July 29, 1918, p. 4; Minot Daily News, December 16, 1920, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶Grand Forks Herald, December 15, 1920, p. 4.

¹⁰⁷Fargo Forum, November 1, 1919, p. 4; June 12, 1918, p. 4; Grand Forks Herald, June 9, 1916, p. 4; Minot Daily News, February 2, 1916, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸Minot Daily News, July 12, 1919, p. 4; December 27, 1920, p. 4; November 3, 1919, p. 2; Grand Forks Herald, May 22, 1920, p. 4.

four dailies charged the League leaders with corruption and exploitative practices.¹⁰⁹ The Fargo Forum stated that "men have joined the organization to exploit it for their own personal advantage and have invariably wrecked it."¹¹⁰ The class struggle started by the League between the farmer and big business caused the Fargo Forum to plead to its readers for an end to the fight.¹¹¹

The editors of the four dailies sought to keep capitalism in existence. They urged farmers not to organize for political reasons, because prosperity could not be legislated.¹¹² One editor clearly stated:

It is impossible to compel good times or to legislate prosperity. The nation and this state have had political convulsions before. There have been false leaders, too, who painted for the farmer a situation where he would dominate the markets of the world and fix by law the price of his products and through statute limit the costs of goods

¹⁰⁹Bismarck Daily Tribune, October 21, 1918, p. 4; June 7, 1917, p. 4; June 16, 1917, p. 4; June 23, 1917, p. 4; March 21, 1917, p. 4; Minot Daily News, December 11, 1920, p. 4; December 17, 1920, p. 4; Grand Forks Herald, June 9, 1916, p. 4; Fargo Forum, July 29, 1918, p. 4; January 7, 1916, p. 4.

¹¹⁰Fargo Forum, January 7, 1916, p. 4.

¹¹¹Ibid., February 26, 1916, p. 12; September 23, 1916, p. 4.

¹¹²Minot Daily News, February 17, 1916, p. 2; December 9, 1920, p. 4; Bismarck Daily Tribune, June 9, 1916, p. 4; April 29, 1916, p. 4; January 23, 1916, p. 4; Fargo Forum, February 23, 1916, p. 4; February 18, 1916, p. 4; June 3, 1916, p. 4; Grand Forks Herald, December 9, 1920, p. 4; June 15, 1916, p. 4; January 25, 1919, p. 4.

he purchases. Anyone who has studied economics realizes regulation by laws has its limitations.¹¹³

The dailies favored and praised farmers who joined organizations for the purpose of improving farming methods. One editor approved of the Equity Society. The editorial stated that the "... organization promises to become one of the greatest co-operative powers in existence, it has divorced itself from politics."¹¹⁴ Another editorial alleged that "the society according to its president has no political axes to grind and seeks for no changes in the existing system of society. The president says frankly, we are capitalists. We merely advocate the ownership by the farmers of a part of the means of a distribution."¹¹⁵ The Minot Daily News praised the Farm Bureau Federation because it furnished the farmers with the service of expert advice, information and assistance in buying and selling.¹¹⁶

The editors also told their readers to vote for candidates who were not bound to the Socialist machine.¹¹⁷ The editor of the Fargo Forum stated: "By your vote tomorrow bring North Dakota back from the

¹¹³Bismarck Daily Tribune, June 9, 1916, p. 4.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Grand Forks Herald, December 9, 1920, p. 4.

¹¹⁶Minot Daily News, December 9, 1920, p. 4.

¹¹⁷Fargo Forum, November 4, 1918, p. 4; May 15, 1916, p. 4; Grand Forks Herald, May 22, 1920, p. 4.

vale of Socialism. Support only those candidates who have declared their opposition to Socialism and vote down the proposal to make North Dakota's constitution socialistic."¹¹⁸ The Grand Forks Herald told its readers to give their support and their votes to the Independent Republican ticket.¹¹⁹ The Bismarck Daily Tribune wanted to impeach Governor Frazier to restore to the office of governorship a man representing the capitalistic economy.¹²⁰

The result of the studies on the selected newspapers revealed that the Leader and the four daily newspapers reflected contrasting ideologies. The editorials of the Leader proposed an ideology of mild socialism, while the four dailies interpreted the economic conditions as basically operating to the tenets of laissez-faire.

¹¹⁸Fargo Forum, November 4, 1918, p. 4.

¹¹⁹Grand Forks Herald, May 22, 1920, p. 4.

¹²⁰Bismarck Daily Tribune, September 29, 1919, p. 4.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSIONS

The North Dakota agrarians experienced a loss of community before the organization of the Nonpartisan League. This loss of community made them susceptible for mobilization by leaders with ideologies, because the farmers were seeking community. In search of community, the farmers gradually became oriented and participated in a political ideology which resulted in political centralization. The Nonpartisan League, under the planning of A. C. Townley and his associates, provided the leadership in the actual acceptance of its protest political ideology by the rural people of North Dakota. The Socialist party and the American Equity Society were instrumental in spreading many ideas contained in the League ideology. The agrarians accepted the League's ideology according to the election returns of 1916 and 1918. However, the League showed a decline in popularity in the 1920 election and the years that followed. What caused the decline of the Nonpartisan League?

A study of the editorial policy of the Leader showed that the Nonpartisan League did not provide a true sense of community. The League

constructed a pseudo-community. The needs of the agrarians in North Dakota were social and psychological. Their loss of community made them seek a new community which would eliminate their uprootedness, loss of social ties, and isolation. The Leader interpreted the farmers' problems as being economic in nature. Its interpretation coincides with that of the historians who linked the League's origin to the farmers' dissatisfaction with an economy of exploitation. The Leader was not aware that the farmers were living during prosperous times at the height of the Nonpartisan League movement. The League was organized on the basis that the farmers suffered from economic abuses. Its ideology did not recognize or meet the social demands of the farmers. The Nonpartisan League's decline can be linked with its inability to understand and solve the farmers' social problems.

The editorial directions of the Bismarck Daily Tribune, the Fargo Forum, the Grand Forks Herald, and the Minot Daily News did not approximate the ideology reflected in the Leader. The editors of the dailies opposed the League's ideology and attacked its activities contributing to the decline in the League's popularity. The dailies took an optimistic view of the agrarian economic conditions in North Dakota. They actually recognized the prosperity of the farmers during the Nonpartisan League movement. They interpreted the economy as operating to the tenets of capitalism speaking favorably of big business. The four dailies did not sense the farmers' loss and quest of community,

nor did they propose solutions for the uprooted, disorganized, and isolated farmers in North Dakota. The four daily newspapers also promoted a pseudo-community.

The Nonpartisan League movement also lost much of its direct political influence with the development and reorganization of the rural social institutions, and the growth of transportation and communication. The use of English eventually brought mixed populations together. Rural churches declined and unions of larger church bodies were formed. The school system improved and the use of libraries increased. Automobiles and good roads broke down isolation, and made possible for greater participation and reorganization of social institutions. An increase in telephones, radios, and daily newspapers brought the agrarians in touch with ideas, news, and entertainment. The farmers of North Dakota gradually overcame social isolation.

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