

**THE FOOD CRISIS
AND
AMERICANISM**

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The Food Crisis and Americanism by William Stull

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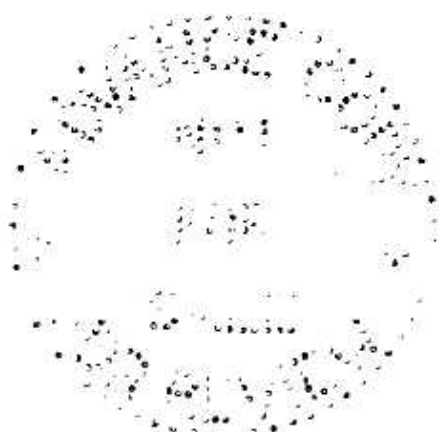
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WILLIAM STULL

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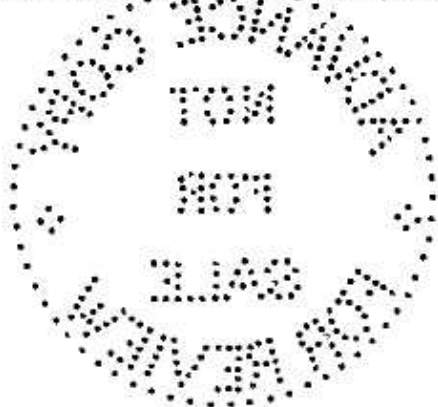
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FOREWORD

"When one aims at an error there be those who cry out, 'He is trying to bring down truth.'"

I realize that when one states facts that run counter to prejudices or preconceived notions, he is likely to be characterized as academic, inexperienced, impractical or visionary. Hence, not to interest the reader in my personality, but as "a reason for the faith that is in me," I will indulge in a bit of apparent egotism.

I was born on a prairie farm, where as a manual laborer I worked for my father until twenty-one years of age. Later, after working my way for four years in one of the best Agricultural Universities, specializing in mathematics and agricultural chemistry, ill health compelled me to abandon all thought of literary or scientific pursuits. So for more than forty years I have been actively engaged in the farm mortgage business.

By accident, my first employer was the state agent for Illinois of the Equitable Loan & Trust Company of New London, Connecticut — the first company incorporated to do a farm mortgage business; at least the first to enter into active operation. That company failed, and it is a significant fact that practically all other companies incorporated for that purpose, prior to 1896, failed. Must there not be some inherent weakness in an industry, in which, after giving the

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heart of its assets as security to voluntary creditors, those creditors fail?

The effects of the panic of 1873 upon agriculture were not seriously felt throughout the Central West until 1878 and 1879. During that period, it devolved upon me to take charge of the foreclosed lands belonging to my employers and their clients — see that they were rented, rents collected, taxes paid, and lands sold.

Again, between 1893 and 1896, nearly 95 per cent. of my competitors failed or went out of business, and at the urgent request of my clients I took charge of millions in mortgages which had been made by those now defunct concerns. A great many of these mortgages were, of course, foreclosed, and as a result, for nearly ten years, I had the control and management of from 100,000 to 150,000 acres of farm lands scattered through four of the best agricultural States. As these lands were owned by a very large number of individuals and corporations, a strict account was kept with each tract. None of these tracts paid current interest on its costs. Poor farming! So I thought until on investigation it transpired that the increased mortgage indebtedness on surrounding farms was greater than the shortage of my farming operations. This experience, coupled with my early labors on the farm, gave me, I think it will be admitted, an opportunity to study the farmer and his problems enjoyed by few during the last fifty years. The result was not in keeping with what I had hopefully anticipated. Pleasing fancies were dispelled by unpleasant facts — truth sometimes seems a cruel thing.

Agriculture is the basic industry of our nation. It

engages at least one-third of the population. It should receive more serious consideration than any other industry; both in and out of Congress it receives less. Every other civilized country has, during the last sixty years, bettered its agricultural conditions and enormously increased its yield per acre of cereals. We have not done so to any appreciable extent. For fourteen years prior to the beginning of this war, the average wheat yield per acre of France was approximately 36 per cent. above ours; that of Germany, 107 per cent. above; and that of England, 124 per cent. above. (See 1914 Year Book.) Had our 1917 wheat yield per acre been on a parity with those countries, we could have sent to the Allies an amount of wheat equal to our entire yield for that year, and have had a superabundance for home consumption. No national economic policy is sound, nor can it long endure, that fails to give due consideration to this, our great creative class, nor in whose counsels the farmer's voice is not heard.

For nearly three years the American people rejected all evidence as to the sinister and brutal motives of Kaiserism, accepting instead fairy tales, spun by the pacifists, to show that the brotherhood of man was established on earth, and that war could come no more. In blood and money we are paying the penalty of our unbelief. It is as dangerously unwise to reject a truth because it is disagreeable as to cherish an error because "beautiful, if true." People who do the one usually do the other.

Should the American people refuse to recognize in the trend of events certain economic, socialistic, if not

anarchistic tendencies? These must be met. Delays are dangerous.

In this book, I have tried to give the results of my observation and experience. If errors have crept into the work, I regret it, and shall be glad to have my attention called to them. I have endeavored conservatively and accurately to tell the truth.

WILLIAM STULL.

Omaha, July, 1918.

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