

BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

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SEN. DOLE DEDICATES MONUMENT, HAILS AMERICA'S FARMERS

Bonner Springs, KS -- The following remarks are scheduled to be delivered by Senator Bob Dole (R-KS) at dedication ceremonies for the National Farmer Memorial at the Agriculture Hall of Fame at Bonner Springs on Monday, Sept. 1:

Sharing A Dream

"Sculptor Lewis Watkins and composer Robert Moffa today give us a monument that is long overdue - a memorial in honor of the American farmer. Their work, like that of the farmer they pay tribute to, is a labor of love.

"Harold Adkins and the Board of Governors here deserve our thanks too in helping to bring yet another major milestone to the national Agriculture Hall of Fame's fine tradition.

"We come here today to share a dream. It is a dream that says there are no mountains too large to climb if we keep our sights fixed on taking the next step forward, no matter how difficult that step may be.

"This monument, expressed magnificently through artwork, is reflective of what was said long ago - the first and most respectable of all the arts is agriculture.

"It is reflective also of what George Washington said long ago - agriculture is the oldest and most noble of professions.

"Years ago, those who tilled the soil and worked the land from sunrise to sunset had their dreams too: to feed their families, to earn a living and to make America a strong, healthy and free nation.

"In the beginning of our nation's development, our rural ancestors had to tame an unknown wilderness to find a new home and see their dream come alive. Today this generation of farmers have no fewer obstacles but a few different challenges.

"Every day, farmers still face battles over which they have little control: droughts, floods, hailstorms, insects - and many times contradictory government policies that make it difficult to manage a farm on a day to day basis.

American Farmers - Envy Of The World

"Despite these challenges, the American farmer today is the envy of the world. He produces enough food and fiber for 116 people - 86 in our own country and 30 overseas.

"Today we produce 80-percent more on an acre of land than just a generation ago. Today, one hour of farm labor produces 16 times as much food and other crops as it did in 1920. In fact, agricultural production per hour has been increasing about three times as fast as industrial production.

"Today our city cousins spend only 15-percent of their disposable income on food, and yet are blessed with a stable supply of many different types of food items.

"Agriculture is the nation's largest industry. Farm assets total more than 700 million dollars, and are equal to about 70-percent of the capital assets of all manufacturing corporations in the United States.

"Agriculture accounts for 20 percent of the nation's gross national product with \$610 billion of business activity yearly. It is the nation's largest employer with roughly 21 million people - one out of five American jobs - involved in some phase of agriculture.

"And although U.S. farm exports have fallen from their 1981 peak of \$43.8 billion to a \$28 billion last year, I believe they are still a key ingredient to the American farmer's earnings. Every billion dollars in farm exports generates more than 35,000 jobs and creates another \$1.4 billion of economic activity in our country.

"The American farmer is a consumer and taxpayer as well. Farmers spend \$45 billion a year on goods, services, and personal taxes. Total farm production expenses or the cost of producing crops and livestock for 240 million people amounts to \$139.5 billion.

An Appropriate Recognition

"It is only appropriate to recognize the American farmer with a 'living memorial'. And I am very proud as a Kansan that we can dedicate this memorial at the national Agriculture Hall of Fame - the only one of its kind in the entire world - here in Bonner Springs, Kansas.

"The Agriculture Hall of Fame has always been a symbolic shrine to the American farmer. A tour of the grounds, already taken by more than one and a half million people, reveals a very proud and noble heritage.

"Gone from today's dynamic agricultural scene but preserved here for our appreciation and a greater understanding of agriculture are the horse drawn plows; the steel-wheeled tractors; the one-room school house; the 1903 Dart farm trucks; the McCormick reaper and other so-called relics that remind us of a by-gone day. Yes, they have found a home here.

"We remember George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington Carver, Eli Whitney, Squanto the Indian, Hugh Bennett, Luther Burbank and Roswell Garst and others who led the march toward new frontiers in agriculture.

"It is true that the equipment and methods and faces of years past have changed, but the spirit and drive and dreams inspired by those pioneers and those days still live on.

The American Farmer: A Hero

"The dream we share today is the same type of dream the late Howard Cowden had in the 1950's when he recognized the American farmer was just as much a superstar and hero as any baseball player, football player or track star. The National Farmer Memorial is a proud trophy to a real winner - the American farmer.

"The Agriculture Hall of Fame, like the National Farmer Memorial, happened because many people wanted to keep alive the tradition of our rural heritage. Thousands of farmers and agribusiness interests made small donations of money or artifacts to see the hall of fame become a reality.

"They understood that although they may not have grown up on a farm or disked a field or milked a cow or fixed a tractor,

their grandfather may have or their great grandfather most certainly did.

"The American farmer memorial depicts a pioneer family of the past, fighting all odds with no guarantees.

"It pays tribute to the farmer of today, confronted with the uncertainty of our complex, contemporary world.

"It inspires the farmer of tomorrow, a young boy or girl who will carry the proud tradition of agriculture into a new era and a better day.

"We are a nation brought from the fertile soil of a great land and proud dreams. Today, it is true, many Americans are generations removed from the soil. So let them see firsthand, here, that they are still dependent every day upon the food and fiber produced on the farms and ranches of America's heartland.

"This is a great day to share a dream that has become a reality. This is a great day to see art - the art of the land, captured within the art of a sculpture and the art of music.

"As Daniel Webster said so long ago, "When tillage begins, other arts follow. The farmers are the founders of civilization."