

Statement by
Senator Hubert H. Humphrey
on
Family Farm
July 29, 1953

Mr. President, on many occasions the Congress has made it clear that as a matter of public policy the Department of Agriculture should encourage and perpetuate family farming in this country, directing its programs in the interest of the family farmer.

Because of recent indications that the Department of Agriculture was being orientated away from that established, historic American policy and directed instead toward the more material aspects of larger commercial farming without regard for the human aspects of the farm family and rural living, I have urged the Department to reaffirm, by action as well as words, its concern for the family farmer.

The Secretary of Agriculture has made many public declarations of his intentions to make the utmost use of advisory committees representing all segments of agriculture. So far, however, such committees have not been representative of the average family farmer.

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For that reason I wrote Secretary Benson on June 5, suggesting that he create a Department advisory committee on Family Farming and Rural Living.

Because the church in many rural areas is the real community center, the focal point of rural living, many of our leading church organizations have taken an active and constructive interest in preserving the traditional American pattern of family farming. For that reason I suggested that such organized church groups be invited to participate in the Department's family farm committee, along with representatives of the general farm organizations. Spokesmen for several of these church groups have commented favorably on the suggestion, and expressed a willingness to serve.

However, I regret to say that Secretary Benson has seen fit to turn down my proposal for a committee devoted primarily to the protection of family farming. He has declined to create

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such an advisory group including representatives of churches and other organizations working in the realm of improved rural living.

In reply to my suggestion, Secretary Benson has written me:

"With respect to your suggestion of a committee on 'Family Farming and Rural Living', we look upon all the committees we have set up as serving this purpose. Every committee that has functioned has looked at the problem of the operator of the family farm".

I must respectfully submit that family farmers can feel no security in having committees comprised of persons with interests not in harmony with their own, "looking at their problems".

I am sure that any fair-minded review of many of those named to serve on the Secretary's present committees would provide convincing evidence that however talented or sincere they may be, there is little voice in the Department of Agriculture from the average family farmer in this country.

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Let me cite just one example of the many that exist. One of the pressing problems of farmers is adequate credit on reasonable terms. Secretary Benson appointed a farm credit advisory committee to guide him on credit policies. Who was on that committee? Let me read you the list:

A. G. Brown, American Bankers Association, New York City; D. E. Crowley, vice president of the Northwest National Bank, Minneapolis, Minn.; R. M. Evans, member Board of Governors, Federal Reserve System, Washington, D. C.; O. N. Krueger, the Prudential Insurance Co. of America, Newark, N. J.; R. I. Howell, Equitable Life Insurance Society, New York City; John A. Reed, president, First National Bank, Kemmerer, Wyo.; And Glenn E. Rogers, Metropolitan Life Insurance Co., New York City.

It was that committee which recently advised Secretary Benson there was no need for special livestock credit, a recommendation that even Secretary Benson finally had to ignore

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in the wave of protests from cattlemen. Only recently we enacted emergency legislation to provide such credit.

What hope can family farmers have with such committees advising the Department?

Bankers and insurance company executives, it seems are welcome in the Department of Agriculture -- as they should be; but there is apparently little room for the formal counsel and guidance of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U. S. A., the National Lutheran Council, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, and the National Council of Rural Life and Labor, all of whom I suggested for inclusion on the Family Farming Committee.

I ask unanimous consent to have inserted in the record my letter of June 5 to Secretary Benson, and some of the favorable

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replies I have received from church and farm leaders who agreed it was a constructive move to give more balance to present guidance in the Department. I do hope that Secretary Benson, a man of sincere convictions and great integrity, will reconsider my suggestion.

*Leg. Agric.
Benson Program*

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June 5, 1953

The Honorable Ezra T. Benson
The Secretary of Agriculture
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I appreciated very much the assurance, contained in your letter of May 4, that recent press interpretations of remarks by Mr. Morse and Mr. Davis of your staff as being contrary to America's traditional family farm policy, to which I had directed your attention, do not reflect either the policy or the thinking of yourself or any member of your staff.

I want to emphasize that I was not alone in gaining the impression you say does not express the real meaning of either of the gentlemen. A rather strong feeling exists that the Department of Agriculture's concern is being orientated more toward the larger commercial farmers, and less toward problems of the average family farmer.

In view of your recent letter, I am sure you do not want any such impression to exist. I write to suggest a more positive expression on your part of interest and concern for family farming.

During the recent hearings on the Reorganization Plan, you particularly emphasized your belief in the use of various advisory committees for guidance of the Department's efforts. I certainly agree on the constructive contributions such groups can make, if they are truly representative. Your May 4th letter and subsequent testimony about reliance upon advisory committees prompts me to offer you a suggestion, which I hope you can see fit to accept in the same constructive spirit in which it is offered.

