

Text of Hubert H. Humphrey speech by transcription on 23 radio stations on Wednesday, October 20, at times indicated on accompanying schedule. For release to p.m. papers of Wednesday, October 20, 1948.

History is said to repeat itself. There is no doubt that history will, indeed, repeat itself if we let things take their course.

But if we learn the lessons of history, we have the power to mould a better destiny,- than blind repetition for ourselves and for our world. We can see to it that the good repeats itself, and that the bad does not.

We Americans in one generation have seen two wars----two eras of great prosperity----and two cruel depressions.

Oh, the history of our times has been extremely careful to give us a most broad----and a most costly----education!

Let us look at some of the lessons.

Both the great wars of our time required a vast expansion of farm production.

The farmers of Minnesota will remember the demands of the government for more and more food production. Out of that demand came the high prices of the First World War. And out of them came the land inflation from 1918 to 1920. With that inflation, came a new surge of high prices that pushed up the cost of almost everything the farmer had to buy.

Then came the crash.

Land values collapsed----but mortgages stayed right where they were. As the value of the land went down, the prices of our crops went down.

We saw two dollar wheat become dollar wheat overnight. We saw dollar and a half corn become fifty cent corn. Our farmers were head over heels in debt. Production kept going up---and prices kept going down.

Out of the inflation----and the sharp collapse----of the early twenties came the seeds of the great depression of the thirties.

And then indeed we saw our farm economy abandoned to the mercy of the so-called "free market"----the market of supply and demand.

We had thirty cent wheat and ten cent corn.

We had eight cent oats and two dollar and a half hogs.

Surplus piled up on top of surplus.

There were times when it was better to burn corn to heat our houses than to haul it to market.

Mortgages were foreclosed, and the good farm land of Minnesota was sold to the highest bidder and the highest bid often was so low as to be a joke. Often-----of course-----the farmers who owned the land ended up with heavy deficiency judgments against them. They still faced the ordeal of personal bankruptcy.

The American farmer on the so-called free market was the pawn of the grain exchange----he and his family were the pawns of the money lenders and the speculators.

By 1932, our farm economy was literally ruined. It was bankrupt.

The American farmer had been told that the so-called "free market" would take care of everything. He saw the price of his crops change day by day on the free market. The change generally was downward.

But the price of what the farmer had to buy was relatively stable.

The makers of farm machinery, for example, controlled their output. They controlled distribution. Thus they controlled prices.

That was how it happened that farm machinery prices went down only fifteen percent in the depression----while the price of wheat and corn was going down sixty percent.

The farmer was selling in a so-called free market----which meant simply that prices were free to go down and down and down.

But he was buying in a controlled market----a fixed market----a market rigged against him.

Farmers could not control the agricultural surplus. They were helpless.

But the billion dollar corporations could control industry and commerce from start to finish. And they did.

There was no government program to deal with the situation.

There was no means of dealing with surpluses.

There was no soil conservation plan.

There was no REA.

There was no Farm Security Administration.

There was nothing!

Government let the farmer down.

Agriculture was----as it is today----the great balance wheel of our American economy.

When the farmers prosper, there is food for all, and there are jobs for all.

When the farmers are broke----the people of the United States are broke.

Wall Street can survive the bankruptcy of the farmer-----

But Main Street can not.

Business cannot be good on Main Street, unless the farmers are prosperous.

Whatever happens to the American farmer----whether good or ill----happens to small business, all over America.

And whatever happens to labor, happens to the farmer.

Where do we sell our crops?

Who buys them?

Our customers,----and I mean the ultimate consumers, the only customers who count---are the millions of industrial and white collar workers.

The record proves that the income of the farmer and the wages of the worker go up and down together.

The record proves, just as fully, that there is no such relationship between farm income, and labor income, and the profits of big business.

So that when we say that Agriculture is the balance wheel of this economy----we are not engaging in oratory----we are declaring a sober truth----a lesson hard learned from history.

Under the leadership of Franklin Roosevelt----we learned what had to be done. We sketched out the broad outline of an Economic Bill of Rights for Agriculture.

And it is for the full realization of that Economic Bill of Rights that I stand today.

That means a positive, dynamic program. A program of action.

Let us note the main points.

Price Supports.

Orderly marketing.

Sound credit provisions.

Fair freight rates.

Soil conservation; and land reclamation.

Reforestation.

Development of our great river valleys.

To the TVA we must add a Missouri Valley Authority, a Mississippi Valley Authority-- we must develop every valley.

Through these projects and others we must enlarge the REA, to bring light and power to every farm.

We must build up cooperatives, both those we now have, and those that may be needed in the future.

Our price support program must be more than a "pious statement" of good intentions. We already have had too much of that sort of thing.

