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Agricultural Economics & Management

MILTON KEYNES 1973
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CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Preface	
Acknowledgements	
Part I Farming at Milton Keynes 1973	1
Part II The Leavers	6
Part III Case Studies	9

PREFACE

In 1967 this Department carried out a comprehensive survey of the agricultural population and their farms in the area that had been designated for the new city of Milton Keynes. A report of that survey - Milton Keynes 1967 : An Agricultural Inventory - was published in 1968.

That report was the first of a series which it was hoped would examine the effects of large scale urban development on agricultural communities. It was followed by a second survey and report - Milton Keynes Revisited : 1971.

Now, this third report follows a third survey carried out in the area in the Spring of 1973. The report is in three parts. The first describes the continuing change in the patterns of land use and ownership in the area; the second part describes, in general terms, something of the circumstances of those farmers or farm workers who have left the area behind them; and the third part presents a series of detailed case studies of individual farmers and farm workers.

The main emphasis in this particular report has been placed on these case studies in order to avoid the obvious danger of the individual becoming submerged as a mere statistic.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Department wishes to record its thanks to the farmers, farmers' sons and farm workers who have patiently answered our questions for a third time, and especially to those of them who have allowed their circumstances to be described in the case study section of this report. We are also grateful to the officers of numerous local and national organisations, not least of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation, who have helped us in various ways.

Responsibilities within the Department are listed below.

Professor R.H. Tuck

Project Research Team:

D.J. Ansell, H. Casey, J.A.L. Dench, A.K. Giles (co-ordinator)
A. Harrison, C. Ritson, J.I. Wittenberg.

Field Workers:

D.J. Ansell, R.S. Cook, J.A.L. Dench, A.K. Giles,
E.G. Hunt, J. Wright, J.I. Wittenberg.

Analysis of Data:

P.J. Cheshire and R.J. Tyler.

Principal authors of Sections:

I D.J. Ansell and A.K. Giles.
II A.K. Giles and J.A.L. Dench.
III A. Harrison (Editor).

Typing and reproduction:

Mrs. M. Gibbs and Mr. F.G.England.

PART 1 - FARMING AT MILTON KEYNES 1973

The structure of farming in the Designated Area.

The agricultural situation at Milton Keynes in 1973 suggests no reversal of the trends that were recorded two years earlier, in 1971. At that time it was clear that there had been a relative growth in the importance of cereal crops at the expense of livestock. More recently the rate of change in the farming system has slowed down and it now seems probable that there will be no major changes in the general pattern of farming activity, as opposed to changes in its scale. Table 1 below shows the present pattern of land use in the designated area with comparable figures for 1967 and 1971.

Table 1 Agricultural Land Use in the Designated Area

	<u>1967</u>		<u>1971</u>		<u>1973</u>	
	acres	%	acres	%	acres	%
Cereals	7077	48.3	5500	58.0	5721	60.0
Other Arable Crops	278	1.9	95	1.0	57	0.6
Temporary Grass	1993	13.6	654	6.9	629	6.6
Permanent Grass	5128	35.0	3118	32.9	2822	29.6
Fallow	59	0.4	38	0.4	219	2.3
Buildings and Roads	17	0.8	76	0.8	85	0.9
	<u>14652*</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>9481*</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>9535*</u>	<u>100.0</u>

The more advanced in time that this study of events at Milton Keynes has become, the clearer it has become that the maintenance of any very precise statistical picture of the agricultural characteristics of the area is nearly impossible. Farmers have left the area and in some cases have proved difficult to trace; many that remain have both lost and acquired land as their neighbours leave; here and there, inevitably, some land lies idle, although the policy of the Development Corporation has been to keep this to a minimum, whilst other land is lost to agriculture only to return when the sewer pipe or water supply is laid and the earth is replaced. There is, in addition, some use of the land inside the Designated Area by farmers the main part of whose holding always has been or now is outside the area, but who rent useful additional acres inside for cropping or the seasonal grazing of livestock. This report does not seek therefore to provide a detailed statistical account of events but to highlight the most significant changes that have so far taken place. It was, in any case, argued in our 1971 report** that the chief cause for concern over the development of the area was not based on the loss of agricultural output as such, which in a national sense is quite small, but rather that the major social cost of the project was being borne by a relatively small number of individuals, the majority of whom derived income from farming or some related area of activity. Largely for this reason it was felt that this latest report should concentrate its attention on case studies, following the fortunes of a number of such individuals.

* In each case, because of a small number of farmers who preferred not to co-operate in this survey or because, in latter years, of small areas of land that for one reason or another were not encompassed by our surveys, it is almost certain that each of these figures slightly underestimates the area actually in agricultural use at the time specified.

** Milton Keynes Revisited.

The nature of the residual farming activity would seem now to be of a relatively minor interest except in so far as it reflects the present ability of farmers remaining in Milton Keynes to earn a living. Before long it seems likely that farming just outside the Designated Area rather than inside it may become the major agricultural problem in the locality.

Table 1 shows that the area of land being farmed in the Designated Area on those farms included in the various surveys conducted by this Department fell from 14,652 acres in 1967 to 9481 acres in 1971, since when it has remained virtually unchanged. A footnote to Table 1 explains why in each year these figures almost certainly fall slightly short of the actual areas involved. It should also be stressed that because of the complex nature of the relationships that have developed between farmers, and between farmers and the Milton Keynes Development Authority, it is impossible to make statements, which hold good for any length of time, about the current status of each acre of land in terms of its ownership and use.

In order to overcome these problems and in order to concentrate on the position of farmers themselves, rather than on the level of farm production, it seems appropriate to focus attention on forty farmers who have been farming in the area since developments were first started and from whom precise and complete information has been collected in each of the three Reading University Surveys. These forty farms occupied 5186 acres in 1967, 6746 in 1971 and 7455 acres in 1973, i.e. 35%, 71% and 78% respectively of the total recorded farming land in the three years in question. Their mean size rose from 130 acres in 1967 to 167 acres in 1971 and to 187 acres in 1973. This possibility for expansion has, of course, only come about by the movement of other farmers out of the area either voluntarily or as a result of the loss of some integral part of their farming resources. Not all farms shared equally in the expansion which took place, and some indeed changed in the opposite direction as illustrated in Table II below.

