

PUBLIC INDUSTRIES TO SAVE THE FARM: ARTHUR C. TOWNLEY'S 1933 PLAN FOR DIVERSIFYING THE RURAL ECONOMY

by

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Lean and intense, Arthur C. Townley hammered home his point to crowds throughout North Dakota during the Fall of 1933. "More than 30,000 families are in need in North Dakota," he declared, "and we can produce enough manufactured goods for everyone."¹ His powerful voice, undiminished in the decade since his speeches for the National Nonpartisan League had swayed audiences in many parts of the Plains, echoed as he propounded his plan for state-owned industries that would provide jobs and markets for the Depression-ridden people of the Flickertail State. His ideas reverberated across the state, creating an impact that reached as far as Washington, D. C. For a time he recaptured the Nonpartisan League and demonstrated the continuing appeal of public ownership as a remedy for economic distress in the agricultural hinterlands of the United States. More importantly, his challenge to the conceptual basis on which the Federal rural relief programs were constructed offered an alternative to the make-work programming of the "alphabet" agencies of the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration.

Arthur Charles Townley,² known primarily for his leadership of the National Nonpartisan League between 1915 and 1922, remains an enigmatic example of the charismatic 20th Century farm leader. A dreamer whose career included bonanza farming, oil well promotions, organizing for the Socialist Party, and frequent flings at politics, Townley moved from idea to idea and cause to cause during his long life. When he died in 1959 his fervent anti-Communist rhetoric left lawsuits; yet his most significant accomplishment was the creation of the Nonpartisan League,³ a farmers organization whose dominance of North Dakota built a visible legacy of State-owned enterprises, including a bank and a mill and elevator.

At the time he proposed to diversify the rural economy as a means of combatting the Depression, Townley's popularity in the plains had faded considerably from the high point a decade earlier during the League years. In 1930, for example, he had challenged Nonpartisan League Congressman James T. Sinclair in the primary election, but lost by a wide margin. The organization he had created in North Dakota had moved in large measure into the hands of William L. Langer,⁴ the man whose defection in 1920 had cost that state's branch dearly in public support and confidence; moreover, the National NFL had been dead since 1925. Still, many Midwesterners remembered Townley with fondness. In North Dakota, scene of his organization's birth and greatest success, these Leaguers lamented the turning away of the NFL from its original program of public ownership remedies for

rural economic problems.

Townley returned to North Dakota and the Nonpartisan League at a time of crisis for both. The state's people faced serious economic obstacles as a result of extremely low commodity prices. A wave of foreclosures brought by the inability of many small farmers to repay their debts had given rise to militant "defense" organizations such as the United Farmers League and the Farmers Holiday Association. Even the development and implementation of relief programs by the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration had not significantly altered the situation, and many state residents feared the loss of their farms, their homes, and their lives.⁵

The economic troubles of the early 1930's led directly to the resurgence of the North Dakota Nonpartisan League under the leadership of William L. Langer in the 1932 elections. Langer, promising to "clean house in Bismarck," became Governor and promptly slashed the state budget in half. His thoroughgoing use of patronage and flair for the spectacular quickly made his administration very controversial, even within his own political faction. Actions such as the May, 1933, embargo on grain shipments from North Dakota and the later moratorium on farm foreclosures gained him a large following among the voters. Increasing evidence, however, that he was more interested in his own political career than in expanding the NPL's original program of state industries alienated many "old-line" Leaguers both inside and outside his administration. These people welcomed Townley and his plan, and called the idea an extension of the original League's platform; the fear of splitting the NPL into openly-warring factions probably had much to do with Langer's support for Townley and the idea.

In essence, Townley's plan asked the loan of state and Federal monies to institute factories and processing plants. These worker-controlled cooperatives were to utilize the produce of North Dakota farms for the manufacture of food and clothing. Drawing workers from the state's population, the plants were to sell their products throughout the nation, using a system of scrip as the medium of exchange. The plan intended to stimulate the state economy. Less obviously, it aimed to reduce North Dakota's historic position of dependence on outside markets and sources of the manufactured necessities of life, and perhaps more importantly it tried to stem the trends toward larger farms and the migration of rural youth to urban areas. As one observer opined, "call it leather coats, shoes, socks, and a job!"⁶

From the time when Townley broached his ideas to a public audience in May, 1933, until it became an officially-drawn proposal, he continually refined and rephrased it. It initially appeared as a scheme for a national scrip to be used by farmers and workers in direct exchange of their products. The Des Moines, Iowa, meeting of the Farmers Holiday Association to which it was first proposed divided in regard to its merits, and it received very little further

consideration within the councils of that militant, cost of production-oriented organization.⁷ In August Townley brought the idea to North Dakota as a very generalized call for employee-controlled cooperative manufacturing plants financed "by the state to begin with." From that point until December when it was informally presented to President Franklin D. Roosevelt and officials of the Public Works Administration, the plan's outline steadily became clearer. Townley defined the types of concerns to be opened, naming tanneries, canneries, packing houses, woolen mills, shoe factories, and flour mills as the most feasible. The cost of instituting these operations diminished from a vague figure in the millions of dollars to five to ten million.⁸

This process of definition occurred in North Dakota during late 1933 and early 1934 and resulted from constant agitation by the irrepressible Townley. He began by driving from town to town in an automobile equipped with a loud-speaker, parking at a prominent location, and then using his undeniable powers of public speaking to attract a crowd.⁹ Within a month, the open-air meetings moved indoors to courtrooms and town halls, and the single speaker was joined by political luminaries ranging from his old friend Senator Lynn J. Frazier to a reluctant Governor Langer.¹⁰ The small crowds became excited audiences estimated in the hundreds, and eventually the organizational drive evolved into formal conventions that selected delegates to state-wide meetings. In mid-November, a conference at Bismarck formally adopted a resolution to the President and authorized Townley to set up eight regional meetings throughout North Dakota to consider and approve the call for Federal funding for what was dubbed the "North Dakota Industrial Plan," and to select a delegation to travel to Washington, D.C.¹¹

Townley relied heavily on his oratorical skills as his campaign progressed. Defining the problem in as succinct a way as possible, he responded to questions with combinations of sarcasm and explanation. At Garrison, for example, a listener inquired about the need to obtain money for the industries from Washington; Townley reacted bluntly: "If Washington is ready to furnish the Russians of Russia [with] money, why should it not furnish the Russians and Bolsheviks of North Dakota [with] money?" He defended the creation of industrial plants as a positive use of Federal money, saying that "Certainly there could be no more waste in building a packing plant for instance, even tho [sic] there might never be an animal brot [sic] to it, than there is at the present time with farmers with old teams, old harnesses, old wagons and in old clothes hauling clay up and down the roads." Winning press designation as the "Old Master," Townley derided Communist Party hecklers as impractical visionaries and convinced Nonpartisan Leaguers that he once again had an idea worth supporting.¹²

North Dakota opinion about the industrial plan of course varied, but in large measure most commentators merged the idea with the man who advocated it. Without exception, published opinion recalled

Townley's success during the first Nonpartisan League era and paid homage to his ability to organize people behind an idea. He, however, was a "ghost," "an almost heroically tragic figure" whose "silver tongue" had to overcome the "shaken confidence in his judgment and perhaps even his integrity." Others disagreed. One described Townley as the "abrupt, snappy, old-time boss of 1916-1922," and suggested that he should persist in his attempts to be elected to Congress.¹³

