

WHAT THE 83RD CONGRESS HAS DONE TO THE AMERICAN FARMER

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REMARKS  
of  
SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY, (D., MINN.)  
at  
MIDWEST DEMOCRATIC FARM CONFERENCE  
SIOUX FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA  
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A tidal wave of resentment against the Eisenhower-Benson farm program is sweeping the midwest -- and for good reason.

Midwest farmers have been deliberately double crossed. They can look back in disillusionment on tempting golden promises of 1952, but they can look ahead to 1954 only in the light of harsh realities of what the Republican 83rd Congress has done to them.

After six days of our historic struggle in the Senate to preserve an effective farm program, the Administration rammed through an emasculated farm bill that can mean only one thing -- further reduction in farm income.

Midwest farmers now have a chance to appraise campaign promises with performance of the Republican leadership which . . .

1. Rejected 90% of parity price supports on basic food commodities, and replaced it with flexible supports sliding down to 82½%.
2. Rejected easing of the slash in dairy price supports to 75% of parity, refusing to extend them either to 85% for one more year or even to 80%.
3. Rejected use of producer and processor payments as an alternative or supplement to loans or purchases as a method of price support for dairy products, to permit disposal of accumulated temporary surpluses.
4. Rejected every move in the Senate to provide for increased utilization of the dairy abundance through expanding school lunch programs and distribution of surplus dairy products to the armed forces and veterans hospitals.
5. Rejected elimination of milk marketing barriers to permit free flow of midwest milk to eastern metropolitan centers.
6. Rejected mandatory price supports on oats, rye, barley, grain, sorghums, and soybeans at the feed-value equivalent to corn, or even 75 to 90% of parity as promised at Kasson.
7. Rejected continuation of the old parity formula for another year beyond 1955.
8. Tightened production controls and limited soil conservation payments without any compensatory means of maintaining the farmer's take-home pay.

What a record of repudiation and disregard for midwest agriculture! No wonder farmers are in virtual political revolt in many of our areas.

This is the farm bill that the press hailed as a "Victory for Ike". To have a victor, you must have somebody vanquished. In this instance, it was a victory over the farmers, a defeat for American agriculture.

Most of us have grown up with a sense of decency and fair play as our code of life; we learn as youngsters that it is sometimes more important that we play fair, than that we always win.

This Administration has thrown those rules out the window. They stopped at nothing to achieve their obvious intention of forcing down farm income, in the vain hope of making a bid for city votes.

They distorted facts, and unleashed reams of misleading and blatantly false propaganda to confuse and bewilder the American people and their representatives in the Congress.

Let me cite just one example, where their distortions are proven by their own words.

Throughout our fight to protect the dairy industry against the drastic slash in support levels to 75% of parity, Secretary Benson and even President Eisenhower have repeatedly claimed that lower dairy supports would mean curbing production, lower prices to consumers, and increased consumption.

Just before the Senate votes on this crucial farm bill, the Secretary of Agriculture issued a deliberately-inspired press release claiming that results since the dairy price support reduction April 1 proved they were right.

I charge that release with being a complete falsehood, unfounded and unsupported by fact -- and known to the Secretary not to be supported by his own technicians and economists in the Department on the basis of fact.

The defeat to agriculture came with passage of the farm bill on August 10.

On the next day, the Department's Outlook and Situation Board proved the Dairy Situation report for August, a report released publicly on August 17. I have it here in my hands. It is a factual report, the conclusions of economists who base their findings on fact, not fiction.

What does it say?

Let me read just a few comments:

"The mid-year report on cow numbers indicates the number of milk cows on farms in June was 1.4 greater than a year earlier . . .

"Total milk flow in the rest of 1954 probably will be close to a year earlier, and output for the year as a whole probably will be around 125 billion pounds, compared with 121.2 billion in 1953."

Now get this sentence, and again I am quoting the Department's own report:

"Despite a decline of about one-fifth in milk prices the past two years, the number of milk cows on farms has increased 5 percent . . .

"In areas where dairy is the main source of farm income, numbers generally increased . . ."

Is that not evidence that lower prices are not bringing curtailed production?

But what about prices to consumers?

Since April 1, dairy support prices have been slashed 15 percent.

Yet in Minneapolis on August 1, 1954, the price of home delivered milk in Minneapolis was unchanged from August 1, 1955. How is that going to increase consumption?

What about increased consumption?

The Department proudly reported a slight gain in consumption of butter during the second quarter of 1954. They quickly attributed it to lower price supports. But what does the report of the Department's economists reveal?

That gain was just the normal increasing demand of a rising population -- there has been no per capita increase.

Let me read from page 14 of the Department's dairy situation report which says:

"On balance, it appears that consumption of the several manufactured dairy products in all forms in the second quarter of 1954 was greater than a year earlier by no more than the increase in population."

Those are facts, ladies and gentlemen. They put the lie into Secretary Benson's politically-inspired press release on the eve of the Senate vote, claiming lower support levels had stepped up consumption.

This is just one example, of many of the ends to which the Administration turned to distort the facts and defeat a sound farm program.

The 83rd Congress should be long remembered by farmers as the real knife-in-the back Congress.

Our farmers in Minnesota will remember it. And they know where they must turn for protection.



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