Table II Changes in sizes of farms 1967-73

	<u>1966-71</u>	<u>1971-73</u>
Farms with increased acreage	18	13
Farms with unchanged acreage	14	13
Farms with reduced acreage	8	14
Total farms	40	40

The dimensions of the change have in general been greater in an upward direction than in a downwards one, and thus although 14 farms were reduced in size between 1971 and 1973 the average reduction was only of 7.6 acres whereas the average increase in size in the same period was 24 acres.

It is, of course, some of the farmers who have left the area who have suffered the most serious costs in terms of the loss of productive acres, but their circumstances have been described in

previous reports and elsewhere in this report. It may also be this group who have so far borne the highest social cost. For some, at least, of the group who have remained, it is the case that the aggravation and disturbance that they have suffered has to some extent been compensated by their being able to farm higher acreages than hitherto. The rate of development has now increased, however, and presumably agricultural land will disappear at an increasing rate. It remains to be seen whether the voluntary movement of farmers out of the area will always continue to allow those who remain to farm on a reasonable scale.

In the meantime, land in the area is still being farmed in a responsible manner and there is little evidence of land lying derelict because of the difficulty of farming it. At the time that this survey was conducted it was estimated that just over 70% of the agricultural land was owned by the Development Corporation and let to farmers on a variety of different arrangements, mostly on a 364 day licence, although the Authority has powers to repossess within 14 days if the land is required for development. Initially, rents ranged from £5 - £8 per acre for land let by the Corporation, although since this survey was carried out, this bracket has increased to £9 - £15 per acre. Even so, at the present level of cereal prices the marginal receipts from extra land rented at these rates must well exceed the marginal costs of the enterprise. Table 1 suggested that the trend into cereal production had steadied and that the system of land use had not changed significantly since 1971. There has however been a further decline in the numbers of livestock kept, particularly of dairy cows, sheep and pigs. On the other hand, the size of the beef herd has tended to increase slightly, presumably as farmers wind up dairying and increase the offtake from their dairy herds of animals destined for beef production.

Farmers Attitudes and Plans

So far this report has described the situation at Milton Keynes largely in terms of the changing patterns of land use and tenurial arrangements. No such account, however, would be complete without some reference to the individuals who have been involved and to their feelings about the changing circumstances in which they find themselves. For a limited number of them these matters have been recorded in depth in Part III of this report; comment here is in more general terms.

At the time of our original survey in March 1967 we believed there to be 97 separately identifiable and bona-fide farm businesses with either all or some of their land in the Designated Area. Allowing for a few instances in which the farmers concerned could not be interviewed 90 were eventually included in that analysis. Between that date and May of 1973, 43 individuals gave up farming in the Designated Area, although because of the various forms of ownership arrangements that exist, 50 of the original 90 businesses were still in existence half-way through 1973. The average rate of exodus had therefore been nearly seven businesses per year over a six year period and, clearly, the number remaining will continue to dwindle.

Between 1973 and our previous survey, two years earlier, there appeared to be no dramatic change in farmers attitudes to the development and to their various predicaments; certainly not when compared with the changes that took place between 1967 (just before the Development Corporation had been set up) and 1971. Reporting on the situation in 1971 it was noted that

"the gradual increase in the supply of relatively firm information about the future has meant that a growing number of individuals have been able to seek (or begin to seek) their own salvations. Faced with reality rather than rumour, feelings of resignation and acceptance have to a large extent replaced the utter frustration of four or five years ago. The combined effect of changing circumstances and the mere passing of time has changed many personal attitudes and intentions".

But, it was added,

"that by no stretch of the imagination should it be thought that they (the farmers) approve of events. They are no more enamoured with the whole concept of Milton Keynes now than they were four or five years ago. They have merely become resigned to it and so far as their farm businesses are concerned, are making the best of a bad job".

The impression gained in 1973 was that the 50 farmers still operating in the Designated Area are doing so not because they have no alternative but because they now know reasonably well what confronts them if they remain and that for the time being, at least, this is acceptable. Just over two-thirds, for instance, said that they do know for approximately how long they can remain and in some cases this will be for ten years or more; for others, rather less. Eighty four per cent intend to stay on as long as they can and, not surprisingly, very few of that number had made any serious attempt to move since we last visited them. There is a good deal less certainty in people's minds, however, about what they will eventually do when the time comes to move - which is, perhaps, one reason why most will stay put as long as they can. Nearly half 'don't know' what they will do; about a quarter hope to remain in farming, rather less than a quarter hope to retire and a few will look outside the industry. Earlier replies to this kind of questioning, however, have not been strongly correlated with subsequent behaviour.

Nearly three quarters of these 50 farmers are quite clear about what compensation they are or are not entitled to when their turn comes to move - but they are almost equally divided about how adequately or not they feel the Development Corporation is 'keeping them reasonably informed of progress and developments'. This situation compares with the replies given in 1971 when two thirds of those questioned felt that they were being adequately informed. From the 24 farmers not satisfied with this situation came the following suggested remedies:-

- restart the Newsletter (11)
- give longer notice of plans for land acquisition (6)
- give more reliable information (5)
- have better liaison between departments in the Development Corporation (2)

It is, of course, questionable how far these replies are consistent with the replies given to earlier questions in which a relatively high degree of knowledge seemed to exist and it seemed possible to the authors that new kinds of frustrations associated with visual disamenity and physical discomforts of one kind or another are replacing the more personal anxieties of a few years ago.

In Summary

To summarise a situation that is as complex and as subject to rapid change as that in the Designated Area is a difficult task. The situation of every farmer is, in any case, unique. There are those who are far from the blades of encroaching bulldozers and who, as yet, are totally unaffected and who have at the moment only a distant threat of disturbance. There are those who have been forced to or have chosen to leave as their farmstead stood in the path of a new road and have found houses and employment elsewhere. And there are those who attempt to continue with a varying degree of interference from those who lay the foundations of the new city. It is this group who in many respects now deserve the greatest consideration and sympathy from those who are responsible for development in the area. The evidence of the 1973 survey is not that these farmers are under intolerable pressures or that their operations are being seriously spoiled by developments of various kinds. Admittedly most farmers can give examples of ways in which they have suffered from the development - for example, livestock straying from broken fences or crops spoiled by the activities of surveyors and others. In few cases so far, however, do these annoyances seem to add to a significant problem. In the short term, therefore, it seems that farming can follow its existing pattern. It is, of course, true that the last two years have been ones of considerable prosperity for farming generally and this has been a fortunate coincidence for those individuals who have been confronted with the need to maximise their profits in the short term. In particular, the high price of cereals has benefited those who have increased their cereals acreage at the expense of grass. In different circumstances the adjustment problems could easily have been far worse.

