

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.

FARMING & YOUTH:

IN THIS ISSUE AND THE AUGUST ISSUE THE VER WILL CONTINUE AND CONCLUDE ITS SERIES ON YOUNG PEOPLE AND FARMING.

HERE THE YOUNG FARMER SPEAKS OUT, TALKS ABOUT HIS PROBLEMS, AND DISCUSSES THE FUTURE OF FARMING IN VERMONT.

"The desire of the non-farm population to keep Vermont rural, open, yet prosperous, has been intensified by the changes in surrounding States and the crisis in nearby urban areas. There seems also to be an intuition that the values of independence, integrity, self-reliance, traditionally associated with farm family life, would somehow disappear along with the cultivated land and the cows if Vermont were to become totally an industrial and recreational State."

GOVERNOR'S FOOD COMMISSION, 1976

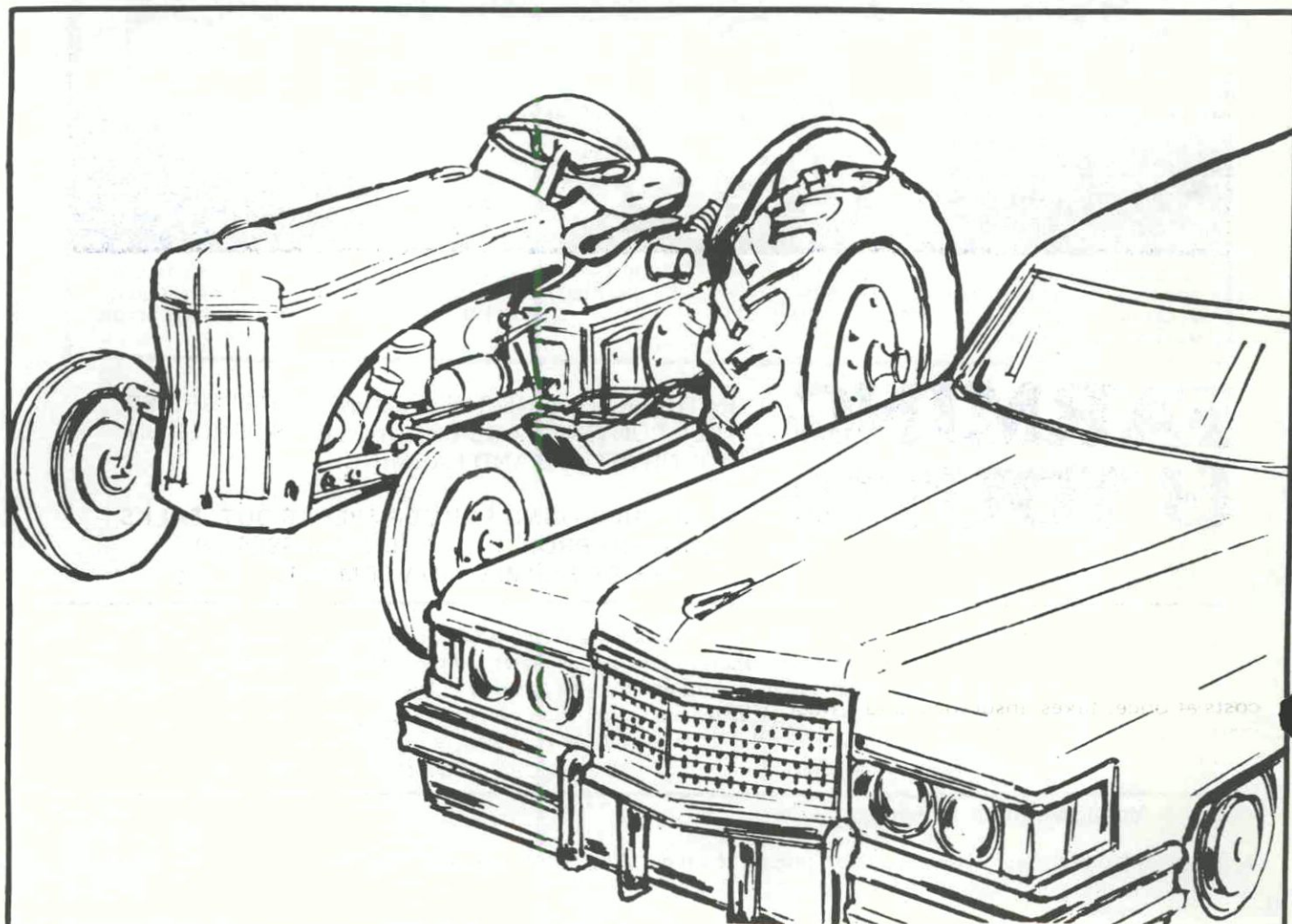
Young Vermont farmers...

