

OPENING STATEMENT FOR SENATOR HUMPHREY, SEPTEMBER 9, 1971,
RURAL DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING, STILLWATER, OKLAHOMA.

I AM PLEASED TO BE IN OKLAHOMA AND IN THE COMPANY OF YOUR SENATOR HENRY BELLMON, A DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THIS SUBCOMMITTEE. *sen curter - Cong Kemp*

HENRY IS A REPUBLICAN, I'M A DEMOCRAT, BUT WE BOTH COME FROM RURAL AMERICA, AND OUR THINKING ISN'T FAR APART ON WHAT THE NEEDS OF OUR FARMERS AND RANCHERS ARE, AND WHAT THE NEEDS OF ECONOMICALLY DECLINING RURAL AMERICA ARE.

YOU KNOW ABOUT DECLINING RURAL POPULATIONS IN OKLAHOMA. THIRTEEN OF YOUR COUNTIES LOST 10 PER CENT OR MORE OF THEIR POPULATION BETWEEN 1960 AND 1970. MANY OTHER COUNTIES DISTANT FROM YOUR GREAT POPULATION CENTERS OF TULSA AND OKLAHOMA CITY ALSO LOST MANY FINE PEOPLE.

OKLAHOMANS ARE KNOWN FOR THEIR TOUGHNESS. THIS WAS A HARD LAND FOR THE PIONEERS TO SINK THEIR ROOTS INTO.

THOSE WHO STUCK IT OUT HAD A LITTLE POEM, WHICH I'M SURE MANY OF YOU KNOW:

"PICKING UP BONES TO KEEP FROM STARVING,
"PICKING UP CHIPS TO KEEP FROM FREEZING,
"PICKING UP COURAGE TO KEEP FROM LEAVING,
"WAY OUT WEST IN NO MAN'S LAND."

OKLAHOMA IS A LONG WAY FROM BEING NO MAN'S LAND NOW. YOU HAVE SURVIVED THE BLUE NORTHERS AND THE DUST BOWLS. YOU HAVE BUILT A GREAT TRADITION AND A GREAT STATE.

THEN WHY DO PEOPLE LEAVE OKLAHOMA?

I CAN ASSURE YOU THEY ARE NOT LEAVING THE STILLWATERS, WHERE THERE IS A MAJOR GROWTH INDUSTRY -- THIS UNIVERSITY. THEY ARE NOT LEAVING OKLAHOMA CITY NOR TULSA WHERE THERE ARE JOBS AND DIVERSE INDUSTRY.

THEY ARE LEAVING RURAL OKLAHOMA BECAUSE THERE ARE FEWER OPPORTUNITIES AND JOBS THERE,

AND IT'S NOT JUST JOBS. I KNOW OF A FARMER IN THE PANHANDLE WHO DRIVES HIS DAUGHTER EIGHT MILES EACH MORNING TO THE SCHOOL BUS STOP. SHE THEN TRAVELS 41 MILES MORE TO GET TO CLASS. THEN SHE MUST MAKE THE SAME 49-MILE TRIP HOME AGAIN EACH NIGHT. WHY? BECAUSE THERE IS NO CLOSER SCHOOL.

HER FATHER IS DISMAYED AT THIS, AND HE WILL PROBABLY MOVE HIS FAMILY TO TOWN, SO THAT HE CAN DO THE COMMUTING RATHER THAN HIS DAUGHTER.

~~BUT THIS LITTLE EXAMPLE POINTS TO THE FACT THAT THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN OUR RURAL AREAS WHICH MUST BE IMPROVED IF OUR PEOPLE ARE TO REMAIN IN THE COUNTRYSIDE.~~

THAT MEANS DECENT TRANSPORTATION, DECENT SCHOOLS, DECENT MEDICAL CARE CLOSE TO THE PEOPLE. IT MEANS A NATIONAL COMMITMENT TO THE 35 PER CENT OF OUR PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN LEFT BEHIND BY THE MASSIVE MIGRATION TO THE MAJOR POPULATION CENTERS.

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WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO THESE PEOPLE, AND THE STAKES ARE INCREASING.

IN THE NEXT 30 YEARS OR SO, THE POPULATION OF THIS COUNTRY WILL INCREASE BY SOME 75 ^{to 100} MILLION PEOPLE.

WHERE WILL THEY LIVE?

GIVEN CURRENT TRENDS, MOST OF THEM WILL BE JAMMED INTO THE PRESENT METROPOLITAN AREAS ALONG OUR SEA COASTS AND THE GREAT LAKES. AS MANY AS 85 PER CENT OF ALL OF OUR PEOPLE WILL LIVE ON JUST TWO OR THREE PER CENT OF THE LAND.

OUR CITIES CANNOT RESPOND TO SUCH POPULATION PRESSURES. AND WE CANNOT PERMIT THE DECAY AND DEATH OF RURAL AMERICA.

WE MUST LOOK FOR OTHER ANSWERS, AND THAT'S WHAT THE JOB OF THIS SUBCOMMITTEE IS. WE ARE LOOKING AND WE ARE LEARNING.

WE ARE LEARNING THAT RURAL DEVELOPMENT MUST BEGIN WITH LOCAL PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT THEIR HOME GROUND.

IT WILL TAKE LOCAL VISION AND PLANNING BEFORE THERE CAN BE ANY BEGINNINGS. MANY WHO HAVE MADE THE EFFORT HAVE ALREADY GIVEN UP. THEY HAVE FOUND THAT THEY CANNOT PULL THEMSELVES UP BY THEIR OWN BOOTSTRAPS, BECAUSE THEY HAVE NO BOOTSTRAPS.

WE IN GOVERNMENT MUST PROVIDE THE STRAPS SO THAT SMALL TOWN AMERICANS CAN HELP THEMSELVES; SO THAT THEY CAN GET NEW INDUSTRIES; SO THAT THEY CAN ENCOURAGE A DOCTOR TO MOVE INTO TOWN; SO THAT THEY CAN HAVE DECENT WATER AND SEWER SYSTEMS; SO THAT THEY CAN HAVE DECENT HOMES -- DO YOU KNOW THAT 60 PER CENT OF ALL OF THIS COUNTRY'S SUBSTANDARD HOUSING IS IN RURAL AMERICA?

I HAVE INTRODUCED A BILL, AND I HAVE BEEN JOINED BY 48 OF MY COLLEAGUES, INCLUDING SENATOR BELLMON, CALLED THE CONSOLIDATED FARM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT ACT.

WHAT WILL IT DO? IT WILL PROVIDE CREDIT AND INCENTIVE TO REBUILD AND REVITALIZE RURAL AMERICA AND ESTABLISH A BASIC FREEDOM THAT IS DENIED TODAY -- FREEDOM OF RESIDENCE.

WE HOPE TO HEAR YOUR VIEWS ON THAT PROPOSAL, AND WE HOPE TO HEAR YOUR OTHER IDEAS.

SENATOR BELLMON, WOULD YOU LIKE TO MAKE A STATEMENT HERE AT YOUR OLD SCHOOL?

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