



# NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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## STATEMENT BY SENATOR BOB DOLE BEFORE THE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

Washington, D.C.

I welcome Secretary Bob Bergland to the Agriculture Committee this morning. It is always a pleasure to have Secretary Bergland with us.

I also welcome the many farmers to our Committee meeting this morning. I know they represent many states and are in the Capitol to tell their story.

Many farmers have been having many meetings across the country to discuss their situation, develop solutions, and to let the Congress, the Administration, and the American people know their disastrous economic situation.

There are several hundred farmers in Washington today from my state of Kansas. I have held meetings with the farmers to listen to their statements and answer their questions. Last Friday afternoon, over 400 farmers gathered to state their viewpoints.

After I visited with the farmers, they asked if it would be possible to have other Senators attend and talk to them. Senators Tower(Texas), Bumpers(Arkansas), Moynihan(New York), and Riegle(Michigan) responded to my invitation. I thank them for coming.

I met with farmers in Washington, D.C., on December 10, 1977. At that time, I assured them the Senate Agriculture Committee would hold field hearings so farmers could present in a more formal manner specific ideas for action by the Congress and the Administration.

Senator Herman Talmadge, the Chairman of this Committee, approved a field hearing at my request. On Monday, January 16, 1978, the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, held a field hearing in Kansas City, Kansas. Testimony from farmers and farm organizations was taken for over 7 hours.

Twenty-one individual farmers, eight farm organizations, and a 7-member panel representing the members of the American Agriculture Movement in 40 states presented some excellent testimony. I am submitting a witness list for inclusion in today's Record. I was very impressed with the witnesses. Their sincerity, honesty, and concern was very evident.

The complete record of the Hearing will be published by the Agriculture Committee. Copies will be available for those who would like to read the fine statements that were presented.

I thank all those who testified at the hearing and those who attended. The people who came had to face some very bad weather conditions. Heavy snow and cold temperatures kept some people from attending.

I found most farmers could care less about politics today. They are concerned about their future and the future of their families. They are concerned about remaining on the farm, and saving what has taken years to develop. I believe politics must be forgotten and the conflicts of the past must be resolved. The farmer is in economic trouble. We must all work together with farmers to improve the situation.

This is not the time for politics. It is a time for the Congress and the Administration to work together with all farmers and all farm organizations.

Raymond Stockebrand, a farmer from Yates Center, Kansas, said, "I am an American farmer who is fighting to survive in a nation that is the land of the free and the home of the brave... this is my plea for the Congress to reconsider your farm legislation, and save the young American farmers from going down the drain. Let the nation's farmers continue to grow and help keep out nation prosperous." A farmer from St. Francis, Kansas, Rodney Shay, said in his testimony, "We are tired to being the only group in our society forced to hold down inflation. Recently, the longshoremen got a 30% increase in wages over three years. Now the steel industry is talking of raising prices. And, farmers are the ones who will pay the ✓ the lion's share of these increases."



Bob Wallace, of Arbuckle, California, testified, "We are witnessing a phenomena in America today that we have never seen before. It has to do with American agriculture. It is a movement direct at injustices in markets. It's joined by farmers from coast to coast and from border to border; and now it's being picked up by concerned Americans everywhere. It is a protect against the economic injustices of America...so the program that the American Agriculture Movement has proposed for the Congress and the President of the United States to adopt as policy of this nation is a 100 percent parity program for America's agricultural production."

Patty Stulp of Hilltop Farms in Yuma, Colorado, stated, "The producers of this country cannot be expected to continue to send their products out of this country at below the cost of production. When we export grains at below the cost of our production, we are having to use the equity we have built up in our farms and ranches. Farmers and ranchers cannot continue to operate at below the cost of production."

Ron Rice of Wathena, Kansas, testified, "I know I have cited many problems and offered few solutions, but the farmer is starting to try to correct some of these problems and with the help of others in the Nation it can be worked out. True the farmer has helped to bring this on himself by taking what comes his way and not reacting to it. This has stopped, however. He is reacting now!"

"Please keep this in mind, if you don't eat, this problem doesn't apply to you, but if you do, it's your problem, too!", Mr. Rice stated.

The Kansas Bankers Association was represented by Max Dickerson, who testified, "The squeeze on agriculture is very real. To help understand how real it is, farmers, bankers, and I'm sure most of you, would agree that:

- (1) Farm operating loans are larger, and at a much higher percent of collateral value than three years ago.
- (2) More farmers have had to increase their real estate loans in order to keep operating than in any other three year period in history.
- (3) Liquidity in operating farm loans as well as in farm real estate loans is not as good as three years ago for at least 30 percent of the farms."

Doyle Rahjes, who represented the American Farm Bureau, said, "It is our hope and fervent prayer, Senator, that what you hear today will also reach the ears, the minds, and the hearts...Yes, the hearts of your colleagues in the Senate and the House of Representatives. Will reach the Executive Branch of the Government. Will reach the people of this Nation." He also said, "We firmly believe the American people do not recognize the disastrous economic conditions confronting agricultural producers in this nation."

The President of the National Farmers Organization said in his statement, "I suggest five things that would be appropriate for government to do at the present time:

- (1) Raise support loans on grains and cotton to a more adequate level and authorize nationwide marketing agreements so producers can manage supplies by referendum vote.
- (2) Make it possible for farm organizations, as such, to join together legally in strikes or holding actions.
- (3) Authorize commodity credit corporations to carry out U.S. Government commitments to foreign nations for wheat and coarse grains, and pursuant to that responsibility, to buy futures contracts at the boards of trade in order to translate foreign purchases into actual U.S. market demands.
- (4) Tighten our meat import quotas and regulations to keep foreign meat and animals out of our markets when we have abundant domestic supplies.
- (5) Provide economic emergency credit at reasonable interest rates to bail out farmers until their real prices are attained.

Gene Schroder of Campo, Colorado, presented the proposals of the American Agriculture Movement. I am attaching those proposals to this statement. I hope everyone will read them and study them. I urge the Agriculture Committee to look at them and see what legislative action would be needed to make them work.

I would also like to request that Secretary Bergland give this Committee the views of the Administration toward the proposals of the American Agriculture Movement. I would appreciate a written statement from the Secretary to the Committee as soon as possible.

Dale Lyon, President of the Kansas Farmers Union, represented the National Farmers Union at the hearing and said, "Historically, the Farmers Union has supported the parity concept of determining what prices are fair to both producers and consumers. We believe that concept is still valid...Farmers Union delegates to our annual national policy-making conventions have reaffirmed their belief in the parity concept again and again. They have called their policy a program of 'parity for farmers and abundance for consumers'."