Who are they? How are they getting started? What problems are they facing? Are they going to 'make it'?

Nothing simple can be said, because being individuals, young farmers are all different.

Granted those words of caution, we can observe these things.

- 1) **Getting started isn't easy.** It is very expensive and the risks are high.
- 2) **Most young farmers come from a farming background.** Of course there are exceptions. Many young farmers have kicked around at other work. But they know they want to farm; they know they want the farming life.
- 3) **Getting started takes time.** By the time he actually gets his own place, the young farmer is likely not to be so "young" anymore. He has been in it one way or the other for a long time. He has built up his tools, his herd, he has some equity. At the back of his mind is always the dream of owning his own place.
- 4) **Farming is a demanding occupation.** Young farmers are not apologetic. As a group they are versatile, intelligent, articulate and mature.
- 5) **There are plenty of young people who want to farm and can't.** These young people are hard to identify. They have melted back into the general population and are driving trucks, working in factories, going to school, looking for work. When you do find them, talk to them, they are like other people whose ambitions have been blocked, who feel defeated, they have little to say, and little inclination to say it.



Young Farmers Speak Out!!

1. **Ed Smith**

Ed Smith, 29, has a four-year lease on a house and barn and 176 acres of land in Brookfield, Vermont.

It may not be as good as owning your own place, your own cattle and equipment, free and clear of debt, but for someone starting out who doesn't have a cent to put down, it's a way to begin.

Smith, like most young farmers, has a justifiable fear of indebtedness.

"If you borrow \$100,000," Smith cautions, "the payments are going to be \$800 a month." And that might just be scratching the surface. Says Smith, knowingly, "If a fellow does not have a damn cent to put into it, you can use up \$200,000 just making ends meet."

Smith didn't just jump into dairy farming. He had good preparation. He was in the U.S. Air Force for close to four years. "I signed up for jet engines," and he adds, "It helped me out

quite a bit." At the end of his tour he had the choice of working for Pratt & Whitney, the airplane engine manufacturers in Hartford, Connecticut at \$6.00 an hour, or doing something else. Smith came back to Vermont. He feels there are some things that are more important than money.

Smith has worked as a carpenter. He worked on Lawrence Camp's farm in North Randolph. He feels that direct 'on-the-job' experience is indispensable. In June, 1972 he started in on his own and bought a herd that now numbers 60 head, 39 milkers.

Smith has no complaints about the four-year lease arrangement with Pete and Buzzy Lipman who own the farm. They have let him farm the place without interference. The arrangement has worked out well.

Ed Smith and his wife, Claudia, see a lease arrangement as an intelligent way to make a start in farming. The alternative is taking on all the costs at once: taxes, insurance, and a huge debt load. This way, Ed Smith will have his cows paid for in two or three years. He already has a couple of tractors and an old baler. He admits that there are some major improvements you wouldn't wish to make on someone else's farm. And someday he would like to own his own place. For now, however, the 176 acres in Brookfield is a good, interim solution.

2. Steve Adams

Steve Adams, 23, of Benson, Vermont, thinks that dairy farmers in Vermont are taking a bad beating.

Adams started farming at 16. It was his family's place, had been his family's place for generations. "I sold out," he says bitterly, "because I could not afford it. I had 50 acres, 80 head of cattle, and I owed \$85,000."

Adams is now leasing a 215-acre farm in Benson from a property-owner from out-of-state. He has 40 head of cattle and he milks 36 cows.

