Two events to explore the question . . .
What is a land grant university?

Informal Community Discussion
5:45 p.m., Wednesday, October 14, Orono High School

Pizza to be provided for participants by the UMaine Humanities Center.

The four very short readings listed below will get us started.

1) Hervey Sylvester, "Agricultural School," *Maine Farmer* (June 27, 1850), 1 pp.

2) Booker T. Washington, "The Struggle for an Education," chapter three in Up from Slavery (orig. 1901), 9 pp.

3) Foreword and Preface to Jim Hightower, Hard Tomatoes, Hard Times . . . the Failure of America's Land Grant College Complex (1973), 6 pp.

4) Rebecca Edwards, "Reconstructing the Nation" in New Spirits: Americans in the "Gilded Age" (2nd ed., 2001), 6 pp.

Download the 17 pp. PDF at:
http://umaine.edu/umhc/files/2014/09/WhatisaLandGrant_titlepage-2.pdf

Public Lecture
3:15 p.m., Friday, October 16
Minsky Recital Hall, University of Maine

"How to Save American Higher Education from its Saviors:
The Morrill Act and What it Can Teach Us Today"

Edward Baptist (Professor of History, Cornell University)

Reception to follow in the University Club, Fogler Library (2nd floor)

Agricultural School
For the Maine FarmerHERVEY SYLVESTER
Maine Farmer (1844-1900); Jun 27, 1850; 18, 26; American Periodicals
pg. 1

Written for the Maine Farmer.

Agricultural School.

MR. EDITOR:—I have noticed quite a movement among your patrons and others, concerning an agricultural school in our State. The Governor, in his Address, recommends such a measure to the State Legislature for consideration. I have noticed, also, that quite a majority of the advocates of the measure are men more highly privileged in wealth and literary acquirements than our common yeomanry; and I apprehend that to such, most of the good effects of such a school would accrue, if, indeed, profit or good effect, it may be called, where the cost would be more than the income. I think we are not as ready to receive such a school now, even if it should ever be reasonably called for, as we shall be when we are free from a State debt. The debt we now have against us is so enormous as to take more than one hundred thousand dollars to pay the annual interest, if I am rightly informed. If those who want such an establishment would be at the whole cost, I should be willing for them to have all the honor and profit arising from it; but they, themselves, I think, must become the students, or there would be no pupils; for I presume they could never get any students only out of the families of the higher or privileged part of the community. The common farmer's boys could not be hired to attend for *small* wages, much less would they give their time. Now, in the name of common sense, who are going to maintain them at the school? Echo answers, *who?* Whether it is Mrs. Maine or Uncle Sam, it will be a heavy bill, and the yeomanry will have to foot it, indirectly. How much better we should feel, in laying out this sum in repairing our fences and buildings: this would have a tendency to please the women, and keep our neighbors friendly.

But to return. The subject I am treating of reminds me of the Israelites in the days of Samuel. From the time when they were first a distinct people, they had been under a Theocracy—they had no other king but God. They desired a king, that they might be like all the nations around them—a king who should judge them and be their general in battle, for this is the point they principally aimed at. Their petition to Samuel was in these words: "Now make us a king to judge us like all nations," &c. See i. Samuel, chapter viii. Compare Maine to the Israelites. Maine has no other school for farming than that which the God of nature has provided, and he has been the principal teacher ever since we have been a people. Some aspirants say, not counting the cost, Give us an agricultural school, that we may be like other States. The expense, however, is much greater at such institutions than many are aware of. Notice the Military school at West Point, N. Y., also our public establishments, such as the Arsenal, the Insane Hospital, the State Prison, and the like. The cost of these establishments runs higher than our calculations at first are.

I think an agricultural paper, like the Maine Farmer, is better than any agricultural school the Legislature can devise, counting the cost and all. Five thousand copies of the Maine Farmer are now circulated, weekly; allowing that each copy is read, on an average, by four persons, and the number that are constantly receiving its instructions, is twenty thousand. What a school is this!—a lesson for one is a lesson for all! We are all hearing the observations of practical and scientific farmers; and if any cannot be benefitted in this school, neither would they be in any other. This is like a republican government; all are equally privileged, according to their locality; and there is no strife among us, who shall be greatest. Each patron is, or may be, both teacher and scholar. All of us desire to learn, and many are willing to communicate their views and experience on various subjects; and a great feature of its beauty is the cheapness and convenience of the thing. We can live at our homes, cultivate our own land, and make experiments at our own convenience and expense, and receive the profit of our own labor. We should never learn economy at a public school. Whoever likes a republican government will like the farmers' *newspaper school;* and whoever prefers a monarchy will choose a school set up and carried on as schools generally are at public establishments.

I think it better to dispense with an agricultural school for the present, until the railroad fever abates, or until we have such a return from California that we shall not know what to do with the money. It is best for blacksmiths not to have too many irons in the fire at once.

HERVEY SYLVESTER.

Leeds, June, 1850.

NOTE. We thank our old friend for the good opinion he has of the Maine Farmer. He knows we go in for agricultural schools, too; but as we have often given our reasons for it in the Farmer, we give him the same chance to express his. ED.

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Booker T. Washington
UP FROM SLAVERY

AUTHORITATIVE TEXT
CONTEXTS AND COMPOSITION HISTORY
CRITICISM

Edited by

WILLIAM L. ANDREWS
UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

(1996, orig. 1901)

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Chapter III

The Struggle for an Education

One day, while at work in the coal-mine, I happened to overhear two miners talking about a great school for coloured people somewhere in Virginia. This was the first time that I had ever heard anything about any kind of school or college that was more pretentious than the little coloured school in our town.

In the darkness of the mine I noiselessly crept as close as I could to the two men who were talking. I heard one tell the other that not only was the school established for the members of my race, but that opportunities were provided by which poor but worthy students could work out all or a part of the cost of board, and at the same time be taught some trade or industry.

As they went on describing the school, it seemed to me that it must be the greatest place on earth, and not even Heaven presented more attractions for me at that time than did the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia, about which these men were talking. I resolved at once to go to that school, although I had no idea where it was, or how many miles away, or how I was going to reach it; I remembered only that I was on fire constantly with one ambition, and that was to go to Hampton. This thought was with me day and night.

