

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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RURAL TRANSPORTATION CRISIS

AMES, IOWA -- Senator Bob Dole (R-Kan.) today made the following statement on rural transportation.

"Everyone - hungry foreigners, U.S. balance-of-trade observers, politicians at both the state and national level, and, yes, the Pope - wants Iowa farmers to produce and export more grain.

WORLD WANTS INCREASED FARM EXPORTS

"The dollar is in deep trouble here and abroad. If it were not for the \$34 billion in farm products exported this year, the dollar would drop in value until the Japanese, the Swiss and the Arabs would be tempted to use it for wallpaper. The state of Iowa plays a major role in agricultural exports, ranking as the second most important state in building new farm export records.

"Just last week, Pope John Paul II, during his inspirational and heart-warming visit to Des Moines, added his voice to those asking Iowans to share the abundant fruits of their labor with the rest of the world," Dole said.

TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS SLOW EXPORTS

"The world clearly wants Iowa food, but how can we ask Iowa farmers to continue or expand their magnificent record of crop production if the transportation system is inadequate to move the grain to port. I do not think it is unreasonable to expect our transportation system to be able to move the grain to market with the same skill Iowans demonstrate in producing that grain.

"But what do we see? We see barges routinely stalled two or three days trying to get through lock and dam 26 near Alton, Illinois. We see trains moving so slowly over dilapidated railbeds that even overweight joggers pass them. We see Iowa shipper-owned cars, loaded with Iowa grain, on which 15% money is borrowed, sitting on sidetracks because of an inadequate supply of locomotives. And we see the two railroads covering over half of the state of Iowa in such dire financial straits that they cannot serve the farmers of your state or the consumers of the world at a time of bountiful harvest.

PLENTY OF BLAME

"The transportation mess is so bad that there is plenty of blame to be spread around. It would be unfair to put all of the blame on the federal government. All Americans sat and watched the railroads being saddled with unreasonable rules. And few people were concerned when the conglomerates got control of some railroads and diverted their resources to non-rail ventures. It isn't surprising, really, that the morale of railroad officials became so bad and their management techniques became unimaginative," stated Dole.

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FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS BLOCKED PROGRESS

"But the transportation of grain and other Iowa products from this state to export terminals is interstate in nature. Because of this, it has long been a federal responsibility. Unfortunately, the federal government has usually hindered, not helped, the development of the kind of transportation system the people of this state deserve. The Interstate Commerce Commission, which is often the focal point of important transportation decisions, has blocked and delayed change when it should have fostered it. Back in 1965, for example, the Union Pacific requested permission from the I.C.C. to purchase a portion of the desperately struggling Rock Island Railroad. When the I.C.C. finally granted the Union Pacific permission to buy 11 years later, the Rock Island had deteriorated so badly that the U.P. no longer wanted it. At the very least, we ought to get the federal regulatory obstacles out of the way so that you can build the transportation system yourself.

"I know you don't want the federal government to subsidize the movement of your products to market. I know Iowans are willing to pay a price for freight that will cover its legitimate costs, including a return on the capital invested. The federal government ought to be a willing and helpful participant in Iowa's effort to create a rail transportation system that really works," Dole said.

THERE ARE SOLUTIONS

"What is the answer? There is clearly no one solution to the transportation problems confronting Iowa and rural America, but a number of steps can be taken.

REPLACE LOCKS AND DAM 26

"First, work must proceed to replace locks and dam 26 in Alton, Illinois. This is severely bottling up grain traffic in Iowa. I voted in the Senate for these improvements in May of 1978, and we have yet to see construction begin because of environmental questions already addressed. These environmental concerns are important, and we must know the impacts of such projects. But to ask the same questions again and again, in forum after forum, serves only those who want to stop all progress.

TEMPORARY ROCK ISLAND SERVICE

"Secondly, we must immediately reinstate temporary service on the Rock Island Railroad to speed the transportation of a record corn crop to market this fall. To this end I have worked with railroads and union officials, and farmers throughout the Midwest, to provide service when it is needed most. Now that President Carter has finally directed temporary service by the Kansas City Terminal Railway Company, I am working in the Senate to see that sufficient funding is available to continue this service for the next few, critical months. Finally, I am urging federal railroad administration officials to allow service over the 2000 miles of old Rock Island track which the Kansas City terminal would like shut down. This temporary service can get Iowa through the harvest.

QUICK-FIX WON'T WORK

"But we all know that a quick-fix will not work. The deep and critical ailments afflicting our railroad system must be diagnosed and cured. We must institute a rail system which can serve the needs of the Iowa farmer without depending on the taxpayer's hard-earned dollar," stated Dole.

"As President, I would expedite the consideration of proposals by those healthy railroad companies expressing interest in purchasing and revitalizing portions of the Rock Island Railroad. Iowa badly needs a strong north/south railroad to transport grain to the Gulf. I have been in contact with one company which is willing and able to provide that service. We should let them. Other railroads are interested in taking over struggling segments in other areas. We should encourage them, also, because the only real and lasting solutions will come through the private sector. The federal government can assist in finding these answers without trying to run the whole show."