the conflicting demands for stability and the need of change." I am not convinced that such a principle is a need. Without formal or conscious interdisciplinarianism, the working of our economy has brought increasingly rapid change. Some of it has been too fast; some of it too slow, depending upon the persons or groups doing the judging.

As an industrial economist and statistician, I have had the privilege for many years of working with data—mainly economic, but always tinged with social, cultural, and other interests—on problems related to lawmaking and interpretation. In view of the nature of our legal processes in the United States, I have been impressed with the rates at which legislative bodies and the courts have been willing to accept or be influenced by the decision aiding results of research using new and advanced analytic and computerized procedures. These groups, even as students in many fields, have been slowed in their acceptance of new methods by the scarcities of physical and human resources which limit both the tools and the methods of communications with them.

Frankly, I have frequently been less impressed with the agricultural economist's selection of issues of importance or priority toward which he should direct his research. In this context, economists face challenges which greatly exceed that of conscious interdisciplinarianism.

**Discussion: Legal-Economic Aspects of Emerging Agricultural Problems—Viewpoint of a Land Economist**

W. L. Gibson, Jr.

Harl and Logan have presented papers that will be of great interest to members of our Association. The focus of Harl's remarks is on the need for interdisciplinary approaches in the conduct of research on farm adjustment problems. I need not remind you that, with a few exceptions, such approaches have received little attention. His contribution should create a better awareness of the need for interdisciplinary research and assist us over some of the obstacles that have made us reluctant to undertake multidisciplinary projects. Logan outlined a most interesting proposal for maintaining farm prices on the domestic market supposedly without accumulating a burdensome surplus.

For some years I have been concerned about our apparent unwillingness to consider institutions as variables in adjustment studies. Determined...
nation of optimum resource-product transformations within present institutional frameworks may contribute little to achieving long-run and short-run adjustments to technological change. Technological innovations not only influence input-output relationships but also often require modifications in social and business organization before successfully adopted. The role of institutions in agricultural adjustment can no longer be omitted if we are to solve the great social problems faced by our agricultural industry. The first step we must take is to realize that an important attribute to institutions is their interdisciplinary dimension. Unless a philosophical framework for fruitful interdisciplinary studies is achieved, we are not likely to give institutions an adequate consideration in future studies. Harl's paper has put considerable mileage behind us on the journey to this goal in legal-economic studies.

In the first section of his paper, Harl utilizes the positive-normative dichotomy of approach in scientific method, and he identifies legal-economic research activity at two levels of interrelationship. The first level consists of making "a descriptive analysis of the relevant positive law, the law that 'is' as of a particular time." Here there is no meaningful integration of the disciplines in the analysis; only helpful collaboration between lawyers and economists is achieved which extends and adds precision to the economic analysis. This is disappointing because positive—the so-called "What is or What will be"—analyses are badly needed on many problems where interdisciplinary research is involved. At the risk of oversimplification, if we can view research as a systematic way of answering questions, I believe an integration of two or more disciplines can be achieved. How this can be done is not yet understood, but one possible avenue to explore is a reframing of the questions we ask.

The second level "involves longer run inquiry in what might be termed a normative analysis of the legal institutions impinging upon" economic problems. Here Harl casts law in the role of a dependent variable. The analysis involves "how the law can contribute to the satisfaction of human wants rather than how these wants can be satisfied within a given legal framework." It is gratifying to see a recognition of law (institution) as a variable subject to change, but it is difficult for me to understand why this restricts the research to a normative approach.

The closing section of Harl's paper is a brief description of a legal-economic study underway at the Agricultural Law Center, State University of Iowa. It is concerned with the changing structure of farm businesses. For several decades, U.S. farm policy has been too narrowly conceived as control or guidance of farm prices. Our policy must be broadened to effect an integration of price and land policy and thereby include objectives with respect to the continuity of farm operation be-
tween generations, conditions of access to agricultural resources, mobility of capital and people, and land tenure in general. The research discussed will contribute greatly to shaping these changes in our farm policy.

Much has been said in recent years about farm price support programs in terms of how to reduce government costs, increase net farm income, and either maintain or decrease consumer prices. It appears to me that Logan accepted these goals as the burden of his paper and proceeded to design a program to attain them. I admire his courage but remain doubtful about the probability of achieving the impossible. The farm income problem lies in an excess quantity of resources committed to agricultural production. It arose from change in the structure of our economy, and its solution lies in achieving difficult and painful adjustments to this change.

First, Logan proposes to increase farm income by lowering cost of production. This is to be achieved through low interest rate loans for purchase of maximum-capacity machinery. Joint ownership is advocated for small farms where size of operation is below that required for optimum use. Two questions immediately come to mind: Are fixed costs no longer significant to managerial decisions in firm management? When we consider a reduction of resources used in agricultural production, why do we limit withdrawal alternatives to land and labor?

Turning to the surplus problem, Logan advocates a two-price system including direct supply control on price supported production, annual allotments based on available amounts of nonhired labor, sale of all products not under allotment by the federal government acting as a marketing cooperative, and domestic sales limited to an amount that will bring an established price, with disposal of any additional production in the international market.

Time does not permit me to give reasons why I believe his plan is neither economically workable nor politically acceptable. However, I should like to call to your attention that Logan does recognize that the farm problem lies in our failure to design a mechanism to distribute equitably the benefits of technological progress. I should like to commend him for his willingness to face this issue. Economists will disagree with the detail of his plan, but they will find it difficult to express dissent on his orientation of the problem.