

Office of  
Volunteers for Humphrey  
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FOR RELEASE  
P. M. PAPERS  
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 1954

SENATOR HUMPHREY CALLS FOR GREATER SOIL CONSERVATION PROGRESS

Senator Hubert H. Humphrey today called for progress on six fronts for a speed-up of conservation work in Minnesota and the nation, in an address at Minnesota's annual Plowville at Lake Benton.

"The speed with which conservation farming is adopted, and the degree to which it is maintained, will play a key part in determining how well we and our children eat in the years ahead", Senator Humphrey declared. "If a good job of conservation on the land is done fast enough, we can all eat better. If a poor job is done, we may not eat as well as we do now".

Reviewing the progress Minnesota has made already through its locally-organized Soil Conservation Districts, Senator Humphrey added:

"As we look ahead at our soil and water conservation problems here in Minnesota I see at least six fronts on which action is needed. They are the following:

"First, the local people need to organize more soil conservation districts.

"Second, these soil conservation districts need to be adequately staffed with technical help.

"Third, we need to build back more effective financial assistance in conservation by putting the ACP program back on its feet.

"Fourth, we need to get our watershed protection program off the ground and moving. To do this it is essential that adequate resources be provided to help local people plan and apply their watershed protection program.

"Fifth, we need to get more facts faster about ways and means of protecting and improving our soil and water resources. There is real need for concentrating more research effort in the field of soil and water conservation.

"Sixth, we need to get farm prices back up to where farmers can have enough income to invest in applying sound conservation practices."

In elaborating on his sixth point, Senator Humphrey said:

"It is a well known fact that good conservation farming is a sound investment which contributes to increased farm income. It is also a well known fact, that shifting to conservation farming often requires a temporary economic sacrifice since some time may be needed for return from the new system to equal and exceed returns from the old system.

"Farmers today are suffering under the price-cost squeeze brought on by the current Republican policies of the United States Department of Agriculture. During the past two years the prices you receive have been forced down, while the prices you pay have gone up steadily.

"I contend that our current farm price structure is one of the major elements holding back a more rapid application of soil and water conservation practices in Minnesota".

In support of that charge, Senator Humphrey quoted from a letter received from Gladwin E. Young, acting administrator of the Soil Conservation Service saying:

"Our records indicate that during the current economic squeeze which farmers are experiencing, there has been a falling off of requests for Service assistance on the more costly practices such as terracing. In other words, it appears that when farm income is down, farmers go a little slower in investing capital for conservation practices which require a period of time to make a profit."

*Sp. File - Sept. 18  
Flowville*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Monday, September 13, 1954

From Volunteers for Humphrey  
Citizens' Committee  
1722 Hennepin Avenue  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Senator Hubert H. Humphrey will carry his campaign for re-election to Congress into south-central Minnesota late this week with appearances in Cottonwood, Lincoln, Blue Earth and Le Sueur counties.

Friday Senator Humphrey will speak at Windom's Flax Day celebration. That evening, he'll attend an area-wide DFL dinner in his honor.

The Senator's Saturday schedule will take him to Lincoln County in the morning where he will speak at Flowville '54, Minnesota's annual soil conservation field days and plowing matches, south of Lake Benton. The Senator will speak at 11:30 a.m. and will be guest at a dinner given at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Cyriacks at 2:30 p.m.

Saturday evening, the Senator will be in Mankato where Democrats are planning a district-wide testimonial dinner for the Senator and Harry Sieben. Sieben is DFL candidate for Congress from the second district. Joseph Halpern and Forrest Talbott are in charge of arrangements for the dinner which will begin at 6:30 p.m. in St. Peter and Paul's Church, Mankato.

The Senator again will be on the speakers' platform at a Farmers' Union picnic in Le Center Sunday. The event, which will be open to the public, is sponsored jointly by the Le Sueur and Scott counties Farmers' Union. The Senator will speak at 12:30 p.m.

