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Statement
by
Senator Hubert H. Humphrey
in The Senate of the United States
Thursday, August 6, 1959

Mr. President, I introduce for appropriate reference, a bill to provide for the development of a comprehensive family farm program, to bring the production of agricultural commodities into balance with demand, ~~therefor~~, to aid underdeveloped countries of the world by making available to them agricultural commodities produced in the United States, and for other purposes.

I ask unanimous consent that the complete text of this bill appear at this point in my remarks.

(Exhibit A)

Mr. President, I offer this bill as the answer of the Congress to Secretary of Agriculture Benson's complaint that Congress has never given him the kind of a farm program he could properly administer. For six years, Administration forces have marched up Capitol Hill offering proposals based on

one over-riding purpose -- to drastically weaken and ultimately destroy the federal farm programs that were designed to provide equality of opportunity for America's farm families. For six years the Administration forces, by adroit use of the veto weapon, have been successful in getting legislative changes that weakened, distorted, and made mockery of the historic purpose of farm programs.

Farm Program Objectives

All of the legislative history confirms that the objective and purpose of Congress in developing the farm programs has been to assure the American people of a continued abundance of food and fiber, to offer America's farmers an opportunity to achieve economic equality with other segments of our economy, and 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.

In more recent years, a new objective has been added in the interest of the entire nation -- the purpose of using our abundance as a useful and effective humanitarian arm of better international relations.

Executive Branch Fails To Cooperate

These objectives have been kept firmly in mind, as year after year new legislation has been proposed. The senior Senator from Minnesota has been joined by many of his colleagues in introducing and pushing for the passage of legislation in all areas of farm programs. A listing of some of these proposed changes in this session shows clearly that any claim that Congress has been lax or remiss in discharging its duty is simply not based on fact. It is the duty of Congress to legislate, with the advice and cooperation of the Executive. We have attempted to fulfill that duty, but the vacuum of

Administration leadership and cooperation has blocked us.

Executive resistance, plus the treat^h and exercise of veto

has prevented constructive action.

To all constructive proposals, the Secretary has given the historic thumbs down signal which, from the days of the Roman circus, has meant death. The Committee Calendars list hundreds of bills that carry the succinct statement, "Adverse report submitted by Department of Agriculture", or, even more disheartening, an empty space after the statement, "Referred to the Department of Agriculture for Report" which indicates that the Department of Agriculture did not even give Congress the courtesy of a reply.

Let me briefly indicate some of the measures which have been brought before this Congress with the aim of improving farm programs.

The senior Senator from Minnesota has not stood alone in

sponsoring these proposals -- he has joined with and been joined by many of his colleagues in these attempts to get constructive action. Some of these measures were aimed at improved administration of existing programs.

To Strengthen Farmer-Committees

We introduced a bill, S. 662, to insure that democratic election procedures were used in electing the farmer-committees that administer farm price support programs on the local level, and to strengthen true grass roots farmer representation at all stages of administration. Adverse report.

To Strengthen REA

S. 144 would have returned to the Administrator of the Rural Electrification Administration the full loan making authority that has been turned over to a political appointee in the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture. Adverse report and active -- very active -- opposition. As we all know, this Congress-approved bill was

vetoed by the President. We here in the Senate overrode that

veto, but the other House was not so successful.

To Expand Farm Credit

Farmers caught in the vise of low farm price and high production costs turned to Congress with pleas for more readily available credit. The legislative proposal that would solve many of the problems of our hard-pressed farmers is in S. 1211, the Family Farm Yardstick Credit Bill. This bill would transform the Farmers Home Administration from the existing minimum operation into a truly constructive credit program. Adverse report.

To Study Changing Rural Scene

We have expressed our concern with the failure to appraise in any thorough, comprehensive manner the impact of technological changes on rural life by the introduction of S. 2031, a bill to establish a bipartisan Commission on Country Life. This Commission would inaugurate studies into the changing rural scene, would

pin-point the most pressing problems of rural life, and come up with suggested solutions. Neutral report from the Department of Agriculture.

To Expand Research in Industrial Uses

In the same spirit of attempting to meet the changing needs of agriculture, we have proposed, and the Senate has passed, S. 690, to expand Research in Industrial Uses of Agricultural Products.

What was the attitude of the Department of Agriculture toward this? Adverse.

To Expand School Milk Program

More children in more schools would benefit from additional supplies of good wholesome milk if S. 1289, a bill to extend and expand the special school milk program, became law. This has passed the Senate. The opinion of the Department of Agriculture? No report.

