

# Vermont Environmental Report

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE VERMONT NATURAL RESOURCES COUNCIL, A NON-PROFIT CITIZENS' CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION SUPPORTED BY MEMBERSHIP DUES AND CONTRIBUTIONS. VNRC, 26 STATE STREET, MONTPELIER -- VERMONT, 05602; (802) 223-2328. CHAIRMAN: DAVID R. MARVIN; EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: SEWARD WEBER; EDITOR--NATHANIEL FROTHINGHAM.

## 'HARTLAND' DEFEATED at the polls

In January, 1975 the Ottauquechee Regional Planning and Development Commission and the Vermont Natural Resources Council began work on the Hartland Open Space Project. This work was in response to a call for assistance from the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Hartland. At issue in Hartland and in a number of small, rural Vermont towns was the fate of the open countryside. Even if Hartland was not showing visible signs of development to the same extent as neighboring towns, it was in the path of growth, taxes were rising, people were selling out, land was being subdivided, land was going out of active agricultural use, and the Selectmen felt that the time had come to bring specific proposals before Hartland citizens. After over a year of work, four alternative programs were proposed to stabilize taxes on and help maintain present uses of open space in Hartland. One program covered farmlands; another all active agricultural land; a third all undeveloped land; and a fourth an area in Hartland known as the "Densmore Hill Open Land District."

These proposals were explained to voters through meetings, discussions, mailings and were finally offered to Hartland citizens at a formal, public vote. On Tuesday, May 25, citizens in Hartland went to the polls to give their verdict on the Hartland Project. The question was whether an open space program should be adopted in Hartland. When the votes were counted Tuesday evening, May 25, the message from Hartland was clear. The Hartland Project had been defeated overwhelmingly. The broad enabling authority sought by the Selectmen that would have permitted the Town to enter into tax stabilization agreements with individual landowners had been turned back by a 2-1 margin, 302-146.

If it was not readily apparent why the vote had gone against the open space proposals, it was certainly clear that these proposals had been given every chance of adoption. They had been initiated at a local level. (There is no body of government closer to rural Vermont than a local Board of Selectmen.) "Local control" had been served. These proposals had been thoroughly aired. The public had been given a solid crack at understanding them over a period lasting almost a year and a half. They had been endorsed by the Town Planning Commission and by the Town Board of Selectmen. So there was no lack of official support and understanding.

Why then, was the Hartland Project turned down? We went to Hartland, not only to answer this question, but to listen to individual citizens. We hope that the story that follows will enable VER readers and citizens across the State to draw some important lessons, lessons that will not be lost on other communities that are facing the same issues of growth and changing times.

The VNRC wishes to thank the Valley Publishing Corporation for its generous gift that has contributed substantially toward the costs of the June issue of the Vermont Environmental Report.



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# The Vote : 302--146 What Did the Results MEAN?

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Dorothy Crandall is the first woman in the history of Hartland to serve on the Board of Selectmen.

She and her husband bought their place in 1941 and she moved up to Vermont as a year-round resident in 1971. We sat outside in the morning sunshine and shared a plank of her picnic table in the garden. Below us was the road and the narrow valley that winds up past her place and past one of the twelve remaining working farms in the Town of Hartland.

"The vote... What did it mean?"

"I would have been amazed," said Dorothy Crandall, "if it had passed."

She took out a list, the points she had gathered from a conversation the night before. "Number one," she said, "the taxes would go up." She continued reading. "And the freedom of their rights would be endangered." Mrs. Crandall was talking about local people, people she liked, but people who were all the same "stubborn," who were stubbornly pounding away at an old theme, "Nobody is going to tell us what we are going to do with our land."

Mrs. Crandall talked of Woodbury, New Jersey, where she had lived. Woodbury, New Jersey, on its way now to becoming just another in the long line of anonymous, faceless, towns somewhere along the Northeast Corridor on the way to Philadelphia, a town that is now trapped on every side by development, where you cannot get out into the open countryside and the farms anymore. And Dorothy Crandall saw the same pressures growing in Hartland, Vermont, turning farms into subdivisions, subdivisions into homesites, homesites into settlements, and in the final logic of these absurd events, leading to developments and commercial strips.