After hearing of the Hampton Institute, I continued to work for a few months longer in the coal-mine. While at work there, I heard of a vacant position in the household of General Lewis Ruffner, the owner of the salt-furnace and coal-mine. Mrs. Viola Ruffner, the wife of General Ruffner, was a "Yankee" woman from Vermont. Mrs. Ruffner had a reputation all through the vicinity for being very strict with her servants, and especially with the boys who tried to serve her. Few of them had remained with her more than two or three weeks. They all left with the same excuse: she was too strict. I decided, however, that I would rather try Mrs. Ruffner's house than remain in the coal-mine, and so my

mother applied to her for the vacant position. I was hired at a salary of $5 per month.

I had heard so much about Mrs. Ruffner's severity that I was almost afraid to see her, and trembled when I went into her presence. I had not lived with her many weeks, however, before I began to understand her. I soon began to learn that, first of all, she wanted everything kept clean about her, that she wanted things done promptly and systematically, and that at the bottom of everything she wanted absolute honesty and frankness. Nothing must be sloven or slipshod; every door, every fence, must be kept in repair.

I cannot now recall how long I lived with Mrs. Ruffner before going to Hampton, but I think it must have been a year and a half. At any rate, I here repeat what I have said more than once before, that the lessons that I learned in the home of Mrs. Ruffner were as valuable to me as any education I have ever gotten anywhere since. Even to this day I never see bits of paper scattered around a house or in the street that I do not want to pick them up at once. I never see a filthy yard that I do not want to clean it, a paling off of a fence that I do not want to put it on, an unpainted or unwhitewashed house that I do not want to paint or whitewash it, or a button off one's clothes, or a grease-spot on them or on a floor, that I do not want to call attention to it.

From fearing Mrs. Ruffner I soon learned to look upon her as one of my best friends. When she found that she could trust me she did so implicitly. During the one or two winters that I was with her she gave me an opportunity to go to school for an hour in the day during a portion of the winter months, but most of my studying was done at night, sometimes alone, sometimes under some one whom I could hire to teach me. Mrs. Ruffner always encouraged and sympathized with me in all my efforts to get an education. It was while living with her that I began to get together my first library. I secured a dry-goods box, knocked out one side of it, put some shelves in it, and began putting into it every kind of book that I could get my hands upon, and called it my "library."

Notwithstanding my success at Mrs. Ruffner's I did not give up the idea of going to the Hampton Institute. In the fall of 1872 I determined to make an effort to get there, although, as I have stated, I had no definite idea of the direction in which Hampton was, or of what it would cost to go there. I do not think that any one thoroughly sympathized with me in my ambition to go to Hampton unless it was my mother, and she was troubled with a grave fear that I was starting out on a "wild-goose chase." At any rate, I got only a half-hearted consent from her that I might start. The small amount of money that I had earned had been consumed by my stepfather and the remainder of the family, with the exception of a very few dollars, and so I had very little with which to buy clothes and pay my travelling expenses. My brother John helped me

all that he could, but of course that was not a great deal, for his work was in the coal-mine, where he did not earn much, and most of what he did earn went in the direction of paying the household expenses.

Perhaps the thing that touched and pleased me most in connection with my starting for Hampton was the interest that many of the older coloured people took in the matter. They had spent the best days of their lives in slavery, and hardly expected to live to see the time when they would see a member of their race leave home to attend a boarding-school. Some of these older people would give me a nickel, others a quarter, or a handkerchief.

Finally the great day came, and I started for Hampton. I had only a small, cheap satchel that contained what few articles of clothing I could get. My mother at the time was rather weak and broken in health. I hardly expected to see her again, and thus our parting was all the more sad. She, however, was very brave through it all. At that time there were no through trains connecting that part of West Virginia with eastern Virginia. Trains ran only a portion of the way, and the remainder of the distance was travelled by stage-coaches.

The distance from Malden to Hampton is about five hundred miles. I had not been away from home many hours before it began to grow painfully evident that I did not have enough money to pay my fare to Hampton. One experience I shall long remember. I had been travelling over the mountains most of the afternoon in an old-fashioned stage-coach, when, late in the evening, the coach stopped for the night at a common, unpainted house called a hotel. All the other passengers except myself were whites. In my ignorance I supposed that the little hotel existed for the purpose of accommodating the passengers who travelled on the stage-coach. The difference that the colour of one's skin would make I had not thought anything about. After all the other passengers had been shown rooms and were getting ready for supper, I shyly presented myself before the man at the desk. It is true I had practically no money in my pocket with which to pay for bed or food, but I had hoped in some way to beg my way into the good graces of the landlord, for at that season in the mountains of Virginia the weather was cold, and I wanted to get indoors for the night. Without asking as to whether I had any money, the man at the desk firmly refused to even consider the matter of providing me with food or lodging. This was my first experience in finding out what the colour of my skin meant. In some way I managed to keep warm by walking about, and so got through the night. My whole soul was so bent upon reaching Hampton that I did not have time to cherish any bitterness toward the hotel-keeper.

By walking, begging rides both in wagons and in the cars, in some way, after a number of days, I reached the city of Richmond, Virginia, about eighty-two miles from Hampton. When I reached there, tired, hungry, and dirty, it was late in the night. I had never been in a large

city, and this rather added to my misery. When I reached Richmond, I was completely out of money. I had not a single acquaintance in the place, and, being unused to city ways, I did not know where to go. I applied at several places for lodging, but they all wanted money, and that was what I did not have. Knowing nothing else better to do, I walked the streets. In doing this I passed by many foodstands where fried chicken and half-moon apple pies were piled high and made to present a most tempting appearance. At that time it seemed to me that I would have promised all that I expected to possess in the future to have gotten hold of one of those chicken legs or one of those pies. But I could not get either of these, nor anything else to eat.