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## SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION

Comments by Senator Hubert H. Humphrey  
Prepared for Delivery at Plowville,  
September 18, 1954

It is a real privilege to have this opportunity of being here with you today, because I like plowing contests. I like the people who attend plowing contests. I like the good done by plowing contests and soil conservation field days. They demonstrate, for everybody to see, progress in agriculture.

\* There is no phase of agriculture in which more progress is needed than in soil and water conservation. Therefore, it is about soil and water conservation that I intend to talk today.

There is no basic, long-term, domestic problem in America more pressing than conserving and improving our land. Soil conservation should be a personal concern to every man, woman and child in the United States.

The speed with which conservation farming is adopted, and the degree to which it is maintained, will play a key part in determining how well we and our children eat in the years ahead. If a good job of conservation on the land is done fast enough, we can all eat better. If a poor job is done, we may not eat as well as we do now.

Minnesota farmers can justly take pride in the progress you are making in getting conservation applied here in our home State. It is progress that started about 20 years ago and has been building up since. Let's look at the highlights of your accomplishments over that period of time.

You have established contour strip cropping on more than 400,000 acres of our rich farmland. You have established contour farming on another 200,000 acres. You have built over 400 miles of terraces. You have practiced crop residue management on more than 300,000 acres. You have established farm drainage on another 300,000 acres. You have planted trees and practiced woodland protection on 100,000 acres.

You have built farm ponds, waterways, and made plantings for wildlife improvement. You have limed, fertilized, and planted cover crops. And you have applied many other soil-conserving practices.

You have organized 65 soil conservation districts in the State. Nine of those were organized during the last year. These soil conservation districts help you to accept and carry out to the fullest degree your opportunities for local leadership and initiative in soil and water conservation. While organized voluntarily, these districts have legal responsibility under our State law for developing and carrying forward a district-wide program. These districts have proved to be a highly effective device through which your government can serve you without dominating you.

Yes, you have made substantial progress in advancing soil conservation. You should be proud of it, and I am sure you are -- but we still have a lot further to go. Never before has the need for conservation farming been so great -- or so urgent. Now, more than ever we need renewed strength in the land.

Our population in this country is increasing at the most rapid rate in this century. The latest census report shows that we already number more than 160 million. We are growing at the rate of about two and one-half million persons per year, or about seven thousand every day. In another ten years at this rate we will have 25 million more mouths to feed and backs to clothe.

By 1975 we shall likely need the production equivalent of an additional 115 million acres of improved cropland to keep pace with the demands of a growing population. Present estimates are that we will fall short of that requirement by as much as 70 million acres. We do not have enough new land to fill that need.

To meet rising demands, we shall have to depend mainly on increasing the per-acre yields on our present agricultural lands. We know this can be done. The best conservation farmers today are making their soils produce about double what the average farmer is producing. The major job ahead is to bring such conservation farming into practice over a much wider area.

I want to take a few moments to trace the history -- the evolution -- of the problem we face. It's a well-known story. But, we need to review it to bring our problem into focus.

The American pioneers were farmers. When they came to America in search of freedom, they found a new land of opportunity. They found their new land so productive that one man could grow more

than enough for himself and his family.

Not all were needed to grow food. Some could be spared to make tools and provide services for the rest.

As more and more land was put to production, more and more people could be spared from the farms. Towns and cities sprang up across the country. Railroads were built. The fertile soils fed the growing industries. And, the country expanded.

In the Midwest, corn grew in abundance. In the Great Plains, wheat was supreme. In the South, cotton was king.

And the soil's capacity to produce was taken for granted. If a farm wore out, the family moved west. "Go west, young man", was the motto for progress.

Then, we ran out of new land. Still, the demand for agriculture products continued to rise. More farm products were needed to feed the bloodstream of our fast-growing Nation. So, agriculture concentrated more on exploiting the available soil resources.

During World War I we plowed the Plains to meet the heavy demand for wheat. In the depression years that followed, economic pressures forced farmers to continue mining their soil to eke out a bare existence.

Erosion had set in on much land. On some fields water erosion had washed away much of the topsoil. Other fields were being depleted by wind erosion. In much of our flat country, drainage ditches plugged up.