Townley's plan for industrializing North Dakota obtained both sharp denunciation and blunt support from the press. Those in favor pointed out that the idea was "useful," that the Federal government readily lent money to foreign nations, that decentralized industry was "entirely within keeping with the trend of the times." Invariably, however, these writers harkened to the similarity between the idea and the "original policies of the Nonpartisan League."¹⁴ Opponents thought the plan represented "a backward step" toward an "ancient handcraft civilization" being advocated by a "Lazarus," and a "political tattooed man." North Dakota's Communist Party, in particular, condemned the idea as unworkable and claimed it signified only a "diversionary tactic by a corrupt state administration" seeking to consolidate power in state government.¹⁵

As the public debate went on, Townley moved ahead with his campaign. The delegates met at Bismarck on December 4. They were joined by "several hundred" others, all of whom united in formally re-establishing the National Nonpartisan League and renaming Townley as President of the organization. Governor Langer spoke to the gathering and endorsed the "industrial plan;" however, he flatly rejected the use of any state funds for instigating the new industries. "We are trying to get out of debt," he said, "not go in further." The meeting adopted a resolution closely parallel to those passed at earlier regional meetings; in part, it called for Federal funding of "the only workable plan for permanent employment and relief of widespread distress." Townley announced that the delegation would leave for Washington on December 8.¹⁶

Arriving in Washington on December 13, the 44 person delegation presented the plan to Federal officials at the Department of the Treasury, the Public Works Administration, and the Department of the Interior. With the good offices of Senator Lynn J. Frazier opening doors for them, the delegates were treated receptively at every stop, and by the time they returned to North Dakota most expressed optimism about the success of their mission. Frazier arranged an audience with President Roosevelt for Townley on December 20; the NPL leader emerged from the brief meeting to report that the nation's chief executive had "accepted in principle" the ideas which were presented to him.¹⁷

Dissension, however, marred the optimistic reports. Governor Langer, who had arrived in Washington several days after the delegation, continued his opposition to use of state bonds as guarantees

for the start-up funding. In response, Townley allegedly threatened to make "an issue" of the disagreement and to carry it before the voters of North Dakota. He, however, remained in Washington until after Christmas to confer with Federal officials and "work out details" of the loan.¹⁸

In January, 1934, the formal application process began. Federal officials had asked that the State of North Dakota submit specific requests for the various aspects of the Industrial Plan. At a meeting at Bismarck on January 3, Governor Langer agreed to chair the effort, and Townley expressed complete optimism about the possibilities for success; "I am fully confident our petition will be granted," he said, "as soon as the details are worked out." He declared that financing for the start-up would come from 30-year Federal loans using the new industries as security.¹⁹

The proposal, developed during January, finally obtained formal presentation to Federal officials in February. On February 24, Townley and a small delegation consisting of North Dakotans and a group of supportive Minnesota residents again visited Washington, D.C. This time they brought the application as signed by Governor Langer; the document, according to Townley, contained the essence of the program of the revived National Nonpartisan League. It requested a Federal loan amounting to \$4,384,286 to finance four woolen mills to be located at Dickinson, Jamestown, Minot and Langdon, two central storage plants at Bismarck and Minot, one clothing manufacturing plant at Fargo, 51 produce storage facilities scattered around the state, one cannery in the Yellowstone River basin, two shoe factories, three tanneries, and one linseed mill. In addition, the application included funds for a lignite coal briquetting plant. The costs estimates ranged from \$28,900 for each grist mill to \$655,129 for the briquetting plant, and the start-up monies were requested to be paid during a phased, five-month period.²⁰

Though the industrial plan was included in the 1934 North Dakota Nonpartisan League platform adopted in March,²¹ it never reached the brick-and-mortar stage. Both political and economic reasons account for its death. On the one hand, refusal by the executive leadership of the state to allow issuance of bonds by the Bank of North Dakota for the amount of the loan request stymied favorable consideration on the Federal level.²² Federal relief officials, moreover, were committed to work relief, and the opposition of President Franklin D. Roosevelt to government financing of industrial operations put a major roadblock in the path of the plan. On the state level, the feud between Governor Langer and elements within the Nonpartisan League broke into the open during the Spring of 1934,²³ and their political battles pushed the industrial plan into the background. Langer himself was indicated for violations connected with his administration of Federal relief programs later that

Spring, but not until he had vanquished the competing faction within the NPL during the primary election campaign. The political struggles caused the demise of both the industrial plan and the National Non-partisan League. Nor did Townley's actions help; he returned to Minnesota that Spring and announced his candidacy for Congress from the 9th congressional district on the Farmer-Labor ticket.²⁴ Though his effective voice may not have saved the plan, his decision to leave North Dakota removed its most effective advocate.

