

NEIGHBORS FOR STASSEN, National Building, Minneapolis 2.

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(Authorized Advance of Address of HAROLD E. STASSEN of Minnesota, to the Eastern States Exposition, at Springfield, Massachusetts, September 20, 1947.)

Mr. Chairman, Fellow Citizens:

I bring greetings from the Minnesota State Fair, greatest fair of the West, to this outstanding Eastern States Exposition.

I realize that politically it is considered wise on an occasion of this kind to praise the exposition, praise the audience, praise the exhibits, tell a story and sit down.

But we meet at a time when food, which is the central object of this exposition, is also the central question in both national and worldwide affairs. With your permission, I would like to discuss this problem with you very frankly and directly.

Food prices today for the American family are at the highest point in our history.

The American people are now eating more food than they ever ate before.

This next winter there will be a greater need of food from America to prevent suffering and chaos in Europe than ever before.

The Communists would like to see chaos in Europe and are today trying to obstruct the harvest in Italy.

What do these hard facts add up to in terms of policy for our country?

Is it not clear that we must stop the inflationary price wage spiral in America, if we are to avoid a boom and a bust similar to our tragic experience after World War I? Is it not clear that the place to stop the price wage spiral is by bringing down the price of food?

It is my view that the sensible manner to do this is for the President to initiate promptly a nationwide coordinated voluntary "save food" program. It should have definite quotas of standards for individuals and for industries. It should include organized resistance to excessive prices. The target ought to be a 20% drop in total food consumption and a 15% drop in prices. This can be accomplished if the press, radio, magazines and movies are enlisted to give active support to the voluntary mobilization of the people of the country on a definite practical program including meatless days and wheatless days, less waste and smaller portions.

Some claim that it is unwise to propose this because it will mean that the farmers will receive a bit less for their products. This claim insults the intelligence of the American farmer. I am confident that the farmers would much prefer a slightly lower price in 1947 and 1948 in place of boom prices now and a depression crash later.

Such a program of food conservation and buyer resistance will bring down food prices and will also make it possible for a careful sound measure of governmental purchasing to provide the necessary extra food for Europe this next winter.

Coupled with this program the wage curve of the dangerous spiral should also be levelled off. The point at which to do this is those factory wages which have already been increased more than the average amount of raise since the war. Special emphasis should then be placed on bringing the white collar salaries of teachers and clerks and office workers up to a fair balance with other wages and prices.

This is the route to better future living conditions for the American people as a whole.

It is an essential step to carry through our responsibility of leadership in the world and will increase the chance of winning peace.

It requires forthright prompt action by the President. The program cannot be set in motion any other way. We have already drifted too long and delayed too much.

Any attempt to institute compulsory rationing and price control at this time would fail and would cause a vicious black market and decreased production.

The voluntary method can succeed. The American people will cooperate if the President will give the definite leadership which it is his duty to provide. That is the plea and challenge which I believe the citizens of our country join in presenting to the President as he steps off the Battleship Missouri and returns to Washington.



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