PART II - THE LEAVERS

It had already been established that in the four years between 1967 and 1971, 23 farmers had left the designated area (1). Seven of them had retired; three had died; eight had moved into farming elsewhere; three had taken other employment and two could not be traced. They were mainly the tenant farmers who had gone, compensated by their landlords who could then sell with vacant possession. There had been only two compulsory purchase orders. In the main, those who went on to farm elsewhere felt, once they had recovered from the disturbance of moving and the costs of re-establishing themselves, that the financial potential from their new farms was at least equal to and in some cases better than that of the farms they had left.

Between 1971 and 1973 the rate at which farmers left the designated area reached what will probably prove to be its peak; eight in 1971, eight more in 1972 and a further four in the first few months of 1973. Ten of these 20 moved 'voluntarily' (three of them not prompted by urban development). One lost his tenancy, two went into planned retirement and six others received compulsory purchase orders. This latter number (6 out of 20 in two years) compares with only 2 out of 23 in the previous four years and no doubt reflects the increased rate of development in the early '70's and the associated need for land.

In the event, six of the 20 went into full or part retirement, five found farms elsewhere and seven found alternative employment. In the main, alternative employment meant relatively unskilled occupations - a storekeeper, milkman, lorry driver, messenger, canal maintenance worker - commanding incomes (in 1972/73) in the £1,000 - £1,500 per annum range. These occupations perhaps reflect something of the vulnerability (and flexibility) that many unqualified, ageing and small-scale farmers feel about their prospects on the open labour market. The remaining two who moved out of farming became self-employed - one a contractor and the other (a qualified pilot) an aerial photographer.

Of the five who found other farms (or remained on part of their existing farms) all found themselves operating on reduced acreages and, to that extent, with reduced prospects. This was in contrast to the generally improved circumstances of those who moved to new farms between 1968 and 1971 and no doubt reflects the dramatic rise in land prices, and in rents associated with newly created tenancies with which the more recent 'leavers' found themselves confronted. In a few cases, a reluctance to reinvest in land fairly quickly caused a particular kind of discomfort not experienced by those who 'bought early' or who decided to leave the industry.

Over the total period during which the University has been monitoring events at Milton Keynes, farmers moving out of the area can thus be accounted for as follows:-

(1) Milton Keynes Revisited page 15

<u>Farmers</u>	<u>Numbers</u>	<u>%</u>
Moved to other farms	13	30
Moved to other occupations	10	23
Retired	13	30
Died	3	7
Not accounted for	4	10
	<u>43</u>	<u>100</u>

So far, throughout this period and despite numerous instances of individual disappointment and complaint, of annoyance and grumbling - there has been no strong evidence given to us to suggest that moving, to whatever alternative, has resulted in circumstances which have 'generally changed for the worse'. Six only of those interviewed have felt this to have been the case. Equally pleasing must be the fact that only four of the 43 leavers have felt that they were not 'generally satisfied with any dealings they had with officials in respect to their departure from Milton Keynes'. This, of course, is not to say that they have welcomed what has happened.

Farm Workers

The general position of farm workers - and especially the contrast with the position of farmers and their sons - was commented on in 'Milton Keynes Revisited' (1). Despite 'individual cases of hardship ... depending on such factors as ... an individual age, alternative skills (and) housing arrangements' there was little evidence to suggest that farm workers who chose to leave farm work were having difficulty in finding fresh jobs. At that stage 47 of the 79 originally interviewed in 1967 had already gone. Most of them (31) had moved for reasons apparently unconnected with the prospect of urban development and only six of the 47 were known to have remained in agricultural work. Between 1971 and 1973 a further 13 left the area: three to farms elsewhere; three to retirement; three to factory work; one to lorry driving; one to railway work and two to general labouring. The overall picture since 1967 is therefore as follows:-

<u>Workers</u>	<u>Numbers</u>	<u>%</u>
To other farms	9	15
To other kinds of work	44	74
Retired	5	8
Died	2	3
	<u>60</u>	<u>100</u>

Whilst this exodus has been taking place a total of 15 'new' workers have come into the area and some 20 more have remained there throughout - about half of them stockmen and half of them general farm workers. The annual gross wage of these 20 in 1972/73 was £1,362 (in no case was it less than £1,000) and all of them intend to remain

(1) pages 22 - 23

in farm work for as far ahead as they can see. In any case most of them wish, for family reasons, to stay in their present locality. They represent that hard core of farm workers who are wedded to the industry, come what may.

Farmers' Sons

Finally, in this section, some reference is necessary to a small, but, it seemed, especially vulnerable group of the farming community - the farmers' sons. In 1967 there were 30 of them, employed either as wage earners or as partners with their fathers. By 1971 their numbers had been reduced by a half and it was noted then that, generally speaking, 'change appears to have been less traumatic than was feared beforehand'. Since then, three sons have moved to farms outside the Designated Area and two have given up farming for other employment. Two sons in joint partnership have taken over from their father who retired but retained ownership of the farm and four other sons, farming in partnership with their fathers, have been relatively unaffected, because the major part of their farms lie outside the Area.

The two sons who have changed to non-agricultural occupations expressed no regrets and claimed that they were better off financially. One of the three sons who moved to another farm found this very upsetting and had experienced difficulty in settling down amongst "strangers" but the other two expressed a sense of relief at being freed from the frustration and disturbance created by the progress of development work. The joint partners who had taken over from their father were not likely to be seriously encroached upon by development work for another 7 - 10 years, by which time the elder partner will be approaching 60. They had no definite plans for the future beyond continuing to farm much as they have done in the past.

Thus, for the majority of farmers' sons, the passing of time has helped to create fewer disadvantages and difficulties than appeared likely in prospect. There remain, however, four sons and a daughter, whose fathers had retired and received compensation from the Milton Keynes Development Corporation by 1973. They have now taken over the tenancy of their family farms on a 14 day licence with a prospect of up to 4 years occupation. These young people are farming with very little capital of their own and no prospect of receiving compensation for disturbance when they have to move. Thus, in addition to their insecurity of tenure, they are faced with the problem of finding another farm to rent without the capital backing that established farmers can command.