It was still a raw time, three days after the vote, and feelings in Town were still sore.

"They didn't even bother to look at the booklet explaining the Project," Mrs. Crandall insisted. "They didn't bother to read it. They still think a nice 'Miracle Mile' (an intensively-developed, drive-in, commercial strip in nearby Lebanon, N.H.) would bring the tax rate way down."

"What is the next step?"

"We have not talked yet... Now we are going directly into zoning and we are going to get the same reaction, 'No-one is going to tell me what I am going to do with my land.'"

Across Hartland, to the east, towards Interstate 91, is Chet Eaton's house and land, a dairy farm with 42 milkers. Eaton is Chairman of the Town Planning Commission. He was working in the barn when I arrived. He talked about the prevailing currents of public thought.

"People do not sense there is a problem.. They do not see the Town developing that fast. People still think that the more development you have, the more people there are to pay taxes."

"Well, was there a problem?"

"The problem is there," said Eaton. "It is not immediate, but it is there."

"We have good listers," he explained. We found out that the land was not being treated all that bad." In one sense you could almost claim that Hartland already had tax stabilization, particularly when you looked at neighboring towns, Windsor to the south, Hartford to the north, where the land "was in" for two or three times what Hartland had.

Did this observation make sense? Was Hartland under siege? As an outsider, when you look at Hartland, drive its roads, -- it looks surprisingly intact, surprisingly rural. As Eaton remarked: "No-one seems to know why we are

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not in for heavy development." And yet visual appearances are deceiving. Statistically, the signs are there. The number of parcels on the grand list jumped 49 percent in the last ten years. The number of permanent homes jumped 45 percent. The number of second homes jumped 51 percent.

"Then why was the Hartland Project voted down?"

Eaton explained. "What I heard most was that that taxes would rise." People were wondering what they were going to get out of it if they voted 'yes.' People wanted a guarantee that if they voted for the tax agreements they could go out on the "protected land" as hunters, or with their snowmachines. When they learned that the tax proposals weren't going to give the any greater access to the land than they had already they said: "If these tax agreements aren't going to do something for us, why should we vote for them?"

Finally, there was this theme, more than twice-told. People don't like government messing; they don't want regulation; they don't want to ask if they can go out on a piece of land; they don't want to have to drive down to the Town Office and ask for a permit to put up a sugar shack or a chicken coop. No, Eaton didn't think that people understood the booklet that went out to every landowner explaining the Project. Nor did he think necessarily that people wanted to understand. "We got involved in emotional issues," he said.

Land is an emotional issue.

At one of the stores a proprietor refused point blank to discuss his vote or his views on the Hartland Project. He would have nothing to say except this, and he wouldn't elaborate: "I just didn't like it, so I voted against it."

At the ARCO Station, William Campbell sized up his feelings in one or two terse sentences: "We have too many outsiders coming in here to tell us what to do. Well, they come here and if they do not like it, they can go back."

Or Kim Perry, who peered down from his tractor with the engine turning over, and he just part of the way through what was likely to be a 14 to 16 hour day. Perry saw the whole thing this way: "A lot of out-of-staters trying

to cram something down our throats. They want to ride their horses and snowmachines across our land. I have to fence that land. I believe if you own a piece of land you should be able to do with it what you want."

The Postmaster talked some, quietly. He spoke of the old gentleman who could not see why he should give some fellow an advantage. "Why should I vote for something that is not going to help me?" But looking at the thing himself he said that people apparently could only see what the effect of the Project would be today. And, as he observed, the Hartland Project, was not for the present.

Win Sargent has a sign out in front of his place that says: "Country Broker, Vt.-- N.H. Real Estate."

Inside his house, Sargent talked the plain logic of economics. "One thing that bothered people," he reported, sympathizing with their incomprehension... "If a man invested a lot of money on a piece of land, why should someone else pay the tax?"

"Downcountry people... Were they coming to Vermont?"

