

FROM: THE OFFICES OF U.S. SENATORS HERMAN E. TALMADGE
AND BOB DOLE

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United States Senators Herman E. Talmadge (D-Ga.) and Bob Dole (R-Kans.) Friday proposed legislation to step up national efforts toward rural development.

The Senators, both members of the Senate Agricultural Committee, said they would offer an amendment to the Agricultural Act of 1970, calling for increased federal promotion of a better balance between rural and urban America. The farm bill is presently pending before the Agriculture Committee.

In a joint statement, the Senators said, "Rural development and revitalization is a national imperative of the highest priority. The tremendous social and economic problems that presently plague our cities, urban poverty and congestion make it clear that we cannot go on repeating mistakes of the past that have caused the mass migration of millions of people from rural to urban areas."

The amendment is designed to prod the Administration into expanding rural development efforts and to provide the Congress with more information on the problem that would be required for corrective legislative action.

It would commit Congress to achieving more of an economic and population balance between rural and urban areas. "This balance is so essential to the peace, prosperity and welfare of our citizens that the highest priority must be given to the revitalization and development of rural areas," the Senators said.

The Talmadge-Dole amendment would add a new title to the farm bill as follows:

"The Congress hereby finds that the technology responsible for the unrivaled abundance of American agriculture has also been largely responsible for the elimination of millions of farm-related jobs. Since 1940 an estimated 25 million displaced farm and rural residents have migrated, chiefly to metropolitan areas, primarily in search of new economic opportunities. Presently, 20 percent of the adult urban population are former rural residents.

"The Congress further finds that despite a slowdown in the peak migration of approximately one million people a year in the 1950's, movement of people from rural areas still continues at a high rate.

"By the year 2000 or soon thereafter, 100 million more Americans will be added to the 140 million already living in our cities and suburbs. Unless this nation makes a commitment of sufficient magnitude to reverse the present trend toward excessive concentration of population, 240 million people will be crowded together in four giant strip cities. Already, 70 percent of our population lives on less than 2 percent of our land.

"The Congress further finds that the devastating consequences of the population shift are evident everywhere - in both urban and rural America. Countless rural communities, once thriving and prosperous, are facing social and economic bankruptcy because too few residents remain to support essential public services and civic institutions.

"On the other hand, our large cities are facing gradual strangulation. Our giant cities are finding themselves increasingly unable to deal with the large influx of uneducated rural migrants who are ill-prepared for urban living. The congested traffic arteries, the pollution of the water and the air, the soaring crime rates, the housing blight, and the simple lack of adequate elbow room are rapidly making our larger cities unlivable as well as ungovernable.

"The Congress further finds that the legislative program provided for herein is vital to American agriculture. If we are to continue to have a viable commercial agriculture, it will be necessary that we continue to support the price of certain commodities and that we have some control over surplus production. However, farm price support programs can never provide an adequate standard of living for a large number of rural residents. Even a farm program providing 100 percent parity for all crops would not provide a decent standard of living to farmers who are too old or too uneducated to adapt to the new farm technology, and to farmers who are unable to secure enough capital to build an efficient farming operation. No system of farm price supports can adequately provide for farm day laborers, migrant workers, and share croppers who are displaced by the new technology."

These are other provisions of the Talmadge-Dole amendment:

1. To minimize further impaction on already over-crowded metropolitan areas, executive departments and agencies of the government would be directed to establish and maintain policies and procedures with respect to location of new offices and facilities in areas of lower population density in preference to populous areas. The President would be requested to report to Congress each year on progress made in carrying out these provisions.

2. The departments of Housing and Urban Development and Agriculture would be authorized to provide planning assistance for the development of rural multi-county areas not included in economically depressed areas. The Secretaries of HUD and Agriculture would be directed to give Congress progress reports and "information sufficient to determine whether the non-metropolitan planning program is meeting certain national priorities and goals."

3. The Secretary of Agriculture would be directed to report annually to Congress on the availability and extent to information and technical assistance to less-populous areas.

4. The President would be asked to submit to Congress annual reports on the availability of government services to rural areas, such as adequate telephone service, water and sewer systems, educational facilities and medical care, and to outline plans for improving these services. The President would also be asked to advise Congress on possible sources of financial assistance for rural development and to recommend appropriate legislation.