

News from Senator

# BOB DOLE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 1984

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## STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOB DOLE

### JOINT CONGRESSIONAL NUTRITION SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING

#### ON RECOMMENDATIONS OF PRESIDENT'S TASK FORCE ON FOOD ASSISTANCE

THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 1984

MR. DOLE. BACK IN SEPTEMBER, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE AND I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA TO HOLD A JOINT CONGRESSIONAL HEARING WHEN THE PRESIDENT'S TASK FORCE ON FOOD ASSISTANCE ANNOUNCED ITS RECOMMENDATIONS. WE LOOK FORWARD TO DISCUSSING THE RECOMMENDATIONS WITH THE CHAIRMAN, DR. J. CLAYBURN LA FORCE, AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE TASK FORCE. THEY ARE TO BE COMMENDED FOR THE SUBSTANTIVE WORK ACCOMPLISHED IN EVALUATING REPORTS OF "HUNGER" WITHIN 90 DAYS.

THE TASK FORCE HAS RECOGNIZED THAT "HUNGER" DOES EXIST IN THIS COUNTRY. FOR ITS PURPOSES, THE TASK FORCE HAS ADOPTED A TWOFOLD WORKING DEFINITION, WHICH IS BOTH CLINICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL. "HUNGER CAN BE THE INABILITY, EVEN OCCASIONALLY, TO OBTAIN ADEQUATE FOOD." WE ARE NOW SPENDING ABOUT \$19 BILLION ON OVER 10 SEPARATE FEDERAL FOOD PROGRAMS, AND THIS EFFORT HAS BEEN TREMENDOUSLY EFFECTIVE IN PROVIDING FOOD ASSISTANCE TO LOW-INCOME AND UNEMPLOYED AMERICANS.

### BIPARTISAN TRADITION OF COOPERATION

SINCE THE LATE '60's, WHEN I SERVED ON THE SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON NUTRITION WITH MY FORMER COLLEAGUE, GEORGE McGOVERN, THE NUTRITION AREA HAS BEEN ONE OF BIPARTISAN CONCERN AND COOPERATION. I TRUST THIS HEARING WILL REINFORCE THIS TRADITION, DESPITE EARLIER CONCERNS REGARDING POLITICIZING THE ISSUE FOR PARTISAN PURPOSES.

IT IS A PLEASURE TO BE HERE WITH CHAIRMAN PANETTA, AND THE RANKING MINORITY MEMBER OF THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE, MR. EMERSON, MY COLLEAGUES ON THE HOUSE SIDE, WHO HAVE WORKED HARD AND IN A BIPARTISAN SPIRIT TO ADDRESS THE "HUNGER" PROBLEMS THAT CAME TO OUR ATTENTION THROUGH NUMEROUS REPORTS. DURING THE PAST SESSION OF CONGRESS, MEMBERS OF BOTH OF OUR RESPECTIVE SUBCOMMITTEES HAVE ATTEMPTED TO UNCOVER THE REALITY FROM THE EXAGGERATED REPORTS THAT WERE OFTEN PRESENTED TO US THROUGH THE MEDIA AND "PROFESSIONAL HUNGER ADVOCATES."

### BIPARTISAN CONSENSUS

SIMILARLY, DURING RECENT YEARS, BOTH REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS WORKING TOGETHER ON THE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE FORGED A POLICY CONSENSUS ON FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAM ISSUES, RELATING TO BOTH THE FOOD STAMP AND CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS. DURING AN ERA OF TOUGH BUDGET DECISIONS, A BIPARTISAN COALITION SUPPORTED RATIONAL POLICY CHANGES IN FEDERAL FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS THAT LARGELY RESULTED IN IMPROVED TARGETTING OF BENEFITS, AND NECESSARY PROGRAM REFORMS. IN FACT, THE VOTES OF 14-2 AND 13-3 IN COMMITTEE DEMONSTRATE HOW STRONG THE BIPARTISAN CONSENSUS WAS DURING THE FOOD STAMP RECONCILIATION PROCESS IN 1981 AND 1982. AS A CONSEQUENCE, THE PROGRAM'S PREVIOUS NEGATIVE IMAGE SEEMS TO HAVE EMERGED IN A MORE POSITIVE LIGHT WITH THE AMERICAN PUBLIC.

MORE

THROUGHOUT THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS OF THE PAST FEW YEARS WE RECOGNIZED A RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT OUR LOW INCOME CITIZENS, WHILE BEING ACCOUNTABLE TO AMERICAN TAXPAYERS. BY REDESIGNING MANY OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S BUDGET PROPOSALS, WE WERE ABLE TO ACHIEVE SIGNIFICANT SAVINGS IN FEDERAL FOOD PROGRAMS WHICH MINIMIZE THE IMPACT ON POOR PEOPLE. ABOUT \$7 BILLION WAS SAVED IN THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM OVER THE THREE YEAR FISCAL PERIOD, 1982-1985, AND ABOUT \$1.5 BILLION WAS SAVED IN THE CHILD NUTRITION AREA.