Steve Adams minces no words as he talks.

He has analysed the problems facing the Vermont

dairy farmer. Overall, he thinks that farming in this State is washed up. The only people who can afford to live here is the rich man. Some of those rich men are farmers, but Adams thinks they got rich from other sources than farming.

The way Adams sees it, it's an unequal struggle. On one side are the concentrated centers of power and wealth, the big national outfits, the sellers of grain, the packers of meat, the shippers and processors of milk. On the other side is the individual farmer, boxed in with debt, and, it would seem, almost congenitally incapable of banding together to avoid extinction.

Adams sees abuses everywhere. He sees farmers selling at wholesale and buying everything they require at retail. At the same time he sees milk on its way to Boston, with farmers paying for the shipping, and then, for the advertising. He sees contracts for the price of milk being negotiated in May and June when there are seasonal surpluses so that the companies can keep the prices down.

In 1973 he remembers that milk dropped \$2.00 a hundred weight. At the same time, baling twine went up 300%, grain went up 50%, machinery went up 50% and electricity skyrocketed 100%. There will be no fairness, contends Adams, and no future for dairy farming, until the farmer is paid for his costs of production.

Adams goes back to the introduction of the 'bulk tank' as the classic example of how the individual milk producer has been 'taken' by the milk companies. First the companies offered a five-cent bonus to farmers who would put in a bulk tank. "That nickel did it!" says Adams scathingly. Then the companies, when they had enough farmers on line with bulk tanks, announced that they would stop picking up unless the rest of the farmers put in bulk tanks. So farmers rushed to install bulk tanks. Then the nickel bonus was cancelled. Now, reports Adams, the milk companies are so powerful that they can say to farmers, "Unless you are producing 5000 pounds of milk a day we will not pick up. And if we do pick up, we will slap on a 'stop-charge.'"

Steve Adams discerns a method and an object in all of this. The milk companies would rather

Continued on p. 6

Ex-Gov. Davis gives a message to Vermont...

Bi-Centennial-July 76

NOT LONG AGO ONE OF OUR NATIONAL WEEKLY MAGAZINES PUBLISHED AN INTERESTING AND THOUGHT-PROVOKING PHOTOGRAPH. IT WAS A PICTURE OF A BUSY CENTRAL CORNER OF NEW YORK CITY TAKEN IN EARLY FORENOON! MANY HUNDREDS WERE SHOWN HURRYING TO WORK AND ELSEWHERE GOING ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS. THE SIGNIFICANT THING WAS: NOT A SINGLE SMILE ON A SINGLE FACE AMONG THAT LARGE CROWD OF PEOPLE. AND YET, AS I READ THE NEWSPAPERS AND LISTEN TO T.V. AND RADIO IT OCCURS TO ME THAT THAT PICTURE MAY WELL BE TRULY REPRESENTATIVE OF OUR TIMES. DO YOU READ IT AS I DO? ONE IN WHICH WE FIND MANY MILLIONS OF AMERICANS CONSUMED BY SELF-DOUBT,--EDGY; WITH A FEELING THAT THEY HAVE BEEN LET DOWN BY THEIR GOVERNMENT? TOO MANY OF US SHAME-FACED AND GUILT-RIDDEN? MANY OF US CARPING AT OUR INSTITUTIONS. FINDING FAULT WITH SO MANY THINGS AS THEY ARE. ANGRY AND FRUSTRATED AND TERRIBLY CONFUSED.

PERHAPS THEN IN THIS BI-CENTENNIAL YEAR WE DO INDEED NEED TO PAUSE A BIT TO ANALYSE OURSELVES AND TRY FOR A MORE ACCURATE PERSPECTIVE. THE PURPOSE OF THE BI-CENTENNIAL EFFORT IS TO REVIEW THE GOALS AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PAST IN ORDER THAT WE MAY GET A CLEARER SENSE OF DIRECTION.

SO -- IS THIS UNHAPPY, GRIM SPIRIT JUSTIFIED BY THE EVENTS OR THE CONDITIONS OF OUR TIMES?

