

SALINA, KANSAS

OPENING STATEMENT BY SENATOR BOB DOLE
HEARING ON FEDERALLY SUPPORTED FOOD PROGRAMS
TUESDAY, AUGUST 9, 1977

THIS IS THE SECOND OF THREE DAYS OF SENATE HEARINGS IN SIX KANSAS COMMUNITIES ON THE MAJOR FEDERALLY SUPPORTED FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS. YESTERDAY, AT PARSONS IN THE MORNING AND AT THE KICKAPOO INDIAN RESERVATION IN THE AFTERNOON, WE OPENED THE HEARINGS ON BEHALF OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON NUTRITION AND HUMAN NEEDS BY REVIEWING THE OPERATION OF FOOD STAMPS AND FIVE OTHER PROGRAMS.

FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

FOOD STAMPS IS BY FAR THE BIGGEST AND MOST EXPENSIVE OF THE FEDERAL FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS. IT HAS ALSO BEEN SUBJECT TO A GREAT DEAL OF PUBLIC MISUNDERSTANDING. MOST OF YOU KNOW HOW IT WORKS. COUPONS CAN BE PURCHASED BY ELIGIBLE LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE THEN ABLE TO EXCHANGE THE STAMPS FOR FOOD AND LESS COST TO THEMSELVES.

THE PROGRAM IS ADMINISTERED AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE; AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS BY THE WELFARE AGENCIES. THE FARM BILL THAT WILL BE BEFORE CONGRESS FOR FINAL ACTION SHORTLY AFTER LABOR DAY WOULD MAKE A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN THE PROGRAM BY ELIMINATING THE REQUIREMENT THAT POOR PEOPLE PAY CASH FOR THEIR ALLOTMENT OF STAMPS.

IN THE PAST, THE PEOPLE WHO NEED HELP THE MOST--NAMELY THOSE WITHOUT MUCH MONEY--HAVE SOMETIMES BEEN UNABLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SAVINGS ON FOOD BECAUSE THEY LACKED THE FEW DOLLARS NEEDED TO OBTAIN THE STAMPS THEY WERE ENTITLED TO AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MONTH. COMBINED WITH A REDUCTION IN THE MONTHLY ALLOTMENT OF STAMPS, AND OTHER PROVISIONS THAT ARE EXPECTED TO WEED OUT THE HIGHER INCOME PEOPLE WHO HAVE SOMETIMES ABUSED THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM--I THINK THE CHANGES ARE DESIRABLE AND WILL BE AN IMPROVEMENT.

SERIOUS QUESTIONS STILL REMAIN. BECAUSE THE PROGRAM IS ADMINISTERED BY THE STATE WELFARE SYSTEM, MANY DESERVING ELDERLY PEOPLE IN KANSAS WOULD RATHER GO HUNGRY THAN SUFFER THE INDIGNITY OF APPLYING FOR ANYTHING CONNECTED WITH WELFARE. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT ONLY ABOUT 20 PER CENT OF ELIGIBLE KANSANS USE FOOD STAMPS.

THE WIC PROGRAM

THIS MORNING I WOULD LIKE TO FOCUS ON THREE OTHER PROGRAMS. THE FIRST OF THESE IS WIC--THE SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN. FUNDS ARE DISTRIBUTED TO STATE HEALTH DEPARTMENTS BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO BE MADE AVAILABLE TO PREGNANT WOMEN, INFANTS, MOTHERS NURSING THEIR BABIES, AND OTHER CHILDREN UP TO AGE 5. THE PURPOSE IS TO HELP THESE MOTHERS AND CHILDREN OBTAIN NUTRITIOUS FOODS, INCLUDING FORMULA, CEREAL, AND FRUIT JUICE FOR INFANTS; MILK, CHEESE, EGGS, CEREAL, AND FRUIT OR VEGETABLE JUICES FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN RAISED ABOUT HOW REALISTIC IT IS TO EXPECT TO PINPOINT FOOD ASSISTANCE FOR THE MOTHER OR MOTHER-TO-BE AND HER SMALL CHILDREN WITHOUT INCLUDING BENEFITS FOR THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY. AS THEY ARE DRAWN NOW, THE PROGRAM REGULATIONS PROHIBIT THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY FROM SHARING THE WIC FOOD PACKAGE.

EXTENSION SERVICE

THE SECOND AREA WE WANT TO EXAMINE TODAY IS THE NUTRITION ACTIVITIES OF THE EXTENSION SERVICE, THE EDUCATIONAL ARM OF USDA. STATE FOOD AND NUTRITION SPECIALISTS AND COUNTY AGENTS COOPERATE WITH THE LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITIES IN THEIR JOINT FEDERAL-STATE-COUNTY PROJECTS.

4-H PROGRAMS

I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO REVIEW HOW ADEQUATE THE 4-H NUTRITION PROGRAMS ARE--AND HOW THEIR LEADERSHIP SHAPES UP.

IN GENERAL

FEDERALLY FINANCED FOOD PROGRAMS ARE BUDGETED FOR OVER \$6.6 BILLION IN THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR--UP FROM A LITTLE OVER \$1 BILLION IN 1970. SO THESE PROGRAMS ARE MORE THAN SIX TIMES AS BIG AS THEY WERE SEVEN YEARS AGO.

WE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS SIT IN WASHINGTON AND CRANK OUT THESE PROGRAMS WITH THE BEST OF INTENTIONS--BUT OFTEN WITHOUT HAVING A VERY GOOD IDEA OF HOW THEY FIT INTO THE EXISTING ACTIVITIES OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE AGENCIES. AND AFTERWARDS WE DON'T ALWAYS WATCH TOO CLOSELY HOW THEY ARE ACTUALLY WORKING AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL. IT'S ONE THING TO TALK ABOUT THE IMPRESSIVE FUNDING LEVELS AND THE MILLIONS OF BENEFICIARIES. IT'S ANOTHER TO TALK TO THE PEOPLE WHO RUN THE PROGRAMS AND THOSE WHO ARE INTENDED TO BENEFIT FROM THEM--TO TRACE THE FEDERAL DOLLARS TO THEIR ULTIMATE DISPOSAL AND JUDGE WHETHER THE GOOD INTENTIONS ARE ACTUALLY BEING FULFILLED IN A SENSIBLE AND ECONOMICAL FASHION.

WE WANT TO KNOW WHETHER THE MONEY IS REACHING THE PEOPLE WHO NEED HELP--WHETHER THE ADMINISTRATION AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVEL IS EFFICIENT--WHETHER ANY RED TAPE CAN BE CUT AWAY--WHETHER THE NUTRITIONAL BENEFITS CAN BE ENHANCED--WHETHER THE IMPACT AT THE LOCAL LEVEL IS WHAT CONGRESS INTENDED WHEN THE LAW PASSED IN THE FIRST PLACE.

I WELCOME THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE HERE TO TESTIFY. FOOD, NUTRITION, AND HEALTH PROFESSIONALS; STATE, COUNTY, AND MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS; ACADEMIC AUTHORITIES FROM COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES; AND PROGRAM RECIPIENTS THEMSELVES CAN ALL HELP US UNDERSTAND WHAT IS BEING DONE AND WHETHER IT CAN BE DONE MORE EFFECTIVELY. GOOD NUTRITION IS THE CONCERN OF ALL AMERICANS. PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS OF FOOD HAVE A VITAL INTEREST IN WHAT WE LEARN HERE IN KANSAS THIS WEEK.