PART III - CASE STUDIES edited by Alan Harrison

Introduction

All of us who live in the densely populated South East of England can readily appreciate the costs of urban expansion - crowded roads, longer journey times, less accessible rural leisure settings, noise, atmospheric, canal and river pollution and so on. We do not enjoy such things but we have at least had the chance to adapt to them slowly; some people, however, like some of the farmers and farmworkers of the Designated Area of Milton Keynes have had to face this sort of transformation virtually overnight. Moreover, whereas for most of us an urban environment provides a work setting of our choice and all the benefits that that bestows, for farmers and farmworkers it marks the end of their traditional pattern of living and employment and they had no freedom whatever in choosing that that should be the case. And that is something the rest of us find much more difficult to appreciate.

The following case studies are not claimed to be representative in a statistical sense but were chosen because they reveal many facets of this urbanisation process - the plight of tenants who are compelled to seek new farms in unfamiliar areas outside their normal run of landlord, trade and advisory contacts, the utter impossibility of employing compensation funds at times of rapidly rising land prices as in recent years to buy farms on anything like the scales operated on hitherto, the difficulties for farmers and workers alike of adapting to urban living patterns and costs.

In the event, the case studies are remarkable not only for the problems and hardships they present but also for the admirable powers of resilience, adaptability and managerial ability they reveal. Some farmers, even, have turned the situation greatly to their advantage in the short term. But such examples should not blind the rest of us to the need to make better provision than we do to cut down on the heavy costs which attend large-scale urban developments like Milton Keynes.

FARMER A: The Problems of the Young Tenant. By David Ansell.

The plight of the tenant farmer is probably worse than that of most other sectors of the farming population who suffer disturbance. For the elderly the problems are less in that the prospect of an advanced retirement probably poses fewer problems than the task of finding another farm or some other kind of employment which younger people face. However, farms, especially smaller farms, are typically family businesses, and as father retires the son in many cases takes over. Thus the 'fortune' of the elderly farmer in being at the end of his career when dispossession occurs, is the misfortune of his son who has probably worked for many years at low pay in order to earn the tenancy at the appointed time.

These are the circumstances which confront farmer A and his family. The father came to the 130 acre farm in 1938 which was his first independent business venture, having previously worked on his parent's farm in South Buckinghamshire, and farmed the area without a break until 1968 when his two sons took over. There were four children born to the marriage; two boys and two girls. Both boys worked on the farm from the time that they left school but the sisters have both left home and are no longer dependent on their parents. In 1970 the younger son, frustrated by the uncertainty attaching to the farm's future and by the inability of the farm to yield an income sufficient for both brothers, left the farm and obtained a job with a local firm undertaking excavation contracts. He still however continued to live in the farmhouse with his parents and gives occasional help on the farm. The elder brother has been the farmer since 1970; he is married and lives in a cottage adjoining the farm house and this study mainly concerns him.

The farm is run as an all-grass dairy farm. There are 43 dairy cows, followers and an associated beef enterprise. No permanent hired labour is used but the farmer who is still only 27 runs the farm on his own apart from seasonal and part-time help. The land was bought by the Development Authority in 1970 and is now operated on a 14 day licence. Urban developments are already taking place in the area and the farmer knows that he will have to leave by October 1974 when the farmstead area will be required for development purposes. It is not, he feels, going to be possible to continue to farm in any way after that. He intends therefore to dispose of his dairy herd as they calve. Despite this, however, he is keen to remain in farming. The herd disposal is being forced upon him by the uncertainty of the situation and his experience with attempts to move which he has made hitherto. Rent tenders are far too high for him with his modest capital resources to compete. Although compensation has already been paid by the Development Authority, there is little remaining as the present farmer's father used most of the compensation to buy the farm house and some adjoining cottages from the Development Authority.

His prospects of obtaining another farm therefore look remote. Unqualified, with small capital resources and a small amount of tenant's capital he seems unlikely to tender successfully for another tenancy or obtain a managerial position on someone else's farm. He is not prepared simply to milk cows for somebody else so it looks certain that he will in fact have to seek employment outside the farm sector. It is probable that he will have, initially at least, to accept a job which offers limited responsibility, and small opportunity for exercising the organisation and entrepreneurial powers with which his farming career has equipped him.

In this particular case it seems that he, an eldest son of an established farmer has suffered most in terms of loss of career and the job satisfaction that farming gave him. Although in course of time and with luck he may find an alternative career which provides equal advantages, it is difficult at present to feel unsympathetic to his ill-fortune.

FARMER B: Reaping short term gains. By Tony Dench.

Mr. B. started farming on his own account in 1939 when he took the tenancy of his present 380 acre farm in what is now the Designated Area. This was 14 miles away from the family farm in the next county where he had farmed with his father since leaving school at 16. At that time the farm was in a very neglected state; Mrs. B. recalls that there were nettles growing in the main living room of the 300 year old farm-house. The buildings, which included two farm cottages were fairly extensive but very old, mostly dating from the end of the last century or earlier, except for a dutch barn put up about 1930.

At the time of our first visit to the area in 1967 the farm-house and buildings were generally in good order although the latter had become increasingly ill-equipped for modern farming. The only significant addition was a covered yard to house 50 cows put up by the landlord in 1960. The farming system in 1967 included milk production from 40 to 50 cows, the calves being reared for beef or for dairy replacements, a small ewe flock, some poultry and about 200 acres of arable, mainly corn. Four workers were employed; a cowman who lived in one of the farm cottages, two general workers who lived in near-by villages and one exemption worker. The farming profits over the previous few years, although adequate to meet immediate living requirements, had been modest and it was clear that the dairy unit was inefficient because of inadequate buildings. All Mr. B.'s financial resources were in the tenant's assets and there was an overdraft commitment to the bank which at times equalled nearly half the book value of the assets. An expansion in the dairy herd to about 100 cows had been planned because it was considered that some of the land was too wet to be really suitable for arable. This would nevertheless have involved fairly extensive drainage work.

When plans for the New Town were announced, Mr. B., who was then 59, realised that a big investment to enlarge the dairy herd could not be justified, but that he would probably be able to continue farming until he reached retiring age. One of his main personal regrets was that he would eventually have to leave the attractive farm-house to which he and his wife had understandably become attached. Another regret was that the North Bucks community, in which he had lived all his life, and to which he had contributed a good deal in his own village and parish would very soon cease to exist as he knew it.

