

REMARKS OF CONGRESSMAN BOB DOLE

VICTORY ELECTRIC COOPS
DODGE CITY, KANSAS
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FARM PROGRAMS

-INTRODUCTION-

I FIRST WANT TO EXPRESS MY SINCERE APPRECIATION FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT WITH YOU DURING YOUR ANNUAL MEETING. THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE GROUPS, AND I ALWAYS ENJOY THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXCHANGE THOUGHTS WITH YOU.

I WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS MYSELF TONIGHT TO WHAT I BELIEVE ARE CRUCIAL ISSUES CONCERNING OUR NATIONAL PROGRAMS AND POLICIES AFFECTING RURAL AMERICA.

FOR MORE THAN THREE DECADES, THIS NATION HAS BEEN STRUGGLING TO DEVELOP NATIONAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMS TO MEET THE PROBLEMS IN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AMERICA. OF ALL OF THE MAJOR ISSUES OF PUBLIC POLICY WHICH THIS NATION HAS FACED OVER THE YEARS, THESE ISSUES HAVE BEEN THE MOST DIFFICULT TO RESOLVE. WE ARE NOW, I BELIEVE, TURNING A CRUCIAL CORNER IN OUR EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THE PERENNIAL PROBLEMS IN RURAL AMERICA.

THIS YEAR AND THOSE IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING MAY WELL PROVE TO BE DECISIVE YEARS IN TERMS OF THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN AGRICULTURE. THE CONGRESS HAS BEFORE IT REQUESTS TO INITIATE OR TAKE ACTION ON SEVEN MAJOR AREAS OF FARM CONCERN:

1. PUBLIC LAW 480, THE FOOD FOR PEACE PROGRAM, EXPIRES AT THE END OF THIS YEAR. WE HAVE BEGUN OUR DISCUSSIONS ON THIS MAJOR AND VITAL LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM.
2. THE CONCEPT OF A SECURITY RESERVE, OR AS THE ADMINISTRATION NOW CALLS IT - A "NATIONAL FOOD BANK" - IS AGAIN UP FOR CONSIDERATION IN THE FORM OF SEVERAL DIFFERENT LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS.
3. THE CURRENT FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ACT OF 1965 EXPIRES AT THE END OF THE 1969 SEASON. THE ADMINISTRATION HAS ASKED FOR A PERMANENT EXTENSION FOR THIS PROGRAM.
4. LEGISLATION AIMED AT STRENGTHENING FARM BARGAINING POWER HAS BEEN INTRODUCED AND WILL BE WIDELY DISCUSSED DURING THIS SESSION OF THE CONGRESS.
5. MAJOR REVISION TO THE PACKERS AND STOCKYARDS ACT HAS BEEN PROPOSED AND IS UNDER DISCUSSION.
6. EXPANSION OF FEDERAL CONTROL OVER POULTRY INSPECTION AND GRADING IS COMING. AND,
7. A NUMBER OF PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN CALLED FOR BY THE PRESIDENT WHICH HE SAYS WILL AID THE SMALL FARMER AND IMPROVE CONDITIONS IN RURAL AMERICA.

-CRUCIAL PERIOD-

DEPENDING ON YOUR POINT OF VIEW, THE ACTION OR INACTION OF THE CONGRESS AND THE ADMINISTRATION ON THESE AND OTHER IMPORTANT AGRICULTURAL

MATTERS CAN HAVE FAR REACHING IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR RURAL CITIZENS. WE HAVE SEEN THE COMPLETION OF A CROP YEAR WHICH DIDN'T DO MUCH TO MAKE THE AMERICAN FARMER VERY OPTIMISTIC OR HAPPY ABOUT THE FUTURE. THE YEAR 1967 SAW A TEN PER CENT REDUCTION IN REALIZED NET INCOME FOR FARMERS. THIS WAS A MASSIVE \$1.9 BILLION REDUCTION ON A NATIONAL BASIS. AT THE SAME TIME, THE FARMER'S COST CONTINUES TO SKYROCKET. OVER THE PAST SEVEN YEARS, THE COST OF FARM PRODUCTION HAS RISEN BY 31 PER CENT. FARM PARITY IS NOW AT A LEVEL COMPARABLE TO WHAT IT WAS IN THE DEPTHS OF THE DEPRESSION. THE YEAR 1967 SAW THE NET REALIZED INCOME PER FARM IN KANSAS DROP \$777 FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR.