They were, of course. And Sargent felt that if they had the money and if they wanted to pay for it, they should have the right to put a house on a piece of land. Sargent felt that Act 250 and the Capital Gains Tax had successfully slowed down the purchase of land in Vermont. A Hartland Project wasn't needed.

Sargent talked of the virtues of the "free enterprise" system. He wondered if the history of the free enterprise system was being taught in the schools. He saw individual initiative at the heart of things. Sure, a young couple could afford to buy a house, if they were frugal and saved. If a farmer was in business and had to depend on tax stabilization, then he shouldn't be in business. Sargent saw a clear unfairness in tax stabilization programs. "When you stabilize taxes," he admonished, "somebody else must make up the difference."

Senator Herbert Ogden, an influential figure in Hartland, was in Montpelier, as a member of the jury in the impeachment trial of Malcolm Mayo. Ogden had written two key letters to local newspapers shortly before the May 25th vote,



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pointing out problems with the Hartland Project.

"Did Senator Ogden agree that there was an open space problem in Hartland?"

"Oh sure, there is a problem," retorted Ogden quickly, "I have been saying this for years. I favored the purpose; opposed the method."

Then Ogden proceeded to discuss the method.

He wondered aloud about the effectiveness of tax stabilization agreements. Did they achieve their stated purpose? They protected the piece of land under agreement, no arguing that. But didn't this divert the "pressure to buy" onto unprotected land? And wouldn't this force up the "bid price" on land? And wouldn't these higher bid prices overcome the resistance of local people who didn't want to sell?

Ogden was sympathetic to small business. He looked at the modest enterprises afloat in Hartland: a tool company, a sign company, a finishing mill, a log buildings' operation. These businesses would have to bear some of the additional tax burden resulting from tax stabilization agreements. Ogden wondered if some of these businesses would be able to sustain this additional tax burden without closing. It was a question.

The solution Ogden offered was this: get rid of the property tax and substitute a local tax on incomes to support school costs. He saw a trend in this direction. Already the program of State Aid to Education comprises 35 percent of the whole expenditure, and State taxes are raised from income, not from property. "I think," said Ogden, with a look of anticipated satisfaction, "there is a good chance that this will be addressed in the next Session."

Harvey Jacobs is a Planner with the Ottawa-Quebec Regional Planning and Development Commission. Jacobs and VNRC's Darby Bradley had supplied the "technical" planning and legal advice to the Hartland Project.

"I was hopeful until the last week," admitted Jacobs. Then word began to seep through. Peo-

ple were saying they did not understand it and since they did not understand it, they were going to vote against it. Jacobs felt that people did not want to understand it.

Jacobs had considered the results of the vote. This is how he explained it.

First, was the ratio between small lot owners and large lot owners. That ratio is 2-1, and the result of the vote was 2-1. Jacobs felt that a large landowner could see that he had something to gain. But the small landowner; that was something else. Jacobs felt that the small landowner had not been successfully reached.

Part of the problem was the feeling of people about the amount of growth that was going on in the immediate vicinity of Hartland. Either people were unaware of it, or they had chosen not to worry about it. It was apparent that the vast majority of citizens in Hartland were simply unconvinced of the basic premise upon which the Project was based, namely this, that uncontrolled growth can be more expensive than controlled growth.

Jacobs, in his work with the Ottawa-Quebec Commission, had assisted a number of towns. He had developed a point of view about planning and the willingness of people to look ahead and cope with the future.

"People do not know how to think about the future," said Jacobs thoughtfully. "They do not know how to think about a community context. It is always 'what is good for me.' On the other hand, -- Jacobs paused. He could remember towns that had risen to collective action. But only after an emergency. "Planning seems to work after a major crisis," concluded Jacobs. And in Hartland there had been no major crisis.

"Had anything been achieved by the Hartland Project?"

Jacobs thought it was too early to write it all off as a total loss. These things take time, or as he observed: "Maybe it cannot pass the first time."

