

# Imagining a World Without Hunger



Creating New Knowledge

IMAGINING A WORLD WITHOUT HUNGER

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# Imagining a World Without Hunger

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*As for the forces of the world: There is a colorful spectrum of possibilities, from the worst to the best. What will happen, I do not know. Hope forces me to believe that those better alternatives will prevail, and above all it forces me to do something to make them happen.*

Vaclav Havel

Can we imagine a world without hunger? Yes, but only if we can imagine a better way to govern and modernize the world's diverse national food systems. This essay imagines that better way by characterizing the world's most modern food system and suggesting how the best traits of that system can be instituted around the world.



IN THE LATE 1950's IT BEGAN TO DAWN on those of us working in Agriculture and Food that our livelihoods were being transformed. Driven by a virtual firestorm of new technologies, changing demographics, expanding market opportunity, and political machinations, the relatively straight-forward and insular enterprises of American food and agriculture were consolidating and reconfiguring to form some new kind of commercial and industrial system.

We in Farming and Agricultural Processing began referring to this phenomenon as “Agribusiness,” while those in Food Manufacturing and Food Distribution chose to talk about their rapidly changing realm

as the “Food Complex.” It soon became obvious to some, if not all, that we were caught up in an even larger game, the “U.S. Food System,” in which everyone, like it or not, was running to keep up. To avoid being consumed by the process, we needed to think in real time and concretely about the “grand scheme” of things. And particularly, to understand the things that really matter in a modernizing world driven by specialization and a virtual firestorm of new technologies. That challenge continues.

The Food System of a modern commercial society encompasses all the activities and decision-making schemes required to produce, assemble, process, and deliver agricultural and food products to end consumers. The U.S. System is our case in point. It is arguably the world’s most innovative and dynamic as well as one of the most transparent. Its continuous improvement over the past one hundred years has been enabled by the exceptional specialization, collaboration, and agglomeration of its food and agriculture industries and the private and public enterprises and institutions that enable them—some two million farms (about 600,000 of them responsible for 60% or more of agricultural production); over 25,000 food and beverage processors; some 35,000 wholesalers and 377,000 food service firms; a raft of input and facilitating suppliers. The system interacts intimately on any given day with 111 million households and trades hugely in global markets. The system’s share of the gross national product exceeds 17 percent—that’s 3.06 trillion dollars, give or take a few hundred billion.

The U. S. Food System’s evolving design, effectiveness, and capacity for renewal is a wonder. One measure: the U.S. Food System delivers to consumers the least expensive food in the world while providing them the world’s greatest array of food variety. U.S. households spend just 6.8% of their income on food as compared with France’s 13.4%, Japan’s 14.4%, Brazil’s 24.6%, China’s 33.9%, India’s 35.8%, and Azerbaijan’s 48.5%. Though the adoption of new technologies plays a significant part in bringing this to pass, a fundamental driver of the system’s modernization and superiority are the aspirations, mind-sets, and talents of its business practitioners, past and present. Five notable American food system leaders illustrate the point.



JAMES J. HILL, founder of the Great Northern Railway comes first to mind. Hill was a food system pioneer without knowing it. The fact is, he was thinking about the U. S. Food System before we even had one.

Emigrating from Canada to the U.S. at age 16 in 1856, Hill gravitated to St. Paul, Minnesota. Without realizing it he had fortuitously landed smack in the middle of one of America's great business opportunities: the trans-

formation of the northern prairie into the world's most expansive grain producing ecosystem, a one million square mile swath of fertile plains that would become known in due course as America's "bread basket."

Hill came to America for both adventure and to work—and work he certainly did. In two decades of endeavor his business acumen led him into warehousing and freight and in 1879 to the formation of The Great Northern Railway, a new venture founded with close associates by taking over the bankrupted St. Paul & Pacific Company.

Railroads were the advanced technology of their day and Hill recognized before most the tremendous opportunity afforded by such a radical change in transportation. Scouting the northern prairie, he thought long and hard about what it would take to transform that seemingly endless expanse of tall stem grass, buffalo, and Indians into a commercial civilization replete with bustling market towns and merchants and staunch farm families with cultivated fields of wheat, herds of fat cattle, and mines and factories. Entranced with Hill's vision, investors flocked to provide the money he needed to translate his plans into reality.



*James J. Hill 1912*

Photo: Minnesota Historical Society

Hill understood the community of interest between his highly efficient, low cost railroad and the communities it served. One could not prosper without the other. Northern prairie agriculture was his road's primary source of traffic, and he was unyielding in his ambition to improve the productivity and prospect for both. Laboring tirelessly to create traffic for his trains, Hill pulled out all the stops. Establishing model farms (one at the crossroad town of Northcote, just up the road from my hometown of Hallock), his agronomists introduced improved strains of seed and livestock, experimented with rotations and feeding regimes, and demonstrated the latest farming techniques.<sup>1</sup> Hill traveled continuously through the Great Northern's territory exhorting his unwitting collaborators to be of good heart and to "press on!" As he flamboyantly put it, his and their mission was "to create an 'Inland Empire' in the very heart of this Grand Republic of ours."

JOHN H. MACMILLAN, JR. the idiosyncratic business genius who crafted the modern Cargill, Incorporated, was an equally energetic contributor to the formation of the U.S. Food System. John Jr. was a descendant of Scottish sea captains and merchants. As Cargill's general manager in the early 1930's he looked over the grain industries and decided—as he explained to initially incredulous family members—that Cargill and its collaborators would bring into being “an endless belt of wheat from the North Dakota producer to the German miller.” Over the next four decades, his flawlessly executed scheme of industry integration rocketed Cargill to first place in the U.S. grain business. At this juncture John Jr. and his colleagues decided to both “go global” while taking a system's approach, diversifying into all manner of commodity processing, merchandising, and transport activities across the agribusiness sectors of soybeans, corn, wheat, copra, flax, poultry, livestock, and hogs, and then into a raft of complementary ventures: salt and fertilizer mining; steel production and fabricating; ag and market finance. Could it be that John Jr., sharing a Scottish heritage, picked up on James J. Hill's systems thinking? Regardless, Cargill, Inc.'s leadership, having figured out the nature and dynamics of the modernizing American food system, was soon on an unstoppable roll. Today the firm is a global food system behemoth with an annual revenue of \$130 billion. It literally



spans the globe, with 145,000 employees engaged in the agribusiness sectors of some 57 national food systems doing business in virtually every market in the world.

RALPH HOFSTAD, the late chief executive for Land



O'Lakes Cooperative, is another of the U.S. food system's visionaries. Land O'Lakes was chartered in the mid 1920's to solve the quality and marketing problems of the myriad dairy product producers throughout the Upper Midwest. Underpinning rigid quality control with modern management and manufacturing techniques, the managers of this novel affiliative proceeded to build for its farmer and local dairy members a superior brand of butter and other consumer dairy products, positioning the cooperative for expansion nationally. In the mid-1970's Hofstad commissioned a study by Stanford Research Institute on the future role of the cooperative in the U.S. Food System. Over the next 20 years, guided by the insights surfaced by that SRI exercise, Land O'Lakes reconfigured its management organization, streamlined its processing and marketing operations, extended its dairy manufacturing nationally, divested its petroleum and fertilizer operations, led the consolidation of the Midwestern Regional Cooperatives soybean processing venture, and established a cooperative service unit to engage Land O'Lakes in cooperative development globally. It too found a systems approach profitable.

ROBERT BRUNER STRICKLER, an ambitious young teacher in the Commonwealth of Virginia's

**Rocco**

Shenandoah Valley, inherited a bit of money in the early 1930's and seized an opportunity to buy a small farm. To stay afloat financially he signed on as the manager of Harrisonburg Allied Mills animal feed dealership. It was a slog but he prevailed, and the modest business that emerged from his efforts positioned his son, R.H. "Twig" Strickler, to extend the business into the contract grow-out of turkeys and chickens for meat. Experimenting with new production methods, Twig systematically set about to acquire and integrate the disparate elements needed to breed, grow, process, and market both commodity whole birds and tailored parts, first domestically and, as production expanded, globally.

