

STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOB DOLE
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURAL APPROPRIATIONS CONSERVATION PROGRAM
MONDAY, APRIL 23, 1971

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE: When addressing a meeting of eminent scientists, Albert Einstein is quoted as saying, "The concern for man and his destiny must always be the chief interest of all technical effort. Never forget this among your diagram and equations." Dr. Einstein's thought well expresses the growing national concern for environmental preservation and improvement.

Through the years Congress has enacted legislation authorizing federal assistance in the conservation of our land and water resources. Now, President Nixon has called on all Americans to dedicate themselves, "to the goal of restoring the environment and reclaiming the earth for ourselves and our posterity."

This request for public dedication demonstrates a widely felt concern for man and his destiny that goes beyond present federal programs. The protective phase of environmental protection has been assigned to a newly formed agency bearing that name.

RURAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The conservation practices of the Department of Agriculture can now be directed more toward reclamation and restoration as outlined by the President. Such steps were taken late last year when the

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Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP) was changed in name and direction. As the Rural Environmental Assistance Program (REAP) the emphasis is more on permanent projects that will reclaim land and water, rather than recurring production oriented projects. With this re-direction the plans are made and implementation of these more permanent practices has commenced. My concern at this time is to provide the financial support for this program to accomplish these objectives.

WATERSHEDS

The funding of government projects is necessarily based on priorities. Mr. Chairman, you are well aware that the past two years we have witnessed a rejuvenation of the watershed program. Watersheds offer extensive reclamation benefits to the environment, both for agricultural purposes and for rural development. In addition to controlling runoff, watersheds restore supplies to insure rural community growth.

This fiscal year, watersheds were appropriated \$77,550,000. As I understand, USDA has requested \$75,797,000 for fiscal year 1972 -- a reduction of nearly \$2 million. Members of several conservation groups will testify before this Subcommittee to recommend an increase in this appropriation, and I would lend my support, to some degree, to their recommendations.

Seventy-six (76) watersheds have been organized in my state of Kansas. Of these 10 are still under construction with only 11 completed. Eight additional watersheds have been authorized for construction, but due to inadequate appropriations, they could not be funded this year.

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Therefore, due to the necessity to determine priorities within this program, and because of the important contribution the construction of these watershed can make to environmental restoration and rural development, I recommend to the Subcommittee that top priority be given to the appropriation of funds to expedite the completion of authorized watershed projects.

GREAT PLAINS CONSERVATION

Funding for the Great Plains Conservation program should receive priority consideration. The appropriations for the current year were \$16.1 million. It is my understanding that the budget request for FY 1972 is \$500,000 less. As a co-sponsor of the initial legislation that provided for this program, and knowing of the 7,000 to 8,000 applications that are backlogged waiting for cost-sharing funds, I would strongly urge an increase in funding to at least \$20 million for Fiscal Year 1972.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

I am deeply concerned over the reduction in Technical Assistance which has been necessary in recent years and would be further reduced at the present requested budget level. My concern is that sufficient technical assistance is made available to the conservation districts to facilitate prompt implementation of the projects as funds are available.

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RESOURCE, CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT

The Resource Conservation and Development Program certainly is worthy of expanded funds due to the program's importance to Rural Development. RC & D projects have stimulated an interest in multi-county orientation that is of growing significance as a means to improve rural America.

Mr. Chairman, I know the members of this Subcommittee are well acquainted with the priorities of these conservation programs in their own states. I am sure you agree that in the interest of helping the farmers improve their production and income, these programs have been diverted from their intended orientation toward more permanent conservation practices. Now, President Nixon has provided the emphasis and direction to put these programs back in the direction of the original intent -- to restore the environment and reclaim the land. On the basis of these changes I know you will give every consideration to the expansion of these important appropriations for the benefit of this nation's farmers and all its citizens.