Don't you think it would be helpful to create a Department of Agriculture advisory committee on Family Farming and Rural Living?

I recognize the heavy pressure of commodity problems confronting you, and the necessity for approaching some of these problems from strictly a commodity viewpoint.

However, with your background I am sure you must have a deep personal conviction about the human and social values of farming as a way of life.

June 5, 1953

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Don't you agree with me that there is room in the Department of Agriculture for another advisory group devoted to exerting its constructive influence toward preserving the desirable patterns of family farming in this country, and concerned with the social aspects of rural living?

It seems to me such a group would help balance the present advisory groups you have created, interested primarily in the material aspects of commercial agriculture, as necessary as that is today.

I have always been impressed with the constructive interest and influence exerted by many of our leading church groups in problems of rural living, so I suggest such representatives might comprise the nucleus of the type of committee I feel is needed.

I am afraid many small American farmers, unable to pay their own expenses to various advisory committee meetings even if they were invited, feel rather "left out" of the present committees offering you advice and counsel. Perhaps such family farmers would feel more proper attention was being given their well-being, however, if your advisers included a committee specifically designated as a "watchdog" for Family Farming and Rural Living, and comprised of people of high moral purpose whose only concern is the welfare of America's farm families, and who recognize farming as a way of life as well as a way of making a living.

If I may presume to suggest membership on such a committee, I would urge that you include representatives of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, the National Lutheran Council, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, the National Council of Rural Life and Labor, the Association of Land Grant Colleges, the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, the National Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives, the National Grange, the National Farmers Union, and the American Farm Bureau Federation.

I would appreciate your reaction to creating such a committee from among people who have devoted their lives and careers to improving rural living standards for America's farm families.

Sincerely,

Hubert H. Humphrey

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST
in the United States of America

Rev. Earl Frederick Adams, General Director

June 12, 1953

The Honorable Hubert H. Humphrey
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator Humphrey:

We have just received in the Washington Office of the National Council of Churches your letter of June 9, addressed to Bishop William C. Martin, president of the National Council.

I am forwarding your letter today to Bishop Martin in Texas, along with a copy of your very commendable letter of June 5, addressed to Secretary Ezra T. Benson of the Department of Agriculture.

While I cannot speak officially either for Bishop Martin or the National Council of Churches, I want to express my personal commendation for your concern for the average family farmer, and I believe that your suggestion for an advisory committee is most constructive. I am sure that the National Council of Churches would be happy to cooperate if such a committee should be established by the Department of Agriculture.

While I am writing I would like to commend you for numerous bills which you have recently introduced into the Congress, particularly those dealing with the extension of social security to include ministers, educators, etc. In fact, the list of bills which you have introduced in this Congress as well as in the last session are a real tribute to your constant concern for justice, and in my judgment reflect a very alert and commendable Christian conscience.

Please call on our office whenever we can be of service.

Yours sincerely,

E. F. Adams

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NATIONAL GRANGE
Patrons of Husbandry

June 15, 1953

Hubert H. Humphrey
Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D. C.

My dear Senator Humphrey:

Thank you sincerely for thinking of us as you did in sending a copy of your letter of June 5 to the Secretary of Agriculture.

I've read that copy of your letter very carefully and find much in it that seems to be constructive.

I'm not sure that you will or will not fully agree with me, but one of the real difficulties in connection with the very important problem that you deal with in the latter portion of your letter, has stemmed from the fact that we have too long confused the social and adjustment problem of our low-income rural families with the strictly price or economic problem of our so-called "commercial farmers" (those who market a rather substantial portion of their production at least). I'm simply trying to say that it should have been obvious to more people than have evidently recognized it, that the farm family which has a gross production of less than \$1,000 at present prices, cannot be provided an adequate standard of living as we want it here in America, by simply raising the unit prices on limited amount of produce that that family has to sell.

Please understand that I'm not intending to leave any inference that you have failed to recognize this fact, but sometimes all of us take for granted that most people do recognize the facts that seem clearly apparent to us and then we proceed to find ourselves in vigorous difficulty or disagreement because of the lack of such recognition.

Your suggestion as to the creation of this Family Farming and Rural Living Advisory Committee is a good one in my opinion, and although we have had many people from some of our best intentioned religious groups, which you've included in your list of potential participants on such an Advisory Committee, fall into the rut of the kind of confused thinking that I've referred to above. It might be profitable to bring them together, if such bringing them together could be done on a confidential, no publicity, hence no sounding board or platform sort of circumstances.

Respectfully yours,

HERSCHEL D. NEWSOM, Master

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NATIONAL FARMERS UNION

June 15, 1953

Honorable Hubert H. Humphrey
Senate Office Building
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator Humphrey:

Thank you for sending me a copy of your June 9 letter to Secretary Benson suggesting the appointment of an advisory committee on the family farm and rural life. I concur heartily in your suggestion.