I THINK THAT WE CAN ALL AGREE THAT THE PERENNIAL "FARM PROBLEM" APPEARS NO CLOSER TO SOLUTION NOW THAN IT HAS BEEN OVER THE PAST SEVERAL DECADES. IN FACT, I THINK THAT AS A RESULT OF EVENTS OF THE PAST YEAR, AGRICULTURE AS AN INDUSTRY IS IN BAD SHAPE! I REPEAT MY PERSONAL FEELING THAT THE NEXT FEW YEARS MAY VERY WELL BE CRUCIAL IN TERMS OF MAINTAINING A VIABLE RURAL ECONOMY.

-NATION'S MOOD-

NOW, LET'S CONSIDER THE MOOD AND ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH THE CRITICAL DIALOGUE ON FARM PROGRAMS WITHIN THE CONGRESS AND THE ADMINISTRATION IS TAKING PLACE.

FIRST, WE ARE ALL AWARE OF THE SENSE OF FRUSTRATION ON THE PART OF THE AMERICAN CITIZENRY. THEY ARE FED UP WITH HIGH COSTS AND TAXES. THEY ARE WORRIED ABOUT THE VIETNAM SITUATION. THEY LOOK WITH FEAR AND

ALARM TOWARD ANOTHER SUMMER OF RIOTS IN THE STREETS OF THEIR CITIES. THEY CONTINUE TO READ AND WORRY ABOUT THE RISING CRIME RATE. MORE THAN EVER BEFORE, THE AMERICAN CITIZEN SEEMS TO BE FACED WITH NEW AND SERIOUS PROBLEMS WHEREVER HE TURNS.

SECOND, THESE SAME FRUSTRATIONS ARE FELT AND FELT DEEPLY BY MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS. ONE GOOD INDICATOR OF THIS FEELING WAS THE ECONOMY DRIVE IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES LAST YEAR. AND NOW THE CONGRESS IS FACED WITH A NATIONAL BUDGET THAT IS RAPIDLY APPROACHING THE \$200 BILLION PER YEAR MARK. THE PRESIDENT'S FISCAL YEAR 1969 BUDGET PROPOSES AN OUTLAY OF \$186.1 BILLIONS. WITH THE SKYROCKETING COST OF GOVERNMENT AT ALL LEVELS, WE WILL CONTINUE TO SEE DRIVES TO HOLD DOWN THE NATIONAL BUDGET. TO REALIZE HOW INTENSE THE FEELINGS ARE ON THIS ISSUE IN THE CONGRESS, WE NEED ONLY TO WITNESS THE RECENT CONSIDERATION OF THE TAX ADJUSTMENT ACT ON THE FLOOR OF THE SENATE. THIS ACT WAS PASSED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AS A RELATIVELY SIMPLE MEASURE EXTENDING CERTAIN EXISTING EXCISE TAXES AND EXPEDITING PAYMENT OF ESTIMATED TAX BY CORPORATIONS. WITHIN A FEW HOURS OF FLOOR DEBATE, THE SENATE WAS CONSIDERING AMENDMENTS WHICH WOULD, AMONG OTHER THINGS:

1. PROVIDE FOR A MORATORIUM ON PUBLIC WORKS;
2. CUT THE FY 1969 BUDGET BY \$6 BILLIONS;
3. PROVIDE FOR A SURTAX; AND
4. PLACE A CEILING ON THE NUMBER OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES.

THE ULTIMATE RESULT WILL INEVITABLY BE ROUGH COMPETITION BETWEEN FEDERAL AGENCIES FOR WHAT THEY CONSIDER TO BE THEIR SHARE OF THE FEDERAL DOLLAR. INCREASINGLY WE WILL SEE THE DOMESTIC AGENCIES CASTING GREEDY EYES AT THE USDA'S \$7 BILLION BUDGET. WE SEE CONTINUING AND INCREASINGLY GROWING DEMANDS TO MOVE IN ON THE FARM PROGRAMS -- A GOOD EXAMPLE IS THE CONTINUING EFFORTS TO PLACE LIMITATIONS ON PAYMENTS THAT ANY ONE FARMER CAN GET UNDER THE GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS.

