

Senator NELSON. We are pleased to have you here as witnesses this morning.

Mr. ROHDE. This past February, Mr. Chairman, when you addressed our annual convention in Madison, you referred to a statement by Senator McGovern of South Dakota to the effect that sometime this spring the auctioneer's gavel would fall on the possessions of the Nation's 3,000,000th farmer. The gavel sounding this milestone in our agricultural history may have already fallen, but outwardly there has been little show of public concern.

One has to go back to the 1870's when my family's Clark County farm was unbroken forest land to find the last time our farm population was this low. In the midst of the farm depression of the 1930's, when I was helping my father farm, there were nearly 7 million farms, the all-time high. Only 10 years ago when I was still a full-time farmer, the farm population had already declined to 4 million.

To us in Farmers Union, an organization of family farmers, these statistics represent an alarming trend, a trend to bigness and corporatism that at this time shows no signs of being reversed. We find little comfort in percentages which show that most farms in the Nation are still family operated. There is also little comfort in such statistics for the farmer who has been forced off the land to the city or the smalltown merchant who has been forced to close his business for the lack of customers.

If this trend continues and we reach the projected half million or so farmers by the year 2000, are we still going to be able to take comfort, as some do now, in knowing that most of these farms are still family operated? I seriously doubt that most of these farms would be independent, individual enterprises operating as family farms. The great consolidations that would have to take place would require capital inputs of the size that would, I believe, exclude most family farmers. Senator McGovern has called this society toward which we are apparently heading "a sort of corporate collectivism."

Senator NELSON. I might interrupt Mr. Rohde for a moment just to make an observation. This subcommittee in conjunction with a subcommittee chaired by Senator Morse has been conducting hearings in the industrial aspect of this same problem of the growth of giant conglomerate corporations. Last week Senator Morse and I heard testimony from Ralph Nader, who has achieved a distinguished reputation in this country as an individual interested in consumer rights. He pointed out in his statistics that as of today some 200 corporations control just about 50 percent of the industrial production in this country, and that by the year 1980 these 200 will control two-thirds of all the production in this country. It raises a very significant question of the same nature as we are raising here about giant conglomerates moving toward corporate control of all the land in the country. And I think certainly that one purpose of these hearings is the educational aspect of bringing the implications of this trend to the attention of Congress and people of this country. Two or three hundred years ago the struggle in England was to get the land away from the land gentry and into the hands of the people. It has been demonstrated historically and is true in many countries today that those who control the land end up controlling the country.