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Despite the unfavorable vote in Hartland, the Ottawa-Quebec Commission, the VNRC, and the State Planning Office feel that the issues considered in Hartland are still of pressing concern throughout the State. We feel that the ideas generated by the Hartland Project could be of value to other communities. For these reasons the FINAL REPORT of this Project, which was delayed until after the May 25 vote, will be published sometime this summer.

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# EDITORIAL

## H.R. 13500

SOMETIME VERY SOON, PROBABLY BEFORE THE END OF JUNE, THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES WILL VOTE ON H. R. 13500, A BILL WITH MAJOR IMPLICATIONS FOR ALL NON-PROFIT, TAX-EXEMPT ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS VNRC. WHAT IS AT STAKE IS THE MUCH-DEBATED AND TANGLED QUESTION OF THE "PROPER" ROLE OF NON-PROFIT, TAX-EXEMPT ORGANIZATIONS IN INFLUENCING LEGISLATION, OR IN AFFECTING THE OUTCOME OF EXECUTIVE POLICY-MAKING.

AS MATTERS STAND PRESENTLY, AN ORGANIZATION LIKE VNRC MAY HAVE ITS TAX-EXEMPT STATUS, CHALLENGED, EVEN REVOKED, IF, ACCORDING TO THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE (IRS) A "SUBSTANTIAL" PART OF ITS ACTIVITIES "CONSISTS OF THE CARRYING ON OF PROPAGANDA OR OTHERWISE ATTEMPTING TO INFLUENCE LEGISLATION." THE VNRC ITSELF WAS RECENTLY ENCUMBERED BY AN IRS CHALLENGE OF ITS TAX-EXEMPT STATUS. THIS CHALLENGE WAS BROUGHT ON SEPTEMBER 30, 1974 AND NOT FULLY RESOLVED IN THE COUNCIL'S FAVOR UNTIL JUNE, 1975.

THIS IS THE NUB OF THE PROBLEM, AND IT WAS THE NUB OF THE PROBLEM IN THE VNRC CASE: WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS WORD "SUBSTANTIAL"? IN THE WORDS OF ELVIS J. STAHR, WHO IS BOTH PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY AND CHAIRMAN OF THE COALITION OF CONCERNED CHARITIES IN SUPPORT OF H. R. 13500: "ALTHOUGH THE PRESENT LAW HAS BEEN IN EFFECT FOR APPROXIMATELY FORTY YEARS, NEITHER THE COURTS NOR THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE HAS BEEN ABLE TO DERIVE A UNIVERSALLY-ACCEPTABLE DEFINITION OF "SUBSTANTIAL". THIS AMBIGUITY HAS LED TO ENORMOUS PROBLEMS.

THE EXTENT OF THESE PROBLEMS WAS SUGGESTED IN THE STATEMENT OF ATTY. MORTIMER CAPLIN WHO TESTIFIED FOR H. R. 13500 BEFORE THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE ON MAY 12, 1976: "THE FACT IS THAT VAGUENESS IN THE CONTROLLING STANDARDS SOMETIMES RESULTS IN NON-UNIFORM APPLICATION OF THE LAW FROM DISTRICT TO DISTRICT OF THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE." AND CAPLIN WENT ON TO SAY, "CHARITIES, IN TURN, ARE LEFT COMPLETELY UNCERTAIN ON THE STANDARDS GOVERNING THEIR RIGHT TO TESTIFY BEFORE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES, COMMUNICATE WITH LEGISLATORS, PREPARE BACKGROUND STUDIES, OR OTHERWISE PARTICIPATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS."

BECAUSE H. R. 13500 DIRECTLY AFFECTS THE TAX-EXEMPT STATUS OF NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS, VNRC MAY LOBBY DIRECTLY FOR THIS PIECE OF LEGISLATION UNDER EXISTING LAW.

THE VNRC HAS EXAMINED H. R. 13500. IT IS MUCH SUPERIOR TO THE EXISTING LAW. IT CLEARS UP THE PRESENT AMBIGUITIES; IT SETS A CLEAR LIMIT ON THE SPECIFIC PROPORTION OF AN ORGANIZATION'S BUDGET THAT MAY BE EXPENDED FOR LOBBYING ACTIVITIES. IT SETS A SPECIFIC LIMIT ON THE AMOUNT OF MONEY THAT AN ORGANIZATION LIKE VNRC MAY SPEND TO INFLUENCE THE GENERAL PUBLIC ON LEGISLATIVE MATTERS.

