

REMARKS 000598
OF
HUBERT H. HUMPHREY
OLMSTED COUNTY FARMERS UNION
OCTOBER 23, 1970

Once again we have the Republicans reverting to the bankrupt farm policies of Ezra Taft Benson leading to ruinous surpluses and depressed prices. Republican agricultural policy is doing to our farmers what Republican economic policy is doing to workers, namely lower and lower income for more and more farmers and increasing unemployment for more and more workers.

American agriculture, and Minnesota farmers in particular, are the victims of Republican neglect.

Neglect in forcing through Congress the 1970 farm bill which can cost Minnesota corn and barley producers \$58 million in the next three years ---

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Neglect --- and bad judgment --- in cutting soybean support prices in an effort to lower market prices to the world market level --- a happily unsuccessful effort ---

Neglect in failing to take the leadership necessary to avoid a national fuel crisis that will cost the users of electricity, fuel oil and natural gas dearly this winter and for years to come ---

Neglect in failing to make advance payments to feed grain farmers, payments that were desperately needed for spring planting and farm operations ---

Neglect in failing to provide adequate farm credit ---

Shameful neglect in promoting the tight money policy that denies farmers the credit they need ---

Unforgiveable neglect in setting unconscionably high interest rates ---

And, finally, neglect in the unwillingness of this Republican Administration to support effective bargaining power for farmers.

Make no mistake about it, the future of the small towns and the smaller cities like those we have here in rural Minnesota

depends first of all upon the condition of the agricultural economy.

If farm income is up, if the farmer is able to get a fair return on his investments and on his labor, if he gets a fair return from the products of his land, then the smaller communities --- the villages, the towns and the small cities --- will grow and prosper.

But if rural America, if the family farm, is squeezed out by low prices and high costs, by high interest rates and tight money, there will be little or no hope. The development of our smaller towns and cities will be dimmed or destroyed.

What the farmer needs from government programs and policies is the opportunity to earn a decent living, to earn a fair wage for his labor, to receive a just return on his investment.

He needs assurance and protection of his right to bargain in the market place for the price and terms of delivery of his products.

Farm programs should provide a base, a minimum, a floor. They should not be used to provide a ceiling as the pending Administration-backed farm bill does. This bill reduces the opportunity to earn a decent living, it fails to assure a fair price, it fails to meet the standards of effective supply management, and it weakens farmers' bargaining power.

Therefore, it is now even more important that the farmer must strengthen and expand his marketing cooperatives and other economic instruments. This bargaining power must be protected by law rather than restricted.

Here's the problem.

Farmers are not now in a position to put price tags on their products. Look at the language of commerce: We say the hardware store charges 39 cents a pound for nails; we say General Motors charges four thousand dollars for a car.

But the farmer, who also produces and sells things, gets five dollars and 20 cents, blend price, for his milk; or gets 26 dollars for his fed cattle.

The farmer deserves the right to charge for his products instead of getting what the buyer decides he can have. And to be able to charge a fair price and get it means you must have the right and the organization to engage in bargaining for a fair price and delivery.

Labor, is organized, business is organized, finance is concentrated and organized, teachers and doctors and lawyers are organized. Yes, even football players are organized and they bargain for salary and benefits.

They all bargain for a share of the national income. They all, in effect, bargain collectively in the market place. Farmers alone have found themselves at the mercy of the market. They simply are not yet in a position to decide the prices that they will charge for their products.

Progress toward economic equity for farm people is going to depend primarily on what they are able to do for themselves.

Farmer cooperatives contribute to bargaining power. They must be strengthened and there must be protection in the law for cooperatives to merge in order to give strength to the farmer in the market place. The Capper-Volstead Act was designed to give the farmer that chance to organize his co-ops, yet the Justice Department has from time to time moved to prevent co-operative mergers even though there is no monopoly nor evidence of monopoly. Nevertheless, the anti-trust laws are frequently brought to bear despite the Capper-Volstead Act.

