



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOB DOLE FOLLOWING COMPLETION OF HOUSE-SENATE CONFERENCE ON FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ACT OF 1977

While the Carter Administration spokesmen will undoubtedly take credit for the farm legislation agreed upon by House and Senate conferees today, it should be and will be remembered by farmers across this nation and other rural Americans that the Carter Administration fought the bill at every step.

Campaign promises by Candidate Carter are one thing, but performance by President Carter and his Secretary of Agriculture, Robert Bergland, are quite another. Hearings on farm legislation were well underway when Secretary Bergland testified before the Senate Agriculture Committee on March 23. Most members of that Committee -- Democrats as well as Republicans -- were shocked at the program he offered American farmers. In nearly every case he attempted to cut back on programs, and even at that early stage suggested the President veto anything above the levels offered by the Administration. The constant threat of a veto has been used repeatedly in efforts to knock down price support levels, particularly in the wheat and feed grain areas. It is fair to say that the Carter Administration was dragged kicking and screaming throughout the development of the bill, and I am certain most American farmers are cognizant of this. The Administration lead the efforts to kill my proposal to increase the wheat target price for 1977 from 2.65 to 2.90 per bushel. That Administration effort failed because Democratic and Republican Senators, truly concerned about farmers, narrowly prevailed by a vote of 50-46.

The Administration also attempted to deny America's cane and sugar beet producers a sound program. Again Democratic and Republican Senators, in an effort to thwart the ill-advised Administration sugar proposal, succeeded in limiting sugar payments to \$50,000 per producer by a vote on my amendment of 54-44 on June 22. The Administration sugar proposal did not insure producers fair prices, but only assured soft-drink manufacturers and other commercial users of sugar low prices -- and big profits.

The Senate Conferees, accepting the amendment of Congressman de la Garza, rebuffed the Administration, and sugar producers will benefit -- no thanks to the Administration.

- Dole Praises Conferees -

Having said that, let me add that I am grateful to the Conference Chairmen, Senator Talmadge and Congressman Foley, for their approach to the problems of rural America. I also commend the Republican and Democrat conferees who put the good of the farmers ahead of the wishes of the Carter Administration. The end result is a pretty good farm bill. It has been hammered out for the most part on a bipartisan basis. It is without question a far better program than he advocated as President, but far less than he advocated as a candidate.

It is a day when all of us will be thankful that the Administration will stop the continual reference to the use of the veto power, while the Congress -- certainly as responsible a body as the Executive Branch -- worked its will. Of course, not every one obtained what he wanted, but a spirit of compromise pervaded the discussions.

It is now time to get on with the job of helping our farm families. It is now time for the Executive Branch to stop devoting its energies to the negativism of veto statements to the constructive job ahead for which the Congress has provided the tools. All of us are distressed by low farm prices. This bill provides tools for improving them. Let me enumerate specific actions which should be taken:

(1) Announce right now the quantities of various commodities which will be approved for shipment under the Food for Peace Program. This will increase demand now. I know how much energy Senator Hubert H. Humphrey has devoted on behalf of this program, and the world should be grateful for his endeavors. He was there at the conception and inception.

(2) Get out the regulations under the Dole bill to assure foreign countries that reserve stocks of agricultural commodities stored in the United States, under specified conditions, will not be subject to export controls. We need the increased demand reflected now in the market.

(3) Move expeditiously to announce the size of the CCC Export Credit Sales Program for the next fiscal year. This is a valuable tool to enable us to compete with other exporters, especially Canada and Australia on wheat.

(4) Announce that they will vigorously support the Dole bill to authorize CCC credit to certain world markets where it is currently prohibited -- especially the Peoples Republic of China. The Peoples Republic of China has bought about 9 million tons of wheat -- none from the United States.

It is my earnest hope this bill -- equitable to farmers, consumers, and taxpayers -- will be vigorously administered in the national interest. This bill will help restore the financial health of farm families and maintain the physical health of the needy.

I am particularly pleased with the action Congress took with respect to cotton, rice and peanuts. There is very little disagreement on dairy legislation. I do have reservations on the wheat and feed grain sections, and therefore reserve the right to continue our efforts to improve these programs.

I am personally pleased that the many amendments I offered to clean up alleged shortcomings in the P.L. 480 program were adopted, the Federal Grain Inspection Act has been improved, and the cost of the program will be paid by the Federal Government and not by the beleaguered producers. Let me just say that great strides were made in revamping research programs, and in my view -- one not shared by all my colleagues -- the Food Stamp Program offers more hope to many Americans who should be participating, while at the same time reducing opportunities for those who have abused the program.

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