In the early Thirties dust from wind erosion in the Great Plains darkened the skies across America all the way to our Eastern shores.

In 1935 a Democratic Congress promptly passed the first broad national Soil Conservation Act adopted by any country. Through this it established the now world-renowned Soil Conservation Service.

In 1936, President Roosevelt recommended to State Governors the framework which made possible the establishment of local soil conservation districts, which are doing such an effective job here in Minnesota at this time. It is through the districts, provided for under Statelaw, that the services of the trained technicians of the Soil Conservation Service are available to help farmers plan and put into effect basic soil and water conservation programs on their farms.

Also in 1936, the Democratic Congress augmented its earlier action by establishing the Agricultural Conservation Program. The objective here was to help farmers to finance the cost of applying soil conservation practices. Each year since 1936 a major portion of Minnesota farmers have received conservation assistance through the ACP program.

At least, that was true until two years ago. I understand it is a bit harder for Minnesota farmers to get financial assistance with their conservation problems today than it was before the 1952 election. Of course, farming has become a harder way of life in lots of ways during the last two long years.

Over the past 18 years, however, ACP assistance has had an important impact on the ability of the land to produce. You know the help that ACP assistance has been to you. I'm sure you have also found that ACP assistance was most effective after your farm was planned completely for soil and water conservation. Farmers generally tell me that maximum benefits can be obtained when the services from both programs are brought to bear simultaneously.

World War II placed a new strain on our soils with unprecedented demands on agriculture. Farmers were called on to produce enough to feed and clothe million-man armies and, at the same time, to feed the working force and supply raw materials for enormously expanded industrial production.

To meet this new demand, agriculture was forced to further exploit our soil resources. We won the war, but in the process we drew heavily on the Nation's reserves of soil fertility.

When the fighting stopped, the demand on agriculture did not let up. Huge quantities of agricultural commodities were needed to rebuild war-torn countries, and to maintain the peace.

Currently, supplies are catching up with demand, and we have been able to build up a STRATEGIC RESERVE of basic commodities. Some enemies of the farmer have labelled these STRATEGIC RESERVES as "burden-some surpluses." They are trying to convince the consumers in the East that our STRATEGIC FOOD RESERVES are a costly luxury.

I say, thank God, we have them. Let's look on our blessings for what they are, instead of using them as scare talk to pit consumers against farmers. And let's not permit these valuable reserves to hurt

the people who have produced them -- the American farm families.

I have taken considerable time in reviewing this history. And I have done it for a specific reason -- to underscore the key part that soil fertility has played in the growth and development of our great Nation.

There is no doubt about it, strength in the land always has been the foundation for building strength in our Nation. In the future, as in the past, our national strength will be determined by the strength in our land. The soil and water conservation job ahead is to rebuild strength in the land.

We have many good tools to work with. Through the establishment of soil conservation districts with their local leadership we are gearing up for more action. We know how to effectively supply farmers with technical and financial assistance. And we have an expanding body of improved techniques.

During the last 20 years research scientists in the Department of Agriculture and the Land Grant Colleges have given intensive study to our soil problems. They have continued to make important progress in determining causes of soil deterioration and developing methods for combatting it.

They have found, for example, that some soils, although naturally infertile, can be made highly productive. Many fields once considered "worn out" can be made to yield abundantly.

Soil research has also revealed that naturally fertile soils that have lost productivity through use and abuse often can be rejuvenated. Already, productivity is on the "come-back" on many farms where yields were falling off because of declining soil fertility.

As a result of these findings over the years there has gradually evolved a changing concept of soil conservation. No longer do we consider soil conservation as limited to controlling erosion. We now know that soil deterioration through cropping also may be extremely serious -- especially here in Minnesota. For soils subject to erosion, it is often necessary to check cropping losses and increase fertility along with application of erosion control measures.

We have also come to understand that conservation farming can seldom be achieved by a single practice. Instead, a combination of

practices is usually needed, a combination fitted to the specific soil characteristics and needs.