This country needs strategic reserves of major farm commodities. The threat of destruction of a major part of this year's corn crop by a newly discovered corn blight underscores the need for such a reserve, ready to come into the market when needed. Prices sky-rocket when a crop fails, and speculators have a field day, and prices of other commodities soar, but a farmer without a crop to sell does not benefit. A strategic reserve would bring stability to the markets, protecting both farmers and consumers. Such reserve would be maintained at common-sense, clearly-defined levels. The method and timing of the release of the reserved commodities would be spelled out to insure that the market would neither be driven up or down. And producers themselves should have a responsibility in the holding and the management of these reserves.

With such a strategic reserve, farm bargaining power would be increased.

Few people realize that agriculture's assets total 307 billion dollars, equal to about two-thirds of the value of current assets of all the vast corporations in the United States; or about one-half of the market value of all corporation stocks on the New York Stock Exchange.

Even though the number of people living on farms has declined a third in the last 10 years, three out of every 10 jobs in private employment in our country today are related to agriculture.

I have spoken about a better deal for the American farmer --- and this means a better America. But we all know there is more to this subject than just dollars and cents.

What we are really talking about is the quality of life in rural America --- the opportunities you and your children have to take advantage of the unprecedented standard of living that America offers today.

We are talking about better schools, better hospitals, and health care. We are talking about communities that can afford the public services which will attract new industries and provide new job opportunities, and new income.

We are talking about making it possible for rural young people to stay on the farm, stay in their home towns, and still look forward to a full and rewarding life. Today, for every 175 rural youngsters who reach working age, there are fewer than 100 jobs. This year, about 200 thousand of those young Americans will leave home and go into the city.

Their departures will make rural America a poorer place. Their leaving will not only separate them from their families but will weaken our rural communities --- weaken them spiritually as well as economically.

I am for giving those young people --- and every other American --- a real choice about where to live, where to work, where to raise their families.

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If they wish to live in the cities, those cities should be clean, wholesome and safe. Today, too often, they are not.

If they wish to live in rural America, then rural America must provide opportunity and modern living.

But rhetoric about rehabilitation, reform, and renewal will do very little for rural America. The key is economic equity, economic power, economic justice for the American farmer. The key is higher farm income. The key is parity --- yet the Republican administration is ready and eager to forget parity.

On our campuses, in our newspapers, in the electronic media, even in Congress, and the White House, there is far too little discussion of the needs of rural America. Once again rural America is neglected. It is a forgotten land and a forgotten people. When a President can deliver a State of the Union message and fail to mention family farmers and American agriculture, then I say the farmer is being neglected and forgotten.

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When a President neglects to send a Farm Message to the Congress, breaking a precedent of more than three decades, I say the American farmer is being neglected and forgotten.

When a Presidential message on the economy fails to include any major reference to the economic and social needs of American agriculture, then I say the American farmer is being neglected and forgotten.

When a government fails to take the leadership in presenting a farm program to Congress, then you can only conclude that the farmer is neglected and forgotten.

The neglect of agriculture must stop. It is time the farmer's needs and efforts are recognized. It is time for the government to make the American farmer a partner in the prosperity and progress of this country.

If I am elected to the United States Senate, I shall ask to be assigned to the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry. I served on this Committee for approximately 8 years. It is my hope that I can serve again. I believe that Midwest agriculture needs an

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effective, hard-working, determined and experienced spokesman for the family farmer.

I have done this in the past. I am prepared to do an even better job in the future.

As your Senator, I shall be your faithful servant who cares about every farm family, every rural resident, and every rural community.

So, I ask your help, not only for election to the U.S. Senate, but in building a better rural America.

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— Olmsted

County

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No. of farms - 1532

No. people living on farms - 6731

County population - 81,258

Population change 1960-70 Up 24%

% on farms - 8%

Total income from marketing of
crops, livestock and livestock
products (including government
payments) 1968

\$30,981,000

Crops \$5,488,000

Livestock \$23,514,000

Govt. payments ... \$1,979,000

Kind of crop:

Corn - 6,595,000 bu.

Oats - 2,331,000 bu.

Spring wheat - 16,000 bu.

Barley - 33,000 bu.

Soybeans - 818,400 bu.

Kind of livestock and
livestock product

Milk - 217 million pounds

All cattle - 83,900 head

Hogs - 52,000 head

Total state income from farm
marketing (including govern-
ment payments)

\$1,999,441,000



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