Pioneering the adoption of new technologies, he accelerated the firm's growth, incorporated the enterprise, and emerged as a recognized leader in the nation's fast developing integrated turkey and broiler businesses. Rocco, Inc. (its name inspired by its geographic location, Rockingham County) soon dominated Virginia's turkey industry, consolidated the state's broiler industry, and aggressively extended its business activities to include a raft of input and supply ventures. In the years immediately following Twig's retirement, the poultry industry's consolidation accelerated and it was soon evident to his successors that the pace of change was working to Rocco's disadvantage. Seizing the moment they chose to merge with Cargill, Inc. Notwithstanding its bittersweet end, the Rocco story dramatizes the nature and extent of the opportunity the U.S. Food System has afforded individuals with wit and imagination, assuming they brought to it a healthy dose of true grit and determination.

RAY KROC, creator of the “Golden Arches,” arguably the global food system's most iconic consumer product brand, “showed the way” for the food system's most recent transformation. Who would ever have imagined that a 55-year-old malt-mixer salesman in the 1950's could acquire a failed local franchiser<sup>2</sup> and then, having built a nationally prominent fast food business, transform it in the following two decades into a globally dominant, totally integrated “fast food” business endeavor. Kroc had imagined and brought into being a new and unique kind of global food system participant. McDonald's Corporation, the core of Kroc's invention, is headquartered in Oakbrook, Illinois. From there its managers orchestrate some 35,000 self-governing suppliers and fast food operators who annually sell over \$30 billion of prepared foods in over 60 countries.



The McDonald's System (“McSystem” if you will) employs a virtual army of workers, 750,000 folks in total. Kroc's organizational scheme, an “agglomerate” of self-governing, independently owned business units, is sheer genius. Anchored in the American culture's proclivity for endeavor and collaboration, the McSystem thrives in a continual state of rediscovery and renewal. Its capacity for growth and innovation is a testimony to the business scheme Kroc devised.

The McSystem’s “ecological” organization is hard for its traditional competitors and peers to understand, as was Kroc’s insistence on “handshake deals” with suppliers. Its ability to attract and engage talented well-motivated people at every level of system operations and management is testimony to its genius. Kroc’s engaging autobiography, titled *Grinding it Out*, provides some clues. In it he explains the magnitude of his ambition; simply put, his mission became to “Feed the World!” His penchant for waxing eloquent about every element of the work at hand startled some: “Consider, for example, the hamburger bun. It requires a certain kind of mind to see beauty in a hamburger bun. Yet, is it any more unusual to find grace in the texture and softly curved silhouette of a bun than to reflect lovingly on the hackles of a favorite fishing fly...or the arrangements of textures and colors in a butterfly’s wing?” Given the opportunity, how could anyone fail to be roused and engaged with such grand ideas? Stop in at the golden arches for a quick hamburger and the best french fries in America (and maybe the world) to learn that Kroc’s ideas live on and have the power still to motivate both McSystem associates and their hordes of customers globally.

The U.S. Food System has prospered through the endeavors of its outstanding business leaders. Their mantras—Hill’s “Inland Empire,” MacMillan Jr.’s “endless belt,” Hofstad’s “food system cooperative,” Strickler’s “experiment our way,” and Kroc’s “Feed the World!”—opened the minds of their associates and food system collaborators to the remarkable opportunities emerging from the technological, demographic, and cultural-political changes throughout society. Their ability to visualize the potential rewards from food system improvement was, in retrospect, uncanny, as was their grasp of how best to adopt new technologies to make it happen.

Improving the U.S. Food System from the inside is work for teams willing and prepared to take on hard, bold, important, risky undertakings. Superior teams in the system have shared visions and values. Those visions and values commit them to persist in timely incremental investments that insinuate increasingly effective techniques, methods, and processes into the system as a whole. Persistence, energy, and a commitment to science, collaboration, and vocation are essential, as are:

- energetic self-reliance;
- open acceptance of calculated risk and its outcomes, good and bad;
- preparedness for change;
- a realistic view on nature and the nature of man;
- desire to “make things work right,” and to promote the attitudes underlying such an ambition such as orderliness, frugality, punctuality, efficiency, diligence, magnanimity, and a sense of humor;
- rationality in thought and action; and
- moral consciousness and pursuit of higher means and ends.