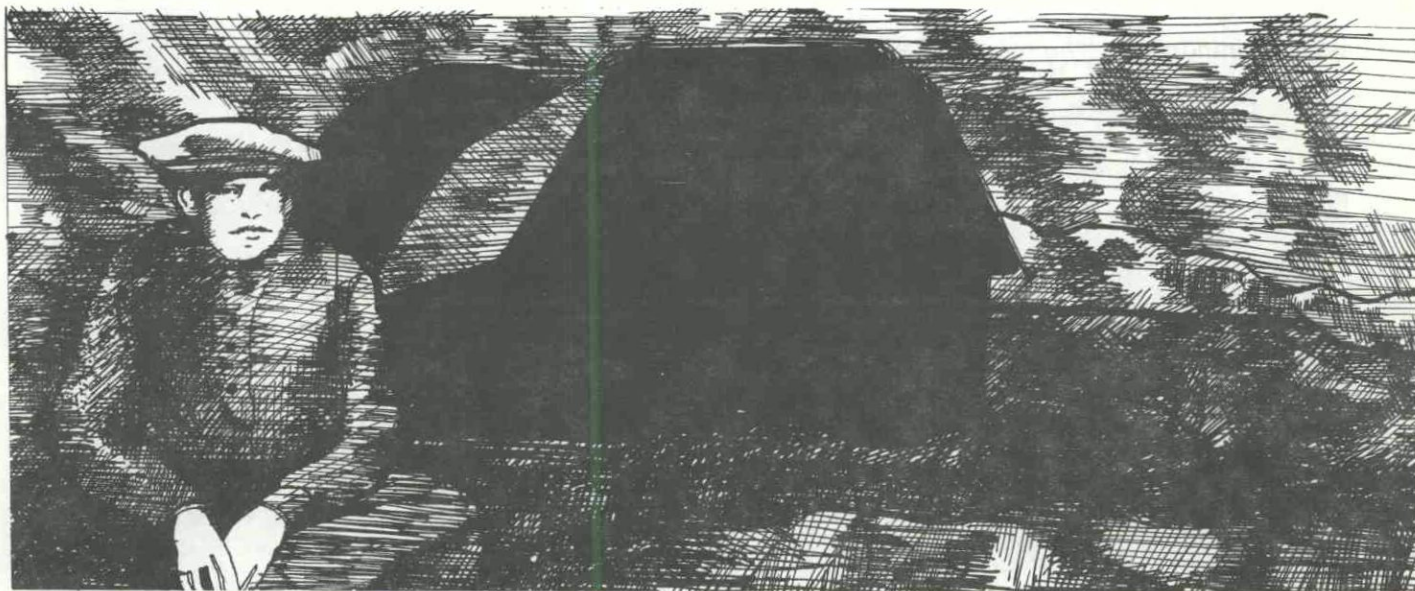
THE EFFORT TO REACH A CONSENSUS ON H. R. 13500 HAS TAKEN SEVEN YEARS. THIS BILL ENJOYS WIDE SUPPORT IN CONGRESS AND HAS THE ENDORSEMENT OF PRESIDENT FORD. VNRC SEES H. R. 13500 AS A TIMELY AND IMPORTANT BILL, A BILL THAT WILL ONCE AND FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, CLEAR UP THE DIFFICULTIES AND OBSCURITIES OF THE PRESENT LAW.

THE VERMONT NATURAL RESOURCES COUNCIL IS ASKING ITS MEMBERS TO WRITE TO OUR CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION IN WASHINGTON D. C. TO URGE THE SWIFT CONSIDERATION AND PASSAGE OF H. R. 13500.