So far, however, events have proved favourable for Mr. B. and he has been flexible enough to adapt to them and take advantage of the opportunities presented. Realizing that difficulty in retaining labour combined with the disturbing influence of development operations and trespass would necessitate a simplification of the farming system, Mr. B. sold the dairy herd in July 1970. Having successfully negotiated what he felt were very fair compensation terms with his landlord, the farm was bought by the Milton Keynes Development Authority in September 1971 and Mr. B. has continued to rent it from them on an annual licence at an increased, though by present national standards not high, rental. At the same time he took over his elder son's farm of about 150 acres on similar terms, his son having moved to the old family farm in Bedfordshire. Approximately 180 acres of the combined farms, plus the two farm cottages and some buildings, were

taken to make way for road and similar construction work during the following eighteen months but in September 1972 Mr. B. obtained another 100 acres under licence. He has thus been farming over 400 acres since development work started, on most of which he has grown corn in conjunction with a beef enterprise rearing about 70 calves to finish at 18 months.

In spite of many frustrations and annoyances associated with the construction operations going on all round his farm, Mr. B. is well satisfied with the outcome up to now, although he would of course have preferred it not to happen at all. Even so he has been able to farm an increased acreage and to continue living in the farm house. His main problem has been the impossibility of getting any permanent farm labour apart from the one able-bodied general worker who has remained with him all the time. The return of his younger son from agricultural college has, up to now, helped to ease this difficulty. This son is probably the hardest hit, as his future in farming is bleak; it seems almost impossible for him to get a farm tenancy.

Although Mr. B.'s story is not yet complete, it illustrates how adaptability plus an element of good fortune can enable even a tenant farmer to turn events to good account. The farming profit has increased substantially as a result of the changed system, good cereal harvests, better prices and the larger acreage. Difficulties and frustrations abound and others might find unbearable the disturbance of bulldozers working by their back door and the piecemeal demolition of their farmstead while the buildings that remain fall into disrepair. He says that at times he feels he is being a 'yes' man in order to stay in farming. The uncertainties which confront him now are, how long will he be able to continue farming, how long can he continue to live in the farm house which is owned by the Milton Keynes Development Authority and when and where can he find a congenial house to which to retire?

FARMER C: A dissatisfied owner-occupier. By Tony Dench.

In 1967 Mr. C. was farming 340 acres on the outskirts of Bletchley. He owned the farm house and buildings and roughly one third of the land, the latter originally belonging to his father with whom he farmed for a time after leaving school at 16. Later Mr. C. farmed some adjoining land on his own account and then moved to a small farm about five miles away. He returned to the family farm after his father's death in 1953 when he built the present farm house (his father had lived in the near-by village) and a set of farm buildings alongside the house. The farm area was about 240 acres at that time and two years later he obtained the tenancy of a further 100 acres from a property development company, but with very limited security of tenure.

The farm system in 1967 was corn on about half the farm, combined with a beef enterprise, rearing approximately 60 animals per year, and a 150 ewe flock. There was also a poultry unit of about 1200 hens plus turkeys for the Christmas trade. Two workers were employed, one had been on the farm for 37 years and the other for six. The happy and contented relationship between Mr. C. and his men was very evident. The farm profit although not large, provided an adequate living and running the farm made relatively moderate managerial and physical demands on him. Mr. C. was, perhaps, more fortunately placed than many, both financially and by his outlook, to face the coming changes. He did not regard farming as his only possible way of life even though he had no experience outside it. And, in addition to owning his farm house and part of his farm, he had some 'non-farm' financial reserves. He had already considered giving up this farm in the not too distant future - there was the possibility that a development company might be interested in buying some of his land - and buying a smaller farm to serve as a home and part-time interest in conjunction with some job, preferably connected with but not actively involved in agriculture. He had no son to take the farm over from him and, in his own words, he felt that he was 'not a dedicated farmer and did not want to end his days on the farm'. So, at the outset, the development of Milton Keynes appeared to coincide in many ways with his own intentions. It did however for a time add a considerable element of uncertainty about the future, always a difficult thing to come to terms with, and his freedom to give up farming when he chose, and on his own terms, was taken away. Everything seemed to proceed satisfactorily however as preparations for the development got under way, his dealings with the Milton Keynes Development Authority were amicable and all the farm except the house, of which Mr. C. retains ownership, was compulsorily purchased in April 1971. At the time he was reasonably satisfied with the compensation (based on agricultural values at April 1971) that he received both for his own land and for relinquishing tenancy of the rented land. The need to take his land at a relatively early stage in the development also matched his original intentions closely and spared him the difficulties of farming for a prolonged period in the midst of development operations.

Since that time however "everything has turned sour" and his dream of a part-time holding and an interesting job has faded. First, he has not succeeded in finding the job he would like and second, the sudden rise in prices for agricultural land during 1972 has made the compensation he received look small. Even very small farms have risen in price beyond the range he originally had in mind. His feelings have been exacerbated by the resale by the Milton Keynes Development Authority of part of the land he used to own at over twenty times the price that he received. He feels with some justification that part at least of this increased value should be passed to him, and others in the Designated Area who are in a similar predicament, as it is to farmers in other areas who are free to sell land for development.

Mr. C.'s very readiness to accept change in the first place and the fact that he did not have to move house have possibly contributed to his present difficulties. Added to this his lifetime in farming holds him more strongly than perhaps he realised before he had no livestock to see to and his house became enveloped in what will be an urban landscape. He has a home but at 58 he has only intermittant part-time work to absorb his energies and, increasingly, he misses the livestock he no longer has.

FARMERS D and E: Similar circumstances - different results.
By Tony Giles.

From the outset it seemed likely that many tenants and owner occupiers on small acreages would be amongst those who would fare least well from development. For the smaller tenants a level of compensation equal to five or six times their rents would seem unlikely to amount to a large capital sum; and it would be largely irrelevant to the problem of finding access to a new farm at, almost inevitably, a substantially higher rent. For owner-occupiers also, especially of small farms, sale value plus the value of stock on hand seemed unlikely to provide much room for manoeuvre. Reinvestment, or simply the purchase of a house would clearly be difficult. Approaching retirement could well accentuate such difficulties and limit the opportunities for alternative employment. But individuals in ostensibly similar situations can fare differently as the following cases show.

At the outset of development, Farmer D. was approaching normal retirement age. He is now retired, has little to occupy his time and, hard as life had been on his 3 acres, he now looks back with nostalgia. Farmer E. was only slightly younger and occupied 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres. He now has a comfortable town job in a factory and wonders why he did not make the change long ago.

