

Comment by the Editor

IN TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

Lo! the poor Iowa farmer, wailed the editor of a dairy paper, "who has no place to live but in a nice, big house" surrounded by bigger and better barns; "no way to talk to his neighbors except by telephone; no way to get his mail except by daily rural free delivery; no way to go to town except in his rubber-tired buggy"; and "no way to avoid being a millionaire except by dying or giving his property away." But, he continued, the "question is not how great and prosperous are we to-day, but how great and prosperous will we be twenty-five years from now?"

A quarter of a century has passed since then. Who would have the temerity to assert that the welfare of the farmer is a conspicuous achievement of that period? A comparison of conditions in 1910 and 1934 reveals many similarities. The average value of farm land twenty-five years ago was \$96 an acre and that is about what it is worth now, though the price rose to \$227 in 1920. Rural population has clung close to a million, as if there were virtue in such a round number. Life on the farm has been less attractive than in town,

however, for urban population has increased. On the face of conditions, the plight of the Iowa farmer seems to be little different than it was, though meanwhile he may have travelled up hill and down in a circle.

And yet these evidences of agricultural equilibrium are more general than particular, more apparent than real, more fortuitous than permanent. Household conveniences which contribute to the comfort of country life have constantly increased until 84 per cent of farm homes are equipped with telephones, 20 per cent are lighted with electricity, and 50 per cent have radios. The rubber-tired buggy of 1910 has been replaced on nine-tenths of the farms by an automobile. At the first Dairy Cattle Congress a "curious individual" counted 121 motor cars at one time! This year there was not parking space for all.

Dairying especially has kept pace with the growth of the great exposition at Waterloo. Though the number of dairy cattle on Iowa farms has decreased, milk and butter production has increased. Instead of a general estimated average of 140 pounds of butter fat a year, the average for over 25,000 cows tested in 1934 was 325 pounds. The present "average" cow is worth about \$20 more than her great grandmother.

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