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In This Issue

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In this issue

Last February the Dordt Agriculture Department sponsored lectures on responsible agricultural technology. We present the two main addresses in this issue.

Donald Duvick ("Responsible Agricultural Technology—Private Industry's Part") presents his thesis by first describing the 60-year experiences of his own family, a farm family including four boys. His account is a mixture of nostalgia for the pre-World War Two years and memory of how physically difficult it was to raise crops and eke out a living. Compared to today, poor methods, poor seed, and poor yields were evident. There was a terrible drought. In later years, better methods and better machinery led to overproduction. For a while both producer and consumer benefitted.

Each of the four brothers became associated with some part of the agricultural economy. Now they can reflect on their experiences over the years and see how problems have arisen as agricultural production has improved. Extensive soil erosion occurs; but its effects were temporarily masked by the use of fertilizer. Nitrates, insecticides, and herbicides pollute groundwater. The practices of some greedy companies endanger the entire agricultural community. The rural social fabric is at risk.

The solution, says Duvick, is not to tear down or go back. Partnership of, not war between, agribusiness and environmentalists is possible. Such a partnership is possible in our society even though what society wants is the source of modern agricultural problems. Technological changes cannot and should not be stopped. Technology can be a part of the solution.

C. Dean Freudenberger ("The Agricultural Agenda of the Twenty-First Century—In Quest of Just and Regenerative Food Systems") also addresses current agricultural problems. He asks, "Is today's agriculture appropriate for a radically changed world?" Freudenberger looks ahead and urges that we "articulate what ought to be on the agricultural agenda as we approach the next century." As we plan, we must consider that there has been fantastic growth in world human population and global famine.

The "Green Revolution" has not been properly understood: "The original purpose of the Green revolution...(was) to buy time while simultaneously working on...developing reliable domestic food systems to replace the old colonial export cropping structures which now have resulted in massive food deficits across the old colonial world. Also, the idea was to come up with less exhaustive (soil, water, vegetative and animal species loss) and therefore more promising agricultural technologies."

Freudenberger's solution, which he discusses at length, is "regenerative agriculture." He states, "A regenerative agriculture (the agenda for the twenty-first century) involves finding ways in which biological reproduction can be managed to benefit the immediate society as well as the future. Regenerative agriculture produces in a way that enhances the physical and biological environment, which, at the same time, brings greater dignity and welfare to the producing community. A regenerative agriculture restores the land to a semblance of its original form."

Louis J. Voskuil, "History as Process: Meaning in Change?" continues to explore the nature of history and the way to teach history. He began this discussion in our last issue. Voskuil maintains that "historical studies in its broadest focus examines the process of culture-making as the unfolding of the creation order by humans. In that inquiry it embraces all cultural phenomena in their life process in the context of culture's interrelatedness." Consequently, historical studies help human beings carry out their responsibility to have dominion in creation. He states, "The general education part of the curriculum should, therefore, include enough history about the society in which the school is located, and about the contemporary world so that the above objectives may be met." Among his specific suggestions is the intriguing idea that schools use McNeill's popular, globally-oriented *The Rise of the West*, or a similar book.

Russell Maatman