

Our electric cooperative organized in 1940 and attained a system with 1,750 miles of distribution lines serving just over 2,915 farm consumers in the early 1950's. Please note that I said "farm" consumers. We have only one country elevator as a commercial load; no non-farm accounts of consequence, and only a handful of cottages.

In view of the fact that we have only farm consumers, we are vitally concerned with the transition taking place in the rural areas which has brought about larger farming units and has resulted in a decrease in the number of farm occupants. I believe you will agree that some of our most intelligent, talented and aggressive leaders of this country, past and present, are men and women who were born and raised in a rural community. It is so vital, today, that people having authority do their utmost to promote a rural environment that will encourage our younger generation to remain on the farm. I am of the opinion that this can be accomplished, at least to a degree, by Congressional action that will provide some incentive for young people to continue the family farm and a penalty to discourage large-scale corporation farming.

I do not feel that a family-type corporation would be detrimental to the community and our economy. Perhaps there should be some reservation on this also.

Last month's operating report indicated that we were serving 2,478 farms which is a decrease of 15% from the 2,915 figure in the early 1950's.

We are situated and serve the members in the Lake Traverse watershed area of Minnesota and South Dakota which is at the beginning of the Red River Valley of the north. The topography of this valley, as you undoubtedly know, is a level area, free of trees, ravines, creeks, or other obstacles thus lending itself to large scale farming—a bonanza for corporation farming, and thus we are greatly concerned.

The independent farmer and many rural communities throughout this great nation could face oblivion unless the movement of huge non-farm corporations into agriculture is halted.

Certainly one of the most important issues of 20th Century America revolves around the question: "Who Shall Control Agriculture?" This struggle attracts few headlines. Changes in the control of agriculture have come about so gradual in the last quarter century that policy makers are inclined to attribute it to evolution rather than to use the more appropriate term, revolution. The pace of the change, however, is accelerating. A survey shows that in Minnesota 50% of the farms now owned by non-farm corporations have been acquired in the past three years, and that these purchases account for one-third of the total of 300,000 acres held by all corporations.

National agriculture policies, from the time the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, nearly two centuries ago, have encouraged development of the family farm. And the nation has benefited from this policy, as industrious family farmers built the greatest agricultural production plant the world has ever known. Family farms are efficient and productive and have all the productive capacity needed to feed and supply the nation, with plenty to spare for adequate reserves and to meet existing world market demands for our products. Our American people today spend less than 18 cents out of their budget dollar for food. No other country in the world can point to this type of record.

On the other side of the coin a vicious cost-price squeeze has driven thousands of family farmers off the land.

Nearly every third farm in a broad area of the agricultural midsection of America today stands empty with the silent migration to the cities accelerating. Meanwhile, thousands of small towns throughout the country feel the impact from the loss of their farmer customers which were the lifeblood of the community. For a 5-year period (1958-63) the 1963 U.S. Dept. of Commerce Census of Business, shows the relationship between the loss of farm families and business places. This figure in laymen's language points out where 6 farms are left vacant, one business place closed its doors.

We are confident that the Administration recognizes the present plight of farmers. Secretary Freeman pointed out in Fargo, N. Dak., Feb. 8th, quote, "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 is continuing at the rate of 500,000 to 600,000 a year—half a million living, breathing bodies added to the