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STATE ASCS CONFERENCE

DES MOINES, IOWA

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Mr. Godfrey - Des Moines, Ia.
State ASCS Conference - Sept. 8, 1965

1. INTRODUCTION

Thank you very much for inviting me to your State Conference -- I appreciate it. Agriculture is the Number One interest of the State of Iowa ... and the farmers of your State have a tremendous record of supporting and participating in progressive farm programs.

The nationwide success of the Feed Grain Program is in no small part the reflection of the high participation among Iowa farmers. Iowa again is leading the Nation in the number of feed grain farms signed up -- about 123,000.

Iowa is again leading the Nation in pre-measurement -- about 923,000 farms this year. You have the biggest bin storage program in the Nation -- and a very fine Agricultural Conservation Program.

I mention these accomplishments because such a record must always reflect the good work of the Farmer Committeemen. Since Iowa not long ago completed its election of farmer committeemen, I am particularly pleased to meet with the team on whose shoulders will rest the responsibility of serving your farmer neighbors during the coming year.

To the new committeemen who are serving for the first time, I would like to say -- welcome to the team! And to you who have served in the past -- and who have been chosen again -- congratulations for a job well done. I wish to give my special commendation to your State Committee, your State Executive Director, and the fine State office staff for their untiring efforts to help you do a good job.

2. The Floods in Iowa

One of the programs that you have administered this year is one that provokes mixed feelings. I refer to the disaster programs made necessary by the floods which were a tragic experience for many farmers, businessmen, and citizens in all walks of life. At the same time, it is good that we had programs that could be used to help farmers to recover at least in part from the damage of floods. With these programs, the ASCS put a half million dollars worth of assistance into 30 Iowa counties. And, of course, other Department agencies helped, too.

During the spring, one of our ASCS people from Washington brought from western Iowa -- the Little Sioux area -- photographs of a corn field which had been flooded with a regular sea of heavy ice cakes and broken timber. It was a horrible appearing mess, which looked like it would never see a corn crop this year. A few days ago, our man revisited the area, and reports back that a fine corn crop was growing on that bottomland field. A product of ASCS help and of course the determination and hard work of the farmer himself.

3. All of Us are Caught in a Flood of Another Kind

I know that you people serving on farmer committees ... and you people in county offices ... sometimes feel that you are caught in a flood of work.

A flood of instructions from the State office and from Washington.

A flood of changes in programs.

A flood of new management techniques and ideas.

A flood of new methods and new ways on the farm ... which continue to bring forth a flood of abundance ... and tax all of our inventiveness in terms of how to live with the plenty we are creating.

We are living in a dynamic world.

We are living in a Society that is organized ... specialized ... systematized ... and revolutionized.

We work in surroundings that are stylized ... plasticized ... harmonized ... and climatized.

We work with equipment that is automated ... cybernated ... calibrated ... and prefabricated.

We deal with ideas that are communicated ... disseminated ... often overstated ... and sometimes prevaricated.

The result is that as a people we may be frustrated or motivated. We may be conciliated or aggravated ... stimulated or debilitated.

The product of a flood of change. Let me illustrate what I mean.

4. CHANGE

Just like that mother fly and that little daughter fly walking over a bald head one day. Mama turned to daughter and said, "You know, when I was a child, this was just a little foot-path through here." