

Success of the many farm cooperative activities, Lauck observes, "is a prime indicator that farmers were not always hapless victims of corporate power in the post-World War II years" (135).

Nevertheless, the inability of farmers to organize control of their production has continued to be a major problem. Thus, they have often turned to the federal government for help, especially during the most serious periods of distress, despite some farmers' reluctance to give up some of their "freedom" to the government. For the most part, government organization of farmers in competition with other groups and forces has been only partially successful.

Lauck is correct that the libertarian streak in farmers has countered organizational efforts on their behalf. But he does not go far enough with this line of analysis. For example, he does not ask why the cattle feeding industry was almost voluntarily abandoned in the Midwest, especially in Iowa, or why, in the face of monopoly forces in the marketplace and the skyrocketing cost of land, more farmers have not incorporated to make the intergenerational transfer of wealth easier and to reduce the costs of farming. These may be technical criticisms of a secondary nature. But when Lauck and other neo-Jeffersonians assume that rural people have some sort of monopoly on civic and personal virtue, readers may take offense and ignore this highly researched, well-argued call for a better antitrust policy in agriculture. Do ruralists really want to be identified as people who believe that just because someone runs a combine over the soil, they therefore know more about justice, honesty, the good, and the best way to run a republic and a democracy?

*Networking the Farm: The Social Structure of Cooperation and Competition in Iowa Agriculture*, by Randy Ziegenhorn. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1999. ix, 145 pp. Maps, tables, graphs, bibliography, index. \$69.95 cloth.

Reviewer Jon Lauck is a lawyer-with the Sioux Falls, South Dakota, firm of Davenport, Evans, Hurwitz & Smith. He earned a Ph.D. in history from the University of Iowa and is the author of *American Agriculture and the Problem of Monopoly: The Political Economy of Grain Belt Farming, 1953-1980* (2000).

Anthropologists, historically inclined to study places like Borneo and Bali, have recently been trying to figure out the American Midwest. Jane Adams examined agrarian life in southern Illinois in *The Transformation of Rural Life* (1994). Deborah Fink and Donald Stull have examined the impact of large-scale meatpacking on small midwestern towns, most recently in Fink's *Cutting into the Meatpacking Line* (1998), an account of an IBP packing plant in Perry, Iowa. And Yale anthro-

pologist Kathryn Marie Dudley has attempted to explode the myth of solidarity among farmers with her book, *Debt and Dispossession* (2000), about rural Minnesota.

Randy Ziegenhorn's book is the latest addition to this list. Ziegenhorn is particularly interested in economic anthropology, or an understanding of how culture and social tradition shape the behavior of economic actors. He is critical of neoclassical economics, which assumes that economic actors are free to maximize their utility, unhampered by social constraints. Ziegenhorn allies himself with the New Institutional Economists, who take seriously the role of institutions and social structures in explaining economic behavior. He also links his study to the long-standing debate in rural sociology over the work of Walter Goldschmidt, who argued in the 1940s that large-scale agriculture eroded rural communities and standards of living.

Ziegenhorn focuses on the nature of social cooperation in the midst of economic stress. Iowa hog production, at one time a small-scale enterprise in which most Iowa farms participated, "especially since most farmers saw hogs as low-risk mortgage-burners," has become a factory enterprise. The construction of large-scale hog confinement systems has transformed the structure of hog production and altered the Iowa landscape. In order to avoid being completely displaced by the industry, small hog producers have attempted to form what Ziegenhorn calls "networks," or cooperative efforts to produce and sell hogs on a larger scale, which allow them to bargain more effectively with large-scale agribusiness buyers.

Some networks succeed and others fail. The model envisioned by "Team Pork" from Iowa State University, which involved the organization of "progressive" farmers, failed because the participating farm operations were so different. But a model embraced by a small-town veterinarian succeeded because the operational needs of farms were similar, information that was available only to someone like a vet who regularly visits different farms. Such a position gave the vet a "structural advantage," in anthropological parlance, which allowed him to use his trusted social status and economic knowledge to foster a smooth negotiation process and resolve thorny questions such as debt levels, which many farmers did not like to discuss at public meetings. "The reason for this reticence was somewhat elusive," Ziegenhorn reports, "but seemed to lie in the direction of both not wanting to appear uncooperative or lacking in the 'guts' to undertake a risky venture—something of a combination of Midwestern politeness and male ego" (40). Such insights, coupled with a thorough review of the work of several disciplines on the subject, make the book a must read for those

interested in the workings of agriculture and the future direction of rural life. To listen in on the conversation anthropologists have started about the rural Midwest, start with Ziegenhorn.

*"I Was Content and Not Content": The Story of Linda Lord and the Closing of Penobscot Poultry*, by Cedric N. Chatterley and Alicia J. Rouverol, with Stephen A. Cole, with photographs by Cedric N. Chatterley and an essay by Carolyn Chute. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000. xxii, 134 pp. Illustrations, notes. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer Richard P. Horwitz is professor of American Studies at the University of Iowa. His most recent books are *Hog Ties: Pigs, Manure, and Mortality in American Culture* (1998) and *The American Studies Anthology* (2001).

This book brings together contributors who are in some obvious ways very different from each other—blue-collar and professional class, male and female, visual- and word-oriented, liberal and apolitical, social scientist and artist, old-timer and newcomer. But they are also remarkably alike in their longing for down-home, small-town ways. They are devoted to their families, sensitive to injustice, and prepared to be assertive when challenged. The challenge in this case is the closing of the Penobscot Poultry Company, the last (and at one time the most celebrated) of Maine's sites for turning chickens into meat and byproducts for far-flung consumers.

Cast as the tragic hero of this collaboration is Linda Lord, a seasoned veteran of the plant. About 1968, as friends and relatives went off to Vietnam, she went straight from high school to the dangerous, mind-numbing, dirty, stinking business of poultry disassembly. She worked her way up to the "blood tunnel," finishing off birds that were merely maimed rather than killed by the power-slasher—a den of horrors, if there ever was one. For the next twenty years she endured, earning just enough to get along and to take care of her aged, dependent parents. By all appearances, she was a diligent, devoted daughter and employee, even when work robbed her of so much. Among the casualties, for example, was sight in one eye, a loss for which Penobscot's insurers supposedly refused but were eventually compelled to compensate her. (We hear only Lord's side of the story.) And then in 1988 the plant closed, laying off all 400-plus employees. Imagine—how hard would it be? For a woman, 39 years of age, with sight in only one eye and experience tailored to an industry that just died in a beloved region buried in job seekers? Fact is, of course, no one should need to read a book on the subject to know the answer: "Very."

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