The number of farms had declined from 55,698 in 1880 to 7,000 in 1982, while the national figure was dropping from 6 million to 2 million.

In Maine as in the nation, farmers were becoming too efficient for their own good. The number of hours required to produce a bushel of wheat dropped from 344 in 1800 to 39 in 1950, and to 7 hours in 1984. The number of hours needed to grow a bale of cotton dropped from 601 in 1800 to 5 hours in 1984.

The *World Watch* publication for April disclosed the role of machinery in this revolution. Farmers took .44 barrels of oil to produce a ton of grain in 1950; and 1.14 barrels in 1985. The machinery revolution was accompanied by the fertilizer revolution—rising from 11 pounds an acre in 1950 to 57 pounds in 1986. Until 1950, crop acreage increased total output; since then it has been increased fertilizer.

Tractor horsepower on farms is still rising—from 100 million horsepower in 1950 to 300 million in 1985.

Mechanization of agriculture continues—a recent article by Ward Sinclair in *The Washington Post* reported the change wrought by the invention of a tomato harvester. Since its sale at $150,000 a machine, the number of tomato growers in California had dropped from 4,000 to 600. Average tomato farm acreage has gone up from 32 to 363. The number of laborers used in the fields is down by 30,000 in a decade. The price of canned tomatoes has gone up 111 percent. The tomatoes have had to be developed to have thicker skins.
Win Libby recently reported in the *Post* on what has happened to dairying nationally. There are farms with 3,000 and 4,000 milking cows. Big business by any standard.

Society is adjusting to these dramatic changes with difficulty. My own career began in the farm crisis of the twenties. Farm groups tried to pass the McNary Haugen bill to increase their prices. Farm organizations demanded parity prices—the return to the price relationships between farm products and other products that existed from 1909 to 1914. Now the Middle West is in the midst of another great farm depression.

It is remarkable that an industry that has been so successful in the increase of its productivity has not yet solved the farm problem.

I have recently driven from Fargo, North Dakota to Luverne, Minnesota and back North to the Twin Cities. I have been struck by the evidences of a declining rural America—half the farm buildings abandoned, small towns drying up, cities expanding and even booming. It brings to mind the melancholy words of Goldsmith in *The Deserted Village*: Ill fares the land/To hastening ills a prey/Where wealth accumulates/And men decay.

My great, great, great grandfather, William Binford, settled on a farm in Baldwin, Maine, in 1781, receiving a grant of 100 acres as part of a settlement on the descendants of participants in King Phillips War. I visited the farm several years ago and found it still in the family, occupied by Perle Thorne and Mrs. Thorne. Mrs. Thorne was a descendant of the settler of 1781. Jeremiah Binford, my great/grandfather, left Maine for Iowa in the 1830s. His son, Jeremiah Binford, my great grandfather settled on a farm in Rock County, Minnesota. His great grandchildren still farm that property. Most of us descend
from farm families. This, of course, is inevitable, for most Americans were farmers a few generations ago. Few of us remain on farms today—unlikethose we honor here today—less than two million of the six million farm families at the peak of our farm population.

A hundred years ago there were 55,698 farms in Maine. They averaged around 110 acres per farm, of which only 49 acres were in fields. Some 7,000 were of less than 20 acres. In the census of 1860, they had 60,637 horses, 147,000 milch cows, 452,472 sheep, 54,000 swine.

Farming in Maine reached its zenith in 1880. Censustakers found more farms, more crop acreage, more livestock here than in any year before or since. By 1940, the number of sheep had declined to 38,517 from a high of 565,918 and most other crops and livestock went down—but dairying was high, along with poultry raising.

Despite this melancholy reflection, and the doubts inspired by statistics, Maine may be adapting to changed circumstances better than the great commercial farming areas of the rest of the country. Maine rural people have had a longer experience in multi-purpose rural life, mixing farming with salt water farming, supplementing farm income with off-the-farm work, retaining the satisfactions of rural life by mixing vocations, hanging on to many of the comforts of rural Maine while getting rid of some of the drudgery of farming of 200 years ago.