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THE CHALLENGE AHEAD

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Address by Senator Hubert H. Humphrey at annual meeting of Farmers Union Grain Terminal Association, St. Paul, Minnesota, December 14, 1954.

Wish radio audience could see this crowd over 5,000

It's good to be here again. It's always a pleasure to meet with my friends in the Farmers Union, and its great Grain Terminal Association that occupies such an important role in the economic life of midwest agriculture. It is inspiring, and reassuring, to look over this gathering of farm men and women -- the backbone of this heartland of America.

Yes, it is reassuring, because our nation's strength rests in its people -- not in its armies, its atomic weapons, or its material wealth. It is the character of the people that molds the character of a nation. And nowhere can you find more industrious, hard-working, dependable people than among the farms and rural communities of the great midwest.

Just a year ago it was my privilege to meet with you, and speak to you. It has been an eventful year since then -- for you and for me -- and for Orv.

On that previous occasion, I endeavored to trace the background, of the growth and development of America's farm programs-- and discuss some of the pros and cons of the great national debate still under way over what, in the public's interests, should be our national policies toward agriculture.

Looking back, some of the warnings voiced on that occasion would now appear well founded.

Your continuing fight for proper recognition of agriculture's essential role in our national economy has suffered a setback -- and the end is not yet in sight.

The challenge of equality of economic opportunity for farm people still remains unanswered.

A year ago I outlined for you a suggested "Farmer's Bill of Rights," setting forth benchmarks of public policy against which any suggested changes in national farm legislation should be measured.

Perhaps it would be well to review that Bill of Rights for Agriculture tonight. Included as goals to which agriculture should be entitled were:

1. The right to full equality of economic opportunity;
2. The right for improved standards of rural living;
3. The right of reasonable protection against natural hazards;
4. The right to extend agricultural free enterprise through cooperative action;
5. The right to public cooperation and assistance in saving the soil; -- soil conservation
6. The right to decent land tenure which would encourage the desirable goal of farm ownership;

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7. The right to a democratic voice by farmers in their own farm programs;
 8. The right to benefits of an expanding world trade;
 9. The right to a long-term program of food storage to encourage abundance;
 10. The right to preserve the social and human values of family farming.

Which way have we been moving, in the past year? Closer to those objectives, or drifting away from them? That is the question we should be asking ourselves tonight.

Few of you, I am sure, would feel agriculture has come closer to full economic equality with other segments of our economy in the past year. Few would agree that rural living standards are being improved and raised as rapidly as they should be. Go right on down the list, and I think most of us will conclude that much remains to be done. The real challenge still lies ahead. If we accept these goals as the broad outline of sound objectives for American agriculture, we must chart a course leading toward them -- not away from them.

My high regard for the National Farmers Union, and its statesmanlike President, Jim Patton, stems from their close adherence to the very goals I have outlined -- and from its determination to do something about achieving those goals.

My warm friendship and high respect for your own exceptionally able General Manager of the CFA -- Bill Thatcher -- comes in

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great part from knowing his devotion to these objectives for farm people, and his vigorous, effective leadership toward achieving such objectives.

Yes, while my admiration from F.U.G.T.A. is inspired in part by the knowledge of your outstanding success as a farm cooperative, it is equally inspired by your dedication to the fulfillment of these basic farm rights.

Our current fight for agriculture has very properly been an economic one. Most of us have long realized that all progress in rural America -- and, yes in ALL America -- really stems from an adequate opportunity for diligent farm people to earn a decent and full living.

Without economic opportunity, little social progress can be made in agriculture. We can't have adequate rural schools, rural housing, and rural health facilities until farmers themselves get a decent return for their toil and production. We aren't going to do the job we should be doing in conserving our heritage of productive soil, unless farmers have the opportunity of providing properly for their families without having to mine and exploit that soil.

We are not going to be able to preserve our family pattern of agriculture, unless economic opportunity continues to exist for young people to stay on the farm. We need these young people.

It is this all important need of economic opportunity that has motivated so many of us to make the fight for an effective price support program the focal point in our efforts toward greater progress for rural America. We know most of such progress must eventually stem from your pocketbooks, and empty pocketbooks mean unfilled hopes and aspirations for you and your families, dwindling business for rural communities, and increased troubles and tribulations for rural institutions such as schools and churches.

Yes, we have had a setback for the kind of economic protection that is essential to agriculture's continued stability and prosperity. --- A serious setback that threatens not only farm stability, but the entire economy of the nation. We go up and down together.

But we have not given up our fight. Far from it; that fight is just moving into high gear.

Regardless of "self-serving" interpretations placed by some persons on the outcome of recent elections in the midwest, I am convinced farmers of the midwest have made it clear they lack faith in Secretary Benson's farm philosophy of further downward adjustments. I am convinced they are looking to the new Congress to reverse some of the recent trends in farm policy.