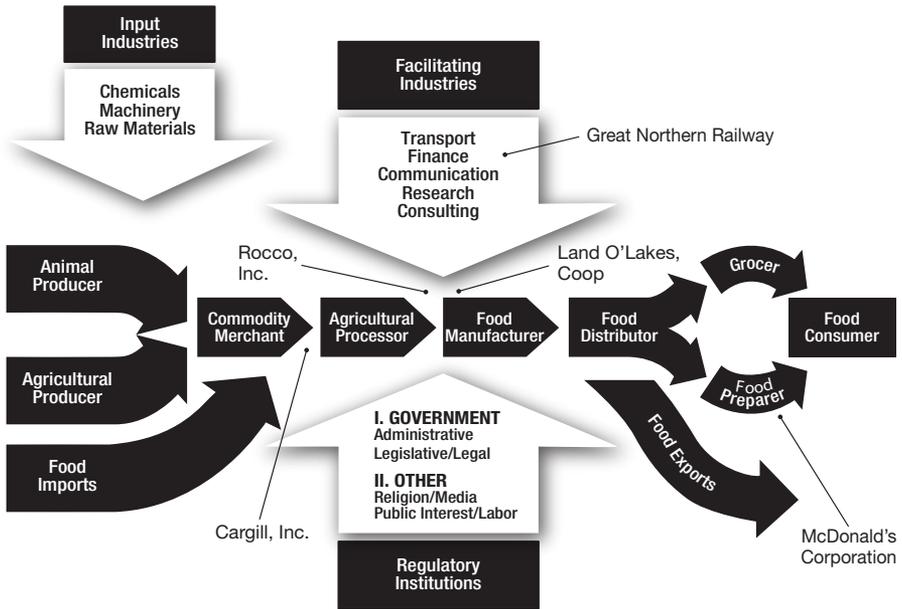
Critical to their success is “the way” by which the actors within the System achieve both superior performance and fulfillment, individually and collectively. Stripped to its essence it reads:

- Learn as you go, all the way to the end.
- Realize the need for continual course correction.
- Acknowledge your mistakes and profit from them.
- Rediscover and renew.
- Press on, never, ever give up.

So much for the inner workings of the U. S. Food System and how its actors endeavored to bring about its modernization. What about the larger forces impinging on the system as a whole? The system is influenced by the society in which it is embedded, by the cultural proclivities of the citizens that comprise the society, and increasingly by governments seemingly distracted by other matters.

We are the inheritors of a U. S. Food System brought into being in simpler times. The tendency is to think of our traditional social, cultural, and political values as unchanging, but this is not so. The United States of the U.S. Food System’s early days was predominately a commercial society in which individual liberty and private property were the overarching themes. Culturally three attributes stood out: Endeavor (with a capital E), collaboration, and self-governance. These cultural values had a profound influence on the nature of our society’s institutions, including the emerging U.S. Food System. A disinterested observer, contemplating the system from afar, would be particularly

## The U.S. Food System



struck by five aspects of the American food system's being and becoming. The U.S. Food System was:

- **Business-centric.** Its actors reflected the aspirations and inspirations of the commercial republic in which the system and they were embedded. Little wonder, for with its fundamental purpose to create and manage wealth, business is the engine of commercial society.
- **Self-generating.** Its actors committed to Endeavor in all three of its flavors: enterprise (undertaking hard, bold, important, and risky projects); industry (focused and persistent work), and conjecture (positioning one's self vis-à-vis the future—which some call speculation).
- **Sustaining and collaborative.** Its actors associated freely (and some would say, passionately) with their system peers and fellow citizens, acknowledging a higher social purpose for their individual and affiliative endeavors.

- Creative and self-governing. Its individual and affiliative participants viewed themselves as “sovereign,” meaning that they took responsibility for “the whole” and acted accordingly. One notable aspect, the system’s actors engaged proactively and constructively with the legitimate regulators of their activities.
- Technologically driven. The system was evolving rapidly with its actors consciously seeking to better both themselves and the social milieu. Compelled by technology and responding to perceived market opportunity, the system’s industries, firms, and practitioners were positioning to “go global.”

Our present day U.S. Food System retains these characteristics to some lesser extent. The social, cultural, and political drivers impinging on the system continue, as in Hill’s day, to effect its nature and effectiveness. But with society rethinking the cultural attribute of self-governance and the primacy of collaboration, it is difficult to be sanguine about the System’s exceptional capacity for innovation.



## What About the Global Food System?

The global food system is but an amalgam of National Food Systems. The prospects for their continued improvement through the adoption of new technologies are good, given the direct and clear correlation between technological enhancement and system productivity. What is not so easy to factor is the ability of nations and their commercial endeavors to adopt governance schemes that enable food system effectiveness.

