

REMARKS OF CONGRESSMAN BOB DOLE
FARMERS COOPERATIVE COMMISSION CO.
WICHITA, KANSAS
MONDAY, APRIL 22, 1968

FIRST, I'D LIKE TO THANK JIMMY DEAN FOR SQUEEZING ME ON FOR A FEW MINUTES. I KNOW HOW TIGHT YOUR SCHEDULE IS DURING YOUR TWO DAYS IN WICHITA.

I'D LIKE TO SPEND A VERY FEW MINUTES DISCUSSING WITH YOU THE CURRENT AGRICULTURAL SITUATION AND WHAT WE MIGHT EXPECT THE FUTURE TO HOLD.

-CURRENT AGRICULTURAL SITUATION-

WE NEED NOT SPEND AN AWFUL LOT OF TIME DESCRIBING THE CURRENT FARM SITUATION. WE ALL KNOW HOW BAD IT IS. THE FIGURES ON FARM INCOME, COSTS, DEBTS, PARITY AND RURAL MIGRATION HAVE BEEN WIDELY PUBLICIZED AND DISCUSSED. ANYONE WHO HAS MADE ANY ATTEMPT TO KEEP INFORMED ON THE AGRICULTURAL SITUATION CANNOT HELP BUT BE DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN AGRICULTURE.

I FULLY AGREE WITH THOSE PEOPLE WHO STATE THAT -- IN THE CONTEXT OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED ON THE AGRICULTURAL SCENE DURING THE LAST YEAR OR 18 MONTHS -- WE ARE TURNING A CRUCIAL CORNER IN TERMS OF OUR NATIONAL FARM POLICIES AND PROGRAMS. IF MY MAIL FROM RURAL CONSTITUENTS IS A VALID MEASURE OF THE SITUATION, FARMER FRUSTRATION IS CLIMBING TO A NEW PEAK. HAVING JUST SURVIVED A YEAR DURING WHICH THE COST-INCOME SQUEEZE HAS BECOME DISASTROUSLY TIGHT, THE AMERICAN FARMER IS EXPERIENCING AND BECOMING INCREASINGLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE FOLLOWING CHANGES:

1. HE SEES HIS POLITICAL POWER SLIPPING. IN THE WAKE OF THE VAST MIGRATION OF RURAL PEOPLE TO THE CITIES, COURT ORDERED REAPPORTIONMENT OF LEGISLATIVE SEATS HAS RESULTED IN THE SHIFTING OF POLITICAL POWER TO URBAN AREAS AT BOTH THE FEDERAL AND STATE LEVELS.
2. HE HAS OBSERVED AN INCREASING TENDENCY ON THE PART OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE -- HIS DEPARTMENT -- TO BE CONSUMER ORIENTED.
3. HE IS SEEING HIS FARMING OPERATION BEING AFFECTED MORE AND MORE BY THE APPLICATION TO FARM LABOR OF THE MINIMUM WAGE LAW, PROVISIONS OF THE NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS ACT, AND OTHER SOCIAL LEGISLATION ORIGINALLY DESIGNED FOR THE INDUSTRIAL SETTING.
4. THE END RESULT IS A GROWING FEELING ON THE PART OF THE FARMER THAT THE UNITED STATES AS A NATION IS MUCH MORE CONCERNED ABOUT MAINTAINING LOW FOOD PRICES AND THE WELFARE OF THE CONSUMER THAN IT IS WITH THE ULTIMATE WELL-BEING OR EVEN EXISTENCE OF THE PRODUCERS OF OUR FOOD AND FIBER NECESSITIES.

-THE NATIONAL SCENE-

ALONG WITH THESE MATTERS OF SPECIFIC CONCERN TO THE FARMER, WE HAVE TO ALSO CONSIDER RECENT EVENTS ON THE NATIONAL SCENE. I DOUBT IF A HISTORIAN COULD PICK OUT ANY SINGLE PERIOD IN OUR NATION'S HISTORY WHEN THE AMERICAN CITIZENRY HAS BEEN SO FRUSTRATED OR FACED WITH SO MANY CRUCIAL ISSUES AND PROBLEMS.

AND THEN WE HAVE THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY SITUATION. TO SAY THE LEAST, IT'S FLUID!

-PENDING FARM LEGISLATION-

IT IS IN CONTEXT OF ALL OF THESE FACETS OF THE NATIONAL SITUATION THAT WE HAVE TO CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF MEANINGFUL ACTION ON FARM LEGISLATION. YOU ARE AWARE OF THE FOUR MAJOR AREAS IN WHICH CONGRESSIONAL ACTION HAS BEEN REQUESTED IN THE AGRICULTURAL ARENA:

1. EXTENSION OF THE FOOD FOR PEACE PROGRAM -- PUBLIC LAW 480;
2. EXTENSION OF THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL ACT OF 1965;
3. ESTABLISHMENT OF A SECURITY RESERVE; AND
4. THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN APPROACH TO FARM BARGAINING.

OF THESE, IT NOW APPEARS THAT ONLY THE FIRST, THE EXTENSION OF P.L. 480, STANDS A REALLY GOOD CHANCE OF PASSAGE THIS YEAR. THERE HAS BEEN A LOT OF SPECULATION THAT MR. JOHNSON'S ANNOUNCEMENT THAT HE WILL NOT BE A CANDIDATE FOR REELECTION HAS MATERIALLY WEAKENED THE CHANCE FOR ACTION ON THE REMAINDER OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S REQUESTS IN THE AGRICULTURAL AREA. COUPLED WITH THIS, WE ARE SEEING A RESURGENCE IN THE CONGRESS OF EFFORTS TO SHARPLY CURTAIL THE ROLE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN AGRICULTURE. SECRETARY FREEMAN RECENTLY STATED THAT THERE ARE TWENTY-ONE BILLS PENDING IN CONGRESS TO ABOLISH CURRENT FARM PROGRAMS OR DRASTICALLY RESTRICT THEM.