Farmer D. owned 2 of his 3 acres, which he bought in 1959 having previously farmed with his father, as tenant, on three different farms in the North Bucks - Bedfordshire locality. His move into what is now the Designated Area coincided with his father's retirement, and subsequently he rented a third acre. The holding provided him with a house and a range of not very impressive farm buildings, about 100 years old, which became the base for small pig and poultry enterprises. At the time of our first visit (1967) he had 20 sows and their progeny and 200 hens. Income, inevitably, was not large and was supplemented only by a small amount of interest from savings; the farmer admits that he might never have bought this unit had he fully appreciated its economic limitations. Nevertheless, he managed, and without any family, enjoyed his occupation, the locality and his farming friends. Until the threat of the new city he had never considered any alternative to what he was then doing. He accepted that his small business had little or no prospects of growth but realised that his age offered him very few prospects of alternative employment. Equally he accepted the kind of urban growth that threatened his holding as "inevitable with population growth and immigration policies". For the time being, however, he did nothing - not really knowing what to do - although three years earlier (with foresight or not) he had bought, in addition to his holding, a small house in a nearby village.

Four years later (1971) his situation was virtually unchanged. He had tried to sell his property to the Development Corporation but their offer of £6000 (later raised to £7000) was unacceptable to him. The scale of his business had been reduced but it remained adequate for his needs. He had no idea how long he could stay on the holding and was worried about the probable difficulties of finding something similar elsewhere with the amount of compensation which now seemed likely. Again, he carried on, with no clear plan.

It subsequently transpired that the Development Corporation would not want this particular plot of land for some time. Nearby construction work, however, was making the site less and less attractive, so in 1972 a timely offer from a private purchaser (twice that offered by the Corporation) decided the farmer to sell. He retired and moved to the house he had so fortunately bought eight years earlier. The land he previously occupied is now unused. His years of uncertainty were over; in exchange, inactivity, and boredom are with him. His house and garden are pleasant and he has no immediate financial worries but he spends his days "messaging about". His health is not as good as it was but he feels his retirement was premature. He would like to do a job but feels there is little that he is equipped for and it is too late for him to retrain. So he goes to market, goes shopping, and occasionally meets old friends. Time passes slowly and although his situation could be worse he simply "wishes he could have gone on as before".

These circumstances are to be contrasted with those of Farmer E. Owner of a few acres, he started life as a farmworker. Then, after a variety of jobs including railway work, a period of unemployment and service in the armed forces, he worked in a partnership with his father as tenants on a Buckinghamshire farm. He continued on his own after his father retired and then moved into the Designated Area in 1963 without knowing anything of pending developments. An old house was accompanied by a not very impressive set of buildings. Pigs and poultry provided the income and he had 27 sows, 450 layers and 120 growers in 1967. Income fluctuated between small profits and small losses. His wife and daughter worked in nearby shops.

Like many of the local farming community he could not understand the point of urban development on good agricultural land. Like Farmer D. he had never thought in terms of an alternative occupation. He was pessimistic about compensation giving him a chance of finding a comparable holding and about his age allowing him to do anything else. Like Farmer D. he stayed put - hoping perhaps that the worst would never happen. Somewhat out of the main stream of the more orthodox farming community he felt ill-informed - and, he worried.

Four years later (in 1971) his situation had not changed but his attitudes had begun to. Tired of "not knowing what will happen" he decided not to stay on to the bitter end in farming. In due course he would look for a house wherever possible, preferably still in the country, and then get an alternative job somewhere.

Late in 1971 he found a job and a few months later, in 1972, gave up his small holding. He knew that it had never been

financially successful and the constant threat of development discouraged him from staying on any longer. He sold privately (to his satisfaction) and with the proceeds bought a house in a village out of the Designated Area. He has a small amount of capital in hand and his new job (in a local factory) resulted from answering a newspaper advertisement.

At his age (he is over 60) he "was delighted to get any job". He feels indebted to the employers who have him this chance - where he is very happy. For a 5 day, and 40 hour week he earns over £20 and overtime is possible. His wife and daughter retain their jobs.

When interviewed recently Farmer E was noticeably more cheerful and contented than when he was farming. In his own words "if he had known what he knows now he would have packed up much earlier".

FARMER F: Some short-term gains but longer-term problems.
By Ted Hunt.

When we first visited Mr. F. in March 1967, he had just bought an adjoining 60 acres to bring his farm up to 190 acres of which 140 were owned and the balance of 50 acres was rented on a normal agricultural tenancy. All the land was in grass - either old permanent pasture or long leys - and the main enterprises were dairying and sheep.

Now, only 30 acres of this 190 acres remain in his possession and he expects to lose some 20 acres of that shortly. The old farm house was excluded from the compulsory purchase order however and Mr. F. still lives there; from it, he farms some 130 acres on an exclusive licence and a further 230 acres on joint licence with a neighbour. His farming system has changed radically for the dairy herd has gone - and with it much of the satisfaction which he previously derived from farming. His family had been stock farmers on this holding since the 1920's and major changes such as that to the present all arable system, are not easily made. Understandably, therefore, Mr. F.'s original hostile attitude to the whole idea of the New City development has not changed, even though in the short term he is far better off financially, for profits doubled between 1966 and 1972.

The long term prospects are far from bright. In 1971 Mr. F. received a total of some £46,000 for the 140 acres of land compulsorily purchased by the Development Authority. Today this sum would purchase perhaps no more than 50 acres however - hardly a viable size for the type of stock farming he prefers. He would like to buy a farm in the same locality as all his family ties are there, but the prospects of being able to do so are receding all the time. To rent a farm in this area is next to impossible so for the time being he plans - as far as one can plan in these circumstances - to carry on as at present. For how long this will be possible, no one knows, as licence land can be lost almost overnight. These uncertainties are now having an adverse effect on his personal life. He feels that he is wasting his time; but he can see no way out.

FARMER G: The problems facing the tenant.
By John Wittenberg.

Farmer G., the son of an established farmer in the Designated Area, went into partnership with his father in 1971 to help run the two adjacent farms which they rented. Part of this complex was originally farmed by Farmer G.'s brother who has now made a successful move out of the Designated Area.

Although all the land which the partnership farms is now leased back from the Development Authority (450 acres) Farmer G. has managed to buy the farmhouse which was on his brother's portion of the farm. It is his intention that, when he finally moves out of the Designated Area, his father will be able to live in this house and be within easy commuting distance of his brother's farm and, hopefully, a farm which Farmer G. will rent himself.

