Iowa, a critical travelogue

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TRAVELING, in addition to being a pleasant and instructive experience, has other distinct advantages such as satisfying natural curiosity or giving one the privilege to ask, "Have you ever been to . . . .?", or, "Are you going back to . . . .?". If the latter question was asked of a person of college graduate age after he has been through Iowa, the answer would be a definite "No". It is highly improbable that any ambitious young person would ever want to re-visit this occupational vacuum again unless he was going to farm or was planning to work in his father's overall factory.

Actually, the discomforts of inadequate roads and the traffic of egocentric residents is secondary in forming an opinion of the State. Iowa implies more than it shows, no matter if it be promise for the future or after-sightedness for the past. The traveler may be encouraged temporarily when along the highway he sees signs promising a three step improvement program, but this encouragement soon changes into utter depression when he passes through the Iowa town. In a word, he is faced with sterility.

Iowa is, indeed, an occupational vacuum. The Iowa State graduate wants primarily to have the promises of industry answered with opportunity in return for his degree. He finds this exceedingly difficult in Iowa, and 80% turn and dejectedly leave for the proverbial "greener" pastures.

Leaving the graduate problem for a while, it will be wise to see just what other problems exist. Iowa has the distinction of being in the top 10% personal tax bracket in the nation and in the lower 20% bracket concerning per capital income. There is a population decrease every year. The emigrants are not only those of college age, but those of high school age who can't even find jobs on farms.
Industry is the answer. It is simple economics to see why industry would alleviate the problems now faced. Corporate taxes will lessen the burden on the individual. With more income for individuals through industry, the State will be generally more prosperous. How obvious all of this is, but the only disadvantage would be that it would take work and planning, the two natural resources that Iowa is short of.

The legislature, as it were, must face the fact that this is a capitalistic society and in order to survive the agrarian policy must be supplemented with an industrial one.

The people of Mississippi were faced with this same situation; they put their far-sightedness to work and devised a plan by which they could balance the two forced of industry and agriculture. The plan is called Balance Agriculture With Industry or BAWI. It is working nicely for the general betterment of the population. New schools, hospitals and libraries have resulted because of the venture. The State sends out representatives to visit corporations in the highly populated industrial regions, to sell Mississippi. When a corporation agrees to move to a town in Mississippi, the town sells bonds to finance a building for the corporation. Such a project takes work and vision and pays off with the dividends of progress. Arkansas is in the planning stages of such a program under the direction of Winthrop Rockefeller.

Meanwhile, the world slowly goes by, as the Iowan sleeps in his moribund state of tranquility. The problem has been defined, the solution is obvious, but his ears are oblivious to words like "progress". The conservatism of his farmer forefathers is ever present to silence the machinery of advancement.

It has been said that for the wisdom of the older generation to be effective it must be given impetus by the younger. It is no wonder then why Iowa is such a conservative State with such a large deficit of young minds. The ambitious Iowa State graduate is angry because he has to leave the state he has been educated in.

—Dave McCunn, Sci. Sr.