

WASHINGTON, D. C.
OCTOBER 14, 1966

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The five Congressmen from Kansas, "The Wheat State", Bob Dole, Chester Mize, Bob Ellsworth, Garner Shriver, and Joe Skubitz, wired President Johnson today suggesting an investigation be made of the charges made by Frank LeRoux, a Democrat, who last week resigned a \$25,000 per year position as General Sales Manager of the Department of Agriculture. The Kansas Congressmen pointed out that their telegram to Johnson was prompted by new revelations which appeared in the October 13 issue of the Des Moines, Iowa Register. The Kansans suggest that Secretary of Agriculture, Orville Freeman, should voluntarily resign or be discharged, if LeRoux's statements are accurate. LeRoux said in the interview that 6 months ago Freeman, and other high-ranking USDA officials, deliberately initiated a 4-stage plan to drive wheat prices down.

According to LeRoux, "The first stage was a cutback in the sales abroad under the P.L. 480 program. Freeman wanted to use it to cut wheat prices, and they sat back gleefully waiting for it to drive prices down."

LeRoux said that while this caused some drop in the prices, it was "not as much as Freeman wanted, so they took the next step -- an announcement of an increase of about 7.7 million wheat acres. Again they sat back waiting for the price to go down, but it still wasn't enough."

LeRoux said, "Then they took the step that was thoroughly dishonest, and they knew it was dishonest at the time." The department announced "an enormous world wheat crop prediction." LeRoux said the "dishonesty" of this announcement was best demonstrated by Agriculture Department comments that the increase of about 20 percent in the wheat acreage in Argentina was one of the reasons why a huge world wheat crop could be expected.

LeRoux continued, "The Agriculture Department knew at the time that a crop failure in Argentina was going to cut the wheat production in that country from something over 11 million tons to about 5.5 million tons. These three moves and this deception was bad enough, but then the Agriculture Department took the fourth crack at wheat prices. This was the announcement that there would be an additional increase in wheat acreage of about 5 million acres by permitting the use of acres cut back from feed grain production to be put in wheat."

LeRoux further declared that Secretary Freeman and Under Secretary of Agriculture, John Schnittker, had "knowingly taken those steps to cut wheat prices and they have been successful in dropping the market 25 or 30 cents in the last

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month."

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In the exclusive interview, LeRoux also related how Freeman deliberately moved to depress the price of corn, hogs, and feed grains.

Congressman Dole, a member of the House Committee on Agriculture, speaking for the Kansas House delegation, stated, "If a Republican had made these charges, he would have been blasted by Administration leaders as playing politics before election, but it so happens that Mr. LeRoux was and is a Democrat. LeRoux, a farmer, came to the Department from the state of Washington with the sole objective of bolstering farm income and upgrading the role of the American farmer. His statements have gone unchallenged. It is obvious that Secretary Freeman and other USDA officials are playing consumer politics at the expense of the American farmer. Freeman has not been a Secretary "of" Agriculture, but a Secretary "against" Agriculture and should either resign or be discharged by President Johnson for his anti-farmer policies if the statements by LeRoux in his book, "The Farmers' Worst Five Years", or his statements in the Des Moines Register interview are not promptly refuted. It seems obvious to me," Dole concluded, "that the wrong USDA official quit."

The text of the telegram to President Johnson is as follows:

WE RESPECTFULLY REQUEST AN INVESTIGATION OF THE STATEMENTS MADE BY FRANK LE ROUX, WHO RESIGNED LAST WEEK AS GENERAL SALES MANAGER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, WHICH APPEARED IN THE OCTOBER 13 ISSUE OF THE DES MOINES, IOWA REGISTER. MR. LE ROUX STATES THAT SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE, ORVILLE FREEMAN, AND OTHER HIGH RANKING USDA OFFICIALS DELIBERATELY INITIATED A 4-STAGE PLAN TO DRIVE WHEAT PRICES DOWN. MR. LE ROUX FURTHER STATES THAT HE HAD KNOWLEDGE OF SECRETARY FREEMAN'S PERSONAL INTEREST IN DRIVING THE PRICE OF WHEAT, CORN, PORK AND OTHER AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS DOWN.

WE RESPECTFULLY SUGGEST THAT IF THESE STATEMENTS ARE ACCURATE, SECRETARY FREEMAN BE ASKED TO RESIGN. THE AMERICAN FARMER CANNOT HAVE CONFIDENCE IN A SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE IF HE IN FACT HAS DELIBERATELY CARRIED OUT A POLICY WHICH WOULD DEPRESS FARM COMMODITY PRICES.

THE FARMERS OF KANSAS AND OF ALL AMERICA LOOK TO YOU FOR A PROMPT, THOROUGH AND OBJECTIVE INVESTIGATION OF THIS SERIOUS SITUATION.

Bob Dole, 1st District, Kansas
Chester Mize, 2nd District, Kansas
Bob Ellsworth, 3rd District, Kansas
Garner Shriver, 4th District, Kansas
Joe Skubitz, 5th District, Kansas