The world’s National Food Systems constitute a kind of “experiment,” in which the outcomes of varying methods and techniques for satisfying human nutritional needs can readily be observed. Though virtually all National Food Systems are in a state of improvement, some are developing faster and functioning better than others. In a superior National food system typically, and over time:

- Food consumers gain access to an increasing array of food products at lower real costs, thereby improving their nutrition and health and making a larger share of their incomes available for the purchase of other goods and services.
- Farmers, merchants, and food processors gain access to an increasing array of new and more profitable investment and production opportunities.
- The system's facilitating and input industries are provided incentives to create new technologies, products, and employment.
- The larger economy and society, of which the food system is a part, gains workers released from agriculture and benefits from the lower real cost of food and other related agricultural products.

Because the process of system modernization is not uniform throughout the world, the capacity and quality of the world's food production and distribution is in question. Considered in whole, the world's current farming and food distribution arrangements and methods as currently governed are simply incapable of meeting the world's increasing need for more and better food. Whether it is admitted or not, no amount of right technology and internal enterprise management can overcome lousy societal or affiliative governance.

The nature of the world's chronic food problems is knowable. The vital resources necessary to effect needed change are accessible. Yet, though theoretically every specific instance of food deficiency is remediable, we still stumble when attempting to define and take action on the material, technical, intellectual, and spiritual transformations necessary to solve the world's chronic food problems.

Of course, the situation is complex and paradoxical.

- The world's affluent urban food consumers—time-constrained and geographically far removed from food producers—now determine the pace and nature of food production and distribution, while at the same time an estimated one-fifth of the world's food consumers, unprepared for modernity, struggle to maintain a bare existence.

- The world's accomplished agricultural producers—highly motivated and increasingly well-educated—now specialize to achieve optimum results, while in countries with chronic food shortages the traditional notions of general or subsistence farming persist.
- The world's most productive food scientists and business practitioners take a strategic approach to food system issues. Rigorously applying advanced systems analysis, they devise highly successful integrated solutions to traditional food production, processing, and distribution problems. At the same time, many development specialists and political leaders, wedded to non-systems thinking, continue to define global food problems in operational rather than strategic terms.

Is this situation a problem or opportunity?

*Employing well over half the world's people and encompassing well over one third of its economic activity, the world's diverse National Food Systems establish the parameters of well-being for literally billions of people. Can you think of any single initiative that would improve the human condition and human well-being more than modernizing the world's National Food Systems and their linkages?*

What would James J. Hill do about world food shortages? Though critically important to Hill's business success, the Great Northern Railway was just one element of Hill's grand scheme. Using the railroad as a fulcrum, Hill implored our nation's leaders, friend and foe alike, to advance education, scientific research, and public communication, promote private enterprise, and support fiscally sound government and export trade. But he didn't stop there. Leveraging his public standing, he exhorted his collaborators and the public at large to be civically alive and politically active, his idea being that "We are creating an Inland Empire in the bosom of this Grand Republic of ours. And we're all in it together!"

By 1885 the Great Northern's system of main and branch lines had grown to 1,470 miles. Building on his success in the Red River Valley, Hill pushed his road east from Minneapolis to Chicago and then



*James J. Hill exhorting crowd, Bend Oregon, 1911*

Photo: Minnesota Historical Society

west into the Dakotas and Montana, over and through the Colorado Rockies and the Washington Cascades to Tacoma and the Pacific ports of Seattle and Portland. On January 6, 1893, in the towering Cascades at the junction named Scenic in the state of Washington, the Great Northern's transcontinental track was completed with Hill driving in the last spike, fittingly a golden one. Though the second to link the heartland with the Pacific Northwest, Hill's Great Northern was distinguished as the most profitable and least subsidized of all the nation's railroads.