The ignominious end of the North Dakota Industrial Plan relegates it to an undeserved obscurity. At the least it has significance for three reasons. First, the emergence of the North Dakota Industrial Plan evidences the continuing appeal of the idea of public ownership in the history of North Dakota. That Townley could return to North Dakota with such a scheme, rapidly acquire a base of support for it, and eventually extend it into the platform of a political organization indicates that the idea had reasonably broad acceptance.

Townley's plan, however, was flawed, and that fact mitigated its promulgation. As time and events proved, it depended upon support and encouragement by North Dakota's governing officials and upon favorable review by the Federal Public Works Administration. These crucial sources of assistance proved in large measure unreliable. Moreover, parts of the industrial plan were obscure and ill-considered. Some North Dakotans, for example, quickly recognized that development of state-owned industries required a trained and experienced labor pool that did not exist in North Dakota. The basic concept, in fact, depended upon the ability of rural workers to make the transition from farm to factory. The very immediacy of Townley's remedy allowed no time for the training period necessary to accomplish this crucial task. Moreover, markets for the products of these industries simply could not be found in North Dakota; as one writer noted, why would North Dakotans buy manufactured goods made in the state when they could, had they the money, buy better quality products from catalog houses?²⁵ Indeed, the output from one shoe factory undoubtedly would have quickly saturated the North Dakota market, thus forcing the plant's managers to look outside the state and to compete with national manufacturers and processors for a share of a depressed consumer dollar. Other industries would have faced the same problem.

Yet, these practical considerations did not detract from the appeal of Townley's remedy for the Depression in North Dakota and other rural regions. The state's leaders and its people recognized that an important reason for the Depression's severe impacts on North Dakota stemmed from the lack of diversification in the economy, and both government and private entities worked during the 1930's in a futile attempt to attract private investments to remedy that situation.²⁶ The reluctance of private capital to invest in North Dakota helped spur interest in public ownership and give impetus to Townley's campaign.

The industrial plan also incorporated an element of self-reliance that appealed to North Dakotans. In a state where cooperatives played a large economic role, many people viewed the use of public funds to create business enterprises as legitimate expenditures. Unfortunately, the need to rely on the Federal government for the seed money caused delays which emphasized the state's dependent economic position and likely diminished the plan's base of support.

The North Dakota Industrial Plan, secondly, demonstrated the changing role of Arthur C. Townley in state political life. By the early 1930's, Townley had to search for a way back to the pinnacle of political power and success that he once had known. That he retained the affection of many North Dakotans and other Midwesterners cannot be denied, and his ability to convince them of the validity of his ideas remained as good as ever. When he commenced his speaking campaign, he forced his old foe William Langer to deal at least sympathetically with him because he attracted enough political support to threaten the Governor's leadership of the Nonpartisan League. The shortlived re-creation of the National League reveals the compromise that the two men made with each other.

Langer, however, was canny enough to realize that his personal following would override any that Townley developed. The Governor's patronage ensured his primacy in North Dakota, and his refusal to permit the state to bond itself to finance the state industries spelled defeat for Townley's plan and those who supported it. The Federal agencies from which the seed money was asked quite rightly reacted negatively when the state itself would not gamble on the plan's possibilities for success. And Townley's charisma could not overcome Langer's power.

