fundamental field for the broadest kind of coöperation. This program will crystallize into legislation. What shall be the nature of this legislation?

To be of service in this foregathering situation, the American Association for Agricultural Legislation is founded. It has good precedent in the American Association for Labor Legislation, which for a series of years has accomplished much progress for the protection, insurance and welfare of the industrial workers. Yet the field of the new Association is distinct, its methods are to be determined, and its purposes are still to be presented to the public. In many lines of agricultural legislation, we have not yet developed a consistent polity nor have we sufficient knowledge to enable us to assume a positive program. The basic principles are yet largely to be established. Under such conditions, partisan and prejudiced legislation, founded largely on discontent, is likely to sweep over the country.

The Association was organized two years ago. I trust it is auspicious that its nativity was in the city of brotherly love. I was not one of its founders, not even a godfather: therefore may I speak impartially and with personal rather than organizational conviction. The official aims of the Association have been published in an excellent statement by the Secretary. With this statement I am in full accord, but I can not make a President's address merely by repeating the explanation of the Secretary, who, by the way, is the executive officer of the Association. Therefore I appealed to the members, asking each one what is his conception of the field and what is the work the Association should undertake. In the inquiry, I stated that in my presidential address, "I shall outline the purposes of the Association, in the endeavor to crystallize the expectations of the membership and to inform the public."

About one-third of the members replied, many of them at considerable length. This I consider to be a liberal proportion of responses to a circular letter, indicating that large numbers of the members are conscious of their membership. After reading these many letters I am happy to disagree with a few of them, and to my purposes to crystallize the expectations of the membership and to inform the public I shall add another,—to inform the membership.

It is to be understood, as I have indicated, that I make a personal statement for which the Association is in no way responsible. The statement represents a point of view on the rural situation: certainly there should be a point of view before there is legislation. I shall repeat some of the suggestions under different captions, in order that we may see the subjects from several sides.

THE BASIS OF THE ASSOCIATION

The Secretary's pronouncement says of the Association: "Its purpose is to be the farmer's research organization." Its aim is to afford a "scientific preparation for sound agricultural legislation," "to work out problems of legislation and to help lay a sound
foundation for farmers' movements." This statement is commendable. We need such an organization. We must consider, therefore, the situation, the reasons for its existence, and the plan of operation.

If we are to have investigations of subjects likely to eventuate into enacted law, we must arrive at a philosophy of agriculture and rural life, and the investigators must be trained persons in the broadest sense. We must combine the historical and scientific methods, and be capable to express ourselves in legal form.

The Association should stand for the welfare of the farmer in the interest of society. The farmer transmutes the raw elements of the earth into materials of food and clothing. If the receipts from these materials are too small, he is obliged to live on the capital of nature,—to mine his potash and phosphorus and to sell it. This has been the case in the long history of civilization. Empires have weakened because of depletion of land. Just now the farmer begins to receive reward for his own labor and to be able to improve the fertility of the farm. Very cheap food rests on land robbery. The farmer must be able to maintain a standard of living equal to that of other men; anything less than this means an ignorant yeomanry, impoverished soil, and headlong haste on the road to ruin.

Any constitution of trade that allows unnatural and unjust profits to accrue to the handler of produce to the hurt of the producer, also reacts eventually on the land. Society cannot afford to have the farmer deprived of his just reward.

To meet the situation, therefore, the Association should conceive of agriculture not only on the side of production but also in its broad welfare relations, and in terms of present problems. Probably we do not need additional agencies to consider production, economics, and publicity, in these connections. The membership should be large among the tillers of the soil, and also among consumers and business men actively interested in agricultural questions. When once under way, the finances should come from the actual participating membership.

The investigators should have real experience of agriculture. All agriculture and country life is founded on farming, on plain every-day farming. We are to beware of the office point of view. Even though we do not legislate on the occupation, we must know what it is possible to do and what it is not possible to do and how the farmer himself reacts to a situation that a law may create. We must also know how the consumer reacts. The first undertaking is to rediscover for ourselves the common phenomena of nature; the second is to save ourselves the trouble of legislating against natural and economic facts.

The statement of the Secretary assumes that legislation is capable of scientific analysis. It assumes that the making of laws is
to rest on positive knowledge gained by investigation rather than on solicitation and influence. Politics, even government, may be partisan; legislation, existing for the public good, should be unpartisan. It should be deliberate. We should know before we legislate. There should be a given body of men and women, designated in an organization, to which one may go for facts and reasons, and for advice founded on facts rather than on sky-blue opinion.

The Association can be of little service unless it knows what is needed in the way of agricultural legislation. It must be ready to act on these needs.

Therefore, we should have an educational agency of guidance, which shall encourage the study of problems affecting agriculture and rural life that are capable of remedy and improvement by means of legislation. It should stimulate an inquiring mind on the part of farmers. It should cooperate with all other agencies interested in rural welfare and duplicate none, granting to every other group or class its right to express itself as it will. It should be non-official and non-bureaucratic. Of course it should recognize and aid the work of governmental agencies that originate legislation, remembering that such agencies are often handicapped in interpreting results of investigations in terms of public policies. It will be broader than the field of economics, and therefore ought not to contest with the several organizations now before the public: it will deal with education, social questions, governmental functions, police control, public health and sanitation, transferrence of the world's foodstuffs, and the general welfare as it is expressed in the legal aspects of the rural situation. To start with, the Association is conceived in the broadest public spirit, and it is capable of becoming a recognized clearing-house on agricultural legislation.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Having stated the main affirmative basis of the American Association for Agricultural Legislation, we may put some of the other positive facts in negative form. Thereby we may contradict some of the misconceptions and allay the fears of certain of our friends.

I wish at once to state that the Association is not a class organization. Agricultural legislation is its subject, but the welfare of the whole people is its prospect. We wish to encourage, benefit and improve farming and to deepen country life; we want to help the farmer; but we do not want to prosecute these objects against the welfare of the other ranges of the population, or even independently of them.

If we hold that the rural situation is at the bottom of public welfare because it lies against the planet, so must we be ready to accept and to encourage movements that originate with farmers, as with other parts of the population; but we shall accept them because they are needful and good, not because we stand for farmers