The problems facing Farmer G. are typical of those facing many other farmers in the Designated Area - he is a young man hoping for a successful future in farming, but experiencing great difficulty in finding another farm reasonably near which will satisfy his requirements. Apart from the 450 acres which he is now farming, he owns 6 acres of land, also in the Designated Area, which is used mainly for intensive turkey production and grain and machinery storage. He is hoping to sell this land for a substantial amount to help finance his inevitable move for if he has to rely solely on tenant's compensation from the Development Authority, his problems will probably be insuperable.

He has bid unsuccessfully for several farms in the region of Milton Keynes. Land prices are very high in the surrounding areas due to pressures of demand, and he finds it most difficult to know what price to tender for farms which come onto the market. Up to the present time, his tenders have been well below the price for which the farms have eventually been let. He has now realised that he must adopt a careful strategy when tendering. A large institutional landlord is not solely interested in the highest tender he receives - in fact some will automatically reject the highest tenders without consideration. Security of tenure for a tenant farmer is very strong, even if he does default on his rent payments, therefore, the landlord will be interested in whether the prospective tenant will be able to run the farm efficiently and thus be able to maintain payments of the tendered amount.

In his partnership with his father, Farmer G. has been able to enjoy a reasonable income. However, he is most unhappy with the development plans in the area and is convinced that his local village has changed for the worse due to these plans. Friends have now moved out of the Designated Area, and he feels that the Development Authority could be more helpful to those farmers still in the area, but wanting to move. He considers that one way the Development Authority could help them is regularly to circulate lists of farms which are becoming available to rent in the region of the Designated Area.

At the time of writing, Farmer G. is frustrated about not having found another farm. He is a man with a love for farming and would not consider changing his occupation, although his wife would be happy to see him do so.

FARMER H: 'Milton Keynes did us a good turn'
By John Wright and Chris Ritson.

Few people enjoy moving house. When they do move, it is usually forced upon them by change in employment or personal circumstances. It is particularly distressing to experience the disruption of moving when the new location has no apparent advantage over the old one. Anyone, however, who was forced to move in 1970 may look back from the higher property values of 1973 and regard the once disliked cause of their migration as a 'blessing in disguise'. So it is that this farmer can now say "Milton Keynes has done us a good turn".

His grandfather started farming in the Milton Keynes area in 1918, and his father took over in 1927. Twice chairman of the local National Farmers Union, his attitude to the new city of Milton Keynes was always a rational one. He felt that more thought should be given to the quality of land chosen for urban development, but recognised that the land at Milton Keynes was ideal for development in a communications sense. He was less certain than many other farmers of the 'inevitability' of this kind of development. Speaking at a time when difficulties at Rolls Royce were much in the news, he wondered just who was going to build factories at Milton Keynes. He was uncertain that the new city would, in fact, ever be completed. Although believing that it would be some years before he was affected by development, when visited in 1967, he had already taken the precaution of renting an additional 263 acres nearby (but outside the designated area). It was his intention to transfer his full attention to this new location when farming was no longer possible within the Designated Area.

The period 1970/71 was a particularly difficult one. Development began on his farm earlier than he had anticipated. His landlord sold to the Milton Keynes Development Corporation in September 1970, and he rented it on a 364 day licence. The dairy herd was sold, partly because of labour problems, but also because of the difficulty of looking after stock in the vicinity of development. All ploughable land was cropped, and permanent pasture devoted to a beef enterprise. The disruption of development contractors (in particular, a main road was being driven through his land) caused severe problems with the beef enterprise. Indeed such was the fragmentation introduced into the land he was trying to farm that, when visited in 1971, it proved quite difficult to discover just where all the acres he was supposed to be renting from the Development Corporation were actually located.

A few months earlier, in an attempt to maintain overall levels of profit, he had rented an additional 150 acres at the new location where he already rented 263 acres. The landlord there then offered him a partnership on 800 acres on the same estate. His few years farming on that estate had however impressed upon him the difficulties involved in farming heavy land which needed considerable investment on drainage. After careful consideration,

he turned the offer down - not only was the land difficult, but the farm house was isolated and provided unsatisfactory accommodation. He therefore found himself looking at very short notice for a new farm which would be suitable for both himself, and his son (who would be shortly leaving agricultural college and taking a full part in the farm business). After a certain amount of difficulty a new farm was eventually purchased in December 1970. It was reasonably priced, constituted 324 acres and had obviously been well farmed with buildings in a good state of repair. A distinct disadvantage was the proximity of a motorway which tended to dominate the skyline. In fact, it was probably the appearance of the motorway that caused the previous owners to leave. Three months later he moved to the new farm.

When moving, his attitude could be best described as one of making the best of a bad job - that is, though he felt the new farm was probably as profitable as the old, nothing could replace the satisfaction derived from farming where you have been brought up. Now, however, he compares the new farm very favourably with the old. The land is slightly more difficult to work but its yield potential is higher for most crops. The farm house is better, being modern and easy to run. So, "Milton Keynes did us a good turn", albeit by accident. He now owns a farm, purchased before the worst excesses of the recent rise in land prices, which is, in many ways, an improvement on the one rented within the Milton Keynes Designated Area. His family are happy with the new location and are only three-quarters of an hour from their old friends.

This story, however, possesses a postscript which would tax credibility if it were fiction. Shortly after moving to the new farm, they discovered that a new town might be built on 750 acres of nearby farmland. Fortunately, this is on the other side of the motorway which should just prevent them landing in a fire after departing with such success from the frying pan.

FARMWORKERS A and B: One settled - the other unsettled
By Tony Giles.

Earlier reports in this series have suggested that in the majority of cases there would be no major problems in the re-employment of farm workers. This was not to suggest that there would be no individual cases of hardship but simply to recognise that, generally speaking, agricultural employees have greater mobility than their employers. In the event, many of the 79 workers interviewed in 1967 have moved and only a minority now remain in farming; those who have gone have moved to a wide range of jobs including lorry drivers, labourers, factory hands, gardeners and mechanics. Each individual has found his personal solution to his own personal set of problems. Questions of age, versatility and housing have been important influences on behaviour. Not untypical of those who have left are the following cases.

In 1967 the worker in question had been working on a large arable farm in the Designated Area as a general farm worker for the previous 12 years, having originally taken up farm work after war service. He was aged 49; married with one child and living in a tied cottage. He earned £12 per week (for a 46 hour week) with a certain amount of seasonal overtime, and paid nothing for a cottage which was reasonably well equipped and maintained. He was satisfied with his job and his surroundings both of which he would be sorry to lose, and had certainly not thought of leaving the land at that stage. At the same time, however, he had no really strong views about staying on the land when his job became threatened by development. He was indifferent to the question of urban development as such and should it force him to look for alternative employment then he would take any suitable job that provided a house or any suitable house that offered a job.

