

**BUILDING A BETTER HOME  
TOWN; A PROGRAM  
OF COMMUNITY SELF-  
ANALYSIS AND SELF-HELP**

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Building a better home town; a program of community self-analysis and self-help by H. Clay  
Tate

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## **Building a Better Home Town .**

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## INTRODUCTION

by Baker Brownell, Supervising Editor

LIKE many other newspapermen, H. Clay Tate seems to have a native resistance to writing books. Presumably, book writing is too high-falutin', theoretical, or academic to appeal to an operating editor. I feel, therefore, that I did well in wearing down that resistance over a period of six years and at last extracting from him this book. As a matter of fact, the book is based on deeds, not proposals. It is essentially a newspaperman's report—and a statesman's—on a project in community stabilization and enrichment in which Mr. Tate, the Bloomington (Illinois) *Daily Pantagraph*, of which he is editor, Alvin Anderson of the University of Illinois, and others took the lead.

Can a big-brother community—in this case Bloomington—live in constructive harmony with little-brother communities? Can it add strength and service to their existence and receive strength and support from them in turn without undermining their economy and culture and destroying their identity as small communities? The survival of these small communities alongside of the larger one is central in Mr. Tate's vision. The importance of their continuity, influence, and way of life is the gist of his message. He rejects the urban patterns of anonymous, mass culture that tend to dominate modern times.

This is a radical idea in the best sense; it is deep rooted. In the outstanding success of his community cooperation project it is quietly revolutionary. What town of forty thousand or more accepts as its destiny anything other than the aggressive capture of its neighboring small communities, the absorption of their business houses, their schools, transportation agencies, their hospitals, churches, and indeed their population? Such a town is rare indeed. The larger town usually sucks dry, as if it were a great tick, the blood and life of its smaller neighbors.

But Bloomington is different. Mr. Tate's evangelism has paid off. Both Bloomington and the little towns around it have come to see the advantage in mutual development and the distribution of many general functions among the several members of the cluster. Instead of being suppressed or duplicated unnecessarily, these functions are parceled out to the community advantage of all. In this cluster of communities efficient services are thus possible without the sacrifice of the primary character and intimacy of each group.

Mr. Tate comes from a little town in southern Illinois. He too, as he says in this book, was drained out of his home community, a part of the general erosion of American small communities and rural life. He turned out to be a stubborn migrant, however, and when precipitated in central Illinois he became through the years an important influence in building a firmer community life and democracy in that magnificent region. Along with people such as Arthur E. Morgan, Harry Schacter, the Ogdens, Richard W. Poston, Luigi Ligutti, Granville Hicks, Irwin Sanders, Howard McClusky, John Barton, and Stanley Hamilton, he is a member of that increasingly significant group in America concerned in the rebuilding of our small communities. It is probably the most critical problem of the time.