

here in Eau Claire, we called upon our county Farmers Union presidents to make a survey in their own counties of instances of corporate takeover of farmlands by nonfarm interests. Here are several examples of their findings:

A 900-acre beef cattle operation in Brown County owned by stockholders of Badger Northland, a subsidiary of Massey-Ferguson, manufacturers of farm machinery.

Over 4,000 acres in four Dane County townships incorporated under several names but operated principally by the chairman of the board of a large Chicago dairy.

Over 3,000 acres of land in one Price County township owned by the Owens-Illinois Glass Co.'s papermill division. Our Price County Farmers Union president writes as follows:

Formerly this papermill bought their pulpwood on trucks and there was a market for local wood. During the past year, they started bringing in vast amounts of pulpwood by rail from Michigan and other more distant places at a much higher cost, leaving a very limited market for local wood. This, in turn, doesn't encourage local landowners to keep their timberlands and the mill can buy up more of the land at favorable prices. The mill has its own crews that cut timber wherever their foresters see fit to cut.

This helps speed up the exodus from the community. When I started school in our local school 50 years ago, there were 48 pupils. Now, if the same school were running as a district, there would be seven children under high school age. There are no preschool children and all married people in the former district are beyond the childbearing age.

Other examples cited by our county officials include land development firms which bulldoze out shelter belts of pine trees in sandy areas in order to sink deep irrigation wells, corporate consolidations which result in the tearing down and burning of farm buildings and numerous instances of corporation farms, owned by absentee owners, which bypass local cooperatives and other businesses to buy their farm supplies direct from their own manufacturing outlet or from some other source.

In examining the operations of these corporate farms, nowhere do we find the kind of contributions to the rural community that the farm families make to the well-being of schools, churches, and local business institutions.

The entrance of nonfarm corporations into agriculture, we are convinced, is based solely on a search for additional investment profits with little, if any, regard for the social consequences. Agriculture, as reported in such news media as Kiplinger Agricultural Letter, the Wall Street Journal, and other business publications, is considered to be an industry ripe with investment potential. Here are some of the reasons, we believe, why investors find agriculture so inviting:

A projected world population of over 6 billion people by the year 2000 or twice that of the present world population.

A relatively limited amount of the earth's surface suitable for agriculture, about 4 percent, or 3½ billion acres.

An anticipated technological explosion which will greatly expand our ability to produce on the land.

Tax laws which permit investors to write off losses from farming operations against their income from nonfarm ventures.

We have had numerous discussions with economists, rural sociologists, and other social scientists concerning the implication of a corporate takeover of American agriculture. We have almost always come