We need continually to put the preservation and strengthening of the family farm in the forefront of our consideration and discussion of farm policies. In my opinion, every farm policy should be designed to favor the development and improvement of adequate family farms.

As you know I have continuously urged Department of Agriculture officials and the Congress to use the effect upon working farm people on family farms as the criterion of the worth of farm policies and programs.

Early this year I wrote Secretary Benson urging him to continue the Family Farm Policy Review initiated by his predecessor. I am gratified to note that the policy review procedure of referring a specific topic to farm people for discussion is to be continued. However, major emphasis is not being placed on the family farm. In spite of this drawback National Farmers Union is cooperating in the conduct of this extension of the farm policy review because we feel it gives permanence and continuity to an important principle in farm policy formulation.

Establishment of a Family Farm and Rural Life Advisory Committee such as you have suggested would help insure that the social and economic values of the family farm pattern of American agriculture would be independently considered in all the various reviews of farm policy that have been traditional in the Department. I hope Secretary Benson thinks well of your suggestion and that he will act favorably upon it. Certainly family farming is as worthy of special consideration as are the different commodity problems for which advisory committees have already been established.

May I take this opportunity to express to you our appreciation of the work you have done and the support you have given in behalf of maintaining and improving the farm programs that farm people have spent 30 years in building in cooperation with Congress and the Department of Agriculture. I am particularly gratified by the way you are focusing legislative attention on the very great importance of effectively using abundant U. S. farm production to support and strengthen our foreign policy efforts to stop and roll back imperialistic Russian communism. When the opportunity presents itself I

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should like to discuss this with you. I feel very deeply that as a nation we need to develop a broad, many-phased program to give U. S. food and fiber a positive role in winning the cold war.

Sincerely,

James G. Patton
President
National Farmers Union

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Merom, Ind.
July 16, 1953

The Honorable Ezra T. Benson
The Secretary of Agriculture
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Benson:

To my attention has come a letter addressed to you from Senator Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota, dated June 5, 1953 in which Senator Humphrey proposes to you the creation of a Departmental advisory committee on Family Farming and Rural Living.

In his letter, the Senator suggests certain organizations whose long-time interest in family farming and rural living might qualify them for representation on such an advisory committee.

Since he included in this list, the National Council of Agricultural Life and Labor, of which I am the Chairman, and since he sent me a copy of his communication, I am taking the liberty of writing this letter heartily to second Senator Humphrey's proposal.

I fully share his concern on these matters, and his misgivings lest the necessary pre-occupation of the Department of Agriculture with pressing commodity problems may lead to overlooking of many important values in family farming at its best as a good and desirable way of life.

May I urge you to give serious consideration to the Senator's proposal, and assure you of the full cooperation of the National Council of Agricultural Life and Labor with any such advisory committee which you may create.

Let me add that I am well acquainted with the other organizations mentioned in Senator Humphrey's letter, and thoroughly approve of them as desirable participants in such a committee.

Cordially yours,

Shirley E. Greene

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BAPTIST JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS
1628 Sixteenth Street, N. W., Washington 9, D. C.

June 18, 1953

The Honorable Hubert H. Humphrey
Senate Office Building
Washington 25, D. C.

My dear Senator Humphrey:

The president of the Committee has requested me as Executive Director to answer your kind letter of June 9th, in which you make certain suggestions to Secretary of Agriculture Benson. I beg to say that I have previously been serving in behalf of the committee on an advisory committee to the Department of Agriculture in respect to its family farm policy. Not having heard from the new Secretary regarding this advisory committee, I am presuming that he has omitted it from his program. I note with pleasure that you suggest our committee's furnishing a representative on any like committee which Secretary Benson may see fit to appoint. Since we are deeply interested in home life, we stand ready to render any possible service. Thanking you for your suggestion, I am

Most sincerely,

Joseph M. Dawson
Executive Director

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THE METHODIST CHURCH
Dallas-Fort Worth Area

William C. Martin
Bishop

June 22, 1953

The Honorable Hubert H. Humphrey
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.

My dear Senator Humphrey:

Thank you for the courtesy of sending to me a copy of your recent letter to Secretary Benson in which you deal with the question of the relationship between the Department of Agriculture and the fortunes of the Family Farmer. I am confident that the emphasis which you make in this letter and for which you have stood on other occasions is a sound one and worthy of the concern of every American who thinks in terms of our national welfare through the years ahead.

Although this matter has not been made the subject of discussion in any meeting of a committee of the National Council of Churches which I have attended, I am sufficiently familiar with the general outlook of the Council to be sure that the proposal which you make to Secretary Benson in the last paragraph but one of your letter of June 5, would find a hearty response on the part of the Council and a ready willingness on its part to be represented upon such a committee as you propose.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely yours,

William C. Martin



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