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RURAL REVITALIZATION ACT OF 1971

WASHINGTON, D.C., Nov. 3, 1971 ---- U.S. Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kans.)

introduced late last evening a bill to "revitalize" rural areas, giving preferential treatment to the farmer. Dole described the Rural Revitalization Act of 1971 as "A rural development plan which gives the American farmer the priority he deserves and offers real hopes of stimulating new growth and prosperity in rural America." Dole said that essentially, "The bill will provide expanded federal assistance to rural America for formulating long range development plans and implementing those plans through support for local financial institutions." A main feature of the legislation is to create the Rural Development Administration out of the Farmers Home Administration, strengthening present farmer programs and expanding rural development programs.

Pointing out the need for such legislation, Dole told his Senate colleagues last night:

Over the past 30 years the farm population of America has steadily decreased from 20 million to less than 10 million. And because of, or in response to this decline in population, has come a deterioration in the quality of life in America. This decline in the quality of life has permeated every aspect of the economic, social and physical environment in rural America. Businesses are failing; schools, health facilities and public services have suffered severe reductions in quality; and communities are deteriorating from lack of growth and outmigration of young people.

The Kansas Senator continued:

This country must undertake a major effort in the area of rural development. This effort must succeed in reversing the trends of the past 30 years and restore to rural America the vitality and strength which is so important to the entire nation. There is an additional point, however, to consider besides the need to stimulate growth and development in rural America.

A member of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, and its Subcommittee on Rural Development, Dole emphasized the need for Congress to "approach rural development from the basis of helping the farmer first --- and assuring that any area or community development be evaluated first in terms of the farmers' needs and rightful expectations." (MORE)

Dole - page two

Dole said:

If rural America is to be helped, that help must begin with the farmers who remain there today. It is high time that the farmers of this nation be allowed to share in the benefits of our prosperous economy, and any rural development plan must establish as its foundation the concept of assuring substantial improvement in the lives of those who have stuck it out and resisted temptations to abandon their farms and communities and who are continuing their efforts to build a way of life for themselves and their families.

The first and most important consideration in any rural development plan should be: "What will this do to improve the income and living conditions of our farmers?"

Dole added that "rural development" does not mean "urban transplantation." He explained that the rural development plan proposed by his legislation would not seek to take over farmers' farmland on a massive scale and develop new cities to accommodate people from problem urban centers.

Due to the significance of the Rural Revitalization Act, Senate Bill 2800, for rural America, it has gained the cosponsorship of the senior Senator from Kansas, U.S. Sen. James B. Pearson, as well as the cosponsorship of Senators Mansfield, Aiken, Curtis and Young.