

rection. It is common knowledge in Maine, for example, that potato processors who largely control the potato marketing—the marketing of processed potatoes—are now deeply involved in growing potatoes. And this story can be repeated for many, many enterprises in which the integration of production is clearly established.

I observed within the last month a situation in which a farming corporation called, I believe, First American Farms, Inc. This is a subordinate corporation of Bunge, Inc., B-u-n-g-e. It is reputed to be the largest exporter of soybean products in the world. This farming corporation has recently acquired 40,000 acres of land. They have drilled an irrigation well on every quarter section. They have cleared 29,000 acres of land and they have installed an irrigation well on each quarter section.

Senator NELSON. Where is this land located?

Mr. BERTSCH. Walton County, Fla. It's northwestern Florida.

They've established these automatic irrigation systems, self-propelled irrigation systems on each quarter section, and they propose quickly to get this 40,000 acres in soybeans; and they're looking for more land. They've kept this acquisition very quiet. The local leadership really didn't realize what was going on there. I suppose they kept it quiet to prevent land prices from reacting until they had acquired more. They're now in the business of producing soybeans, processing soybeans, and marketing soybeans. As an interesting sidelight, for the lack of regard for what they do to a community, this was in the area of flowing wells, artesian wells, but since they started irrigating, all the flowing wells have stopped flowing; and the whole section of the county represented by this is now finding out, of course, what's happened when a rather ruthless and merciless corporation, not concerned at all about the welfare of the community into which they moved, moves in and dominates their social and economic life.

Senator NELSON. Do I understand that you're saying that the draw-down of the water table affected the artesian wells?

Mr. BERTSCH. Right.

Senator NELSON. We had some testimony this morning respecting the problem that confronts us as we develop large irrigation projects with no policy established respecting the withdrawal of water from the aquifers. If there isn't some policy established, we will deplete the water supply. If you draw water more rapidly than the aquifer is rejuvenated by its sources of water, you can draw it down until you destroy the whole aquifer with brackish water and so forth. Do you think that kind of problem poses a serious threat wherever you get involved with these large irrigation projects?

Mr. BERTSCH. I think it poses a more serious threat where the offenders, let us say—and we might want to put offenders in quotes at this stage of the hearings—but where the offenders are big and powerful and well financed and big enough to control local government, to control public opinion through the weekly newspapers, which they have demonstrated they've been able to do in this particular instance. It's far more dangerous when it's being perpetrated by an institution so big and strong that they can ignore the public reaction than if the same offense were being perpetrated by small farmers. They'd be subject to the public reaction. This is what I really fear.