SURELY EVERYONE OF US HAS A CATALOGUE OF THINGS AROUND US THAT WE DON'T LIKE AND CAN EASILY GET ANGRY ABOUT. DANGEROUS, CRUEL INFLATION; UNEMPLOYMENT; FAILURES IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM; WASTE AND POLLUTION OF OUR NATURAL RESOURCES; LOSS OF FAITH IN OUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES; SHORTAGE OF ENERGY; HIGH TAXES; INSUFFICIENT HOUSING AND SO ON AND ON.

I DO NOT BELIEVE THIS COUNTRY SHOULD ENTER THE THIRD CENTURY WITH EYES DOWNCAST, SHAME-FACED, OR FEELING GUILTY. FOR MY PART I AM PROUD TO BE AN AMERICAN. I AM PROUD THAT MY COUNTRY HAS DONE MORE THAN ANY NATION IN THE WORLD TO SUSTAIN AND DEFEND FREEDOM OF ACTION AT HOME AND ABROAD. BECAUSE THERE HAS BEEN DISHONESTY, DECEIT AND BROKEN TRUST IN HIGH PLACES DOES NOT ALTER THE FACT THAT THERE ARE MANY MAGNIFICENT QUALITIES IN OUR COUNTRY. BECAUSE MANY DIS-TRUST THE DIRECTION OF FOREIGN POLICY; BECAUSE SOME METHODS OF THE C.I.A. DO NOT MEET THE HIGHEST STANDARDS. BECAUSE SOME MEN IN GOVERNMENT SERVICE HAVE BETRAYED THEIR TRUST IS NOT AT ALL THE WHOLE STORY -- OR EVEN A GREAT PART OF THE WHOLE STORY. THERE ARE THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF HONEST MEN AND WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT -- DEDICATED TO OUR COUNTRY'S GOALS AND PRINCIPLES, DEDICATED TO THEIR JOBS AND THROUGH THEIR JOBS, TO US.

I AM GRATEFUL AND PROUD THAT OUR SYSTEM FUNCTIONS SUFFICIENTLY TO BRING THESE MATTERS TO LIGHT. THAT OUR SYSTEM OF JUSTICE HAS THE VITALITY AND THE WILL TO PUNISH WRONGDOING IN HIGH PLACES WHEN IT IS BROUGHT TO LIGHT.

THE PAST CAN BE A VALUABLE GUIDE TO THE FUTURE.

I SEE GREAT PROMISE IN THE FUTURE. I LOOK AT THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE 20TH CENTURY SOMETIMES WITH AWE, SOMETIMES WITH PRIDE, BUT NOW WITH A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT THIS COUNTRY'S STRENGTH REALLY IS.

DURING THIS CENTURY WE HAVE ACHIEVED A SUM TOTAL OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES THAT MAKES THE YEARS BEFORE LOOK LIKE THE DARK AGES. THESE ACHIEVEMENTS HAVE INVOLVED NEARLY EVERY ASPECT OF PEOPLE'S LIVES -- TRANSPORTATION, THE AUTOMOBILE, THE AIRPLANE AND SEA TRAVEL; CONSTRUCTION OF ALL KINDS, CHEMISTRY, PHYSICS, ELECTRICITY, RADIO, RADAR, TELEVISION, ALL MAJOR ADVANCES IN MEDICINE AND SURGERY -- THE LIST IS ENDLESS.

THEN WHY ARE WE SO UNHAPPY, SO GRIM, SO FRUSTRATED AND SO CONFUSED?

WINSTON CHURCHILL, COMMENTING ON THESE ADVANCES ONCE GAVE HIS ANSWER IN PART AS FOLLOWS:

This vast expansion was unhappily not accompanied by any noticeable advance in the stature of Man, either in his mental faculties or his moral character. His brain got no better, but it buzzed the more. The scale of events around him assumed gigantic proportions while he remained about the same size... Our need was to discipline an array of gigantic and turbulent facts...

SURELY THAT PERCEPTIVE STATEMENT SEEMS EVEN MORE VALID TODAY.