I must have walked the streets till after midnight. At last I became so exhausted that I could walk no longer. I was tired, I was hungry, I was everything but discouraged. Just about the time when I reached extreme physical exhaustion, I came upon a portion of a street where the board sidewalk was considerably elevated. I waited for a few minutes, till I was sure that no passers-by could see me, and then crept under the sidewalk and lay for the night upon the ground, with my satchel of clothing for a pillow. Nearly all night I could hear the tramp of feet over my head. The next morning I found myself somewhat refreshed, but I was extremely hungry, because it had been a long time since I had had sufficient food. As soon as it became light enough for me to see my surroundings I noticed that I was near a large ship, and that this ship seemed to be unloading a cargo of pig iron. I went at once to the vessel and asked the captain to permit me to help unload the vessel in order to get money for food. The captain, a white man, who seemed to be kind-hearted, consented. I worked long enough to earn money for my breakfast, and it seems to me, as I remember it now, to have been about the best breakfast that I have ever eaten.

My work pleased the captain so well that he told me if I desired I could continue working for a small amount per day. This I was very glad to do. I continued working on this vessel for a number of days. After buying food with the small wages I received there was not much left to add to the amount I must get to pay my way to Hampton. In order to economize in every way possible, so as to be sure to reach Hampton in a reasonable time, I continued to sleep under the same sidewalk that gave me shelter the first night I was in Richmond. Many years after that the coloured citizens of Richmond very kindly tendered me a reception at which there must have been two thousand people present. This reception was held not far from the spot where I slept the first night I spent in that city, and I must confess that my mind was more upon the sidewalk that first gave me shelter than upon the reception, agreeable and cordial as it was.

When I had saved what I considered enough money with which to reach Hampton, I thanked the captain of the vessel for his kindness, and

started again. Without any unusual occurrence I reached Hampton, with a surplus of exactly fifty cents with which to begin my education. To me it had been a long, eventful journey; but the first sight of the large, three-story, brick school building seemed to have rewarded me for all that I had undergone in order to reach the place. If the people who gave the money to provide that building could appreciate the influence the sight of it had upon me, as well as upon thousands of other youths, they would feel all the more encouraged to make such gifts. It seemed to me to be the largest and most beautiful building I had ever seen. The sight of it seemed to give me new life. I felt that a new kind of existence had now begun—that life would now have a new meaning. I felt that I had reached the promised land, and I resolved to let no obstacle prevent me from putting forth the highest effort to fit myself to accomplish the most good in the world.

As soon as possible after reaching the grounds of the Hampton Institute, I presented myself before the head teacher for assignment to a class. Having been so long without proper food, a bath, and change of clothing, I did not, of course, make a very favourable impression upon her, and I could see at once that there were doubts in her mind about the wisdom of admitting me as a student. I felt that I could hardly blame her if she got the idea that I was a worthless loafer or tramp. For some time she did not refuse to admit me, neither did she decide in my favour, and I continued to linger about her, and to impress her in all the ways I could with my worthiness. In the meantime I saw her admitting other students, and that added greatly to my discomfort, for I felt, deep down in my heart, that I could do as well as they, if I could only get a chance to show what was in me.

After some hours had passed, the head teacher said to me: "The adjoining recitation-room needs sweeping. Take the broom and sweep it."

It occurred to me at once that here was my chance. Never did I receive an order with more delight. I knew that I could sweep, for Mrs. Ruffner had thoroughly taught me how to do that when I lived with her.

I swept the recitation-room three times. Then I got a dusting-cloth and I dusted it four times. All the woodwork around the walls, every bench, table, and desk, I went over four times with my dusting-cloth. Besides, every piece of furniture had been moved and every closet and corner in the room had been thoroughly cleaned. I had the feeling that in a large measure my future depended upon the impression I made upon the teacher in the cleaning of that room. When I was through, I reported to the head teacher. She was a "Yankee" woman who knew just where to look for dirt. She went into the room and inspected the floor and closets; then she took her handkerchief and rubbed it on the woodwork about the walls, and over the table and benches. When she was unable to find one bit of dirt on the floor, or a particle of dust on any

of the furniture, she quietly remarked, "I guess you will do to enter this institution."

I was one of the happiest souls on earth. The sweeping of that room was my college examination, and never did any youth pass an examination for entrance into Harvard or Yale that gave him more genuine satisfaction. I have passed several examinations since then, but I have always felt that this was the best one I ever passed.

I have spoken of my own experience in entering the Hampton Institute. Perhaps few, if any, had anything like the same experience that I had, but about that same period there were hundreds who found their way to Hampton and other institutions after experiencing something of the same difficulties that I went through. The young men and women were determined to secure an education at any cost.

The sweeping of the recitation-room in the manner that I did it seems to have paved the way for me to get through Hampton. Miss Mary F. Mackie, the head teacher, offered me a position as janitor. This, of course, I gladly accepted, because it was a place where I could work out nearly all the cost of my board. The work was hard and taxing, but I stuck to it. I had a large number of rooms to care for, and had to work late into the night, while at the same time I had to rise by four o'clock in the morning, in order to build the fires and have a little time in which to prepare my lessons. In all my career at Hampton, and ever since I have been out in the world, Miss Mary F. Mackie, the head teacher to whom I have referred, proved one of my strongest and most helpful friends. Her advice and encouragement were always helpful and strengthening to me in the darkest hour.

I have spoken of the impression that was made upon me by the buildings and general appearance of the Hampton Institute, but I have not spoken of that which made the greatest and most lasting impression upon me, and that was a great man—the noblest, rarest human being that it has ever been my privilege to meet. I refer to the late General Samuel C. Armstrong.[1]

It has been my fortune to meet personally many of what are called great characters, both in Europe and America, but I do not hesitate to say that I never met any man who, in my estimation, was the equal of General Armstrong. Fresh from the degrading influences of the slave plantation and the coal-mines, it was a rare privilege for me to be permitted to come into direct contact with such a character as General Armstrong. I shall always remember that the first time I went into his presence he made the impression upon me of being a perfect man; I was made to feel that there was something about him that was superhuman. It was my privilege to know the General personally from the time I

1. Samuel Chapman Armstrong (1839–1893), former officer in the Union Army and founder, in 1868, of Hampton Institute, the industrial school on which Washington's Tuskegee Institute was modeled.

entered Hampton till he died, and the more I saw of him the greater he grew in my estimation. One might have removed from Hampton all the buildings, class-rooms, teachers, and industries, and given the men and women there the opportunity of coming into daily contact with General Armstrong, and that alone would have been a liberal education. The older I grow, the more I am convinced that there is no education which one can get from books and costly apparatus that is equal to that which can be gotten from contact with great men and women. Instead of studying books so constantly, how I wish that our schools and colleges might learn to study men and things!

