

**STATEMENT OF C. G. BELL, PRESIDENT, SPINK ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, DOLAND, S. DAK.**

Mr. BELL. Mr. Chairman, my name is C. G. Bell, from Spink County, S. Dak.

I live in Doland, S. Dak., and presently serve as president of Spink Electric Cooperative, headquartered in Redfield, S. Dak.

I have been engaged in dryland farming and ranching for over 40 years. I derived my livelihood from agriculture during the infamous "dirty thirties." I have seen the ups and downs in agriculture that were measured by good and bad crops directly related to adequate and inadequate rainfall.

I am here because I am concerned about the future of the young farmer and the big job he assumes in feeding his fellow Americans and a hungry world.

Because of my retirement from a lifetime in agriculture, the completion of the initial stage of the Oahe unit will not benefit me personally. I am testifying here today because of my concern for the future generations in agriculture.

Declining opportunities in rural America present a bleak outlook for thousands of rural-raised Americans who would like to remain on the land but find it economically unfeasible.

Consequently they migrate to our cities, many of them ill prepared to cope with life in an industrial complex.

Authorization of the Oahe project and ultimate completion of this project would, in our area, offer a "new lease on life," a new lease on rural life, if you please, for many of our young people.

The possibility of complementing a dryland operation with an irrigated unit would brighten the prospects of these young people and would go far in encouraging them to remain on the land.

Many farmer friends of mine have sadly seen their sons leave agriculture and turn to other pursuits simply because the prospects of earning a decent living in agriculture were dim, indeed.

I am concerned, too, at the resultant age level of the average South Dakota farmer. It continues to rise as these young people leave our State, convinced that agriculture holds no future for them. What is to become of many of our farming operations when the farmer becomes too old to farm and his sons have long since left and are making their living elsewhere, having lost all contact with farming and all desire to be farmers?

Completion of the entire Oahe project, all 490,000 acres of it, will surely reverse this flow of young people from our area to the urban areas. Completion of the Oahe project will breathe new life and new hope into the future of agriculture in our area and into the ambitions of our young people to stay "where their hearts are," on the land.

We hear over and over again references to a "declining rural America." Here, in my opinion, is a golden opportunity to halt this decline in at least one area of this Nation and bring new hope to our