-FARM BARGAINING POWER-

LET ME NOW SHIFT TO AN AREA OF IMMEDIATE CONCERN TO YOU -- FARM BARGAINING. AS YOU KNOW, THE PRESIDENT'S FARM MESSAGE DID NOT CONTAIN ANY SPECIFIC PROPOSALS IN THIS AREA. RATHER, HE CALLED FOR DISCUSSIONS ON THE MATTER. THE RELATED BILL INTRODUCED BY SENATOR MONDALE WAS BASICALLY DESIGNED FOR THE SAME PURPOSE -- TO INITIATE A REVIEW OF THE SITUATION AND TO OBTAIN VIEWS OF INTERESTED PERSONS.

-AGRI-BUSINESS MARKETING PLAN-

ONE PROPOSAL IN THIS AREA WHICH YOU ARE ACQUAINTED WITH AND INTERESTED IN IS THE "AGRI-BUSINESS MARKETING PLAN" PROPOSED BY THE KANSAS CO-OP COUNCIL. HAL HELLEBUST HAS BEEN IN MY OFFICE SEVERAL TIMES DISCUSSING THIS PROPOSAL WITH ME AND MEMBERS OF MY STAFF. FRANKLY, I HAVE MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS ON THIS SPECIFIC PROPOSAL. AS INITIALLY PRESENTED, IT WAS BASICALLY A VERY GENERAL PLAN WITH LITTLE IN THE WAY OF SPECIFICS. AFTER SEVERAL SESSIONS WITH HAL, WE WERE ABLE TO FILL IN MORE DETAILS ON HOW THE PLAN WOULD WORK. MY IMMEDIATE CONCERN IN THIS AREA IS THE ULTIMATE EFFECT THE INSTITUTION OF THIS APPROACH WOULD HAVE ON FARM INCOME. TAKE WHEAT FOR INSTANCE, AS DESCRIBED BY HAL, THE AGRI-BUSINESS MARKETING PLAN WOULD COMPLETELY DO AWAY WITH THE CURRENT PROGRAM, INCLUDING ACREAGE ALLOTMENTS AND CERTIFICATE PAYMENTS. QUITE A FEW WHEAT FARMERS HAVE TOLD ME THAT THE CERTIFICATE PAYMENTS HAVE MEANT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STAYING IN BUSINESS AND BANKRUPTCY.

DON'T MISUNDERSTAND ME -- I AM NOT CONDEMNING THE PLAN OUT OF HAND. I AM ONLY TRYING TO GET AS MUCH INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE ON ITS ULTIMATE EFFECT. TO THIS END, I CURRENTLY HAVE AN AGRICULTURAL EXPERT FROM THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PREPARING AN OBJECTIVE APPRAISAL OF THE PLAN AND ITS POSSIBLE EFFECTS. WHEN THIS IS COMPLETED, I HOPE TO CIRCULATE THE LIBRARY'S COMMENTS WIDELY AMONG KEY FARMERS AND FARM GROUPS FOR THEIR REACTIONS.

-FARM JOURNAL POLL-

LET ME MAKE ONE OTHER COMMENT ON THE MATTER OF FARM BARGAINING. YOU ARE PROBABLY AWARE OF THE FACT THAT THE FARM JOURNAL IS CONDUCTING

A NATIONWIDE POLL TO FIND OUT HOW FARMERS FEEL ON THIS ISSUE. I HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THE EDITORS OF THAT MAGAZINE, AND THEY HAVE PROMISED TO FURNISH ME WITH THE RESULTS OF THEIR POLL. THIS SHOULD PROVIDE SOME VALUABLE INSIGHT FROM THE PEOPLE MOST CONCERNED ABOUT THE ISSUE.

-SUMMARY-

LET ME VERY BRIEFLY SUMMARIZE. A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE VERY FIRMLY CONVINCED THAT WE ARE ENTERING A VERY CRUCIAL PHASE IN TERMS OF OUR NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMS. IF THIS IS TRUE, WE ARE TURNING THIS CORNER AT A TIME WHEN THE NATION'S CITIZENS HAVE A LOT OF OTHER THINGS ON THEIR MINDS. I'M NOT OPTIMISTIC ENOUGH TO ASSUME THAT THE FUTURE WILL BRING ABOUT ANY LESS VOCAL OR VIOLENT DISAGREEMENT ABOUT HOW TO SOLVE THE FARM PROBLEM. BUT, I DO BELIEVE THAT IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT ALL OF US INTERESTED IN AND CONCERNED WITH AGRICULTURE MUST DO SOME SERIOUS THINKING IN TERMS OF CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACHES TO THIS SITUATION. SOMEHOW, WE HAVE TO DEVELOP SOME BALANCE IN OUR PROGRAMS WHICH TAKES INTO CONSIDERATION BOTH THE TOTAL NEEDS OF THE NATION AS WELL AS ALLOWING THE FARMER TO EARN A FAIR RETURN FOR HIS LABOR AND INVESTMENT.