

COLBY, KANSAS

OPENING STATEMENT BY SENATOR BOB DOLE
HEARING ON FEDERALLY SUPPORTED FOOD PROGRAMS
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 10, 1977

THIS IS THE FINAL DAY OF OUR SERIES OF SENATE HEARINGS IN SIX KANSAS COMMUNITIES ON THE MAJOR FEDERALLY SUPPORTED FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS. THE FOOD PROGRAMS THAT WE'RE CONCERNED WITH DURING THIS WEEK'S KANSAS HEARINGS ON BEHALF OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON NUTRITION AND HUMAN NEEDS ARE BUDGETED FOR OVER \$6.6 BILLION IN THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR--COMPARED TO A LITTLE OVER \$1 BILLION IN 1970. SO THESE PROGRAMS ARE OVER SIX TIMES AS BIG AS THEY WERE SEVEN YEARS AGO.

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.

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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 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.

THIS MORNING I WOULD LIKE TO FOCUS ON THREE OTHER PROGRAMS.

SUMMER FOOD SERVICE

THE FIRST OF THESE IS THE SUMMER FOOD SERVICE FOR CHILDREN, WHICH IS ADMINISTERED BY USDA, AND WHICH PROVIDES CASH ASSISTANCE FOR NUTRITIOUS MEALS FOR CHILDREN IN LOW-INCOME FAMILIES. WE WANT TO KNOW WHETHER THE CATERING SYSTEMS THAT ARE SOMETIMES USED TO PROVIDE THE MEALS ARE TOO EXPENSIVE--AND WHETHER THE ASSISTANCE IS REACHING THOSE CHILDREN WHO NEED IT MOST. CHILD NUTRITION LEGISLATION THAT IS ON ITS WAY TO A SENATE-HOUSE CONFERENCE--THE FINAL STEP IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS BEFORE A BILL IS CLEARED FOR ACTION BY THE PRESIDENT--CONTAINS MANY PROVISIONS DESIGNED TO ELIMINATE THE FRAUD AND MISMANAGEMENT THAT HAVE PLAGUED THIS PROGRAM.

EXTENSION SERVICE

THE SECOND AREA WE WANT TO EXAMINE TODAY IS THE NUTRITION ACTIVITIES OF THE EXTENSION SERVICE, WHICH IS THE EDUCATION ARM OF USDA. JOINT FEDERAL-STATE-COUNTY PROJECTS ARE OPERATED WITH THE COOPERATION OF STATE FOOD AND NUTRITION SPECIALISTS, COUNTY AGENTS, AND THE LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITIES.

CHILD CARE FOOD PROGRAM

AND, FINALLY, WE WANT TO TALK ABOUT ANOTHER USDA-ADMINISTERED PROGRAM: FREE AND REDUCED-PRICE MEALS FOR THOSE IN CHILD-CARE FACILITIES, SUCH AS DAY-CARE CENTERS, SETTLEMENT HOUSES, AND HEAD START CENTERS. IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT IN SOME KANSAS COMMUNITIES, THE OBJECT OF THIS PROGRAM--TO PROVIDE NUTRITIOUS MEALS FOR NEEDY CHILDREN--IS BEING FRUSTRATED BY THE MASSIVE PAPERWORK INVOLVED IN COMPLYING WITH GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS. WE WANT TO FIND OUT WHETHER THIS ALLEGATION IS TRUE.

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.