

that sector of the local economy, agriculture will soon reach the point of total extinction.

Statistics in this respect describe a grim picture indeed. According to census figures, in 1951 some 15,000 people, out of a total population of 27,000 in Kent County, were living on farms. In 1966, 15 years later, the number of those living on farms had dropped to close to 4,000 representing a decrease of at least 10,000 people during that period of time.

This serious situation is reflected also in the acreage of land under cultivation. The 1951 census reported a total of 267,000 acres under cultivation. In 1966 the acreage had dropped to 138,000 acres, representing a decrease of almost 50 per cent since 1951. I suspect that the 1971 census figures, yet to be released, will reveal a larger decrease in both farm population and acreage.

While visiting the farming areas of the county recently in company with another farmer I made an actual count and learned that under 100 farmers are making their living from farming in Kent County. To make matters worse, only a few of those who remain are under the age of 50. It has become obvious therefore that the younger generation has rejected agriculture as a profitable way of making a living. What will be the end result if the present trend is allowed to continue?

According to projected figures issued by NewStart, a federal research agency now piloting its own project in Kent County, by 1980 the population of the county will have decreased to 15,000, representing a drop of almost 50 per cent in the total population over 25 years. It is estimated that in recent years about 1,000 people have been leaving the county annually, these being mostly young people in their productive years and who, for the greater part, leave the county permanently to seek employment in the New England states.

In the light of those circumstances, one might wonder what is likely to happen to the political and social structure of the county, and its regional identity, in the years that lie ahead. The same concern applies also to those human values which will be wasted as a result of the widespread disruption which will follow, and to the declining equity in farm land and farm property in the area.

According to information which I have obtained from pertinent sources, including the Farm Credit Corporation, land in eastern Canada purchased for agricultural use usually sells for between \$100 and \$200 per acre. That same type of land in my home district is no longer sought. There is no demand for agricultural land in my section of the country, and anyone who wishes to liquidate a piece of farm land generally has only one recourse, which is to offer that land for reforestation purposes to one of the lumber companies which in that case usually pay in the vicinity of \$10 or \$15 per acre. That is the only outcome for anyone having farm land to sell in that area.

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Let us now take a look at another group of figures supplied by NewStart with respect to the general economic picture of the region. These figures are related to what are called economic indicators and are taken from 22 communities in Kent County, which cover the county in

its entirety. The highest per capita income from those 22 communities stands at \$1,957 and the lowest stands at \$908. The poverty line set by the Special Senate Committee on Poverty in Canada stands at \$2,140 per capita. Included in the per capita incomes that I have mentioned is the sum total of transfer payments accruing in the region, such as unemployment insurance, family allowances, pensions, social assistance, and the like. These transfer payments equal 39 per cent of the total income of the county. If it is assumed that 11 per cent of the actual earnings of the county's population is now coming from outside the county—and this seems to be a fair estimate—it can be further assumed that the county is self-supporting to the level of 50 per cent only of the essential living requirements of its present population.

Honourable senators, it is not with a light heart, believe me, that I have proceeded to expose before this house conditions of such widespread deprivation affecting an area so close to me. The most startling paradox in Kent County, New Brunswick, is that so much want—20 per cent of the total population received social assistance during the last fiscal year—could exist in the midst of an abundance of agricultural resources which is being abandoned at an increasing rate every year. Surely there is something basically wrong with a system which allows such deplorable conditions to exist.

May I reveal at this stage that I have given some thought in the past to moving a resolution for the appointment of a subcommittee of the Senate to inquire into the whole matter of land use in Kent County. The county has a great deal of good land. There is a local population of over 20,000 people to be supplied with food which is presently being imported, for the most part. The area is situated at the doorstep to Moncton, a city of some 60,000 people which, as the designated growth centre, holds promise of an increasing market in the years ahead. However, had I moved that resolution I suspect some honourable senators might have argued that it would have been improper to appoint a committee to look into a local situation which is not of a general or national character. But who knows what a pilot project of such character might reveal? Who knows that the farmland conditions that exist in Kent County do not also exist, in whole or in part, in other areas of Canada, and that a remedy, if one was found, for the conditions that exist in Kent County would not also become applicable to conditions existing in those other parts of Canada?

In the Speech from the Throne the government announced its intention to establish a small farm development program. This is welcome; it will be a key weapon. By this legislation the government will be seeking to solve a problem that has long been at the root of agriculture's main difficulties. Therefore, it is appropriate that the problem should be fully assessed, in order to ensure that it is dealt with effectively. A Senate committee, such as the one I have in mind, could, I submit, facilitate attaining both an assessment of, and an equitable solution to, that problem. At some future date I may seek to ascertain the views of this house by moving that a committee be appointed to make a pilot study of the problem of small farms, with particular reference to Kent County.