— Seward Weber

These are the names and addresses of the Vermont Congressional Delegation: **Representative James Jeffords**, 501 Cannon Office Building, Washington D. C., 20515; **Senator Robert Stafford**, 5219 Dirksen Senate Building, Washington D. C., 20510; **Senator Patrick Leahy**, 1203 Dirksen Senate Building, Washington, D. C., 20510.





# FARMING & YOUTH

The following piece is the continuation of a series on Farming and Youth that began in the May issue of the Vermont Environmental Report. A future issue of the VER will devote space to interviews with young people who are farming, or who want to enter farming. The drawing is kindness of Karen Watson, Montpelier.

At the Farm Home Administration office (FHA) in Montpelier, the talk is all economics. Alan A. Comery, the FHA Washington County Supervisor, confirms Albert and Jean Conklin's estimate about the future of farming in most of Central Vermont. Comery talks about the albatross of debt. "It is difficult to justify farming on an economic basis. Time and money could better be spent elsewhere." About the small valley and hill farms that are remaining. Yes, he agrees, they would go out, and he says: "This is what all the experts predict. Unless there is some change these farms have become marginal. They are worth more to a speculator than as a farm."

Comery talks about where farming will survive. There are three "heavy" loan offices: in Newport, St. Albans, and Middlebury. He talks about the clay soils of the Champlain Valley. Here the value of the land will rise, but it will remain in farming.

It seems quite clear as Comery explains the loan programs, two of them, that anyone hoping to qualify for government assistance will have to offer what will survive close scrutiny as a paying proposition. There is an "operating" loan program to purchase cattle and equipment, a seven-year loan at 8½% interest, with an upper lending limit of \$50,000. And there is a "real estate" loan program to provide capital for farm ownership, a 40-year loan at 5% interest, with an upper lending limit of \$100,000. "It is difficult to get young people into it," says Comery, referring to farming today. "It is a monster as far as debt."

At the State Office of the Farm Home Administration (FHA), William Collins, Chief of Farmer Programs, has the same story. "We look at repayment ability. Can the farmer afford to repay? Is there a land base?" In figuring out a farmer's income you can estimate \$220 per cow. If he milks 30 cows that gives him an annual in-



come of \$6,600; if he milks 40 cows, \$8,800. And then you have your debt repayments. So the land base is all-important. You need two or three acres of tillage per cow. So the size of your herd hangs on the size of your farm. And your income hangs on all of that. "If the land base is there, o.k.," says Collins. "If you do not have the land base, not o.k."

This is the problem with these little farms outside of towns like Woodstock. These old fellows can hold on if they are out of debt. But when they need more land, when they have to increase their herds, or when things get tough and begin to slide, what are they going to do? "Who is going to subsidize them?" asks Collins. "Is it fair to the taxpayers to subsidize these people? And he adds this note: "We would like to keep all farms in business, but if they cannot repay, we cannot loan to them. Benjamin Huffman looked at the question of whether or not hill farms would survive in his 1973 study. He called the upland farming country "Class II" land. He found that the average age of farmers in this part of Vermont was 52. And he concluded that when these farmers retire, their farms will go out of production into "an urban or recreational use." This is what Collins sees as well. "This 30-cow man can get by if he has no debt." Fine. "But when these farms go out they become a little horse farm, or a place to raise a few beef. The man with money is the group who can do this."

William Collins looks out at the difficulties facing young farmers. "Maybe an owner will sell to a young person on contract and carry the mortgage himself." As to the notion of fathers passing a farm down to sons, Collins has this observation: "Generally, the son does not want any part of that farm." Collins has seen some instances where the father takes his son and gives him a real beating on the price. "It doesn't happen sometimes the way you think it should." And then again, sometimes the father is so deeply in debt, he has to get out. Collins says that nationwide, 70% of America's farms are free and clear of debt, but this doesn't hold for Vermont. There are 3,000 shippers of milk left. There is a lot of debt. Grain dealers are carrying a big load of unpaid bills, so are fertilizer suppliers, but the biggest share of all is in short term notes, issued through the local bank.

