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The Minnesota Farm Home Building Program

H. B. WHITE

The Federal Government has adopted a building program as one means of relieving unemployment. In order that the rural sections should not be neglected there has been appointed a farm representative for each state. The intention is to carry to the farmers of the state in-



The old type L-shaped house will last about fifty years.

formation concerning the importance of repairing, remodeling and rebuilding of farm homes.

In starting a building program there is danger that unless a careful long-time view is taken a large number of poorly planned, poorly built, or poorly located structures will be erected and the owners will not achieve satisfactory results. Furthermore, if many groups of subsistence homesteads are developed it may leave the established farmers with a restricted market for their products. The establishment of subsistence dwellers may result not only in loss of consumers for the farmer to feed but also in loss by the farmer of ability to buy anything which the subsistence dweller may produce on part-time employment. Farm people must be consumers of manufactured products if a part of the population is to be kept out of agriculture.

The normal balance for a nation, with such diversification as is possible in, the United States, is to have, in each industry, only enough people to produce the quantity of its goods that is required, at a price that will enable the producers to live on a scale high enough to enable

them to also be consumers of goods from other industries. Agriculture has not yet supplied its homes with the conveniences that are necessary for comfortable living. In addition to being permanent, houses need to be equipped with heat, light, and plumbing. The standard for farmhouses might well be set at about that of the average village home, which has a furnace, sewer connection, and running water as well as electric lights. The amount of work necessary to bring farmhouses up to this standard would be surprisingly great. At present in Minnesota only 13 per cent of the farmhouses have electric lights, 7 per cent have bathtubs and 4 per cent have sewage disposal. The installation of sewage disposal systems may serve to show how local labor is necessary in home improvement work. There is only a small amount of cash outlay for material but the outlay for necessary local labor is considerable. It is very much worth while, however, as the housework is put on a much more satisfactory basis and there is time for other work the moment water can be emptied into a sink and allowed to run away without further attention. Supplying running water requires more planning but it is a very simple problem as compared with servicing an automobile, a task which many farm boys now do without hesitation.

The indications are that almost everyone is going to take part in a building program, some directly, others indirectly. The movement will be under way almost before it is noticed. Those who are employed will begin to buy more from those producing food and clothing and these in turn will pass the money on to still others. It is well known that there is no better way of spending money than to invest it in a home. Much of the money thus spent stays in the community, because it is paid out for local labor.

The various groups that should be interested in the building program are agricultural schools and colleges and ex-

tension workers in the various counties; dealers who sell materials and all who manufacture and merchandise them; builders and all related workers; and finally, farmers and their families who will enjoy the improvement and profit by a better place in which to live and work.

Many farmers thinking of building are puzzled over how good the buildings should be that they are about to erect. Under pioneer conditions sod and straw stables were usually warm in winter but not easily kept dry and sanitary. With the new program of building getting under way what standards should be established? Considerable attention has been given to this question by the Division of Agricultural Engineering at University Farm, St. Paul, and the following schedule is suggested:



A well-built modern house will last one hundred years.

THE MINNESOTA FARM HOME BUILDING PROGRAM

On well-established farms the following standard of shelter should be attained:

1. A comfortable house having a sink with running water, and a drain.
2. A comfortable barn which, for dairy animals, should not allow the water to freeze in the coldest weather.
3. A poultry house that does not allow the hens' combs to freeze.
4. Storage where crops may be kept on the farm until the price at least equals the cost of production.