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My pledge to you tonight is this -- a vigorous fight will be made in the new Congress to restore 90% of parity for America's basic commodities, to provide similar effective protection for

Legislation
and
Regulation

Feed grains
at 70% --
Relationship
to corn and
wheat

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secondary feed grains, to end the present discrimination against midwest dairy producers and provide more effective price protection by one means or another, and to provide for greater utilization of America's food abundance to feed needy people at home and abroad.

It won't be an easy fight. It is still an uphill fight in which greater unity of America's farm people themselves is still needed.

As much as we need revision and improvement of price support legislation, my hope is that the New Congress will approach the farm issue in a broader way than just specific patchwork changes.

Yes, perhaps America's farm policies need to be re-examined and clarified in terms of objectives sought not alone in the farmer's interests, but in the nation's interest.

We must never let the underlying purpose and objective of farm legislation be lost sight of, in the heat of controversy over means to a desired end.

All the legislative history behind the development of farm programs in America confirms that our objective and purpose has really been three-fold:

1. To assure the American people continued abundance of food and fiber;
2. To offer America's farmers an opportunity of achieving economic equality with other segments of our citizens;

3. To preserve and protect America's traditional pattern of family-owned, family-operated farms as the type of agriculture best adapted to our democratic way of life.

Repeatedly the Congress of the United States has restated its intent to uphold these objectives, in one way or another, ever since the days of the homestead law.

Yet, unfortunately, the objectives sometime appear forgotten in the development and administration of farm legislation.

We have heard our blessings of abundance criticized as a curse.

We have heard that even 90% of equality -- let alone full equality -- is more than farmers are entitled to in our economy.

We have heard disturbing yet increasing talk of encouraging a complete change in our historic pattern of farming, to put more emphasis on mere bigness and so-called efficiency, less on human values and social problems of rural living.

We have heard less and less concern about perpetuating our family farming pattern, and more and more about giving way to the pressures of mass operations. So-called bigness is not necessarily goodness. So-called efficiency isn't always decency and fair play.

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None of us wants to perpetuate inefficiency, or the farmers to units too small to be economically practical. Yet, there is a distinct line between improving the efficiency of family farmers and increasing their opportunities to make family farming profitable, on the one hand, and abandoning the family-operated farm concept to be replaced by large-scale industrialized farming operations with absentee-ownership and hired labor on the other.

Serious questions of public policy are involved, if we are to cross that line.

It is not a change of direction toward which we should be allowed to drift or be pushed, without knowing fully the consequences.

If America is in the midst of changing objectives of farm policy -- if deliberate efforts are under way to re-design America's pattern of family farming into the mold of Big Business -- should not it be brought out in the open for examination and review -- to see if such a change is desirable?

For my part, my faith is still strong in the pattern of Agriculture which has made America strong, and my faith remains unchanged in the objectives under which American agriculture has contributed so much to our country.

Yes, America's farm policies must be geared to social objectives as well as economic objectives. And foremost among such social objectives, in my opinion, should always remain the encouragement and preservation of our traditional rural pattern of the family-farm type of agriculture that has long been accepted as essential to a strong democracy.

It is easy to understand why.

A large number of prospering farm families on family farms is a strong balancing force within the nation, against the political and social extremes of economic class warfare.

On the family farm, the economic functions of capital ownership, of arranging for financial needs, of managing the productive enterprise, and of farm labor are all performed by the farm operator and his family, thus eliminating controversy and tension along economic lines.

Our family farm pattern of agriculture has been the basis of all our agricultural progress and good community life. It builds in farm family members attitudes of self-reliance, social responsibility, individual initiative, tolerance, and self-government -- the attitudes that make for a sound and progressive democracy.

The family farm builds strong families, and the family farm builds strong social communities, with good schools and active churches.

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Our pattern of family farming has become an example to the world of democracy's answer to Soviet Communist collective farming.

We want neither state collectiveism or private collectiveism.

Unrest in many parts of the world today results from insecure and inequitable farm land tenure, creating hopelessness among those who work the soil and making them an easy prey for communism's glittering false lures and promises.

The restless peasants of the world can find the ray of hope they seek in America's pattern of family farming, and family farm ownership that enables the nation's farmers to farm efficiently, conserve soil and water resources, provide adequately for their family needs, and participate fully in civic, community and public affairs.

Can we risk destroying that ray of hope ourselves?

There is ample precedent for our country to gear its legislative policies toward preserving our family farm pattern in agriculture.

We adopt anti-trust laws, fair trade laws, and take other steps to protect independent business, because we know America's real strength rests in many prospering business firms -- not in just a few huge corporations. We take such a course because we feel it is in the nation's best interests to maintain continued opportunity for small business. --- Business -- Labor -- agriculture

Labor - col-
lective bar-
gaining --for
home ownership

Isn't it just as wise to make sure, in the nation's interest, that we maintain continued opportunity for family farming?