AND WHERE WOULD ANY SAVINGS FROM THE USDA'S BUDGET GO? IN THIS URBAN ORIENTED ECONOMY -- TO THE CITIES, OF COURSE.

THIRD, RECENT EVENTS AND CHANGES IN THE NATIONAL POLITICAL SCENE HAVE THROWN THE SITUATION INTO EVEN MORE TURMOIL THAN EXISTED BEFORE. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRESIDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENT THAT HE IS NOT A CANDIDATE FOR REELECTION TO THE PRESIDENCY AND HIS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT SIGNIFICANT CUTS MUST BE MADE IN THE DOMESTIC PROGRAM BUDGETS CANNOT BE OVERLOOKED. WE HAVE HAD TO ADMIT THAT WE CANNOT AFFORD BOTH GUNS AND BUTTER. ESSENTIALLY, VIETNAM HAS BECOME THE OVERRIDING ISSUE OF NATIONAL CONCERN. THESE FACTORS, ALONG WITH THE INEVITABLE QUESTION CONCERNING WHETHER OR NOT MR. JOHNSON IS NOW A "LAME DUCK" PRESIDENT, WILL PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE ULTIMATE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF PENDING RURAL LEGISLATION.

FOURTH, THIS IS THE ERA OF THE CONSUMER. THERE IS A RISING INTEREST AND CONCERN AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL ON CONSUMER PROBLEMS. JUST LOOK AT THE CONSUMER ORIENTED LEGISLATION THAT HAS COME BEFORE THE CONGRESS LATELY --

AUTOMOBILE SAFETY, TRUTH IN LENDING, MEAT AND POULTRY INSPECTION, AND ON AND ON. AND ALSO CONSIDER THE FACT THAT THESE ARE MAJOR PIECES OF LEGISLATION WITH FAR-REACHING EFFECTS AND OFTEN REQUIRING CONSIDERABLE AMOUNTS OF TAX DOLLARS TO OPERATE.

AND, FINALLY, CONSIDER THE MATTER OF RURAL-URBAN BALANCE. WE ARE SEEING OUR RURAL AREAS BEING DEPLETED OF PEOPLE. THERE IS A DEARTH OF ACCURATE STATISTICS ON THE ACTUAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE MIGRATED INTO URBAN AREAS, BUT THE NUMBER IS SIGNIFICANT. AT DIFFERENT TIMES, USDA OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD US THAT THE COUNTRYSIDE LOST 20,000,000 PEOPLE TO THE CITIES DURING THE LAST 20 YEARS. THEY HAVE ESTIMATED THAT THIS MIGRATION STILL RUNS AS HIGH AS FROM 500,000 TO 600,000 A YEAR. WE ARE, WITHOUT NECESSARILY DESIRING IT AND ALMOST BY DEFAULT, BECOMING AN URBAN SOCIETY.

-BALANCE OF POLITICAL POWER-

IT IS THIS LAST SUBJECT THAT I WANT TO DWELL ON FOR A TIME. THE RUSH OF PEOPLE FROM COUNTRY TO THE CITIES HAS HAD FAR REACHING IMPLICATIONS IN TERMS OF THE BALANCE OF POLITICAL POWER BETWEEN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS. POLITICAL POWER HAS MOVED INTO SUBURBIA WITH THE PEOPLE. LET'S LOOK AT THE STRUCTURE OF THE PRESENT CONGRESS. OUT OF THE 435 REPRESENTATIVES IN THE 90TH CONGRESS, 388 ARE FROM DISTRICTS WHERE 4/5THS OR MORE OF THE PEOPLE LIVE IN URBAN AREAS OFF THE FARM. AND THIS SHIFT OF POLITICAL POWER HAS BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY CERTAIN SHIFTS IN ECONOMIC POWER. JUST REVIEW THE SITUATION. ONLY THIRTY YEARS AGO, IT TOOK TEN FARMERS AND FARM WORKERS TO SUPPLY THE FOOD AND FIBRE NEEDS FOR 40 PERSONS. TODAY,

