South Dakota has not escaped this trend During the years of 1959–64, our state lost 6,027 farms for an average loss of 1,205 per year, and the picture is getting darker instead of brighter. The South Dakota Crop and Livestock Reporting Service recently estimated that our state lost another 1,500 farms in 1967.

Equally alarming is what has been happening to our small towns and actually, our entire rural community. During the years 1959 to 1964 our state lost 6,027 farms. In a similar 5-year period (1958–63) we lost 1,101 business places, according to the 1963 U.S. Dept. of Commerce Census of Business. This means that for every six farms left vacant, one business place closed its doors.

Furthermore, according to a recent study by Marvin Riley, rural sociology professor at South Dakota State University, one out of every seven South Dakotans left the state to seek a living elsewhere during the decade from 1950 to 1960, including one out of four young adults, the real productive segment of any state's population. During that 10-year period, according to Riley's report, the state had a total exodus of 94,279 people.

We are confident that the Administration recognizes the present plight of farmers. Secretary Freeman pointed out in Fargo, N.D., Feb. 8th that "70 percent of our population lives on only 1.3 percent of the land * * * From 1940 to 1960, 17.4 million persons left farms or the farming way of life. * * * The total exodus from the countryside, from small town and farming America, since 1950 has been 20 million people.

"This march to the cities," he added, "is continuing at the rate of 500,000 to 600,000 a year—half a million living, breathing bodies added to the 2½ million yearly that are crowding into our already glutted urban areas by virtue of natural population increase. And the migrants are leaving behind a decaying countryside of dwindling economic and human resources."

So there is no lack of awareness of the crisis in Washington. But somewhere along the way this nation has gone astray in its concept of values.

Senator George McGovern, in an address on the Senate floor in February, declared "We are more and more accepting technology, unquestioningly, as an irresistible force and optimum mechanical efficiency as the goal of existence. It is time to take a look at what is being done to people. It is time that we took a look to see if the change is either inevitable or desirable, and whether the new society toward which we are heading, a sort of corporate collectivism, is what we really want."

Our farms in rural America have been disappearing not because the farmer has not been working hard and efficiently. In most cases his productivity exceeds that of his city cousin. But while our farmers have been producing more and better food, they have been continually asked to produce it at lower wages for themselves.

The exodus from rural America has been brought about by two elements which go hand in hand: low farm prices and the increasing entrance into agriculture by giant, non-farm corporations.

I am sure that during this hearing today, the entrance into agriculture by some of these giant non-farm corporations will be aptly illustrated so our organization will stick primarily to what has happened in South Dakota.

On learning of the millions of acres of farm land being purchased around the nation by corporations and individuals as a hedge against inflation and for tax loss purposes, we decided to conduct our own investigation into the extent of corporate farming in South Dakota.

Our survey, conducted with the assistance of county assessors and the state ASCS, revealed that there are 452 corporations owning agricultural land in South Dakota, totaling 1,633,529 acres, or the equivalent of five medium-sized South Dakota counties. Corporations now own one out of every 27 acres of farmland in our state. A copy of this survey is enclosed with our statement.

Equally alarming was that there are 56 corporations listing an out-of-state address owning nearly a third of a million acres (312.589.)

Some of the larger holdings by these out-of-state firms include:

Western Cattle Company of New York—70,948 acres in two counties.

Homestake Mining Company of California—42,282 acres in two counties.

Shur-Gro Irrigation Company, Clovis, New Mexico—36,688 acres in four counties.

Hickman & Jordan, a Texas firm, with 28,327 acres in one county.

Norris Grain Company of Illinois, 41,874 acres in two counties.