Appendix II

Statement of George D. Levin, Hereford, S. Dak., and Accompanying Article, "Beef Profits—Safeway Hikes Price $188 on Each Carcass," by Douglas Bradley, From Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal

When I learned that a Senate investigation in regard to corporation farming was to take place, I decided at once to prepare a statement for the Committee giving some of my observations and ideas on the subject, and some of my ideas on how the growth of corporate agriculture can be checked.

From what I know about my own ranching and farming operations, and my neighbors, first hand, and from what I can learn about ranching and farming all over the country, I would say that unless the ranchers receive much better prices for their livestock than they have been getting for the past eight or ten years, and the grain farmers receive much better prices for their products, that the days of corporate agriculture are not far around the corner.

Farmers and ranchers either go broke, or retire because they see no future in their operations due to the low-price situation. Their land will eventually go into the hands of corporations having outside interests that enable them to deduct their losses in agriculture from their gains in other kinds of production. And because no rancher or farmer can now operate at anything like a fair profit, while hundreds of thousands operate at a continual deficit, there is no place to sell a ranch or farm except to a large corporation; or to an individual who is attempting to outrun the cost-price squeeze by enlarging his operations and is going further into debt. And in this case the individual certainly has to have considerable credit or be able to get money from some "rich uncle", of which there are very few nowadays.

Therefore, it is only a question of time before corporate agriculture becomes the dominate way in which the food for the people of this nation is produced. And once the big corporations get hold of a certain percent of the land of this country, there will be no turning back. What this percent might be I cannot now tell, but I am sure that it would be less than seventy-five (75%) percent. So the time could easily come, in the area where I live, that the cattle would no longer be branded because all cattle would belong to one big company.

I am sure that statements are available to this committee as to what happens to the rural towns, and the people that are a part of such towns, if the small operators on the farms are pushed over the cliff. I have in mind a case not far from where I live. A small town merchant got news that some eighteen (18) small ranch-farm operations were selling out to a big cattle company—just coming into the area. He was elated, he said, because he knew the company had the money to pay grocery bills. Some of his customers were slow at times. But he learned, after the small operators left, and company came in, that the company bought nothing from him whatsoever but had all the supplies trucked in from Chicago, wholesale.

In our state we have been losing about 1,000 agricultural units per year for some time, and with each six farms or ranches that quit one Main Street business goes out also. But for the record, with less units to draw from, South Dakota lost 1,500 in 1967, leaving us only 48,500 at present. Both the number and the rate of attrition is greater.

I wish to comment now on some of the reasons that the family farmers and rancher has been leaving the land.

It is my opinion, based on documentary evidence, that ever since the great depression in the 1930's, certain large commercial and financial interest have been planning for the time when only a few will have control of agriculture. And these "planners" have been in a position to get the idea to the public that the family farmer was living in luxury, driving expensive cars, all at the expense of the taxpayer. In other words there has been a war, or a campaign, to keep farm prices down to the lowest minimum so that food will be low-priced to the public and competitive on the world market, while at the same