



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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DOLE SAYS BERGLAND'S NATIONAL DIALOGUE WILL NOT HELP FARMERS NOW

WASHINGTON -- Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) said today that Agriculture Secretary Bob Bergland's call for a two-year debate on farm policy will help Congress in 1981 but will not help the thousands of farmers who are suffering economic crisis today.

"I welcome the secretary's offer to debate farm policies so a national consensus can be reached by 1981 when Congress writes a new farm bill," Dole said. "But at the same time, I think the secretary should be concerned about economic conditions on the farm today. Many of our farmers cannot wait until 1981. If the secretary doesn't act to assist them now under the present farm bill, they will be out of business.

"I believe that the call for a national dialogue is really a smokescreen to cover up the disaster of the present Carter farm policies. The 1978 program was not a successful one for farmers, and the 1979 program could be a disaster.

"The secretary has said, 'My greatest aggravation is people who want to change things right away -- we're not going to do that.' I believe the farmer's greatest aggravation is that the secretary will not act.

"The Administration was given in the 1977 farm bill the authority necessary to deal with our agricultural problems. The present farm income situation could have been avoided if the Administration had used that authority effectively. Instead, the Carter team is mandating huge surpluses of grain, low target prices, and low set-asides. They are keeping the farmer in an economic bind.

"It will be good to have a national dialogue about getting rid of our cheap food policy and getting rid of government farm programs. In the meantime we cannot ignore the needs of farmers to survive economically between now and 1981.

"Until a new policy and a new law can be passed, it seems to me that a government that has asked for and been given the broadest kind of delegated authority to manage production, commodity stocks, loan levels, target prices, countervailing duties and tariffs would not hesitate to give farmers some protection against food grain prices that threaten their very livelihood.

"We cannot wait until 1981. The time for action by the secretary is now. Farmers cannot wait until 1981 for the cheap food policy to be over. Many of them will not be in business for the 1982 crop."