

STATEMENT OF NORVAL ELLEFSON, PRESIDENT, FARMERS UNION
CENTRAL EXCHANGE, INC., ST. PAUL, MINN.

Mr. ELLEFSON. Thank you.

I am speaking for the Farmers Union Central Exchange, a farm supply cooperative based in St. Paul. We serve about 850 cooperatives.

Senator NELSON. How many?

Mr. ELLEFSON. About 850 cooperatives throughout this northwest area. We have our prepared statement that I wish to file with the committee.

In addition to this, we just want to make these remarks: that we are very much concerned about the future of agriculture, we are very much concerned about the national resources of this land. Otherwise than this, we have submitted our thoughts in this prepared statement.

We want to express our appreciation for the privilege of submitting these views and thank you very much for appearing at this hearing.

Senator NELSON. We appreciate your taking the time to come, Mr. Ellefson. Your statement will be printed in full in the record.

(The complete prepared statement submitted by Mr. Ellefson follows:)

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EXCHANGE, INC.

The subject of corporation farming in the United States is being discussed more and more frequently by farmers, farm leaders and those involved in the decision-making processes within the non-farm portions of the agri-business complex. There are those, usually farmers themselves, who oppose all corporation farming as being against the tradition of American family-type agriculture and therefore inherently evil. There are those, apparently dominated by non-farm businessmen, who seem to think that any restriction on the free entry into farming by any one, be it person or corporation, is also against the American tradition of free enterprise and is, therefore, inherently evil.

In an issue as emotionally charged as this one, history would indicate that the wisest course of action to produce the greatest good for the greatest number of people, also an American tradition, probably lies somewhere between the two extreme views.

The question of corporation farming is not a new one. The Statutes of at least five states at one time or other placed some restrictions on corporation farming. For example, a Minnesota law limiting corporate ownership of land was passed in 1887—80 years ago.

In my judgment these laws reflect an attitude that unlimited corporate control of agriculture would not be in the best public interest. While it has not been documented, to my knowledge, I believe that the same general attitude still exists. I feel certain that the overwhelming majority of family farmers believe this without qualification.

Yet there is much confusion about the question, even among farmers. An arbitrary legal prohibition of all types of corporation farming would probably not get the support of operating farmers. There are many advantages to family or closely held farmer or community farming corporations.

What farmers are most concerned about is the invasion of great sums of corporate capital from out of the community and frequently out of the state, to purchase large tracts of land which are absentee owned and operated. The average farmer knows he cannot possibly compete for additional land to expand his farm against this type of operation.

But the question of whether corporation farming is good or bad for the country goes beyond just what farmers, or the leaders of the farming corporations think. It is a question for all segments of our society to consider. Unlimited corporate ownership of farms will have a direct effect on all of rural America and will