ONE FARMER CAN DO IT. WE NOW HAVE ONLY TWO PERSONS ON FARMS FOR EVERY FIVE THAT LIVED THERE THIRTY YEARS AGO. THE CONSEQUENCE IS INEVITABLE. AGRICULTURE IS NO LONGER THE GREAT EMPLOYER OF AMERICA. LESS THAN 6 PERCENT OF OUR PEOPLE NOW LIVE ON FARMS. THIS HAS INEVITABLY LED TO AN ATTITUDE ON THE PART OF URBAN CITIZENS THAT AGRICULTURE IS OF DECLINING IMPORTANCE AND INFLUENCE IN NATIONAL AND WORLD AFFAIRS. TO MANY OF OUR CITIZENS, AGRICULTURE IS SIMPLY AN INDUSTRY WITH RAPIDLY DECLINING ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE.

-CHANGING SOCIAL ROLE-

AND ALONG WITH THIS EXODUS OF PEOPLE AND POLITICAL POWER FROM THE FARM, WE ARE ALSO SEEING A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN THE AVERAGE AMERICAN'S VIEW OF THE SOCIAL ROLE OF AGRICULTURE. IN THE PAST, THE PREVAILING VIEW AMONG NON-FARM GROUPS WAS THAT FARM PEOPLE MADE SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SOCIAL STABILITY OF OUR NATION. TO MANY, THE FARM FAMILY EPITOMIZED THE "GOOD LIFE". SOCIAL JUSTICE AND HIGH MORAL PRINCIPLES WERE SYNONOMOUS WITH RURAL LIFE. THE WELL-BEING OF AMERICA SEEMED TO HAVE ITS ROOTS IN AGRICULTURE. BUT YEARS OF BLAMING THE FARMER FOR MASSIVE SURPLUSES AND ACCUSATIONS OF HIM GETTING FAT AT THE "PUBLIC TROUGH" IN THE FORM OF HIGH FEDERAL SUBSIDIES HAVE HAD THEIR AFFECT. FARMERS HAVE LOST THIS "GOODWILL". NOW, AT THE SAME TIME THAT THEY ARE EATING BETTER THAN THEY EVER HAVE AND AT LESS COST IN TERMS OF THEIR TOTAL DISPOSABLE INCOME, TOO MANY PEOPLE ARE SAYING THAT THE NATION NO LONGER NEEDS TO PAY MUCH ATTENTION TO THE ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF U. S. FARMERS.

-IMPLICATIONS OF POWER SHIFT-

NOW, LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT SOME OF THE IMPLICATIONS INHERENT IN THIS POLITICAL-ECONOMIC-SOCIOLOGICAL SHIFT IN THE POWER STRUCTURE OF THE UNITED STATES.

THE POLITICAL SCIENTISTS TELL US THAT NATIONAL ELECTIONS ARE NO LONGER WON OR LOST IN THE RURAL AREAS. THEY TELL US THAT THE BURGEONING POLITICAL POWER OF THE SPRAWLING MIDDLE-CLASS SUBURBAN AREAS IS NOW THE FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH. AND WHAT IS THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF THIS POWER CENTER? IT IS POPULATED LARGELY BY MIDDLE-INCOME GROUPS. THEY ARE EITHER SALARIED OR HOURLY WORKERS WITH EFFECTIVE UNIONS, A RELATIVELY HIGH STANDARD OF LIVING, AND HAVE LITTLE FEAR OF UNEMPLOYMENT OR SEVERE ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION. THEY ARE YOUNGER AND GROWING YOUNGER. BY WAY OF CONTRAST, WITH THE MASSIVE RURAL MIGRATION WHICH WE HAVE SEEN, THE FARM POPULATION IS OLD AND GROWING OLDER.