MY OPTIMISM STEMS FROM TWO THINGS. FIRST THE FACT THAT WE ARE GETTING OUR PROBLEMS AND OUR WEAKNESSES OUT ON THE TABLE WHERE WE CAN DEAL WITH THEM. AND SECONDLY, I SEE CLEAR SIGNS THAT WE ARE STRIVING AS NEVER BEFORE TO "DISCIPLINE THIS ARRAY OF GIGANTIC AND TURBULENT FACTS."

ONE EXAMPLE WILL SUFFICE. IN THE FIELD OF NATURAL RESOURCES. MANY ARE DISCOURAGED THAT WE HAVE NOT ACHIEVED MORE. I AM NOT. I AM ELATED. I AM HAPPY TO SEE THAT MORE PEOPLE ARE ENLISTED IN THIS CAUSE THAN EVER BEFORE; THAT OUR LAWS, OUR PRESS, OUR ORGANIZATIONS, ALL RECOGNIZE THE GIGANTIC NATURE OF THE PROBLEM. AND WE ARE ON OUR WAY. ONLY A FEW YEARS AGO JUST A FEW VOICES WERE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS.

I AM ENCOURAGED TOO BY THE RAPIDLY INCREASING PROPORTION OF ENERGY AND MONEY THAT IS BEING APPLIED TO THE SOLUTION OF OUR TWO GREATEST PROBLEMS: ENERGY AND POLLUTION. I AM CHEERED BY THE COUNTLESS NUMBERS OF PEOPLE INVOLVED IN EXPERIMENTATION WITH THE TECHNOLOGY OF ALTERNATE ENERGY SOURCES: SOLAR, WOOD -- AND OTHERS.

JUST THE OTHER DAY RIGHT HERE IN VERMONT, I WITNESSED WITH SURPRISE AND RENEWED HOPE THE EFFICIENT OPERATION OF AN AUTOMOBILE ENGINE AND A FURNACE POWERED BY HYDROGEN. HYDROGEN THE MOST ABUNDANT NATURAL RESOURCE WE HAVE! AND NOT A BIT OF POLLUTION FROM ITS CONVERSION BY ELECTROLYSIS FROM WATER AND ITS EXPENDITURE AS ENERGY. IT AWAITS PERFECTION. BUT THE PROMISE IS THERE. IT'S ALL AROUND US.

NO, THIS IS NOT THE TIME TO RUN OUT ON OUR INSTITUTIONS. IT IS THE TIME TO BECOME PERSONALLY MORE VALIANTLY INVOLVED. AND WITH A SONG IN OUR HEARTS AND A SMILE ON OUR FACE.

THERE ARE GREAT DAYS AHEAD FOR THIS AND SUCCEEDING GENERATIONS IF WE WILL BUT SIMPLY RE-FURBISH OUR FAITH IN OUR CAPACITY TO "DISCIPLINE THE ARRAY OF GIGANTIC AND TURBULENT FACTS" OF LIFE AROUND US AND KEEP OUR AMERICAN GOALS CLEARLY IN MIND.

--- Deane C. Davis

(Deane C. Davis was Governor of Vermont from 1968 until 1972 and was a member of the Board of Directors of VNRC.)

vnrc announcements

KAREN McINNES TO LEAVE VNRC

VNRC will be losing the services of Karen McInnes in mid-August. Ms. McInnes joined the staff of the Council in 1973. She has done a tremendous job as Secretary and Office Manager since then. She will be missed, but we wish her well as she moves to Massachusetts.

VER TO ACCEPT ADVERTISEMENTS

Over the next several weeks the Editor of the VER will be accepting advertisements for a page that will be assembled under the heading of "Resources." We hope to carry advertisements that will be appropriate to this publication and of service to our readers. For information on rates, please contact N. Frothingham, at VNRC.

deal with fewer farmers. So they are squeezing the little fellow out, one by one. It is easier to tell 10 farmers that you are cutting the price of milk than to tell 100 farmers who might not wish to agree.