The relationship between Townley and Langer during the state industrial plan episode, in fact, leaves room for much speculation. Did the two men strike a deal that gave control of a revitalized national League to Townley and left North Dakota to Langer? Was Townley a stalking horse for Langer, intended to mollify the "left wing" within the divided NPL? Available documentary resources do not answer those questions, but the opportunistic careers of both men arouse suspicion that a deal was indeed made.

These considerations aside, the Townley industrial plan episode points out an element of American agricultural and New Deal history that has been largely ignored. Roosevelt administration farm policy during the 1930's followed a highly centralized, "trickle-down" concept of relief that concentrated both power and authority in Washington, D.C.²⁷ Townley's plan, conversely, called upon the Federal government to help a state initiate and develop a program. The two concepts represent dissimilar approaches to the problem of "getting agriculture back on its feet." Had the Townley idea been

implemented, control of a major relief program would have centered in Bismarck. This state-based attempt to counter the Depression surely would have enhanced the state's control of its own economic destiny. Federal relief, on the other hand, sent authority to Washington, a long term trend that changed the federal system's balance of power by focusing on national, rather than state-based, programs.

Historians of North Dakota and the Great Plains experience traditionally concentrate on the Federal role in relieving the effects of the Depression, and for that reason the many self-help ideas based upon state or cooperative ownership that were fostered during the period receive little attention.²⁸ Yet, these ideas are endemic to the philosophy of the Plains peoples and surface over and over again in the history of North Dakota and other states. Taken together, the concepts emphasize local control, keeping people on or close to the land, and creating a local market for farm produce that is owned and controlled cooperatively. Such ideas have largely been dismissed or ignored by American historians, and attempts to institutionalize state-based remedies for the decline of the small farm, such as Townley's industrial plan, have apparently been considered unprogressive and insignificant aberrations. Such history dismisses too lightly an important element of rural economic thought, one that is again finding an audience in the present day.²⁹

The Townley industrial plan should be considered a progressive attempt to preserve and liberate a rural economy and social system. Its implications reach far beyond the immediate political goals of 1933. The plan represented the continuing vitality of an alternative vision of the future for rural society and showed the lasting appeal of its author, a man often dismissed as a self-serving politician. Townley's idea of using public money to diversify the rural economy confronted a problem that still bedevils states whose economies remain based in agriculture. That it should have been proposed by the man who made public industries a part of North Dakota life fits well the legacy that he left to the northern plains.

NOTES

¹Minot Daily News, November 6, 1933, p. 3.

²Arthur Charles Townley (1880-1959) has not yet received more than sketchy biographical treatment. For general information, see his obituary in the Minot Daily News, November 9, 1959, p. 1; a generally accurate sketch comprises part of Larry Remele, "Power for the People: The Nonpartisan League," in The North Dakota Political Tradition. North Dakota Centennial Heritage Series, Volume I (Fargo: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1981).

³Many accounts cover the first Nonpartisan League era in North Dakota and the other states where it was active. The best-known is Robert Loren Morlan, Political Prairie Fire: The National Nonpartisan League, 1915-1922 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955).

⁴William L. Langer (1886-1959) is perhaps the most well-known of any political figure in North Dakota history. He served as Attorney-General from 1917-1921, Governor from 1933-34 and 1937-38, and United States Senator from 1941-59. He led and dominated the so-called "second" Nonpartisan League in North Dakota, an organization he built after 1928 with his own efforts and funds. For biographical information see Glenn H. Smith, Langer of North Dakota: A Study in Isolationism, 1940-1959 (New York: Garland Press, 1979). A popular biography is Agnes Geelan, The Dakota Maverick: the political life of William Langer, also known as "Wild Bill" Langer (Fargo, N.D.: the author, 1975).

⁵Discussions of the economic impact of the Great Depression on North Dakota may be found in D. Jerome Tweton and Daniel Rylance, Years of Despair: The Depression in North Dakota (Grand Forks, N.D.: Oxcart Press, 1974), and Elwyn B. Robinson, History of North Dakota (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), pp. 396-419. Militant reaction to the economic conditions are discussed in Larry Remele, "The North Dakota Farm Strike of 1932," North Dakota History, 41-4 (Fall, 1974), pp. 4-19.