THE IMPLICATIONS ARE OBVIOUS AND FAR REACHING. THE URBAN POPULATION NO LONGER LOOKS UPON FARMING AS AN ENTERPRISE WITH SPECIAL VIRTUES NOR ONE THAT SHOULD BE PROTECTED AND MAINTAINED WITH A PARTICULAR STRUCTURE BECAUSE OF ITS SPECIAL NON-ECONOMIC VALUES. SUBURBIA LOOKS AT AGRICULTURE AS A PURE ECONOMIC ENTERPRISE -- IN MUCH THE SAME FASHION AS ANY INDUSTRIAL ENTERPRISE. THE OLD ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ARGUMENTS OF AGRARIAN FUNDAMENTALISM CUTS NO ICE WITH THE SUBURBANITE.

-SOCIAL LEGISLATION AND THE FARM-

WE CAN ALREADY SEE SIGNIFICANT RESULTS OF THIS ATTITUDE CHANGE IN AT LEAST TWO AREAS.

FIRST, WE HAVE SEEN AND UNDOUBTEDLY WILL SEE MORE EMPHASIS ON THE APPLICATION TO THE FARM SITUATION OF SOCIAL LEGISLATION ORIGINALLY DESIGNED TO PROTECT WORKERS IN THE INDUSTRIAL SETTING. THE RECENT REGULATIONS ISSUED BY THE LABOR DEPARTMENT RESTRICTING THE TYPES OF FARM WORK THAT YOUTHS UNDER SIXTEEN CAN DO IS ONE EXAMPLE. ANOTHER IS THE RECENT LEGISLATIVE MOVES TO EXTEND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING RIGHTS TO AGRICULTURAL WORKERS.

THE SECOND AREA IN WHICH CHANGES ARE TAKING PLACE RELATES TO THE CAPITAL ORGANIZATION FOR AGRICULTURE. THERE IS LESS AND LESS POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF SPECIAL CREDIT ARRANGEMENTS AND LEGAL RESTRICTIONS DESIGNED TO KEEP THE SMALL FARMER IN PRODUCTION. IN SEVERAL OF THE STATES WE ARE SEEING INCREASINGLY STRONG ATTACKS ON LAWS DESIGNED TO LIMIT THE SPREAD OF CORPORATE FARMING.

IF I AM CORRECT IN MY ASSESSMENT OF THE SCOPE OF THESE AND OTHER COMING CHANGES IN THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ARENA, THE EFFECT ON THE AMERICAN FARMER WILL BE VAST AND SIGNIFICANT. IT WILL CONSIDERABLY CHANGE THE WAY HE WILL HAVE TO COMPETE FOR CREDIT, LABOR AND THE OTHER RESOURCES THAT HE NEEDS TO DO BUSINESS.

-POVERTY PROGRAMS-

NOW, LET'S TURN FROM THE FARMER FOR A MOMENT AND CONSIDER THE IMPLICATIONS TO OUR TOTAL ECONOMY. THE POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR THE FEDERAL PROGRAMS DIRECTED AT POVERTY IS NOW AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE CENTERED IN THE METROPOLITAN AREAS. THE RESULT HAS BEEN, I BELIEVE, THAT WE HAVE FAILED TO ATTACK ONE OF THE ROOT CAUSES OF POVERTY IN OUR CITIES. WITH OUR OVERRIDING POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONCERN FOR THE PROBLEMS OF THE CITIES, WE ARE JUST NOW BEGINNING TO REALIZE THAT WE DO NOT CURE THESE PROBLEMS BY NATIONAL FARM POLICIES THAT ONLY SERVE TO SPEED THE RISING TIDE OF MIGRATION OF OUR RURAL PEOPLE INTO THE GHETTOS OF THESE VERY CITIES.

IT WAS ONLY WITH THE ISSUANCE IN LAST SEPTEMBER OF A REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT'S NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMISSION ON RURAL POVERTY, THAT THE GENERAL PUBLIC STARTED TO APPRECIATE THE FACT THAT POVERTY WAS NOT THE SOLE PROPERTY OF OUR CITIES. THAT REPORT CONTAINED INFORMATION THAT SHOCKED A LOT OF PEOPLE. AMONG OTHER THINGS, IT STATED THAT, WHILE ONE PERSON OUT OF EIGHT ARE CLASSIFIED AS "POOR" IN METROPOLITAN AREAS, THE RATIO OF POOR IN THE RURAL AREAS IS ONE OUT OF EVERY FOUR PERSONS. PROPORTIONATELY, WE HAVE TWICE AS MUCH POVERTY IN RURAL AREAS THAN IN THE BIG CITIES.