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To Feed the Needy

Food Stamp

There have been many proposals that would provide for the distribution of more nutritious foods to the needy in this country. In June the Senate Committee on Agriculture and

Forestry held extensive hearings that proved conclusively the great need that exists. It is clearly shameful that there should be around five million undernourished and even hungry people in this country at a time when we hear so much about agricultural surpluses. Whether or not we shall get any action on legislation in this area is still uncertain. What is not uncertain is the attitude of the Department of Agriculture -- adverse.

To Balance Feed Grain Price Supports

Congress has not turned its back on the producers of individual commodities as price difficulties have engulfed them. Our efforts have been unsuccessful because of the lack of cooperation and the strong opposition of the Executive. Early in the session we introduced a bill, S. 1343, which would have brought balance into the feed grain picture by letting the price supports on oats,

rye, barley, and grain sorghums bear the same ratio to the price support on corn as the feed value of each grain bears to the feed value of corn. The position of the Department of Agriculture was adverse.

To Aid Milk Producers

The senior Senator from Minnesota was joined by other Senators in sponsorship of the Dairy Marketing Act, S. 1821. This bill proposed a self-financing program which would improve the income of milk producers at much less cost to the government than the existing program. This proposal was met by silence from the Department of Agriculture.

Wheat Legislation Vetoed

The legislative action on wheat is fresh in our memories -- kept green, I might say, through the daily insistence of the minority leader in his attempts to point the finger of blame at the majority members of this body. Congress passed a bill

that would have cut back drastically on the acreage of wheat to be seeded this next year -- as the President requested. Congress passed a bill that would have prevented the further build up of wheat in the inventory of Commodity Credit Corporation, and thus reduced government costs -- as the President requested. Congress passed a bill that would have given income protection to the wheat farmers in return for the drastic cutback. This is not a principle upon which Administration requests are based. The Secretary of Agriculture opposed the bill. The President vetoed the bill. The record is clear. Congress fulfilled its responsibilities. If there were any spirit of cooperation evidenced by the Department of Agriculture or by the President, there would be no question of where the blame should be placed, for there would be no blame. The failure of the wheat program to reduce production follows the pattern of failure set for seven years by the Secretary of Agriculture.

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The Department's farm program management failure is most dramatically shown by the mountainous supplies of feed grains in the hands of the Commodity Credit Corporation and the 4.2 billion bushel corn crop anticipated this fall.

To Firm Hog Prices

The Congress knows that this supply of feed grain leads inevitably to price trouble for the hog producers. The June 15, 1959, average price received for hogs was \$15.00 per cwt. The July 15, 1959, price was \$13.30 per cwt. What will the price be two months from now? Under the weight of increased marketings, where will it be a year from now?

Last week the Senators from Minnesota, Mr. McCarthy and myself, introduced a proposal that attempts to look into the future so that we here in Congress may, by timely legislative action, forestall the hog price collapse. This bill, S. 2453, asks that a plan immediately be put into effect which will

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reduce the total amount of pork going to market and thus bolster the market price. This plan, which has been recommended by the National Planning Association after long study, calls for payments to be made to producers as an incentive to market hogs at lighter weights -- at from 180 to 200 pounds instead of the usual higher weights. Not only would this strengthen the market, but consumers would be able to secure the leaner cuts of pork which they prefer.

The Department of Agriculture has not yet had time to report on this proposal. It is my hope that the Secretary will in this instance have enough foresight to cooperate with Congress in the interests of the hog producers and the public.

To Bring Stability to Poultry

Next week the senior Senator from Minnesota plans to introduce a bill which will give to the producers of eggs, poultry, and turkeys the right to establish a program that will bring order into the production and marketing of these

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commodities. These producers have been going through a series of price ups and downs, with the downs becoming more accentuated. These producers have asked again and again for government assistance to enable them to gain some price stability. For this reason, I shall introduce a bill that presents a positive program and expect to be joined by colleagues who feel a similar responsibility.

"Food for Peace"

I have reviewed these proposals as a refutation of charges that Congress has not borne its proper responsibility toward farmers.

There is another area of responsibility where Congress has forged ahead of the Administration in the face of opposition and adverse reports from the Secretary of Agriculture. This is in the use of our agricultural abundance as a positive arm of international relations. The senior Senator from Minnesota was joined by 15 Senate colleagues in introducing S. 1711, the "Food for Peace Act", which would expand existing operations

under Public Law 480 into a constructive, long-term program to use American surpluses to build peace. I expect action that will bring this proposal before the Senate.

Secretary Benson Presents No Farm Program

Mr. President, many more constructive legislative proposals have been made that could have been tailored to meet head-on the farm problems that exist. I have not reviewed all of them. I am confident that a strong, foresighted Secretary of Agriculture could have used these proposals as building blocks to erect a strong edifice of agricultural prosperity.