⁶The quotation is taken from the Stanley Sun, November 30, 1933, p. 2.

⁷An account of the Farmers Holiday Association meeting at Des Moines, Iowa, where Townley first spoke about his plan appears in the Farm Holiday News (St. Paul, Minnesota), April, 1933, pp. 1,3; the issue was obviously published in May because it contains information about events occurring after its ostensible date.

⁸Accounts of Townley's speaking campaign to arouse interest in his proposals appear in North Dakota newspapers after August, 1933.

If read in chronological order, they reveal the growing precision in his discussions. See the Williston Williams County Farmers Press, August 31, 1933, p. 1; Stanley Sun, September 21, 1933, p. 1; Garrison McLean County Independent, November 16, 1933, p. 1; Minot Daily News, November 21, 1933, p. 3; Bismarck Leader, December 7, 1933, p. 1.

⁹Townley's agitational methods are noted in the Williston Williams County Farmers Press, August 31, 1933, p. 1; Garrison McLean County Independent, September 21, 1933, p. 1.

¹⁰For example of the billings for the various meetings, see Williston Williams County Farmers Press, October 26, 1933, p. 1; Minot Daily News, November 2, 1933, p. 1; Garrison McLean County Independent, November 16, 1933, p. 3. The latter bill is a full-page advertisement for a mass meeting about the subject, "Why Starve and Freeze in the Midst of Plenty," and lists Townley, Frazier, and Langer as the principle orators. The Governor's reluctance is revealed in the correspondence that survives in which he speaks about his role in the meetings; for example, on November 20, 1933, he wrote to H.A. Peters of McClusky, North Dakota, that "I finally gave my half-hearted consent to appear at just a few of the meetings;" two days later, he explained to R.R. Robinson of Washburn, North Dakota that "While I was advertised to speak with Townley, I appeared with him only at a couple of meetings." Both letters are in the Langer Papers filed at the Orin G. Libby Manuscript Collection at the University of North Dakota at Grand Forks.

¹¹Accounts of the Bismarck conference appear in most North Dakota newspapers for the week of November 16. See the Bismarck Leader, November 23, 1933, p. 1; Minot Daily News, November 25, 1933, p. 1. A good report of one of the eight regional meetings is published in the Minot Daily News, November 27, 1933, p. 1.

¹²The quotes, respectively, are taken from the Garrison McLean County Independent, November 16, 1933, p. 1; Minot Daily News, November 27, 1933, p. 1; Williston Herald, November 30, 1933, p. 2.

¹³See editorials in the Stanley Sun, September 7, 1933, p. 4 (reprinted from the Aneta Panorama); Williston Williams County Farmers Press, November 9, 1933, p. 2; Garrison McLean County Independent, November 16, 1933, p. 8.

¹⁴Two excellent examples of this positive editorial reaction are published in the Stanley Sun, November 30, 1933, p. 2.

¹⁵Williston Herald, November 30, December 7, 1933, both p. 8; Plentywood (Montana) Producers News, January 26, 1934, p. 4.

¹⁶Bismarck Leader, December 7, 1933, pp. 1, 8. Accounts of

this meeting appear in most North Dakota newspapers for this week.

¹⁷Every North Dakota daily paper carries accounts of the progress of the delegation during the week of December 13-20, 1933. Lengthy Associated Press wire stories appear in the Fargo Forum, Bismarck Tribune and other papers. The bulk of the delegation left Washington on December 18.

The report of Townley and Frazier's meeting with President Roosevelt appeared in North Dakota papers on December 20 and 21, 1933. A lengthy account by a member of the delegation of the trip was written by Ole Stray and published in the Stanley Sun, December 28, 1933, p. 1.