Adams looks back. When his grandfather owned the family farm in Brandon the place was worth \$1500. That was in 1932. When his father took over, the farm was worth \$15,000. Of course there had been improvements. In Steve Adams' own time the same farm was worth \$60,000. So much for the past. According to Adams, who has heard this through the grapevine, the man who bought the place from him, is now in debt for \$150,000.

What is the answer? If there is an answer Adams feels it's in getting farmers to organize. But farmers are so tied down with debt that they can still be bought off for five or ten cents a hundred weight. Steve Adams and others are trying to reach dairy farmers. "You have to cut the middleman out," insists Adams. The problem with too many farmers is that they are so deep in debt they cannot sell and get out. They're trapped. "We just want to control the product, at a fair price, at a fair profit, and with a majority vote for farmers."

The alternative is not too palatable. "My children, the way I see it," declares Adams tersely, "they will be working for someone. Janitors, custodians, -- working for nothing."

3. Andrew Bacchi

Andrew Bacchi, 30, and his wife, Barbara, have a homestead in Shaftsbury, near Bennington, Vermont. It is eight acres, a modest place as farms go. The sign at the end of the driveway along Route 7 says: "Morning Hill Farm -- Fresh Eggs -- the bacchis."

The Bacchis had been living in New York City. Barbara was a secretary; Andy was a journeyman electrician, and had been for 12 years. They were making good money. "My wife and I decided we did not like New York City," Andrew Bacchi says simply.

One summer, four or five years ago, the Bacchis

came up to Vermont for the Mt. Equinox Hill Climb. They fell in love with the State. "It's a romantic State, a 'people' State," declares Andrew Bacchi with undiminished conviction.

Bacchi, like many others, was looking for "complete self-sufficiency." "I thought I would be a farmer," he says. "I thought I would have time for crafts." Then he explains. "I was a city boy. I was green. It takes time. It was not a realistic approach."

Just the same, life has worked out.

Bacchi came to Vermont fully expecting to find employment as a qualified electrician. That was in 1973. When the bottom dropped out of the construction business the demand for electrical work dried up. Bacchi took a job as janitor at the Shaftsbury Elementary School, a piece of work he enjoys. He knows the kids, all 284 of them, their parents, and feels that the job has given him an indispensable link with his local community.

The 'fresh egg' business has been a great success. The Bacchis started out with 12 hens in 1973. Today there are 250 birds and the demand for eggs continues. The key to this success is what Bacchi describes as the 'unique taste' of a really fresh egg. He explains that a supermarket egg can be labelled 'fresh' even though it may have sat around at a farm for as much as thirty days, to say nothing of subsequent warehousing, and these eggs deteriorate.

Morning begins at 4.30 a.m. There is a cow to be milked by hand. That takes an hour. There are hens to be fed. Bacchi reports to the Elementary School at 7 a.m. and works an eight-hour day. Barbara grades the eggs, packs them and makes deliveries to the 22 people on the route and the three restaurants.

Bacchi has a 'Master Plan' for the next five years. It includes increasing the number of his hens from 250 to 2000 birds. He wants to keep a few sheep and eventually hopes to pasture as many as 100 head on land he can rent nearby. At some point Bacchi wants to go into full-time farming. Somewhere deep in his remembered past is the desire to be a dairy farmer. As a kid in Queens, New York, he remembers the last surviving dairy farm. "I like the smell of cows, the feel of them, I want to work with them," he says today enthusiastically.

HELP WANTED: The Council would be happy to hear from anyone in the Barre-Montpelier area interested in becoming the VNRC Office Manager. We are looking for a person with an interest in the environmental problems of the State, skill in typing, an engaging personality, and an ability to perform a wide range of office tasks. The pay is modest but the working environment is informal and friendly. Anyone interested or acquainted with anyone who might be interested in this position should contact Seward Weber at the Council, (802) 223-2328.

LETTERS:

To the Editor:

Since I am the Editor for our **BCRC Newsletter** (we are changing the name to the **Bennington Regional Report** this coming edition) I am always interested in criticizing the various news releases that come our way. I certainly liked your review of our **The Vermont River** and would like you to add in your next **VER** that copies are available at our office for \$3.00. If this is possible, fine.