General Armstrong spent two of the last six months of his life in my home at Tuskegee. At that time he was paralyzed to the extent that he had lost control of his body and voice in a very large degree. Notwithstanding his affliction, he worked almost constantly night and day for the cause to which he had given his life. I never saw a man who so completely lost sight of himself. I do not believe he ever had a selfish thought. He was just as happy in trying to assist some other institution in the South as he was when working for Hampton. Although he fought the Southern white man in the Civil War, I never heard him utter a bitter word against him afterward. On the other hand, he was constantly seeking to find ways by which he could be of service to the Southern whites.

It would be difficult to describe the hold that he had upon the students at Hampton, or the faith they had in him. In fact, he was worshipped by his students. It never occurred to me that General Armstrong could fail in anything that he undertook. There is almost no request that he could have made that would not have been complied with. When he was a guest at my home in Alabama, and was so badly paralyzed that he had to be wheeled about in an invalid's chair, I recall that one of the General's former students had occasion to push his chair up a long, steep hill that taxed his strength to the utmost. When the top of the hill was reached, the former pupil, with a glow of happiness on his face, exclaimed, "I am so glad that I have been permitted to do something that was real hard for the General before he dies!" While I was a student at Hampton, the dormitories became so crowded that it was impossible to find room for all who wanted to be admitted. In order to help remedy the difficulty, the General conceived the plan of putting up tents to be used as rooms. As soon as it became known that General Armstrong would be pleased if some of the older students would live in the tents during the winter, nearly every student in school volunteered to go.

I was one of the volunteers. The winter that we spent in those tents was an intensely cold one, and we suffered severely—how much I am sure General Armstrong never knew, because we made no complaints. It was enough for us to know that we were pleasing General Armstrong, and that we were making it possible for an additional number of students to secure an education. More than once, during a cold night, when a stiff gale would be blowing, our tent was lifted bodily, and we would find ourselves in the open air. The General would usually pay a visit to the tents early in the morning, and his earnest, cheerful, encouraging voice would dispel any feeling of despondency.

I have spoken of my admiration for General Armstrong, and yet he was but a type of that Christlike body of men and women who went into the Negro schools at the close of the war by the hundreds to assist in lifting up my race. The history of the world fails to show a higher, purer, and more unselfish class of men and women than those who found their way into those Negro schools.

Life at Hampton was a constant revelation to me; was constantly taking me into a new world. The matter of having meals at regular hours, of eating on a tablecloth, using a napkin, the use of the bathtub and of the tooth-brush, as well as the use of sheets upon the bed, were all new to me.

I sometimes feel that almost the most valuable lesson I got at the Hampton Institute was in the use and value of the bath. I learned there for the first time some of its value, not only in keeping the body healthy, but in inspiring self-respect and promoting virtue. In all my travels in the South and elsewhere since leaving Hampton I have always in some way sought my daily bath. To get it sometimes when I have been the guest of my own people in a single-roomed cabin has not always been easy to do, except by slipping away to some stream in the woods. I have always tried to teach my people that some provision for bathing should be a part of every house.

For some time, while a student at Hampton, I possessed but a single pair of socks, but when I had worn these till they became soiled, I would wash them at night and hang them by the fire to dry, so that I might wear them again the next morning.

The charge for my board at Hampton was ten dollars per month. I was expected to pay a part of this in cash and to work out the remainder. To meet this cash payment, as I have stated, I had just fifty cents when I reached the institution. Aside from a very few dollars that my brother John was able to send me once in a while, I had no money with which to pay my board. I was determined from the first to make my work as janitor so valuable that my services would be indispensable. This I succeeded in doing to such an extent that I was soon informed that I would be allowed the full cost of my board in return for my work. The cost of tuition was seventy dollars a year. This, of course, was wholly beyond my ability to provide. If I had been compelled to pay the seventy dollars for tuition, in addition to providing for my board, I would have been compelled to leave the Hampton school. General Armstrong,

however, very kindly got Mr. S. Griffitts Morgan, of New Bedford, Mass., to defray the cost of my tuition during the whole time that I was at Hampton. After I finished the course at Hampton and had entered upon my lifework at Tuskegee, I had the pleasure of visiting Mr. Morgan several times.

After having been for a while at Hampton, I found myself in difficulty because I did not have books and clothing. Usually, however, I got around the trouble about books by borrowing from those who were more fortunate than myself. As to clothes, when I reached Hampton I had practically nothing. Everything that I possessed was in a small hand satchel. My anxiety about clothing was increased because of the fact that General Armstrong made a personal inspection of the young men in ranks, to see that their clothes were clean. Shoes had to be polished, there must be no buttons off the clothing, and no grease-spots. To wear one suit of clothes continually, while at work and in the schoolroom, and at the same time keep it clean, was rather a hard problem for me to solve. In some way I managed to get on till the teachers learned that I was in earnest and meant to succeed, and then some of them were kind enough to see that I was partly supplied with second-hand clothing that had been sent in barrels from the North. These barrels proved a blessing to hundreds of poor but deserving students. Without them I question whether I should ever have gotten through Hampton.

When I first went to Hampton I do not recall that I had ever slept in a bed that had two sheets on it. In those days there were not many buildings there, and room was very precious. There were seven other boys in the same room with me; most of them, however, students who had been there for some time. The sheets were quite a puzzle to me. The first night I slept under both of them, and the second night I slept on top of both of them; but by watching the other boys I learned my lesson in this, and have been trying to follow it ever since and to teach it to others.

I was among the youngest of the students who were in Hampton at that time. Most of the students were men and women—some as old as forty years of age. As I now recall the scene of my first year, I do not believe that one often has the opportunity of coming into contact with three or four hundred men and women who were so tremendously in earnest as these men and women were. Every hour was occupied in study or work. Nearly all had had enough actual contact with the world to teach them the need of education. Many of the older ones were, of course, too old to master the text-books very thoroughly, and it was often sad to watch their struggles; but they made up in earnestness much of what they lacked in books. Many of them were as poor as I was, and, besides having to wrestle with their books, they had to struggle with a poverty which prevented their having the necessities of life. Many of them had aged parents who were dependent upon them, and some of

them were men who had wives whose support in some way they had to provide for.