There can not be any effective price support without an active, powerful Commodity Credit Corporation. The CCC is the mainspring of the price support program.

The Senator from Minnesota, Mr. Ball, tells us--now that there is an election coming up -- that he, too, favors price supports.

Yet the Senator voted against continuing the Commodity Credit Corporation.

Mr. Ball last January said he would like to replace that corporation.

And Mr. Ball and his colleagues in the Republican 80th Congress hampered the CCC so badly that it has not been able to do its job. Farmers here in Minnesota have been forced to sell corn and wheat below support levels.

There you have the Senator's record -- and you have his deeds.

"By their fruits you shall know them."

Our farmers have tasted the fruits of the Ball policy of lip service to price supports -- a policy of words without substance.

A real price support program, of course, will bring with it, a system of orderly marketing.

The International Wheat Agreement was part of such a program. The agreement guaranteed wheat exports to the United States, to Canada and Australia -- with a guaranteed price --- for five years.

That agreement meant a market every year for 185 million bushels of United States wheat.

The National Grange, the National Farm Bureau and the National Farmers Union all advocated the International Wheat Agreement.

And do you know what happened to that agreement?

It died.

In the Senate of the 80th Congress -- where Mr. Ball was a member, the agreement died, without Mr. Ball so much as lifting a finger -- or whispering a word -- to save it.

And he never -- as far as the record shows -- sent even a small basket of flowers to its sick bed, or an inexpensive wreath to its funeral.

That's the record.

And it is the record, too, that the Mayor of Minneapolis spoke up in favor of the wheat agreement. Next year, my fellow citizens, I promise you the former Mayor of Minneapolis will speak up again -- in the United States Senate -- in favor of orderly marketing, both at home and in the world market.

The farm security measures undertaken under President Roosevelt must be broadened.

Never again must private capital be free to force desperate, reckless foreclosures on our farmers as it did under Mr. Hoover.

The freight rates paid by farmers -- on the crops they ship and the goods they buy -- must be controlled by the anti-trust laws.

That is not a new lesson. We learned that one nearly sixty years ago. The first anti-trust act was passed to protect the farms of Minnesota from the conspiracies of the railroad trust.

A few years ago, that act was invoked in our behalf. The Supreme Court declared in effect, that the wicked conspiracy against the South and Middle West, must stop.

We must do away with the Reed Bulwinkle Bill which was hurried to passage soon after the Supreme Court spoke. The bill allows the railroads to ignore the anti-trust laws. We must do away with it.

And that we shall do -- as soon as we have disposed of the Senator from Minnesota -- and those like him -- who voted for that bill, and voted to over-ride President Truman's veto.

The conservation of our soil finds its place in the Economic Bill of Rights for Agriculture. The land itself is the greatest asset of the United States.

When we saw three billion dollars worth of rich topsoil washed away every year, we saw the United States being devastated. The loss was the farmer's loss only in the first instance.

I stand for putting a stop to those huge losses.

The Senator from Minnesota -- in this election season -- has been quick to come forward and say, "me too." But only a few months ago he said -- and here I quote from the Congressional Record of Friday, January 30, 1948. "I CANNOT IN MY OWN MIND JUSTIFY PAYMENTS TO FARMERS TODAY FOR USING GOOD SOIL CONSERVATION PRACTICES."

Yes, the Senator is for conservation -- as long as the farmers pay for it. He wants you, Mr. Farmer, to pay the entire bill, for the whole country.

We saw the TVA turn a poor house into a treasure house. Out of

the TVA has poured a colossal flow of wealth -- power and light for the farms -- nitrates for the soil -- aluminum for our factories -- and for our airplanes. The dams of the TVA have cut down soil erosion in that great valley, the good topsoil is no longer being washed down to the sea.

What we did for the Tennessee Valley we can do for other river valleys.

Mr. Joe Ball voted to cripple the TVA -- he voted to block a few million dollars that the TVA needed for building a generating plant.

The Senator seems to have something against generators -- when the people want to build them. He also stood against loans to REA Co-ops, to build their own generating plants. That stripped the REA Co-ops of bargaining power -- left them without a voice in rate fixing.

When a REA Co-op was able to borrow money to build a generator, the private company kept its rates down to a fair level.

That was government in action!

That was good government -- government for the people.

Now, we cannot, as individual citizens -- or even as groups of citizens -- conserve the soil, or make over river valleys. That takes government and the people working together.

But there is one thing that we can -- in this democracy -- do one by one!

We can vote!

We can make over the government.

We can see that we have a Senate that will do what the welfare of our country requires.

We can, on November 2, by our votes, put the government back in the hands of its friends. They will give us back the Economic Bill of Rights for Agriculture.



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