

*The Curse of American Agricultural Abundance: A Sustainable Solution*, by Willard W. Cochrane. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003. xiv, 156 pp. Figure, tables, notes, index. \$35.00 cloth.

Reviewer Tim Lehman is professor of history at Rocky Mountain College in Billings, Montana. He is the author of *Public Values, Private Lands: Farmland Preservation Policy, 1933-1985* (1995).

Anyone not happy with the face of rural America will find this thoughtful and bold book worth reading. Cochrane's vision for a sustainable agriculture in the new century is important not so much for its novelty as for its author's authority. Cochrane's distinguished career includes positions as adviser to President Kennedy, consultant to foreign governments, author of numerous books, and longtime advocate for family farms. The ideas in this book represent a culmination of the wisdom gained from those experiences.

The book consists of seven essays, three written in the 1950s and four written since 1997. The result is somewhat uneven, with occasional duplication and even contradiction. Some readers might be tempted to skip to the final two essays, but they are the liveliest and most important chapters. In them, Cochrane sets out his vision for a sustainable agriculture that preserves the remaining family farms, buffers farmers from market swings, and protects the environment both on the farm and beyond the farm gate.

Cochrane's solutions rest on his informed analysis of the policies that led to our current crisis. Policies since the New Deal, he argues, have succeeded in producing an abundant food supply at low prices for consumers, but have failed in their other goals of stabilizing farm income, preserving family farms, or enhancing rural communities. The unanticipated and unwanted result of decades of market pressures, supply management, and federal subsidy is that food production is concentrated in fewer and larger units while farm income has remained as volatile as ever. Cochrane worries that this increasing concentration of agricultural units (he hesitates to call them "farms" in the traditional sense) will lead to even more corporate control of food production and still less income security for the remaining half-million family farms. Add to that an emerging environmental critique that finds farmers' groundwater poisoned by nitrates, rivers all the way to the Mississippi delta damaged by nitrogen runoff, and topsoil continuing to erode.

Cochrane's solution, which he accurately calls "radical but not new," focuses on supporting family farms and enhancing the quality of the rural environment. The core of his vision is to convert current payments to farmers into "green payments" that would reward farm-

ers for adopting sustainable practices. This would require a revived research and extension effort dedicated to sustainable agriculture and federally supported marketing cooperatives to find markets for niche products. Additionally, Cochrane proposes an active antimonopoly division for agriculture in the Justice Department, a farm credit program that would allow family farms to restructure debt into long-term, low-interest loans, and a large grain reserve that would moderate price swings and provide humanitarian relief.

Cochrane acknowledges that these proposals are more responsive to social and environmental concerns than to political reality, but he argues persuasively that his ideas offer more hope than the alternatives. Free markets, even global markets, simply offer more of the same—fewer and fewer farms producing ever more food. Political solutions that continue cash payments to farmers only serve to benefit large producers at the expense of small and midsize farms. Cochrane's vision offers a dramatically different future that might be the only way to maintain a rural America that is socially and environmentally sustainable. In short, Cochrane makes a case that the visionary path has become the necessary one.

*Museum Administration: An Introduction*, by Hugh H. Genoways and Lynne M. Ireland. American Association for State and Local History Book Series. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2003. xi, 403 pp. References, index. \$80.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper.

Reviewer Timothy Glines is Manager of Outreach Services at the Minnesota Historical Society.

A book with the title *Museum Administration* may not make many best-seller lists, but this publication has much to offer. The book grew out of a class taught by Hugh Genoways and Lynne Ireland at the University of Nebraska and is aimed at those seeking careers or holding positions in museums. Why might readers of the *Annals of Iowa* find it useful? Because many are themselves active in local museums, and for those without training or previous experience, this book provides a comprehensive overview of important matters necessary for proper museum operation.

In 15 chapters the authors cover topics ranging from strategic planning, governance, and legal and ethical issues to personnel, facilities management, fundraising, marketing, collections management, and programming. Exercises and case studies allow readers to practice what they are learning.

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