The great and prevailing idea that seemed to take possession of every one was to prepare himself to lift up the people at his home. No one seemed to think of himself. And the officers and teachers, what a rare set of human beings they were! They worked for the students night and day, in season and out of season. They seemed happy only when they were helping the students in some manner. Whenever it is written—and I hope it will be—the part that the Yankee teachers played in the education of the Negroes immediately after the war will make one of the most thrilling parts of the history of this country. The time is not far distant when the whole South will appreciate this service in a way that it has not yet been able to do.

HARD TOMATOES, HARD TIMES

A Report of the Agribusiness Accountability Project on the Failure of America's Land Grant College Complex

by JIM HIGHTOWER

Research Coordinated by

SUSAN DeMARCO

Foreword
by Senator James Abourezk

Schenkman Publishing Company
Cambridge, Massachusetts

(1973)

Foreword
by U. S. Senator James Abourezk

Over a hundred years ago this country opened up its frontiers by investing our public resources in people. We granted homesteads to anyone willing to work the land, gave land to communities for schools, awarded public land for the extension of railroad transportation into the countryside, and established land grants for states that would create colleges of agriculture. The focus of that investment was on people, and that focus gave rise to strong agricultural development and a strong rural America.

If our leaders had as much vision today as they did then, our rural policy would still enable people to live and work prosperously on the farms and in the towns and small cities across the country. Thirty or forty years ago, however, we turned from that policy and instead focused the public investment in rural America on corporate structures and food systems, rather than on people. The shift has proven costly. Farmers and small town merchants have been forced out of business, workers and professionals have had to move elsewhere to find jobs and clients, communities and towns have been broken up and abandoned — and an entire rural culture is disappearing.

A farmer recently told me:

> We would like to have our kids stay in the hometown areas, and a lot of them would like to stay. But what would they do here? There's less and less chance in farming. Small businessmen have all they can do to make a living for themselves, so they can't pay much. Smart kids go ou to school. They'd like to come back to their own community or some other small community. But there aren't enough good jobs there. Out of 110 kids graduated from high school with my boys six years ago, only seven stayed here. Four others are in other small communities. The rest all went to the big city — quite a few left the state for even bigger cities.

The cities, in turn, are choking on these people. As rural urban migrants they come looking for jobs that do not exist, and they are in need of services that overburdened cities are incapable of delivering. To date, 73 percent of the American people live on less than 2 percent

of the American land. By the year 2000, we will have an additional 75 million people in this country. Where shall they live? What shall they do?

These are questions properly directed at America's land grant colleges. As *Hard Tomatoes, Hard Times* makes clear, these multi-million dollar, public institutions have the legislative mandate and the tax resources to participate in the solution. They are research and development agencies intended to benefit the public. It is only fair to ask for a public accounting of their work.

As a Senator representing thousands of farmers and other rural people, I know the importance of agricultural research, education and extension. Throughout my years in public office, I have supported these programs, and I consider myself today a good friend of land grant colleges.

Hard Tomatoes, Hard Times is also a good friend of those colleges. It is precisely the kind of document that long-established institutions need every now and again to help them shake off the crust, re-examine their mission and ultimately do a better job of serving the public. Land grant colleges, dating back to the Morrill Act of 1863, should have had this tough, demanding book hurled at them long before now.

It is obvious that much good has come out of land grant colleges. No one doubts this, nor is anyone out to dismantle an institution that is so soundly conceived. But neither can their glaring faults and failures be doubted, and those of us who are supporters of these colleges will do them little good by refusing to face that fact.

You do not have to be a U. S. Senator or dean of a college of agriculture to know that there are real problems in rural America. But far too much of the money, time and intellect of land grant researchers is diverted away from those real problems. Rutgers University is trying to make spinach taste like potato chips; University of California researchers, having genetically, chemically and mechanically altered the tomato, now want to flavor it artificially; at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, two researchers are working on techniques to thaw a frozen turkey.

What about the skyrocketing cost of farm technology, the poor bargaining position of farmers, the nutritional impact of agribusiness methods, the absence of a rural health delivery system, the rising rate of crime on the farms, the need for cooperative marketing systems, the misery of farm worker housing, the tragedy of tractor deaths and hundreds of other very real and very immediate problems that consumers and rural people are struggling with every day, with miniscule or no assistance from their land grant institution?

Those people and those problems are what the land grant mission is all about. There is no need for new legislation or new funding. Agricultural research, education and extension were created quite specifically to deal with the needs of rural people and consumers. But there is a troubling tendency by too many top land grant officials to wash their hands of that responsibility. In response to the point that the cost and necessity of farm mechanization is a staggering burden to thousands of farmers, the chancellor of one land grant college said coldly, "They can go out of business." The national association representing land grant colleges offered this weak apology:

> Great agricultural achievements are not accomplished without some side effects, and the accusation that the land grant colleges and universities have been taken over by the great food conglomerates and have driven the little farmer out of business tend to overlook the dazzling array of abundant foods this cooperation has made available.

And we know where the secretary of agriculture, Earl Butz, is on the issue: "Adapt or die," he said.

That attitude simply is unacceptable. The resources of our land grant institutions are too valuable and the history of those institutions is too proud to allow such a distortion of the land grant mission. There are thousands of good people within those colleges and there is enormous potential there. America needs those people.

Hard Tomatoes, Hard Times is a useful, timely and important book. It is forcing public officials and land grant college officials to take a long-overdue, hard look at the impact of agricultural research, education and extension. Both a political and an academic debate on the role of land grant colleges have been set in motion by this book, and that debate ultimately will reorient the focus of those institutions.

