



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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STATEMENT BY SENATOR BOB DOLE

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I want to say a word about the income of farmers, and the possibility that some people may be profiting from this uncertainty about export sales.

What little this administration is doing to help the farmer is being done grudgingly.

The Carter-Bergland farm policy is totally inadequate. And it is the drought-stricken wheat farmers who suffer the most. The Administration is proposing to set target prices for wheat at lower than the level of loan rates. And the President wants a grain reserve program only when prices are down, which would have the effect of keeping prices down.

Virtually everything we try to do to help is resisted by the White House.

The grain inspection bill is a case in point. This bill that passed the Senate last week would relieve grain producers of the government's cost of inspecting and weighing what they sell. The appropriation of federal funds for these fees would mean a half million dollars in the pockets of Kansas wheat farmers on this year's crop alone. But the Administration is against the bill, and the House committee doesn't seem interested. I urge Secretary Bergland to use his influence to get the President to support the bill. Unless that happens, there isn't much chance of correcting this injustice this year.

We can't wait until next year's crops before raising the price support targets. The farm bill supported by the Administration would provide for no changes in target prices until then. There is an urgent need for higher target prices effective with this year's crops. For many farmers, another year's wait would be too long. I will do what I can to make room for these additions this year in the budget resolution.

Unfortunately -- and it may have been unintentional -- the Department may have made it possible for futures market speculators and export traders to collect windfall profits from the sale of soybeans to the People's Republic of China. The announcement of the sale was held up for six days. During this period, while rumors circulated through the market, it may have been -- and I make no allegations, because I don't know what all the facts are -- it may have been that some insiders were able to take advantage of a price rise of over 57¢ a bushel. The point is that this spurt in price did little good for the farmer who raised the beans. Export information of such a sensitive nature ought to be made public immediately. That was the policy in the Ford Administration. Unless the Secretary has a satisfactory explanation for the withholding of information, I believe our committee ought to look into the matter further. It may be that the Department should be required by law to make immediate public announcement of export sales.