His employer in fact moved well away from the area as a result of a compulsory purchase order served in 1971, and this worker immediately looked for alternatives. A labouring job in a nearby factory was pointed out by a friend. His application for this job was successful and he started work immediately at £19.35 for 40 hour week. His wife took a job in a nearby restaurant and with the aid of a small mortgage he bought a small but modern town house. After making the move he felt that it had been advantageous in every way - certainly in terms of such specific matters as family income, length of working week, housing amenities, security and educational facilities for his child, but also in terms of life generally. He regarded the extra costs of accommodation (£12 per week for a relatively short-term mortgage plus rates) as adequately compensated by the advantages of owning his own house. He was glad he had made the move and would only return to farming if he was unable to find a job, comparable with his new one.

In contrast, there are of course instances of workers still in the area, rather more wedded to farming than the person just described - and content to remain where they are until circumstances dictate otherwise. In most of these cases they are employed by

farmers whose land will not be required for development for a considerable period, or by farmers who have second farms, often close by, where the workers concerned will be offered employment. Here and there, there are even workers who have come into the Designated Area, knowing its limited agricultural life but confident of their ability to find alternative employment, in or out of agriculture if needs be.

Here and there also, are agricultural workers who, for one personal reason or another, are far less happy, not to say disillusioned. In this category is the case of a 45 year-old employee who works mainly, but not exclusively, as a stud-manager. He began stud work as a boy apprentice and moved around in employment until he settled on a farm in the Designated Area in 1960. He is married with a family of two now aged 14 and 17. In 1969 they moved from a very well appointed tied cottage to a nearby council house. His present wage is £1300 and his weekly rent is £5.44. He and his wife and family are thoroughly settled in the locality and have no desire to move, but in due course (although not for a few years) his employer will move out.

From the outset this man realised that his age and his specialised job, combined with a desire not to move out of the area, could all act against him. The possibility of, say, riding school work in a developing recreational area, had no appeal to him compared with stud work. He had valued his job and his relationship with his employer and had never seriously thought of changing, but realised that in his particular circumstances he might have to settle for any reasonable job he could get.

His move into a council house added greatly to his vocational mobility but so far he has remained in his stud job. He has felt all along that compensation to workers in these situations should take the form of free retraining. Although his domestic circumstances and his jobs have not altered, during the early years of development at Milton Keynes his personal attitudes have certainly begun to. An intelligent, likeable man, he feels that a prolonged period of uncertainty about his future has had the effect of gradually killing off any original interest that he had in working on the land. In his own words, he feels that he 'has been left behind' and it now seems imperative to him to 'take stock' fairly quickly. He feels he 'must adopt a new attitude to life'. He and his family remain strongly attached to their house, to the locality and to the country. The employment opportunities for his children are bright and his wife still enjoys various community involvements in the locality. But he now feels the need to make a radical change in his own life and at the moment cannot quite see what that change should or could be. Without a readily marketable trade he is tempted to look first and foremost for the highest wage he can command, irrespective of the work it involves. But he knows also that that may not provide the complete answer to his problem. He remains restless - and feels out on a limb. Milton Keynes always has and still does disenchant him.

FARMWORKER C: Problems of adapting to higher cost urban living.
By Tony Dench.

Not all agricultural workers who have changed to factory work have found themselves better off financially or in terms of working hours as the case of this young worker, Mr. C. illustrates.

A native of Bletchley he worked on the railway there for six years after leaving school, rising to the position of fireman instructor. Redundancy on the railway, and his unsatisfactory housing accommodation in Bletchley, decided him to transfer to agricultural work. After two years apprenticeship on a poultry farm he took a job as tractor driver/general maintenance man on a large estate in the Designated Area, about three miles from Bletchley. With this job he had an excellent, rent-free, modern house and generous perquisites including use of farm transport and free milk. His wage was £16 for a 56 hour week and working conditions were good, with new equipment and modern buildings. The situation was also very satisfactory for his wife and children; a school bus passed the gates and the house was not isolated being near a small village and on a bus route to Bletchley. He liked his work, the rural surroundings and the locality, which was near to his family and friends in Bletchley. This job gave him just the chance he needed to gain experience on a fairly large farm. He had been there two months and was 23 years old at the time of our first interview in 1967. However, when it became clear that his employer intended to sell the farm to the Milton Keynes Development Authority at the earliest opportunity he decided to seek factory work and a council house in Bletchley. This he succeeded in doing at the end of 1969, and left his farm job before he was obliged.

His first two jobs as an unskilled worker in local factories brought in approximately £22 for 60 hours per week. This proved inadequate to meet the higher town living costs including a rent of £3.75 per week, so his wife had to work in order to supplement their income. His factory work was on a shift basis so that it was just possible for both to work and to look after the young family (two of the three were below school age and there was a waiting list for the one and only local playgroup). Jointly, the family income amounted to £30 per week. The long working hours and little free time together as a family soon became a strain so he turned to assembly work at Vauxhall Motors, Luton, some 30 miles away, which offered better money; after a probationary period of six months he was earning £32 per week for just under 50 hours in 1971. Transport was provided or he travelled with neighbours who also worked there. His wife no longer had to work but his hours away from home were still long, from 6 a.m. until often 6 p.m. on weekdays and a half day on Saturdays. This contrasts with life on the farm where he was working within sight of home most of the time and went home for all his meals. He does not like factory work but admits he sees more of life and people than he did on the farm.

Their council house is smaller and not so well designed as the farm 'cottage' but offers greater security and Mr. C. says he would only return to agricultural work if it did not involve a tied house and the wage was 25% higher than it is. He would sooner live in a less densely populated locality but the nearness to shops, schools, doctor, and other services, is very useful. He would like his children to have any benefits available from the New City and to remain in the same locality as his family and friends.

An aspect highlighted by this case is the fact that, unless both husband and wife work, the income from unskilled factory work available in Bletchley may not (and did not in their case up to 1971) equal farm wages after allowance is made for increased living costs including housing. The absence of nursery schools adds a further difficulty for wives with young families. Mr. C. feels that the idea of a New City at Milton Keynes is a good one but if displaced workers are to stay in the area it must attract large factory units capable of paying good wages.