Furthermore, these proposals are proof that the Congress has not wavered in its determination to develop sound farm programs. But Congress has operated without the cooperation of the Executive Branch. We have been handicapped by the shadow of the unstated, secret policy that has motivated all of the actions, demands, and recommendations of the adherents to the Benson way.

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Repeatedly, the committees charged with the responsibility of formulating legislation in the interests of the nation's farmers have requested, insisted, begged, that the Secretary of Agriculture submit an over-all legislative plan, a complete farm program that would meet the changing forces in agriculture. We have pleaded for a full honest statement of intention.

Mr. President, there has never been an honest reply to these requests. As late as this spring, another sincere attempt was made in the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry to get from the Secretary of Agriculture a clear statement of his over-all policy and intentions. You all know -- our colleague from Missouri, Senator Symington, has informed us again in these past few days of the devious manner in which the Secretary of Agriculture evaded this last request, just as he has evaded the intent of Congress in the administration of farm programs.

The time is at hand to put an end to subterfuge, evasion, and misdirection in this matter of farm policy. It is time to put an end to this blind stumbling in the dark, goaded by the Administration's panic cry of "haste".

The Farm Program Development Act

The bill I have just introduced surely should^{not}/arouse the Administration to charges of "wasteful," "regimentation", "outmoded", and all the other trick words they overwork.

This bill will give to Secretary Benson a whole agricultural policy tool kit, laboratory, and factory -- everything he needs to do the job he ought to be doing in behalf of America's farm families.

He is always asking for more authority. This gives him all of the authority anyone could want to put the house of agriculture in order. Its basic request is that the Secretary work with and consult the farm producers on program development and

action.

The proposal directs the Secretary of Agriculture to employ the abundant resources at his command -- the technicians, economists, and other agricultural production, marketing, conservation and research specialists -- to make a complete, detailed exhaustive review of the many inter-related forces in both domestic and foreign agriculture. Based upon the findings of this study, he shall bring before Congress immediate and long-term practical plans that will assure the consumers of this nation a continued full, adequate supply of food and fiber while assuring family farmers the opportunity to employ their capital and labor in earning their livelihood without the waste of priceless soil, water, and human resources.

Domestic Food and Nutrition Program

The Secretary of Agriculture is directed to submit to Congress a plan for an over-all food and nutrition program for

the United States, a program that will expand and liberalize the national school lunch program; a program that will more adequately meet the nutritional needs of low income persons, the unemployed, the aged, and the handicapped; a program that will set up a national security reserve of food and fiber products designed to protect the people of the United States from want in case of war or national emergency.

This is not to be a minimum, half-hearted, "all is well" type of plan. We want the facts ~~and we want the facts~~ and we want the figures. We want to know whether Americans are nutritionally prepared to contribute to a productive, expanding economy. If our fellow-citizens are ill-fed and ill-clothed, we want to know who they are, and where they are, and what can be done to correct the situation.

We want to face up to the hard facts of what we should do to prepare for a national emergency -- not necessarily and only

war, for there are other perils and natural disasters that often cripple broad areas of our country. We want to know that our abundant supplies are safely held as a cushion, a protection against unexpected need. Our precious stores of food and fiber served us well in the last great national emergency. Let us not, in the name of false economy and false economics, destroy this potential treasure. Instead, let us have a plan. How many bushels of wheat do we need to have in ready supply? How many bales of cotton? How many tons of feedstuff? What commodities should be placed in a safety reserve? Where should they be kept to be of maximum value? We have ships in a kind of safety reserve. We even have a mothball fleet of Pullman cars. Let us now plan for a food and fiber safety reserve. Let us face up to the problems and have some complete, honest answers. In previous Congresses, I have repeatedly asked for such a program and information. Always the answer has been no.

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Study of World-Wide Needs

The Secretary of Agriculture is directed in this bill to submit to Congress by February 1, 1960, and annually thereafter, a report on world-wide needs for food and fiber. The study to be made should go to the heart of the matter by determining the nutritional deficiencies existing in the world as well as those areas of such need that the people live out their brief lives in a starving condition.

In addition to a determination of the amount and the location of the world's need for food and fiber, the Secretary shall present a positive program that details the fair and feasible share the United States should have in filling this need. A plan for cooperating with other countries which are also in a position to aid in meeting the world's food and fiber deficiency should be part of this program.

This is not to be a short-term dumping type program. This

is to be a long-term program, based upon the most effective use of the food and fiber in the recipient countries and based also upon proper production adjustments in this country. Safeguards shall be taken to insure that the program is consistent with the international objectives of the United States and that there is no interference with the commercial trading activities of friendly exporting countries.

Adjusting Supply and Demand

This bill provides the Secretary with all of the means and authority necessary to halt the build up of surplus commodities in government warehouses, and to adjust the supplies of any commodity to the demand.