We are all pleased to have these manuals available and if the demand is great we plan to have a second printing.

Sincerely,

Millis M. Ringheiser
Executive Secretary to the
Associate and Executive
Directors

Bennington County Regional Commission,
Arlington, Vermont, 05250

To the Editor:

Regarding the decline of farming in Vermont, a couple of years ago I had what I thought was an inspired idea. It was that the State sponsor a half dozen or so pilot programs for carefully-selected young farmers, donating State-owned land and lending money to get the young farmer started-- capital being of course a major stumbling block. I talked to my local Representative who happens to be a farmer (he was lukewarm) and wrote a letter to Governor Salmon, who wrote back that he thought it a fine idea-- and he referred my letter to then Agricultural Secretary O'Brien. O'Brien wrote to say that such

opportunities were already available through various agencies, federal or state, or both, I forget which. Maybe so, but if the State cares about farming, why doesn't it spend a relatively small amount of risk money for a pilot program which, if successful, could be expanded with time?

Yours truly,

Addison Merrick
Craftsbury Common, VT.

(The **VER** asked Deputy Agricultural Commissioner Ronald Allbee to respond to Mr. Merrick's letter. The following is Mr. Allbee's response.)

To the Editor:

You have asked me to respond to a suggestion that a State-supported pilot program be established to encourage young people to enter farming. I wish I could say that a problem does not exist for the young who want to enter farming. However, there is a problem for those wishing to enter who do not possess some family ties in agriculture. The cost of entering farming today is such that only those with such family ties find financing easily accessible.

The suggestion was that the State establish a training program on State-owned land or make State land available to young farmers. I think it is a fine idea, but I do not perceive it as a major problem facing Vermont agriculture.

I believe that an immediate priority for the State of Vermont, if agriculture is to continue, is the purchase of development rights. The approach will certainly be expensive and will require an increase in taxation. Another priority is a form of land use taxation. Through the enactment of the above programs and a modi-

HELP WANTED:

THE VERMONT NATURAL RESOURCES COUNCIL NEEDS YOUR HELP. WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN THE VNRC, BECOME AN ACTIVE MEMBER, AND HELP US IN OUR WORK OF PROTECTING, VALUING, AND DEVELOPING THOSE QUALITIES THAT MAKE VERMONT UNIQUE.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES: STUDENT/LOW INCOME (\$5.00) - INDIVIDUAL (\$10.00) - FAMILY (\$12.50)
NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION (\$15.00) - ASSOCIATE (\$25.00) - BUSINESS (\$50.00)

NAME	MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY	\$
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fication of government lending programs young people could enter farming.

Traditional training is available for those wishing to enter dairy farming. I do think that we might modify some of the traditional agricultural training for those interested in diversified agriculture.

I have contacted the Agency of Environmental Conservation concerning the amount of suitable agricultural land in State ownership which is not presently leased. They have indicated that out of a total of 1,328 agricultural acres, only 421 acres are available. Land is available, but is scattered and certainly could not be farmed as a single unit. I do think that the State has the responsibility of encouraging the productive use of its lands.

Sincerely,

Ronald Allbee
Deputy Commissioner of
Agriculture

(Mr. Allbee attached to his letter an "Agricultural Land Use Report.")

1. Total State-owned land 227,594 acres
 - A. Water Resources 1,352 acres
 - B. Forests & Parks 144,907 acres
 - C. Fish & Game 18,182 acres
2. Total usable agricultural land 1,328.2 acres.
 - A. Total agricultural land leased 907.4 acres
 - B. Total agricultural land available 420.8 acres

EDITOR'S NOTE

This month's issue of the VER will be arriving about one week later than usual. I regret this delay, which occurred because of a death in my family.

VNRC

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THIS ISSUE --- JULY -- 1976 -- No. 53

contents:

- FARMING & YOUTH, -- Part Three
Young Vermont Farmers Speak Out
- FORMER GOV. DEANE C. DAVIS
A Bi-Centennial Message to Vermont

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

VERMONT NATURAL RESOURCES COUNCIL, 26 STATE STREET, MONTPELIER, VERMONT