Hard Tomatoes, Hard Times is aimed primarily at two audiences with special potential to make a difference in the way the colleges operates and for whom it operates. The first of these audiences is the land grant community itself, specifically students and those professors and scientists who share some of the Project's concern that the land grant effort is misdirected. In these people exists the potential to expand the vision of the colleges, to alter curricula and press for new expertise on the faculties, to weaken the corporate ties and generally to open up the institution to the research and extension needs of other interests. Such people are present on practically every land grant campus, and publication of this book has emboldened, embarrassed and otherwise encouraged many of them to be more outspoken and insistent on changes. The other primary audience for which the report was written is that diverse constituency of farmers, farm workers, small town businessmen, consumers, environmentalists and other whose needs and aspirations either are ignored or directly opposed by the land grant colleges. They have the potential to bring into the colleges organized and very specific demands for redirection.

These constituencies have disparate interests in agriculture and there is no need to dwell on the obvious fact that their narrow interests often conflict at specific points. There are too many efforts to play these interests against each other. The present secretary of agriculture seems to delight in that exercise, suggesting that the consumer is the enemy of the farmer, wildly characterizing environmentalists as "extremists" demagoging about the Caesar in his salad, saying that organic farming would mean starvation for 50 million Americans, calling on hard pressed farmers to break up the strike of hard pressed dock workers, and otherwise trying to play people against one another.

But it is my view that these people have more common interests than differences, and that those common interests are much more fundamental. At the very least, they share a common recognition that corporate domination of agriculture is not in the best interests of any of them. If the enormous power of corporate agribusiness is ever to be countered, and if people oriented policies are ever to exist in agriculture and rural America — and they must — these constituencies will have to come together more and more for common action.

The land grant colleges can make an important contribution to the revitalization of rural America. They clearly have the legislative mandate, the expertise and the tax resources to help devise agricultural policies and rural programs which put the needs of common people above the needs of an agribusiness elite. Having that capacity, they have the responsibility. Those of us who are genuine friends of these colleges must work to hold them to that responsibility.

Hard Tomatoes, Hard Times has focused public attention on this important issue. Congress has been awakened by this book, and land grant appropriations can expect a tougher going over than in the past. But if there is to be long lasting change in the focus of the colleges, if this public institution is to turn away from its preoccupation with private interest and devote itself to the needs of the people and community, the fight will have to be carried by those who now stand on the outside, with all the support that can be generated among the people oriented forces within the land grant community.

Preface

This preliminary report is an independent examination of America's land grant college-agricultural complex, focused on the work of colleges of agriculture, agricultural experiment stations and state extension services. The message of the report is that the tax-paid, land grant complex has come to serve an elite of private, corporate interests in rural America, while ignoring those who have the most urgent needs and the most legitimate claims for assistance.

The report has no destructive aims. It is the objective of the Task Force to provoke a public response that will help realign the land grant complex with the public interest. In a recent speech on re-ordering agricultural research priorities, the director of Science and Education at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) said that, "the first giant steps are open discussion and full recognition of the need."[1] this report is dedicated to that spirit.

The Task Force recognizes that "public interest" is not something that is carved on stone tablets. Rather it is the variable result of a process, not a particular set of goals and values. Public interest is only served when all legitimate interests are assured a reasonable chance to be heard on a particular issue and to compete for scarce resources. The president of the National Farmers Union expressed this well in an address on the subject of land grant research:

> If we have learned one thing in America it is that implementation of the democratic ideal requires democratic participation. Our young people talk much of participatory democracy. Minorities demand the right to take part in decisions that affect their lives. When planners do not represent the public, the program is not likely to represent the public interest.[2]

[1]Ned Bayley. "Agricultural Research: Arrows in the Air." Speech before Division of Agricultural Chemistry, American Chemical Society. New York, N.Y. September 10, 1969, p. 15. Available from United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Office of Information.

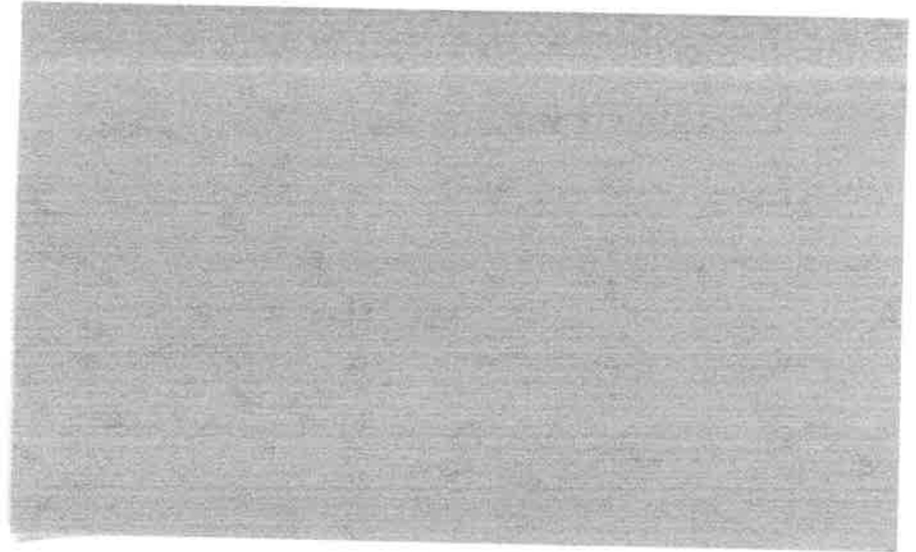
[2]Tony T. Dechant. Address before National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC). Chicago, Illinois. November 11, 1969, p. 9. Available from National Farmers Union, Denver, Colorado.

This examination of America's land grant college complex is not intended to be a total rejection of that agricultural system. In fact, there is much to commend its efforts. Conceptually, and even to some extent structurally, it is designed to reach people, particularly to assist rural Americans in their work and in their lives. There are many individuals within this agricultural complex who are at work every day in an earnest application of the historical concepts of the land grant colleges.

For the most part, information contained in the report is taken from public information produced by the system itself, from reports in the agricultural press and from interviews with people involved in the land grant complex.

This preliminary report is the product of research that has been underway for about six months through the Agribusiness Accountability Project's "Task Force on the Land Grant College Complex." In addition to research conducted in Washington and by correspondence, the Task Force effort included research on the campuses of the University of California, Cornell University, University of Florida, Iowa State University, University of Maryland, Michigan State University, North Carolina State University, Purdue University, and Texas A & M University.