When the true needs of this country are determined, taking into account the programs for school children and our own needs; the supplies of food and fiber needed in the safety reserve; the fair share of the United States in filling the fiber, food, and

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nutritional deficiency in the friendly nations of the world

-- then the Secretary may exercise the authority given in this act to adjust supplies with this total demand.

This bill gives the Secretary the right to ask producers of any commodity that is in surplus supply if they favor a national marketing quota. If two-thirds or more of the producers vote "yes" in a referendum for a national marketing quota program, then the Secretary shall develop such a plan and submit it to the Congress. The Secretary is given very broad authority in administering the program. He is to determine the control and adjustment procedures and the necessary penalties. Guide lines are provided for the use of alternative methods of assuring the farmer of a fair price in return for his compliance. The Secretary may use the method best adapted to achieve this end. This might be by means of income equalization payments to producers, marketing orders and agreements, orderly

marketing loans and direct purchases, compensatory or incentive payments, diversion programs, marketing premium payments, or special marketing programs. I have no fear of the Secretary failing to find people who can work out details of the programs chosen. The Department of Agriculture is overflowing with fine, dedicated career public servants, people who would be more than able and happy to make a decent farm program work.

Yet just in case the Secretary needs any help, the bill provides for farmers themselves having a voice in telling him their needs and assisting in program formulation.

The bill directs the Secretary, whenever he determines an agricultural commodity is being produced in abundance beyond effective demand in the free markets, to establish producer-chosen commodity committees for any such commodity, to consult with and guide the Secretary in developing a national production adjustment and marketing program.

Whenever any national production adjustment and marketing program for a given commodity has been approved by the producers and submitted by the Secretary to the Congress, it shall go into effect unless disapproved by Congressional resolution within 60 days -- similar to the reorganizational authority already given the Executive Branch under Hoover Commission recommendations.

By this method maximum authority is given the Secretary to work with producers in developing more effective programs, yet the right of the Congress to protect the public interest is retained.

Fair Price Standard

For the guidance of the Secretary and individual commodity groups that may be established, the bill establishes a new fair price standard geared to current economic conditions, not frozen to periods of the past. A fair price is defined as that price

which will yield returns on capital and labor, on representative family farms, comparable to nonfarm earnings, as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture on the basis of costs and returns collected and published annually by the United States Department of Agriculture for typical family-operated commercial farms.

In the guidelines established by Congress under this bill, direct payments to an individual farm operator would be limited to \$5,000 a year, and crop loans would be limited to \$25,000.

The measure proposes seeking cooperation of producers themselves in achieving the fair price standard by adjusting supply to over-all demand, yet safeguards participating farmers with the assurances of alternate available devices for income stabilization in order to encourage compliance. Government assistance for income stabilization is conditioned on the acceptance of production adjustments and orderly marketing.

Long Term Land Use

The Secretary is also directed to formulate and submit to the Congress a program dealing with long-term adjustments in agriculture in the United States, after first giving Congress his findings on the domestic and international food and fiber use potential and needs so we will have something factual upon which to make decisions about production adjustments that may be needed.

As guidelines, the bill asks the Secretary to include plans for an expanded agricultural resources conservation program, including incentives to encourage land-use adjustment and temporary retirement of land not needed for production, as well as plans for a thorough review and appraisal of the total

research effort, public and private, in the field of agriculture, with a view to determining the need for increased research in production patterns, marketing, and new uses of agricultural commodities.

Low Production Farms

The measure recognizes the unique and separate problems of our low production, low income farms, and directs the Secretary not only report to the Congress on progress toward solving these problems, but also recommendations for dealing more effectively and more rapidly with them, offering our own guidelines for his consideration.

New Ways to Meet New Challenges

Mr. President, this measure is no panacea, nor does it profess or pretend to offer all the answers. Rather, it is a practical approach toward seeking new and better answers to new challenges.

All of these are things the Secretary of Agriculture could and should have already accomplished. Instead of waging his ceaseless battle against the established farm programs, he should have been finding new ways to meet new challenges.

He claims that his hands are tied, that he cannot move without a directive from Congress. This is a weak and unjustified alibi for inaction and mismanagement. But if he needs a more comprehensive grant of authority, then here it is.

Here is the directive.

Here is the blueprint for immediate and long-term constructive action.

Here is the reaffirmation of the intent of Congress to bring agriculture into a harmonious and equitable relationship with the rest of our economy.

Mr. President, here is a program which all of us who really

care about the well being of family farmers can wholeheartedly support.

We hope that the present Secretary of Agriculture will see that here is a golden opportunity. We hope that we will receive that rare object, a "favorable report from the Department of Agriculture" on this bill.

If the present Secretary of Agriculture does not see fit to accept this challenge, perhaps a future Secretary of Agriculture will.

August 6, 1959.



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