

11.3 Co-operation in rural society, IV

Room 107

Convener and chair: András Vári

11.31 Debra Reid – The National Federation of Colored Farmers: constructing self-segregated networks during the 1930s

Seventy years ago John Hope II began his article, ‘Rochdale Co-operation Among Negroes’⁵ with the claim that the co-operative movement was ‘beginning to take root in the thinking Negroes ... both rural and urban’.⁶ He included the National Federation of Colored Farmers, Inc. (NFCF) as a model because its ‘co-operative philosophy and technique among Negro farmers and particularly sharecroppers’⁷ made it distinctive from other rural co-operatives. Administrators included several Tuskegee-educated wholesale grocers, lawyers, and engineers who saw the potential to link black farmers with urban markets directly. The NFCF established local branches in areas with the highest population densities of black farmers in the United States, specifically in counties bordering the Mississippi River in Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee and Mississippi. Through such grassroots organizing, annual conventions, and its regular newspaper, *The Modern Farmer*, the NFCF spread its purpose of economic reform based in direct marketing to urban buyers.

The organisation grew during the Great Depression and peaked during the mid-1930s. The NFCF allied mostly with black landowners and cash renters, not sharecroppers. These families had operated outside the domination of white landlords since they had acquired land as early as 1865. Even small patches made it possible for black farmers to grow watermelons or sweet corn or other commodities and explore marketing options with the local NFCF branch. The NFCF built its reputation on the separatist foundation that defined black farm community development. It de-emphasised governmental aid, particularly intervention in the form of rights protection. Segregationist whites could generally live with economic self-improvement. Such engagement in larger economic networks benefitted local farming communities without threatening the racialised status quo.

Debra A. Reid is professor of history at Eastern Illinois University and adjunct professor in the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences at the University of Illinois – Champaign-Urbana. Publications include *Reaping a Greater Harvest: African Americans, the Extension Service and Rural Reform in Jim Crow Texas* (2007) which received the T. R. Fehrenbach Award from the Texas Historical Commission and *Seeking Inalienable Rights: Texans and Their Quests for Justice* (2009). She co-edited a collection of essays with Evan P. Bennett, entitled ‘Beyond Forty Acres and a Mule: African American Farmers Since Reconstruction,’ under review at University Press of Florida.

11.32 Frederik Eriksson – Co-operatives, corporatism and politics: agrarian organisations and the Swedish Right during the 1940s

In 1942, during World War II, the most comprehensive agricultural commission was appointed. The purpose was to investigate the pricing of agricultural products during the war, and also to investigate how to organise agriculture after the war. It has been called the Magna Charta of Swedish agricultural policy. The commission consisted of 27 members and all belonged to different organisations (agrarian co-operatives, other agrarian organisations, consumer co-operation, trade unions, industry etc). This paper focuses on the workings of organisations within agricultural commission and to what extent one can talk about organisational networks within the political

⁵ *Phylon* 1, no. 1 (1940)

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

sphere. Previous research has shown strong links between the trade unions and the Social Democracy, and also between business and the right-wing parties. But we know less about how agrarian co-operatives and organisations functioned within the political sphere. The purpose of the presentation is to investigate the roots of organisational influence in agricultural politics through tracing the ideology of the Swedish co-operative movement in the late nineteenth century. An equally important part of the presentation is to define the relations between the co-operative movement and the political parties in Sweden.

Fredrik Eriksson (b.1971) has an MA in History and Political Science from Södertörn University, 1998 and a PhD in History from Stockholm University, 2004. He is Lecturer at the Institute of Contemporary History, Södertörn University. His publications include ‘Modernity, Rationality and Citizenship: Swedish Agrarian Organizations as Seen Through the Lens of the Agrarian Press, circa 1880–1917’, in Wawrzenuk, Piotr (ed.), *Societal Change and Ideological Formation Among the Rural Population of the Baltic Area 1880–1939* (2008); ‘The Problematic Freedom of Information Principle – the Swedish Experience’ with Kjell Östberg, in Flinn, Andrew & Jones, Harriet (eds.), *Freedom of Information. Open Access, Empty Archives?* (2009) and ‘The Mirror of Agrarian Modernity. Agrarian Press in Estonia, Galicia and Sweden 1890–1917’ with Johan Eellend and Piotr Wawrzenuk in *Jahrbuch für Geschichte des ländlichen Raumes* (forthcoming).

11.33 Johan Eellend – The seeds of the nation: rural co-operatives and the formation of an agrarian ideology in Estonia at the turn of the twentieth century

The presentation will examine the ideas and political practices produced in the emerging rural public sphere in Estonia during late Tsarist times. The time period is characterised by the emergence of a class of independent farmers on the Estonian countryside and growing national and political self-consciousness. An underlying aim is to study the emergence and character of an agrarian ideology in Estonia, with a special concern paid for ideas on an alternative agrarian path to modernity and the organisation of society.

Through studying the content and the advice on modernisation and organisation of farm work, in Estonian language agricultural instructions, the underlying ideas on the organisation of the rural society become uncovered. These ideas are then studied in practice through the emerging network of work of local agricultural associations, on the local level, and the Agricultural Congresses 1899 and 1905 and the All-Estonian Congress 1905 on a national level. A special attention is paid to the work practices of the agrarian co-operative movement, which grew strong in Estonia after 1905.

The study emphasises the importance of the rural sphere in creating the foundation for the inter-war Estonian society and shows significant ideological and organisational similarities between the Estonian agrarian movement and contemporary agrarian movements in Europe.

Johan Eellend (b.1971) has an MA in Peace and Conflict Studies and East European Studies from Uppsala University 2000, and an MA in History and Political Science, 2001, and a PhD in History, 2007, both from Stockholm University. He is Lecturer at the Institute of Contemporary History, Södertörn University College. His doctoral dissertation was on *Cultivating the Rural Citizen: Modernity, Agrarianism and Citizenship in Late Tsarist Estonia* (2007) and his publications include ‘Agrarianism – a third way to modernity in inter war East Europe’ in Piotr Wawrzenuk (ed) *Societal Change and Ideological Formation Among Rural Population of the Baltic Area 1880-1939* (2008); ‘Estonian Latvian relations’ and ‘Finnish Estonian relations’, in *Cross-border Co-operation in the Baltic Sea area: an Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats* (Council of Europe: Istituto di Sociologia Internazionale di Gorizia, 2009); to be published in 2010 are ‘Agrarianism and Corporativism in the Baltic Sea Area 1900–1940’ *Jahrbuch für Geschichte des ländlichen Raumes*; ‘The Mirror of Agrarian Modernity’ with Fredrik L. Eriksson in *Jahrbuch für Geschichte des ländlichen Raumes*; *From Peasants to Citizens Agrarian Citizenship, Modernity and Co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region 1890 – 1939* with Fredrik L Eriksson, Anu-Mai Köll, Piotr Wawrzenuk and Ann-Catrine Östman.