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## Review of Emil Loriks: Builder of a New Economic Order

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*Emil Loriks: Builder of a New Economic Order.*

By Elizabeth E. Williams. Sioux Falls, South Dakota: Center for Western Studies, 1987. Illustrations, photographs, notes, bibliographic essay. xii + 183 pp. \$18.00 cloth, \$9.95 paper.

The author of *Emil Loriks: Builder of a New Economic Order* wrote the book in order to do justice to the life of her fellow South Dakotan Emil Loriks (1895–1985). Elizabeth Williams, an instructor of journalism and speech at South Dakota State University, has succeeded

in producing a eulogy of an interesting and active farm leader. Her biographical portrait loudly praises Loriks for the variety of roles he played: as state legislator and Farm Holiday leader from 1927–34, as unsuccessful liberal Democratic candidate running against Republican Karl Mundt in 1938, as South Dakota Farmer's Union president during the later Depression, as farm cooperative leader throughout the war years and 1950s, and finally as head of the Farmer's Union Grain Terminal Association (GTA) from 1957 until his retirement in 1967. From beginning to end the book valiantly tries to turn the unpretentious Loriks into a truly heroic figure. Unfortunately, in the course of her lionizing, Williams does not add much to the general picture of South Dakota life and agriculture during our turbulent century.

The book is flawed not only because of the author's inability to distance herself from her subject but even more because of her failure to fulfill the announced purpose of the work. The title informs us that Emil Loriks was the builder of a new economic order, but this claim is never really substantiated. The reader does not learn how a new economic order came into being in South Dakota nor even what that new economic order was. Presumably the author means the cooperative movement, but she nowhere deals authoritatively with cooperation. Many questions remain unanswered: Why and when were the first cooperative efforts made in South Dakota? What were the roots of Loriks's cooperative ideas? What was Loriks's mature philosophy of cooperation? How extensive was the cooperative movement's support in South Dakota? How did South Dakota's cooperative efforts relate to those in other states? How exactly did the GTA or Farmer's Union put cooperative theory to work?

To answer these and other similar questions, the author would have to have gone far beyond the main sources she employed, the letters of her hero, and to have done two things: investigate more fully the entire phenomenon of cooperation, and describe how it,

through the work of Emil Loriks, fundamentally altered the economic structure of South Dakota. Since she did neither, the book remains what one suspects Williams was really trying to produce all along—an extended funeral oration for a beloved friend.

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