

Any Way You Cut It: Meat Processing and Small-Town America, edited by Donald D. Stull, Michael J. Broadway, and David Griffith. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995. xiv, 269 pp. Illustrations, graphs, maps, notes, index. \$35.00 cloth, \$17.95 paper.

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Iowans will welcome this book because it offers a wealth of historical facts upon which we can base intelligent decisions to guide the influx of industrial swine production and processing. Can scientific research affect policy to benefit the public? In documenting the political forces behind the historical slashing of wages, deterioration of working conditions, and increased injury rates that have accompanied the concentration of production of meat, poultry, and fish products in Iowa and the rest of the United States, this book poses a challenge. The people and communities of Iowa can and should use these facts to shape responses through our democratic institutions. Those who are interested in the history of Iowa should use that knowledge to wisely guide its future.

This research shows why these industries exacerbate rather than solve problems of rural poverty and underdevelopment. Federal and state governments responsible for ensuring the safety of workers, products, and environments fall prey to political pressures. The industries use international rotating labor forces that move quickly through communities as healthy workers replace injured ones who have not worked long enough to have health insurance. The turnover rate of workers is high to take advantage of wage subsidy programs offered as educational programs and avoid the costs of treating injured workers. The industries are environmentally irresponsible polluters. Because they subvert democratic political institutions by intimidation and money, they also pollute the political atmosphere at all levels of decision making with their power and influence.

This research proves that the optimistic economic forecasts of industry apologists, Chambers of Commerce, and state, county, and local development agencies are wrong. The industry does not promote economic growth: the jobs *bring* poverty; they do not alleviate it. Modelers ignore the costs: public subsidies through tax incentives, forgivable loans, health care costs for the workers in a dangerous industry made more so by production speed-ups, education for non-English-speaking students, welfare support for workers whose wages leave them in poverty, increased law enforcement, environmental pollution, and the social costs of destroying communities. The net result of the touted increased employment is more poverty, occupa-

tional injury, and community dismemberment. Workers and communities alike are the victims.

The multiplier effects the economic models claim will bring widespread prosperity actually results in even lower-paying service jobs than those in the factories, jobs that also rely on social service agencies for supplemental food, medical care, and basic needs for workers. By reducing competition, the industry oligopoly deflates prices for livestock. A negative multiplier effect the apologists' models do not incorporate is the disappearance of small producers and packers and their workers into the unemployed. This book shows the same process for communities across Kansas and Iowa. Even when communities knew of problems in advance and planned for these industries, the results were the same.

These industries have received additional subsidies from land grant colleges that do the research and develop the technologies and processes the industries rely on for fish and livestock production. As we have seen in Iowa, land grant institutions work with the industries to provide politically motivated justifications for them and promote the impression that their apologia are scientific. The research in this book documents the intimidation the industry uses to control its workers, the communities where they operate, policy makers, and researchers who attempt to conduct objective scientific work.

Iowa communities need to be vigilant to see the realities of who benefits from these developments and control and restrain them so that the costs are not transferred to those least able to pay them, those who receive no benefits—the communities and workers. The story of Storm Lake in this book shows that these processes have happened and continue to happen in Iowa.

The conclusion is that there is no useful reason to encourage a plant to locate in a community unless it offers long-term benefits to the resources that are already there—the local people and the environment. These industries do not.

None of these developments are natural or inevitable. They are all consequences of national, state, and local policies. There are alternatives. This book does not just criticize a powerful and polluting industry, it offers positive policy suggestions, many simple and well known, on how to control and contain the process. But they require political will and intelligent policy. We who live in Iowa and enjoy its rich resources must learn the lessons of this book. If we do not, we will pay the prices of neglect of our democratic political institutions, our communities, and our people that others have already paid in their regions.

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