

INTRODUCTION

The family farm is the classic example of the American small-business enterprise. For generations this institution and the community it supports have held the esteem of all who have known and understood the American heritage. Statesmen, historians, economists, and sociologists have generally agreed that the spread of the family farm over the land has laid the economic base for the liberties and the democratic institutions which this Nation counts as its greatest asset.

The great declaration by Daniel Webster still stands as perhaps the clearest and most authentic expression of America's deep-rooted belief in the intimate and causal relation between the family farm and the distinctively popular character of our Government.

Our New England ancestors—
he said—

brought thither no great capitals from Europe; and if they had, there was nothing productive in which they could have been invested. They left behind them the whole feudal policy of the other continent. * * * They came to a new country. There were as yet no lands yielding rent, and no tenants rendering service. The whole soil was unreclaimed from barbarism. They were themselves either from their original condition, or from the necessity of their common interest, nearly on a level in respect to property. Their situation demanded a parceling out and division of the land, and it may fairly be said that this necessary act *fixed the future frame and form of their government.* [Webster's italics.] The character of their political institutions was determined by the fundamental laws respecting property. * * * The consequence of all these causes has been a great subdivision of the soil and a great equality of condition; the true basis, most certainly, of popular government. * * *

The advances in technology during the past century have greatly benefited farmers who, with their families, work the land. The industrial revolution has eased the burden of the farmer and rendered his labors more productive. Yet these technological advances have, at the same time, brought a threat to the very institution to whose personnel they have brought so much aid. The threat is this: That with increased mechanization will come increased industrialization of the farm enterprise; that with industrialization will come an increasing concentration of economic power in the hands of fewer and fewer men at the head of great organizations, and an end to that broad diffusion of social and economic benefits that has long been characteristic of American rural communities.

There is foundation for the belief that industrialization is on the increase. The United States Census of Agriculture has been recording the gradual increase in average farm size in America. This is not a result of the disappearance of undersized farms; family farmers on the better lands appear to be particularly vulnerable. Census statistics are supported by other information. In those areas particularly suitable to high-value specialty crops, the concentration of land and production into large units has been reported by various agencies and