

Bankers won't take a risk on the small farmer. The government doesn't appear to give a damn. But McCains are able to get substantial government grants, and they can afford to take the kind of risk a small farmer can't.

A farmer used to be able to depend on his sons to help him on the farm. Today those sons work a 45-hour week for McCains, while the farmer, if he's serious about farming, works a 72-hour week. And that doesn't count the times his farm animals decide to bear their young in the middle of the night. The farmer has to go out and milk the cows before breakfast and again after supper. The McCains worker is through when his shift ends, whether the work is finished or not. A farmer can't even take a Sunday off. He can't have his cows each carrying two pails of milk on the day of rest.

Florenceville is no longer a village but a booming town, could be an affluent suburb of Toronto, swimming pools and rockgardens. Here McCain Foods operates a frozen packaging and dehydration plant. Materially, it would seem the people who work for McCains are better off. They have car payments and TV payments, and every house, trailer and shack boasts a snowmobile. But money as well as land has shifted hands. Progress has poked its nose into New Brunswick.

Progress has brought some great innovations, and possibly the end to a style of life. Nobody talks any more. Gone are the community gatherings, the barn raisings, the Sunday night community "sings," the large house parties with the local musical talent, rich in color and romance. Now everybody watches Bonanza, though the Baptists won't admit it.

The Baptist Church has lost its long buggy shelter, where the starlings used to nest and the husbands smoked their pipes through seven verses of The Old Rugged Cross.

Once in a while, there's a religious revival, and a band of preachers comes to town, and everybody gets saved for a week or two. People stop smoking, give up bootlegged liquor, stop swearing and wearing lipstick—and another crop of babies arrives next year.

Gone are the general stores which smelled of smoked meat and floor oil. Gone are the sheep

shearing, the carding and washing of wool. Gone are the quilting parties and the Red Cross. Gone are thrashing machines and butter churns. Gone are the salmon pools and fishing tales. Gone is the swimming hole; in its place pollution.

Progress has brought in the Beechwood Power Dam, but Island Park is flooded over. There are electric lights and running water, but no maple honey season. No more sap cans or bobsledding in the woods. The Hydro cut a swath through the maple grove.

The Trans-Canada Highway chops up the province, ripping the guts out of some of the best land in the country, and diesel tractor trailers whine through. To accommodate the highway they dug up homes and set them back in the fields on new foundations, where they stand in a silly pose. Even the inhabited houses have a temporary look, as if the owners were about to move to Ontario. And the house trailers, banked and sunporched, remain mobile homes, rootless, landless imposters.

The one-room schoolhouses have been torn down, sold or left to rot. Now they have regional high schools, pot and hash. The high schools close for three weeks in the fall to allow the youngsters to pick potatoes.

Progress has brought in welfare. Old-age pensions. Progress has made old people's homes available. There is an old folks home in Woodstock where they separate the husbands and wives, a cruel gesture in the name of morality. Progress has brought in children's allowances. And beer bellies. Motorcycles, contraception and summer holidays. One family, I see, doesn't go for that contraception bit. There are seven rows of diapers flapping in the wind in front of their shack.

But, with all this progress, do you know that you can still hear a June bug's whirr on a summer night? And in the dead of winter the Northern Lights still roar like a waterfall from the Big Dipper. And even with all the McCain processed food, you can still find fiddleheads* along the river banks and wild strawberries up on the ridge.

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*Young curled up fern favoured by gourmets.