One might think that Hill, having spanned the continent, would ease off to enjoy the fruits of his labor. Not so. Hill knew that his inland empire's well-being (wealth-creating potential) could more quickly be realized through the efficiencies of a fully integrated rail system. It was not in his nature to let such an idea lie dormant, so he set off to merge his road with one of his rivals, the well-positioned but not-so-well-managed or operated Pacific Northern. It was not to be. Thwarted by the machinations of his financial rivals and the federal government—crony capitalism in action—Hill failed. Undeterred, in 1901 he sought to join forces with the Chicago, Burlington, & Quincy Railroad, and once again was thwarted. The forces arrayed against him in resisting

modernization of rail transport were just too powerful. Hill died in 1916, and his grand scheme to enrich the inland empire seemingly died with him.

But really good ideas have a life of their own. In 1927 Hill's Great Northern successors took up his plan and once again proposed merger, but this time with all three of their rival railroads. Failure once again. Thirty years later, in 1961, seventy years after Hill's first attempt, the Great Northern's third generation finally punched through. In 1970 they brought the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway into the fold to incorporate as the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway.

One can hardly exaggerate the influence of Hill in shaping the aspirations and expectations of those drawn to civilizing the Great Plains. His ambition, enthusiasm, and dedication to a higher purpose than railroading swept up his intimate colleagues, public and private investors, politicians, ministers, and teachers, right along with his favored customer—the inspired and aspiring, self-governing immigrant farmer intent on making a new life out there on the wind-swept northern prairie.

In 1914, his life moving to its end, Hill wrote a letter to one of his staunch, life-long supporters, Lord Mount Steven, and in writing gave a hint of the breadth, scope, and consciousness of his mind's eye: "The old days and their associations will always be nearer our hearts than any other period of our lives. They can never come back to us, or to any others, for the reason that there are no such opportunities to open up new countries of imperial size as we had." Hill was wrong, of course. His "good old days" are recapitulated in our day in an even more dramatic way—a globalizing world. And wouldn't you know, creating Inland Empires is still the surest way forward for nations intent on advancing their national well-being.

## A Thought Experiment

Imagine in your minds-eye:

- the world's amalgam of national food systems in their varied states of modernization;
- the continuing firestorm of new technologies and the expanding power of global communication;
- the growing flood of increasingly well-educated young men and women eager to make a mark in the world.

Now, bring to mind one nation whose unfortunate citizens are suffering from hunger or malnutrition.

Then think, what would James J. Hill and his entrepreneurial successors do?

They are no longer here, of course, so we're stuck. It's up to us. Fortuitously the food system pioneers' achievements are instructive:

*To advance a nation's well-being, establish modernity (self-governance) and enable entrepreneurial collaboration—locally, regionally, and nationally. This was Hill's Inland Empire message. It is as true today as it was in his and his successors' days.*

As for translating this useful knowledge into action:

*To end a nation's hunger, provide its food system's yet-to-be discovered Hills, MacMillans, Hofstads, Stricklers, and Krocs a fulcrum of self-governance (local and national) and they will lever technology, modernize their business ventures, and collaborate with fellow citizens to make better their industries and communities.*



## Are Inland Empires the Way to a World Without Hunger?

### A Proposition

- Nations with commercial societies have modern food systems and are free of hunger.
- Ergo, to end humankind’s pervasive hunger, flood the world with Inland Empires.
- Modern national food systems naturally follow.

### In Consideration

Business is the world’s indispensable wealth creator. Astutely managed and soundly invested the wealth business creates advances human well-being—individually and collectively.

As a social phenomenon, business exhibits all the proclivities of human nature, good and bad—magnanimity and greed, big-heartedness and selfishness, courage and fear, right and wrong. It flourishes for the good in cultural environments that enable and encourage its practitioners’ better instincts and higher purpose. Flourishing business yields substantial benefits for society.

The United States is a prime example of how the phenomenon of “business flourishing” works in the modern world.

Established as a commercial republic, the newly formed U.S.A. unleashed a sustained two-century burst of human invention in all fields of endeavor. It did this by making self-governing businesses the spearhead of its economic and social development. The result was a virtual flood of new ideas, novel technologies, and highly valued everyday goods and services—an unparalleled creation of wealth in all forms.

The U. S. experiment in societal governance and management proved successful (some say exceptional) in its ability to sustain individual freedom, stimulate innovation, create wealth, and to advance the well-being of its citizens; as so graphically played out in its path-finding food system.