The Agribusiness Accountability Project particularly appreciates the cooperation given this research effort by officials in USDA and by officials and staff at the campus level of the land grant complex.



New Spirits

Americans in the "Gilded Age," 1865–1905

REBECCA EDWARDS
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RECONSTRUCTING THE NATION

Though historians sometimes describe the late nineteenth century as an era of laissez-faire, when government was weak, that notion would have baffled both Unionists and ex-Confederates. Advocates of smaller government responded to what they saw, at the time, as a central government that was exercising extraordinary and unprecedented powers. Republicans set out, before and during the Civil War, to develop new initiatives that would help ordinary Americans. In doing so, they took an attitude toward government more like that of today's Democrats than today's Republicans. (We will explore, in Part III, how and why the parties began to change places in the late 1890s.)

Republicans used government power to promote economic development and industrialization. First and foremost, that meant railroads, which provided fast, powerful networks for travel and trade. Transcontinental railroads seemed crucial to Republicans, who believed these railroads would bind the nation together with ties of commerce and communication, discouraging future sectional conflicts. Since railroad building was expensive, policy makers offered aid. Between 1861 and 1872, Congress subsidized transcontinental railroads with grants of a staggering 100 million public acres and $64 million in tax incentives and direct aid. State and local governments vied to offer railroads their own subsidies. By the late 1890s, the United States boasted three transcontinental lines and a total of 183,601 miles of track, about 42 percent of the world's total. By then, the nation's roads were capitalized at $35 billion and employed almost 800,000 men.

Republicans undertook an array of other pro-business initiatives, notably high protective tariffs. First implemented in 1790 as a revenue measure, tariffs required overseas manufacturers to pay a tax for the privilege of selling goods in the United States. In the antebellum decades, northern mill owners had argued for much steeper "protective" tariffs to shield U.S. industries from foreign competition. Representatives from rural areas, especially the South, had blocked them, since tariffs on manufactured goods did not raise farmers' crop prices but cost them when they went shopping. After the South left the Union, Congress instituted higher tariffs and kept them in place for most of the rest of the century. Tariff rates were crafted to serve both economic and political goals, protecting textiles, steel, and iron and also sugar and wool, which were linked to critical constituencies in swing states. What the tariff did not cover was cotton and wheat, the great export crops so critical to southern and western farmers.

Tariffs brought in the bulk of federal revenue during the postwar decades, earning more than $2.1 billion in the 1880s alone. That income paid off the massive Union war debt with remarkable speed; two decades after the war, the U.S.

Treasury was accruing large surpluses. At the same time, American industries grew spectacularly behind the tariff barrier. Real gross domestic product rose an average of more than 4 percent a year for decades after the Civil War, and while many factors led to this high growth rate, tariffs played a key role. Such protected industries as sheep ranching and steel were among the fastest-growing parts of the economy. The western sugar beet industry was launched with the help of the sugar tariff. American-born cane planters in Hawai'i and Cuba, in fact, worked desperately for annexation so they could be classed as domestic producers and obtain the same advantage.

The United States emerged from the Civil War with far greater power to flex its economic and political muscle in places like Hawai'i and the Caribbean. During the war, leaders of both the Union and the Confederacy, like their forerunners in the early republic, fretted over the prospect of European intervention in the war. After Union victory the tables turned: British politicians listened anxiously as Congress debated whether to ask Britain to hand over Canada. Acknowledging that it owed reparations because Confederate raiders such as the CSS *Alabama* had been built in English shipyards, Britain submitted to international arbitration and paid the United States $15.5 million.

William Seward, secretary of state from 1861 to 1869 under presidents Lincoln and Johnson, developed a sweeping vision of global economic power. While European strategists believed that political conquests led to increased trade, Seward argued the reverse: if America achieved "commercial ascendancy," then political dominance would follow in its wake. In pursuit of this goal, Seward initiated talks with China to ensure an open market for American products and to arrange for Chinese immigrants, a source of cheap labor, to enter the United States. Seward advocated purchase of overseas sites for naval ports and coaling stations to strengthen trade. Faced with opposition at home, he won only two acquisitions, tiny Midway (an uninhabited Pacific island) and Alaska, purchased from Russia in 1867. Seward, however, accurately predicted that the United States would eventually control Hawai'i, the Philippines, and an isthmian (Panama) canal that American engineers would construct.

The most ambitious Republican proposals included measures to address the impact of war itself. A pension system for Union veterans, far more extensive than the programs provided in previous American wars, supported disabled veterans and widows, orphans, and dependent mothers and sisters of the Union dead. Branches of the U.S. National Soldiers' Home sprang up to care for the most disabled men. Showcases of Union pride, they featured libraries, telegraph offices, and the latest in medical care. Outside its gates, each home attracted a string of saloons—painful reminders of the war's psychic toll—but the homes' landscaped grounds became popular picnic sites for tourists. At the home outside Dayton, Ohio, visitors could stroll through acres of gardens and admire two scenic lakes and an aviary.

Public education was high on Republicans' agenda. In the immediate aftermath of war, the Freedmen's Bureau not only mediated legal disputes and provided

food and shelter to destitute freedpeople in the former Confederacy; it also set up more than 2,500 schools. Bureau officials also played a central role in setting up freedmen's colleges like Fisk and Howard, both named for Bureau leaders. Through the wartime Morrill Act, Congress transferred thousands of federal acres to states for public universities, placing special emphasis on increasing access for women and working-class men. The act created or expanded an array of leading institutions, ranging from the University of California to Cornell University. Republicans created a federal Department of Education in 1867; though demoted to the status of "office" a few years later, it remained a national site for educational research and policy ideas.

Meanwhile, the Department of Agriculture, created during the war, set up a nationwide network of experiment stations and extension services to hybridize plants and advise farmers on crop rotation, fertilizer use, and control of insects and disease. U.S. Marine Hospital laboratories made advances in bacteriology. The National Weather Service began keeping systematic records and delivering public forecasts. The U.S. Geological Survey, founded in 1879, sent expeditions to map the far corners of the continent and precipitated discoveries in geology and paleontology. Americans were even prouder of the U.S. Life-Saving Service (LSS), whose heroic deeds won attention in the popular press. The service had existed before the Civil War but like many other federal agencies had been grossly underfunded, relying mainly on volunteers. In the 1870s Congress expanded and professionalized the service, ushering in its heyday. Stationed along the coasts, LSS employees warned navigators away from dangerous shores and staged dramatic rescues by lifeboat and towline. Between 1871 and 1915, when the LSS merged with the Coast Guard, its surfmen saved more than 178,000 lives.