If holding onto a small upland or valley farm is hard, perhaps impossible, making a go of things in the rich and wide Champlain Valley is no cinch

either. Dean Jackson of Vergennes is a successful farmer. He is also an independent, straight talker. "I am the fourth generation here," he says. He has 150 head of cattle — 75 milkers. It's a family operation, just Jackson, his wife and son. There are 334 acres, and when asked to put a figure on the place — cows, machinery and all — if it were offered for sale tomorrow, Jackson says it would probably be put on the market for \$350,000 to \$375,000.

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## **"The government should not be in the business of loaning money."**

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The land in Addison County is as flat as you find it in Vermont, gently rolling. You can get the big machinery out on this land. As you sit on Dean Jackson's porch you can see the farms and the farm country for miles around. Jackson thinks the price of farms is "stupidly high." He talks about a nearby farm that recently sold "bare" (without cattle or equipment), 305 or 306 acres, for \$208,000. Or another one with 120 acres (with cattle and machinery) that sold for \$160,000. Jackson is convinced that federal credit is too easy. "The government should not be in the business of loaning money. They are throwing our money away. The supervision is just awful." Jackson knows the farms in the area. He sees farmers who have just got started and who find "they paid too much." He sees young farmers saddled with debts, the wife off working somewhere, and the poor fellow squeezing out his payments, or going under. "The wrong people are going into it," he asserts. "A lot of people who never farmed and who do not have the proper experience, are going into it." He looks off into the distance, and says, almost bitterly: "You might as well say it is government land, because they (these debt-ridden farmers) cannot make it, there is no way they can make it."

If government on the one side is feeding the inflation of land values through easy credit, then



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speculators are out there on the other side. "It's perfectly legal," says Jackson. These are business people who are buying these places on speculation. Just as Jackson finishes firing off this salvo, out comes Mrs. Jackson with a copy of the local newspaper, the **Valley Voice**. "You can keep it," she says. It is all there, captured in the first sentences of the story, "Caught between business expansion in Burlington to the north and Middlebury to the south, several small Valley towns find themselves facing the prospect of a sudden transition from farm town to bedroom community."

"This is what is forcing up the price of land," says Jackson. "It is the fellow who pays for it that sets the price." And in the Champlain Valley the "fellow who pays for it" is none other than the land speculation corporations going under such exotic names as "Algonquin Properties, Ltd." (Londonderry, Vermont). Algonquin is the parent corporation. Under Algonquin are separate, limited partnerships such as "Lemon Fair Investments, Ltd." or "Ramparts Associates, Ltd." or the "Vermont Stock Farm, Ltd." While most of the purchased land is still in farming, a small number of parcels are already being subdivided in lot sizes of 10.1 acres. (A lot size of 10.1 acres successfully escapes Vermont's Act 250 regulations.)

"And what about young people breaking into farming?"

"You almost hate to encourage them to do it. You cannot see how they are going to make it." Jackson has definite opinions. "If you have some farm background I would tell you to get to a farmer who would take you on. Start on your knees and work along with a farmer. Build up a little stock. Have a little equity."

Jackson is candid. He feels that the young person coming along faces a tougher situation than the one he faced. But he sees an inclination of kids to want to start out right on the top at the first moment. "I was 43 years old when I bought the farm from my mother. I was working by the month." As for development, Jackson doesn't think you are going to stop it, and he sees farmers being nibbled away before they will do anything. They won't organize. They won't get together. Farmers have seen a lot of things tried and they have seen a lot of things fail. The farm co-ops which started out fine, got too big, and then got subverted. As Jackson says, with experience in his voice, "they have been taken so many times, they are on their guard."

Young people and farming. As for passing these farms along, it will happen and it will not happen. This is the conventional wisdom. In Woodstock and in places like Woodstock, the farms will disappear. Everyone agrees. And once a farm goes out of production, it never comes back in as a productive farm. That also is agreed. In the Champlain Valley, in Franklin County, in part of the Northeast Kingdom, along the Connecticut River, farming will hold on longer.

Jean and Albert Conklin may be summing up that part of the world of farming that is lost to the coming generation, when they say: "I think the heart has been cut out of it. The whole structure of our world is changing. It's a terrible thing to have happen. The saddest part of the whole thing is that it has changed the social structure. We are thinking of the old Vermont values."