¹⁸Minot Daily News, December 20, 1933, pp. 1, 7; Williston Herald, December 21, 1933, p. 1; Stanley Sun, December 21, 1933, p. 1.

¹⁹Quote from the Bismarck Leader, December 28, 1933, p. 1; Garrison McLean County Independent, December 28, 1933, p. 1; Minot Daily News, January 5, 1934, p. 7; January 6, 1934, p. 2; Bismarck Leader, January 11, 1934, p. 1.

²⁰Stanley Sun, February 8, March 1, 1934, both p. 1.

²¹Bismarck Leader, March 15, 1934, p. 2.

²²That Federal relief officials had requested state bonds as a prerequisite to any loans had been reported as early as December 19, 1933. See the Minot Daily News for that date.

²³The dissention within the Nonpartisan League provided editorial writers with fodder for speculation during early 1934. See the Williston Williams County Farmers Press, January 11, 1934, p. 2, for an example. The split led to two separate NPL conventions in March; the endorsees of these conventions confronted each other in the June, 1934, primary, and the Langer ticket vanquished those supported by the League's state executive committee. For discussion of the split, see Glenn H. Smith, Langer of North Dakota, pp. 23-30.

²⁴Townley's endorsement is noted in the Bismarck Leader, March 15, 1934, p. 5, as well as most other North Dakota newspapers.

²⁵Letter from H. A. Peters to Frank Vogel, November 20, 1933 (University of North Dakota, Orin G. Libby Manuscript Collection, Langer Papers). Other letters in this collection comment unfavorably about the financing of the plan and its author; only two express support for the idea.

²⁶Governor Langer and the Greater North Dakota Association

embarked during the Fall of 1933 on a campaign to attract private investment to North Dakota through use of radio broadcasts and newspaper "informational" materials. Publicity about the campaign appears in most state newspapers for late September. See the Bismarck Leader, September 28, 1933, p. 1, for a press release that was printed in a number of other papers.

²⁷Scholars have spent many words of description about North Dakota during the Depression, the Roosevelt administration, and various relief agencies and plans, but few, if any, consider the alternative solutions offered to the problems of agriculture by leaders such as Arthur C. Townley. For North Dakota history during this era, Elwyn B. Robinson, History of North Dakota (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), pp. 396-419; Robert P. and Wynono H. Wilkins, North Dakota: A History (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), pp. 101-105, 115-118; Glenn H. Smith, Langer of North Dakota: A Study in Isolationism, 1940-1959 (New York: Garland Publishing Co., 1979), pp. 23-32; none of these works mention the Townley plan. Standard histories of the FDR administration also say little or nothing about such ideas; see, for example, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Roosevelt. Vol. II: The Coming of the New Deal (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1958); William E. Leuchtenberg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Coming of the New Deal, 1932-1940 (New York: Harper and Row, 1963); Raymond Moley, The First New Deal (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966). Finally, historians writing about relief agencies or militant farm organizations also say little about state-based relief plans; see Donald R. McCoy, Angry Voices: Left of Center Politics During the New Deal Era (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1958); Richard S. Kirkendall, Social Scientists and Farm Politics in the Age of Roosevelt (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1966); Theodore Saloutos and John D. Hicks, Twentieth Century Populism: Agricultural Discontent in the Middle West, 1900-1939 (Lincoln: Bison Books, 1951); William D. Rowley, M. L. Wilson and the Campaign for the Domestic Allotment (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970); Edward L. and Frederick H. Schapsmeier, Henry A. Wallace of Iowa: The Agrarian Years, 1910-1940 (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1968).

²⁸See discussions of the Depression in North Dakota noted in #5.

²⁹See, for example, the recent work of Wendell Berry and economist E.F. Schumacher. A particularly cogent statement of the problems faced by many historians concerned with agrarian movements is Lawrence Goodwyn, "The Cooperative Commonwealth and other Abstractions: In Search of a Democratic Premise," Marxist Perspectives, 3-2 (Summer, 1980), pp. 8-42.