The example set, the world is now peppered with modern national food systems enabled by commercial societies: early on the Netherlands, Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand; more recent, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, Germany and Denmark; and nascent, Thailand, Ireland, Finland, Poland, Chile, Mexico, and India. In all instances these nations embrace the liberating principles of private property and enterprise, political inclusiveness, rule of law, and free markets while celebrating the cultural habits of endeavor, collaboration, and self-governance. In all instances business spearheads economic and social development.

It is apparent that nations that encourage business firms capable of innovating and competing in the global marketplace are rapidly improving their national well-being. This is the new modernism. It is apparent as well that nations and peoples resisting this profound phenomenon are falling behind.

Even more profoundly, this emerging new order holds promise for a world defined more by common sense, dialogue, and peace than elite dogma, prejudice, and war.

## Looking Ahead

The process of developing the United States as a commercial society is historic. The debate that enables it, some two hundred years in the making, is both vigorous and contentious. It continues today, guided by an evolving series of questions welling up out of the exercise itself. Nine in particular are relevant to the present stage of public discourse:<sup>1</sup>

1. How best to advance human well-being?
2. How best to govern ourselves?
3. How best to regulate government?
4. How best to achieve social equality?
5. How best to create “Inland Empires”?
6. How best to regulate business?

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<sup>1</sup> Questions courtesy of (in order): Adam Smith, James Madison, George Mason, Abraham Lincoln, James J. Hill, Theodore Roosevelt, Calvin Coolidge, Will Clayton, Ronald Reagan.

7. How best to manage government?
8. How best to achieve order in a globalizing world?
9. How best to promote liberty and self-governance globally?

Materializing and sustaining a commercial republic is, obviously, no easy thing. It calls for dedication on the part of its advocates. An essential task is to draw proper distinctions between reality, myths, and dreams. Business experience confirms what human history instructs: doable visions and winning strategies are grounded in the “better” rather than the “perfect.” Both business and society become better by their leaders and citizens repetitively doing the next best thing—collaboratively.

Beyond sheer wit and wisdom, perfecting commercial society and sustaining enlightened systems of human endeavor (the U.S. Food System as an example) requires a civic leadership dedicated to individual liberty and justice; a forceful coterie of self-governing individuals and institutions; and a polity committed to commercial society as its organizing principle. Right governance and management at all levels of

### The Institutions of Commercial Society

- The **Individual** to foster integrity, creativity (ingenuity), and persistence.
- **Families** (parents and relatives) to civilize the coming generations.
- **Affiliatives** to amplify individual enterprise through teamwork.
  - **Business** to create and prudently manage wealth.
  - **Politics** to institute and advance sound governance.
  - **Science** to discover and promulgate new and useful knowledge.
  - **Education** to instill a love of virtue and learning.
  - **Philosophy** to define truth and beauty.
  - **Art** to refine and elevate our tastes.
- **Governments** to assure security and promote tranquility.

social life is a necessary condition – to achieve and sustain a productive collaboration.

Here's the thing. We can continue to view ourselves as a nation in transition. Evolving. A nation with a state dedicated to advancing individual liberty and equality and a society continuously reinventing itself. A society of self-governing individuals and institutions disposed to capitalize on change, rather than being plagued by it. A society in which motivated business leaders bring their experience-gained wisdom to the paramount issue of societal governance and management—locally, nationally, and globally.

Thoughtful Americans understand the web of business that underpins their society. They understand as well the threat authoritarianism poses. Uncontested, the threat is existential. Which means that business leaders, to the extent they are committed to commercial society, have no choice. Those positioned to contest the threat do so by entering the arena of national governance as advocates, supporters, or public servants. It appears that such a movement is quickening.<sup>2</sup> Which raises one last question: What about the U.S. Food System's business leaders?



*The foundations of commercial society allow people to take advantage of their natural differences and inequalities in ways that allow more and more people to rise out of poverty...Here is the realism of commercial society. It recognizes the limits of what can be reasonably expected from flawed, very human beings and understands that the task of meeting the economic needs and wants of billions of people cannot be left to people giving gifts to one another.*

**Samuel Gregg**

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<sup>2</sup> Contemporary business leaders recently entering the national governance arena include Steve Case (Maryland), Darrel Issa (California), Ron Johnson (Wisconsin), Charles and David Koch (Kansas), Mitt Romney (Connecticut), Tim Scott (South Carolina), Paul Theil (California), Donald Trump (New York), Rex Tillerson (Texas).

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