

PUT PROFIT INTO FARMING

In the year 1950 there were 8.5 million farmers in this country. Today, there are 3.3 million left. By 1980, it is projected that there will be less than 1 million farmers left.

Isn't it about time that this business of forcing the farmer off of the land is halted? We must put the necessary profit incentive into agriculture to maintain farming as an industry, and provide the incentive for young people to enter farming as a means of providing their living.

We must insist that the United States Department of Agriculture be administered for the benefit of the farmer and the rural communities in this country, rather than to be the instrument used to force farmers off of the land. We must take action to see that agriculture receives the same status in our economy that other industries have.

Senator NELSON. Mr. Kirchner, did you have further comments?

Mr. KIRCHNER. I think Mr. DuBois has very well covered the subject.

Our committee this year is going to delve as deeply as possible into this corporate impact on the community, what the social repercussions are, and we don't have any material at this time. However, we will as time goes on.

Senator NELSON. You mentioned, Mr. DuBois, the question of corporations using farms for tax writeoff purposes. Did your association evaluate this question so they would be prepared to suggest specific legislation?

Mr. DuBois. We have spent considerable time discussing it but we are not prepared specifically at this time to propose legislation that would go in this direction. This, as you well know, is a complicated matter and we would want to certainly develop the sophistication in order to make a proper and timely discussion on our position.

Senator NELSON. We had testimony this morning from the president of the Farmers Union of South Dakota, as well as Iowa and Nebraska. In South Dakota they have done what appears to be quite an extensive statistical study of how many corporate farms there are in South Dakota and what the ownership is. Has any such study been made in Minnesota?

Mr. DuBois. Yes, sir. That study is being undertaken by the Minnesota Farmers Union at this time. I don't know whether they have completed their work to where they have compiled the data on it, but I know they have carried it on in each county. I have seen some of the statistics on Stearns County, the county I live in; and I suspect they will have it ready to submit for the record.

Senator NELSON. Do you observe in Minnesota the trend toward the acquisition of large holdings by corporations?

Mr. DuBois. We see in Minnesota generally a movement on the part of corporations to acquire more and more land. In my immediate area, the area that I am most familiar with, my legislative district which I travel in and get around a great deal, my banking area, we see the corporate farm coming in, and while the takeover hasn't been of great proportion yet, the trend is there. And one of the things they're doing is that they come in and they bid the price of land up. This dollar cost of land doesn't seem to be significant to them but it becomes very significant to our farmers who would desire to increase the size of their operation to accommodate another member of the family that might be growing up and who would like to stay on the farm. So the