#### CONTRIBUTION OF PRESIDENT'S TASK FORCE

THE PRESIDENT'S TASK FORCE HAS NOW REEVALUATED SOME OF THE POLICY CHANGES THAT CONGRESS ENACTED, AND THEREFORE SOME FINE TUNING IN FEDERAL FOOD PROGRAMS SEEMS NECESSARY AT THIS TIME -- SUCH AS RESTORING THE THRIFTY FOOD PLAN TO 100 PERCENT OF ITS INTENDED VALUE. THE TASK FORCE HAS ALSO RECOMMENDED THAT THE BASIS OF THE THRIFTY FOOD PLAN ITSELF SHOULD BE EVALUATED. FURTHER, IT WAS TIME FOR THE CONGRESS TO CHANGE THE ASSETS LIMITS THAT HAD BECOME OUTDATED, AS A RESULT OF THE HIGH INFLATION RATE OF THE LATE '70's.

THERE MAY BE HONEST POLICY DISAGREEMENTS WITH REGARD TO CERTAIN OF THE TASK FORCE PROPOSALS SUCH AS THE BLOCK GRANT APPROACH TO THE FOOD PROGRAM AREA. HOWEVER, IF THE BLOCK GRANT IS SET ASIDE TEMPORARILY, THE REMAINDER OF THE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS DESERVE OUR ATTENTION. THE MAJORITY OF SUBSTANTIVE, CONSTRUCTIVE RECOMMENDATIONS SHOULD NOT BE OVERSHADOWED BY ONE PROPOSAL, WHICH, I BELIEVE, WAS MERELY INTENDED FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES. (AS IT TURNED OUT, IT PROVED TO STIMULATE A LOT OF DISCUSSION.)

#### LEADERSHIP ROLE OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

MY INVOLVEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS IN RESPONSE TO THE DOMESTIC HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION OF THE '60's LEADS ME TO BELIEVE THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD MAINTAIN ITS LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THE NUTRITION AREA. IN FACT, IT WAS PRESIDENT NIXON WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROPOSING THE STANDARDIZATION OF BENEFITS IN THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM IN RESPONSE TO THE WAR ON POVERTY IN THIS COUNTRY. AS MY COLLEAGUES ARE AWARE, THIS STANDARDIZATION OF BENEFITS IS ESSENTIAL IN PROVIDING EQUITABLE AND ADEQUATE FOOD ASSISTANCE TO LOW-INCOME AMERICANS CONSISTENTLY THROUGHOUT THE NATION.

ALTHOUGH IT IS APPROPRIATE FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO ASSUME A PRIMARY ROLE IN THE NUTRITION PROGRAM AREA, IT SHOULD NOT BE THE SOLE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO PROVIDE FOOD ASSISTANCE TO THOSE IN NEED. NO MATTER HOW SENSITIVE, THE FEDERAL BUREAUCRACY IS SIMPLY NOT EQUIPPED TO DEAL WITH ALL OF THE SPECIFIC PROBLEMS OF THE VARIOUS INDIVIDUALS WITHIN OUR SOCIETY WHO FIND THEMSELVES IN NEED OF FOOD. ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT SHOULD SHARE RESPONSIBILITY, ALONG WITH PRIVATE SECTOR CHARITABLE EFFORTS. SOUP KITCHENS, FOOD BANKS, CHURCHES AND OTHER NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS WHO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO THE POOR AND UNEMPLOYED ARE TO BE CONGRATULATED FOR THE TREMENDOUS WORK THEY HAVE DONE IN ATTEMPTING TO FILL THE GAPS IN GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.

HOWEVER, WITH ALL OF THIS DISCUSSION OF "HUNGER", WE ARE PERHAPS LOSING SIGHT OF THE ROOT CAUSE OF THE PROBLEM, WHICH IS POVERTY. THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM SIMPLY SHOULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO ASSUME THE BURDEN OF INCOME MAINTENANCE JUST BECAUSE IT IS ABLE TO REACH OVER 22 MILLION PEOPLE.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

I COMMEND THE LEADERSHIP OF CLAY LA FORCE IN ACCEPTING AND DEALING WITH THE CHALLENGE PRESENTED TO HIM AS CHAIRMAN OF THE PRESIDENT'S TASK FORCE ON FOOD ASSISTANCE. AS DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT AT UCLA, HE BROUGHT A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE TO THE JOB ASSIGNED TO HIM. AGAIN, I CANNOT AGREE WITH THE BLOCK GRANT APPROACH TO FEDERAL FOOD PROGRAMS, OR THE HEAVY SANCTIONS RECOMMENDED FOR THE CURRENT ERROR RATE SYSTEM, BUT I WOULD LIKE TO ENDORSE THE MAJORITY OF PROVISIONS CONTAINED IN THE TASK FORCE REPORT.

AT THIS TIME, IT MIGHT BE APPROPRIATE TO ANNOUNCE THAT IT IS THE INTENTION OF SENATOR DOMENICI AND MYSELF TO INTRODUCE LEGISLATION SOON WHICH WILL IMPLEMENT MOST OF THESE TASK FORCE PROPOSALS, AND MAKE SOME NECESSARY POLICY ADJUSTMENTS IN MANY OF THE NUTRITION PROGRAMS UNDER OUR JURISDICTION. WE WOULD WELCOME BIPARTISAN SUPPORT OF OUR EFFORTS.