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Review of Raising Less Com and More Hell: Midwestern Farmers Speak Out

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two farmers and nonfarmers, mostly from Iowa and bordering states, gives vivid personal stories of the hard times of the 1980s. Pictures of many of the persons, set in the context of their daily work, help us to hear and understand the messages.

Beginning with a foreword by Senator Tom Harkin, Senate sponsor of the Save the Family Farm Act (actually a bill rather than an act), *Raising Less Corn and More Hell* weaves an implicit polemic through the diverse stories. Political actions detailed in the "Fighting Back" section of the book are consistent with the visions and tactics of supporters of the bill; the "New Leaders" featured at the end of the book are all among the leaders of the neopopulist groups organized around the bill. Apparently no opponents of the bill were interviewed.

The book manages to convey a false image of a rural groundswell of support for the Save the Family Farm Act. So far the bill has never in fact attracted more than a minority of supporters. Most recently Senator Harkin himself has backed away from support of his bill. Although the people interviewed for this book may represent a significant minority, they should not be construed as representative of the collective voice of rural midwestern people.

In view of the implicit agenda, the absence of explicit discussion of the bill is disturbing. Indeed, moral indignation, cursing, and obscenity tend to substitute for the analysis of complexity. Personal attacks on individuals stand without political context. While those whose lives are being torn apart by the economic system can be forgiven for not offering a coherent analysis of what is happening, the politicians and writers who use their stories cannot be so readily excused.

Hard thinking needs to be done about the serious environmental, demographic, economic, and social problems of rural America, including an acknowledgement of class, gender, religious, and racial divisions in rural society. These divisions have distinct rural manifestations, but they are as real in the country as in the city. Rural voices do not speak in unison.

Raising Less Corn and More Hell: Midwestern Farmers Speak Out. By Jim Schwab. Foreword by Senator Tom Harkin. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988. Photographs, tables, appendices, index. 301 pp. \$24.95.

Raising Less Corn and More Hell will be inspiring reading for the political advocates organized around the Save the Family Farm Act; others will find insights on the symbols and themes that lie behind a highly visible rural movement of the 1980s. The bulk of the book, consisting of excerpts of interviews with forty-

A program that ignores genuine diversity and contradiction in rural life is too simple to address fundamental rural problems.

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