Other revolutionary changes took place in the growing cities. Though rapid growth overwhelmed urban planners, most cities tried to enforce architectural safety, and many completed ambitious sanitary engineering projects. City dwellers began to expect paved sidewalks, where they could wait under gas or electric streetlights for trolleys that would carry them to and from the business districts and residential suburbs. One of the great questions of the Progressive Era was whether or not cities should contract with private companies for such services or inaugurate municipal ownership. (Like Congressional Republicans who subsidized the railroad, they usually opted for the former.) Mayors and city councils established thousands of public parks. New York's Central Park was the largest and most famous, but by the turn of the century Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, and St. Louis each boasted more than 2,000 landscaped acres. An approving British visitor remarked that "no country in the world" had "such extensive and delightful public parks and pleasure-grounds."

As striking as such federal and municipal projects were, expansions of power by the states may have been even more significant. Almost all states recognized married women's right to claim their own wages, which had previously been the property of husbands. In many states, husbands and wives won broader access to divorce. Pressured by the WCTU and other temperance groups, many states

"Patience on a Monument," by cartoonist Thomas Nast, *Harper's Weekly*, 10 October 1868. In the early years of Reconstruction, Nast's cartoons offered powerful indictments of ex-Confederate violence. He appealed to northerners to sympathize with freedmen and support African-American voting rights. Courtesy Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center.

restricted the sale of liquor; several banned it outright. Some legislatures began to regulate key industries, appointing mine and factory inspectors and dairy boards. By 1883, four years before Congress created the Interstate Commerce Commission, fourteen states had established railroad commissions; fifteen had commissioners to oversee the insurance industry. Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota even regulated shipping rates. Many states (and municipalities, too) invested in public health projects. By the mid-1880s Massachusetts had capped the workday at ten hours for women and children, restricted unsafe food and drugs, and imposed

state oversight of banks, insurance companies, and utilities. In the 1870s and 1880s, federal courts allowed most of these regulations to stand.

Such far-reaching initiatives, along with the bloody struggles of Reconstruction, prompted a backlash against rising government power. The term "Liberal Republican" was first made famous in Horace Greeley's presidential campaign against Republican U. S. Grant in 1872. Though Grant won overwhelmingly, liberal ideas were on the rise over the decade that followed. Influential proponents included editors such as E. L. Godkin of the *Nation* and George W. Curtis of *Harper's Weekly*. They were not "liberal" in the sense that the word is used today in the United States. Rather, they championed the virtues of laissez-faire and market economics. They mistrusted government power, critiquing Reconstruction policies in the South, high protective tariffs, and the "spoils system" of political appointments.

Liberal Republicans responded in the 1870s to what they saw as increasing corruption, and to new two challenges. First, wage workers' groups began to organize nationally in the late 1860s and called for laws limiting the workday to eight hours. Liberal Republicans argued that such laws would violate rights of contract and property (though they denied taking sides between labor and capital). Second, Liberal Republicans attacked southern Reconstruction governments as illegitimate, run by "trashy whites and ignorant negroes," as Godkin put it. Liberals cheered when white supremacist Democrats drove out southern Republicans, and they urged northerners to abandon freedmen's voting rights. Both North and South, they argued, should be governed by "the part of the community that embodies the intelligence and the capital."

Increasingly, in the 1870s, Liberal thinkers sided with Democrats in rejecting the Republican economic initiatives of the Civil War and Reconstruction. The excesses of lobbyists and corrupt legislators—not to mention machine grafters like Tammany's "Boss Tweed"—lent support to their arguments. Railroad building proved to be particularly subject to bribes and backroom deals, as dozens of railroad companies lobbied (and bribed) for government funds. The most notorious scandal of Reconstruction, the Crédit Mobilier affair, resulted from unsavory deals between legislators and railroad lobbyists. And it was not clear that the resulting transportation system served the public interest. Railroads outraged farmers with their complex rates, which discriminated against small shippers. Even worse, they built an array of competing and overextended lines, resulting in duplicate services, frequent bankruptcies, and fierce rivalries among the lines.

Controversy also ensued over who benefited from high protective tariffs. Republicans claimed tariffs helped workers, and high tariffs did in fact create new industries and protect jobs from moving overseas. But the argument that tariffs would keep American wages high proved false. By the 1880s economic reformers argued that most tariff benefits were going to major industrialists, who could mark up prices in the absence of foreign competition, hold wages low, and keep the profits. It gradually became clear that tariffs had helped create the giant corporations that were beginning to overshadow the economic landscape, while raising wages little, if at all.

"The Grand Old Party of Moral Ideas 'Keeping Up Appearances.' G.O.P. to W.R.: 'Hurry up and get my dress on; we must cover up this awful skirt.'" The Democratic-leaning humor journal *Puck* suggests how the Republican Party's fortunes have fallen. Her dress, bustle, and plume proclaim "political purity," "high moral ideals," and "war record." But a tariff "protection corset" gives the lady her shape; her patched petticoat records such scandals as Crédit Mobilier and the Navy and Whiskey Rings. The party's handmaid is Whitelaw Reid, editor of the staunchly Republican *New York Tribune*. *Puck*, 20 August 1884. Courtesy Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center.

Thus, as early as the mid-1880s, the stage was set for a protracted set of debates. Even high-tariff advocates, such as Pennsylvania congressman William "Pig Iron" Kelley, began to admit that Republican tariffs had not prevented industrial poverty in the United States. Kelley's daughter Florence, studying economics in Germany in 1884, wrote home arguing that laws to cap the workday at eight hours would help workers more than tariffs did. Politicians in the United States (like their German counterparts) were slow to accept such advice, but William Kelley read his daughter's letter into the *Congressional Record* and declared that he agreed. Within a decade, Florence Kelley returned to the United States and launched a radical and creative career as an economic reformer.