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## LETTERS

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### To the Editor:

My ire was roused by your front page article in the (April) **Vermont Environmental Report** "Richard Brett Reviews Barry Commoner Series on Energy."

I have supported your organization and other groups interested in and actively working to protect our environment and I should like to continue.

But such prominence given to and implied agreement with the position of Mr. Commoner with his fallacious arguments and his obvious ultimate goal—some form of State Socialism—with an all-wise "Central Committee" (my terminology) chaired undoubtedly by Mr. Commoner and with Mr. Brett a prominent member to determine "the right thing to do", will only



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serve to separate those of us who prefer calm logical discussion from supporting your organization's goals. I am assuming you are not interested in being used by those who would actually work toward an energy shortage and so to hopefully disrupt our whole economy to make us prey to the elitist social planners—and just maybe for our worldwide Communist antagonists who meanwhile are assuring themselves adequate energy from all sources—including nuclear!

It would take a whole book and a lot smarter guy than I am to write it, to answer Mr. Commoner's glib "conclusions."

May I ask that you take the time to read another review of this book—this from *Time Magazine* of May 31, 1976? I should like to see this review published in your paper. It raises questions worth considering.

I am also enclosing a copy of "Report of the Fiftieth American Assembly", April 22-25, 1976 Arden House, Harrison, N. Y.,—"Nuclear Energy."

This is self-explanatory and a reasoned statement made by a group of rather knowledgeable persons from many professions—very few with an any axe to grind (profit, that is!).

If, as Mr. Commoner states, "Solar power is available, free and non-polluting", there is no problem and we have nothing to talk about anyway! But he knows, Mr. Brett knows and you and I know, that the technology is not available to make solar power economically feasible in the immediate future. Meanwhile the United States depends on others for 30% to 40% of its power needs (oil) and we had better get about using nuclear power wisely or power shortages will so disrupt our very lives that the results cannot be foreseen.

I hope the Vermont Natural Resources Council will be an organization that works for rational solutions and avoids being used by those who would push us into the Communist-Socialist sphere.

If not, count me out.

Sincerely,

Judson T. Pierson, Sr  
Hanover, N. H.

### To the Editor:

It is my desire to make comments and try to set the record straight.

In a letter by Senator Arthur Gibb, Chairman of the Natural Resources Committee of the Senate (May VER), he stated that his Committee did not receive H. 473, a bill to ban fluorocarbon aerosol containers, until the last week of the session. The fact is that H. 473 was referred to that Committee on February 27th, one month before final adjournment March 27th (Senate Journal, p. 205). The House passed the bill on February 23rd with a roll call vote of 113 to 32.

The Natural Resources Committee of the Senate held a public meeting in Room 11 on March 10th, having received the same testimony that was given to the Health and Welfare Committee of the House. After due consideration by that Committee, the Committee gave final approval of the bill which the House then passed. (H. 473 was drafted after the Oregon bill which was voted into law.)

After the Senate's public hearing, Governor Salmon invited Senator Gibb and Senator Howland into his office and explained the importance of the bill and asked for approval. However, on March 18th, the Committee drafted a resolution JRS 47 calling for a study committee comprised of three members of the Senate and three members of the House to meet after adjournment for the purpose of evaluating the question of aerosol sprays, with particular attention to the expected report of the National Academy of Sciences. This Committee was to report back to the 1977 General Assembly on or before January 1, 1977 with specific recommendations for legislation, (Senate Journal, p. 3, 67-368). The 1977 General Assembly does not convene until January 5, 1977.

Due to the fact that no funds were available for summer committee studies, the House had to change the resolution to have the Legislative Council collect data on fluorocarbon aerosol sprays and the Council will conclude their studies on or before January 15, 1977 and file and make available on request to members of the General Assembly copies of their findings and recommendations (House Calendar, p. 611).

I was sponsor of H. 473 together with eighteen cosponsors who all felt that this important piece of legislation should have been given more consideration and passed by the Senate. It