The modern concept of conservation farming has come to mean applying the necessary practices on a farm to increase production and to build up soil productivity, both at the same time. It means making soils yield abundantly, year in and year out, for an indefinite period. It means rebuilding strength in the land.

Gradually, too, over the last twenty years we have to come to learn the importance of water conservation in farming. We have learned much about the control of water as it flows across fields and farms and into the streams and rivers. Much of this information has been learned in flood control projects around the Nation which were established under the Flood Control Act of 1938, which was enacted by a Democratic Congress.

Out of that knowledge has grown our new concept of watershed protection where soil conservation and water control are combined to make efficient and effective use of all the water where it falls and as it flows away.

Here in Minnesota we already have work under way on three pilot watersheds, and I understand that many communities are developing increasing interest in approaching their soil and water conservation problem through the watershed approach in soil conservation districts.

As we look ahead at our soil and water conservation problems here in Minnesota, I see at least six fronts on which action is needed. They are the following:

First, the local people need to organize more soil conservation districts. The 65 districts now organized cover only about one-half of the agricultural land in Minnesota. If we are to get on faster with the soil conservation job in Minnesota, the services of a local soil conservation district should be available to every farm.

Second, these soil conservation districts need to be adequately staffed with technical help. It isn't enough to organize a new district and then rob an old district of technical staff in order to make these services available to farmers. We need to reverse the trend of the last two years of weakening the technical services to districts. Instead, the Soil Conservation Service needs to be strengthened.

Third, we need to build back more effective financial assistance in conservation by putting the ACP program back on its feet. We

need more adequate resources for financial assistance. And, furthermore, the money should be made more readily available to farmers for those practices on which you need financial help.

Fourth, we need to get our watershed protection program off the ground and moving. To do this, it is essential that adequate resources be provided to help local people plan and apply their watershed protection program. Now that we finally have a watershed program started, we must not starve it to death before it grows up.

Fifth, we need to get more facts faster about ways and means of protecting and improving our soil and water resources. There is real need for concentrating more research effort in the field of soil and water conservation, and more educational effort in getting the facts to farmers as rapidly as the facts are discovered.

And, sixth, we need to get farm prices back up to where farmers can have enough income to invest in applying sound conservation practices.

It is on this sixth front that I want to conclude my comments here today.

It is a well-known fact that good conservation farming is a sound investment which contributes to increased farm income. It is also a well-known fact, that shifting to conservation farming often requires a temporary economic sacrifice since some time may be needed for return from the new system to equal and exceed returns from the old system.

Farmers today are suffering under the price-cost squeeze brought on by the current Republican policies of the United States Department of Agriculture. During the past two years the prices you receive have been forced down, while the prices you pay have steadily gone up.

I contend that our current farm price structure is one of the major elements holding back a more rapid application of soil and water conservation practices in Minnesota. This contention is borne out in a letter my office received this summer from Gladwin E. Young, Acting Administrator of the Soil Conservation Service. Mr. Young wrote, and I quote:

"Our records indicate that during the current economic squeeze which farmers are experiencing, there has been a falling off of requests

for Service assistance on the more costly practices such as terracing. In other words, it appears that when farm income is down, farmers go a little slower in investing capital for conservation practices which require a period of time to make a profit."

End of quotation.

If we are to move ahead faster with the conservation job in Minnesota, I believe we must have action on all six fronts that I have mentioned. They are all important and they are inter-related. Action on one front will have an impact on the action of the other five. Lack of action on any one front, on the other hand, will have an adverse impact on the other fronts. We must move forward on all fronts, and we must do it this year. We can't wait until 1956.

To hold our present rate of conservation progress, however, I believe that action on the farm price front is most essential. Until we get farm prices back up to where they are fair and just, we can expect a slowing down in our rate of conservation progress.

I stand solidly behind a program of speeding up the soil and water conservation work in Minnesota -- and of all America. It is in the interest of all the people in this country that we get on more rapidly with the conservation job, and I shall devote my full energy to seeing that we move ahead on all fronts.

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