

GARDEN CITY, KANSAS

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

THIS IS THE LAST OF SIX SENATE HEARINGS THAT HAVE BEEN HELD THIS WEEK IN SIX DIFFERENT KANSAS COMMUNITIES ON BEHALF OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON NUTRITION AND HUMAN NEEDS. WE HAVE BEEN EXAMING THE OPERATION OF THE MAJOR FEDERALLY SUPPORTED FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS. THESE PROGRAMS ARE BUDGETED IN THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR FOR OVER \$6.6 BILLION--COMPARED TO A LITTLE OVER \$1 BILLION IN 1970. SO THEY ARE 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.

FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

BY FAR THE BIGGEST AND MOST EXPENSIVE OF THE FEDERAL FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IS FOOD STAMPS. 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.

FOR THIS OUR FINAL HEARING IN THIS WEEK'S SERIES, I WOULD LIKE TO FOCUS ON FOUR OTHER PROGRAMS.

HEAD START

THE FIRST OF THESE IS HEAD START--THE TRAINING PROGRAM FOR PRESCHOOL-AGE YOUNGSTERS. LAUNCHED IN 1965 BY THE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY (WHICH IS NOW RENAMED THE COMMUNITY SERVICES ADMINISTRATION), HEAD START IS RUN BY HEW AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL AND BY COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL. GOOD NUTRITION IS RECOGNIZED AS AN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT IF CHILDREN FROM LOW-INCOME FAMILIES ARE TO START SCHOOL ON AN EQUAL FOOTING.

4-H PROGRAM

ANOTHER IMPORTANT PROGRAM IS 4-H. WE WANT TO REVIEW THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP IN THE 4-H NUTRITION EDUCATION PROJECTS.

CHILD CARE PROGRAM

ANOTHER USDA-ADMINISTERED PROGRAM ON THIS AFTERNOON'S AGENDA IS 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.

THE WIC PROGRAM

AND, FINALLY, WE WILL BE TURNING TO 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.

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.