

Fall

Ag. HHH Speeches [1964?]

TV STATEMENT OF SENATOR HUMPHREY  
FOR FARMERS UNION CENTRAL EXCHANGE

I had hoped I would be speaking with you this evening from the Municipal Auditorium in St. Paul. I promised my good friends Tom Steichen, Norval Ellefson and Verne Wing I would be there for the thirty-third annual meeting of the Farmers Union Central Exchange. I did not want to go back on that promise, but I thought most of you would prefer my being here in Washington trying to get a farm bill passed rather than enjoying myself at your convention. Tom, I don't think you would ever forgive me if I were to be absent for a vote on the Farm Bill and it meant the difference between getting a good amendment passed or a bad one defeated. So as

much as I wanted to be with all of you this evening, I felt I had to stay in Washington and do the job you elected me to do.

You know this Farm Bill we have before us is of vital importance to our entire economy. The Tax Bill recently passed by the Congress and signed into law by President Johnson will be worth very little or nothing to the people who have little or no net income. The tax comes only to those who have a net income.

But to you as farmers and as members of the Farmers Union Central Exchange, the Farm Bill now before us carries a special meaning. For in order for farmers to be able to continue to patronize your exchange, their income must be maintained. And most importantly, their wheat income must be maintained. Your earnings largely

are dependent on the income of the wheat grower. If new wheat legislation is not passed this year, the income of the wheat producer could drop as much as \$600 million to \$700 million. So I am here in Washington fighting for the lives of our wheat farmers and for you as members of a great marketing cooperative.

Let me give you an example of the importance of maintaining the income of our farmers. You in the Farmers Union Central Exchange own and operate 1200 gas stations. Do you know that farming uses more petroleum than any other single industry? More than \$4 billion is spent by farmers each year for fuel, lubricants, and equipment maintenance.

And are you aware of the fact that farmers spend over \$2 billion a year for trucks, tractors, machines

and other equipment. For every dollar of additional income in agriculture there is additional purchasing power throughout our economy of \$5 to \$7. We cannot afford to let farm income drop. We must take every action possible to bring about a rise in farm income. To this worthy objective I pledge my continued dedication.

The bill we have before us contains two sections-- one on wheat and one on cotton. It is extremely important that the bill be passed at the earliest possible time. Winter wheat is in the ground now and farmers will begin seeding spring wheat in less than a month. Farmers rightfully are asking what their wheat program will be. The same is true of cotton. Farmers are beginning to plant cotton in south Texas, and in another month planting will be moving across the cotton belt.

The new wheat program is voluntary--the so-called certificate program. It provides for \$2 wheat on that amount which is consumed domestically and \$1.55 or \$1.60 for that which goes into export. It is essential that this legislation be passed, for every business, including your own, in the State of Minnesota and in fact, throughout the nation is affected by the price of wheat. I learned a long time ago that the welfare of large cities like Minneapolis or St. Paul are dependent upon hundreds of small communities and thousands of small farms which may be within a 300, 400, or 500 mile trade territory. No place lives by itself. There is no state or city that can get along living by itself. The effects of slash in income of wheat farmers would be felt across

the country and the paralyzing results would not be confined to the farm.

The problem with cotton is a complicated one. We not only must relieve domestic mills of unfair competition resulting from the export subsidy necessary to move our cotton into world markets, but we must also attack the problem of overproduction of cotton and must price cotton more competitively. And we must do all this without placing an intolerable burden on the backs of the cotton producers. Under the proposed bill, cotton will be made available to our own mills at the world price and they will be put in a better competitive position. This program not only will put a halt to the rising inventory of cotton in Government hands, but will make possible a reduction of these inventories. This in turn

will mean a reduction in the cost of operating the cotton program and a big savings for the taxpayer.

The legislation before us this week--the so-called wheat-cotton bill--is much more than a farm program. It is in effect an investment in the prosperity of our whole Nation. We cannot hope to maintain an affluent society if two of our largest groups of farmers are oppressed by poverty brought on by programs which do not work under present-day conditions. If we sit by and let our wheat and cotton farmers suffer from an unnecessary economic pinch we can all expect to join them in the economic squeeze before too long.

Recent studies indicate that without workable price support programs, net farm income would rapidly drop 40 to 50 per cent. Some farmers would be hurt even worse.

We cannot tolerate even the threat of such a horrible development. We must, as a minimum, update our wheat and cotton programs. There is no time for delay.

I take a great deal of pride in our Minnesota cooperatives. We lead the nation in number of cooperatives and number of memberships, and stand second in dollar volume of business. The Farmers Union Central Exchange is a growing, well managed, modern successful cooperative. It is significant that in 1961 your farmers made nearly \$9 million added savings on \$92 million worth of supply business.

From the past has come the inspiring heritage that is a built-in legacy of most of today's cooperatives, the heritage of free men freely working together to try to better their farming lot. As we look to our accomplish-

ments today and the firm place cooperatives have forged for themselves in our business economy, you can rightfully take a full measure of pride in the giant strides you have made.

Additional strides can and should be made by our nation's cooperatives. Furthermore, they should play a more important role in the development of other countries. We export a tremendous amount of farm products, both commercially and under the Food for Peace Program. We need to export our agricultural know-how, and our cooperative leaders can play a very important role in doing this.

But keep in mind that without farmer purchasing power your cooperative cannot exist. It is in your interest and in the interest of every businessman in

America to maintain and to strengthen farm income. To do this is to strengthen your cooperative and to, in turn, provide additional purchasing power to our farmers.

I hope your convention was a successful one and I hope that my absence from it will be justified by passage of effective farm legislation.

Thank you.



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