BUT, IN SPITE OF THE RECOGNITION OF A BASIC PROBLEM IN OUR RURAL ECONOMY, THE COMMISSION APPARENTLY COULD NOT HELP BUT ADHERE TO THE POPULARLY HELD VIEW OF THE AMERICAN FARMER:

"SOME OF OUR RURAL PROGRAMS, ESPECIALLY FARM AND VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS, ARE RELICS FROM AN EARLIER ERA. THEY WERE DEVELOPED IN A PERIOD DURING WHICH THE WELFARE OF FARM FAMILIES WAS EQUATED WITH THE WELL-BEING OF RURAL COMMUNITIES AND OF ALL RURAL PEOPLE. THIS IS NO LONGER SO. THEY WERE DEVELOPED WITHOUT ANTICIPATING THE VAST CHANGES IN TECHNOLOGY, AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS TECHNOLOGY TO RURAL PEOPLE. INSTEAD OF COMBATING LOW INCOMES OF RURAL PEOPLE, THESE PROGRAMS HAVE HELPED TO CREATE WEALTHY LANDOWNERS WHILE LARGELY BYPASSING THE RURAL POOR."

IN ANY EVENT, THE ADVISORY COMMISSION HAS SERVED AN EXTREMELY IMPORTANT FUNCTION. WE ARE SEEING MORE AND MORE ATTENTION BEING GIVEN NATIONALLY TO THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RURAL ASPECTS OF THE POVERTY PROBLEM. AN INDICATOR OF THIS WAS THE RECENT LEAD ARTICLE ON THE EDITORIAL PAGE OF THE WALL STREET JOURNAL. THIS ARTICLE WAS APPROPRIATELY TITLED "THE SUICIDAL RURAL GAP IN THE POVERTY WAR". PARROTING THE WAR IN VIETNAM, THE ARTICLE CONTAINED AN IMAGINARY COMMUNIQUE FROM THE POVERTY WAR COMMANDERS:

"THE GOVERNMENT COMMANDERS VIEW THE CITIES AS THE CRITICAL BATTLEGROUND AND ARE CONCENTRATING THEIR STRENGTH THERE. SOME GAINS HAVE BEEN MADE, BUT REPLACEMENTS FOR THE OTHER SIDE CONTINUE TO POUR IN FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE. FOR THIS REASON, THE OUTCOME OF THE GOVERNMENT DRIVE IS UNCERTAIN AT THIS TIME."

-INCREASING CONCERN ABOUT AGRICULTURE-

THE PICTURE THAT I HAVE PRESENTED UP TO NOW ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES TO RURAL AMERICA OF THE POLITICAL-ECONOMIC-SOCIAL POWER SHIFT HAS BEEN PRETTY BLEAK. BUT THERE IS SOME SUNSHINE. A NEW AND GROWING UNDERSTANDING IS EMERGING AMONG OUR URBAN POPULATION THAT THIS NATION NEEDS A VIGOROUS, PRODUCTIVE RURAL ECONOMY. NOT TOO MANY YEARS AGO, IT WAS A POPULAR PASTIME FOR NON-FARM LEADERS AND NEWSPAPERS TO BEMOAN THE FACT THAT AMERICA'S AGRICULTURE WAS A MESS AND A NATIONAL DISGRACE. THERE IS NOW SOME EVIDENCE THAT THE GENERAL PUBLIC IS BEGINNING TO REALIZE THAT NOT ONLY IS AGRICULTURE IMPORTANT TO OUR COUNTRY, BUT THAT IT IS IN SERIOUS TROUBLE. IT IS NO LONGER UNUSUAL TO SEE CONCERNED ARTICLES IN OUR NATIONAL MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS DISCUSSING THE FARM INCOME SITUATION, RURAL POVERTY, AND THE SEEMING INABILITY OF OUR RURAL POPULATION TO SHARE FULLY IN THE FANTASTIC ECONOMIC GROWTH OF AMERICA.

