

Oct. 16, 1964

Stafford- Rep. Bob Dole charged that ^{for} the first time in its three-decade existence the Rural Electrification program has been made a political issue in a national election campaign.

Speaking here at a GOP Meeting Saturday night, Dole stated that REA Administrator, Norman Clapp, in an effort to instill fear in the hearts of American farmers, has made a number of frankly partisan political speeches in which he has made the astounding charge that, if elected, Republicans could ruin the Rural Electrification Program. Dole said, "Clapp has accused the Republican party generally of holding these views, and has accused the Republican candidates of wanting to destroy the program.

"Of all the people in the United States", Dole continued, "Mr. Clapp should know better. No President and no Congress can destroy the rural electric cooperatives or the cooperative ~~the~~ movement. These cooperatives--about 1000 of them---are a going concern. It is estimated that nearly 800 of the 1000 co-ops are in sound financial condition with sizeable liquid reserves and probably will never again have to borrow from the Federal Treasury.

The only two ways these REA cooperatives could possibly be destroyed, would be through internal decay (a most unlikely prospect for the vast majority of them) or through becoming entangled in politics.

"Neither the Republican Party or Republican candidates have any desire to see this happen; Nor do we want to see the Central Government get itself more deeply involved in the cooperative field, but it seems Democrats want REA to become a political pawn.

Republican reasoning contends individual members of electric cooperatives-- and there are 5 million of them -- do not want Government control over their organizations. They want to retain the status they hold by and under the original Rural Electrification Act: that of free enterprise organizations privately owned and privately controlled and operated. Rural cooperatives have never been a creature of the Government: nor do their member- owners want to become wards of the Government.

Dole pointed out that the REA Administrator completely ~~ignores~~ ignores the fact that the REA program showed its greatest growth under the Eisenhower years and with the

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support of Republicans in Congress. "As long as REA programs meets the criteria set forth by law," Dole ~~continued~~ continued, "a majority of Republicans and Democrats will support them.

"Since its inception, the REA program has had the protection of a bipartisan sanctuary", stated Dole, "but Norman Clapp, and others seeking political advantage are dragging the program out of that sanctuary and into the arena of partisan politics," Dole concluded.