Price supports, farm credit, conservation assistance -- all of these vital farm programs are but means to an end, not the end itself. The end objective must be the kind of agricultural pattern we want in this country.

As we consider changes in these means to an end, from time to time, let's make sure we measure such changes carefully against the end we seek to achieve -- and let's make sure we are agreed to those end objectives.

Perhaps the air of confusion surrounding America's farm policy fight in and out of Congress could be clarified by two actions by Congress:

First, by adopting a Joint Resolution setting forth an American Family Farm Policy, declaring the intent of Congress as to the purpose of all farm programs in preserving this historic American pattern of agriculture, and providing a yardstick for measuring the effectiveness of present and future programs in meeting that objective.

Second, by adopting a Joint Resolution setting forth a National Food and Fiber policy, declaring the intent of Congress to maintain abundance and see that abundance wisely used, both for America's own people and people in need through out the world.

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While such resolutions would only in effect be a reaffirmation of already established purposes and objectives, it would add new emphasis by bringing them together in a positive statement of national policy.

Establishment of such national policies in a positive form would provide some consistency to developing proper and workable programs aimed at achieving the accepted objectives, and revising our programs wherever and whenever necessary to make sure they serve such objectives.

We have ample precedent for such declaration of national policy in the Full Employment Act, designed to chart America's course of economic growth and progress.

Enactment of policy declarations on Family Farming and utilization of Food and Fiber could well be linked with functions of the Joint Committee on the Economic Report under the Employment Act, requiring closer annual examination of agriculture's contribution toward the nation's economic progress -- and closer appraisal of agriculture's needs to maintain its most effective contribution toward such progress.

Foreign Relations and Agriculture --- freedom from want.

Perhaps such focusing of national attention on proper objectives of farm policy will aid in achieving effective legislation directed toward achieving such objectives.

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For that reason it is my hope that the new Congress will do more than re-examine price support levels, and take a serious look at the purpose of our price support legislation, and of all farm legislation.

Perhaps we will find that the time has come to take more positive action toward directing government legislative and administrative policy more specifically to serving family farmers. We may well consider channeling price protection to family farm operators falling within reasonable bounds of desirable production patterns.

farm supports

At least the subject of price supports deserves a new look in the direction of parity income for family farms. Let us not be afraid to pioneer, to seek better means for parity income.

Perhaps we will find that the time has come to take more positive steps toward raising the economic opportunities of low-income farmers, through expanded operations of supervised, expanded credit under the Farmers Home Administration.

Perhaps we will find that the time has come to re-appraise all our farm credit operations to see how well they are geared to modern needs, particularly to providing opportunities for young beginning farmers to get a sound start in agriculture.

Perhaps we will find, too, that America's soundest approach to peaceful international relations rests in greater use of our productive know-how and abundance to help eliminate hunger and poverty throughout the world -- using food and fiber as weapons of peace in the battle against the encroachments of communism in

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the world. Food, fiber and freedom are the answer to fear - force and tyranny.

America's food abundance can be a powerful force for good in the world, a real weapon of freedom.

But linked with greater overseas use of our food abundance must be provision for assuring every American an opportunity to have a minimum adequate diet of basic foods, particularly of milk and butter. Issuance of food stamps to supplement meager public assistance allowances to the aged, the widows and dependent children and the handicapped would go a long way toward that objective. This proposal would make possible wiser use than now provided for our temporary surpluses of food products.

Underlying all our considerations of food and fiber policies must be continued recognition of the human elements involved, the human and social values that are far more important than material values.

America isn't just efficiency and bigness. America is people -- people with needs and wants. People with hopes and aspirations. American agriculture is more than just efficient production. It is family living. It is church on Sunday. It is the family picnic, the rural school.

The moral level of American social and political institutions is due in no small part to the wholesome atmosphere created by men and women and their families who live on our family farms.

Expand
proposal

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That contribution to America's strength must never be ignored, nor its preservation neglected.

For as I endeavored to set forth at the outset of these remarks, the strength of America is in its people -- its people at work in gainful employment, its farmers producing at fair prices, its merchants selling their goods and services in sufficient volume to maintain a profit.

The strength of America is to be found in the children in good schools, its old people cared for in dignity in the twilight years of their lives.

The strength of America is found in the fulfillment and practice of the great spiritual and moral principles that have guided us throughout our history. Yes, the strength of America is found in a faith in God, and a trust in the people.

It is this kind of America that I believe in, and it is to this kind of an America that I dedicate my life and whatever talents God may have given me.

And it is for this kind of America that I believe it is essential we maintain a strong and prospering agriculture, solidly based upon family farms.



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