STILL, I AM AFRAID THAT THE AVERAGE URBAN CITIZEN HAS ONLY A HAZY CONCEPT OF THE BASIC IMPORTANCE OF THE AMERICAN FARMER TO THEIR PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC WELL-BEING. I BELIEVE THAT WE ALL HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO TELL THEM -- AND TO REPEAT IT AGAIN AND AGAIN UNTIL SOME BETTER REALIZATION IS ACHIEVED.

FIRST, WE SHOULD REPEATEDLY BRING TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC'S ATTENTION A FACT THAT BY ALL RIGHTS SHOULD BE OBVIOUS -- THEY ARE BEING FED BETTER AND AT CONTINUALLY LOWER COSTS IN TERMS OF THEIR TOTAL DISPOSABLE INCOME. THEY SHOULD BE MADE AWARE THAT THEIR FOOD BILL WOULD BE ELEVEN BILLION DOLLARS HIGHER THAN IT IS IF THEY STILL HAD TO PAY THE SAME PROPORTION OF THEIR INCOME FOR FOOD AS THEY DID SEVEN SHORT YEARS AGO!

SECOND, WE MUST OBTAIN A GENERAL REALIZATION THAT AGRICULTURE IS STILL A BASIC INDUSTRY IN THIS ECONOMY. SOME EXAMPLES: THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TELLS US THAT THE AMERICAN FARMER LAST YEAR SPENT \$34 BILLIONS FOR THE GOODS AND SERVICES HE NEEDED TO PRODUCE CROPS AND LIVESTOCK. HE USES MORE PETROLEUM PRODUCTS THAN ANY OTHER SINGLE INDUSTRY. HE PURCHASES 5 MILLION TONS OF STEEL EACH YEAR. HIS PRODUCTS WHICH ARE SOLD OVERSEAS PROVIDE OVER 50 PERCENT OF THIS NATION'S TOTAL FAVORABLE BALANCE OF TRADE.

THIRD, AS THE NATION BECOMES MORE AND MORE AWARE OF THE RURAL POVERTY SITUATION AND ITS ULTIMATE EFFECT ON AND RELATIONSHIP WITH URBAN POVERTY, THEY MUST BE MADE TO FULLY APPRECIATE THAT AGRICULTURE REMAINS THE SINGLE LARGEST INDUSTRY AND EMPLOYER IN RURAL AMERICA.

-SUMMARY-

LET ME SUMMARIZE. WE HAVE -- MOST OF US WITHIN OUR LIFETIME -- WITNESSED A DRAMATIC SHIFT IN POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC POWER FROM RURAL TO URBAN AMERICA. WE HAVE SEEN SOME OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS SHIFT IN TERMS OF THE PREVAILING POLITICAL AND SOCIAL VIEW ABOUT SOME OF THE AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN SACRED TO MANY OF US. LESS THAN 6 PERCENT OF THIS NATION'S POPULATION NOW LIVES ON FARMS. FOR EVERY FIVE PEOPLE WHO LIVED ON FARMS THIRTY YEARS AGO, ONLY TWO LIVE THERE NOW.

IT IS IN THIS ATMOSPHERE THAT WE WILL BE FACING SOME OF THE MOST CRUCIAL DECISIONS ON THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN AGRICULTURE. THANKFULLY, WE ARE SEEING A GROWING AWARENESS AMONG THE CITIZENRY ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF AGRICULTURE TO THE TOTAL ECONOMY.

WE ARE BEGINNING TO REALIZE THAT WE CANNOT CURE THE ILLS OF OUR
CITIES WITHOUT MAKING SIMILAR EFFORTS TO ASSURE A VIABLE RURAL ECONOMY.
OUR TASK NOW IS TO BE SURE THAT THIS WORD IS SPREAD. WE HAVE TO CONVINC
THE AMERICAN VOTER AND TAXPAYER THAT NOT ONLY MUST WE HAVE A VIABLE
RURAL ECONOMY, BUT THAT WE CANNOT HAVE ONE WITHOUT A HEALTHY AGRICULTURAL
INDUSTRY.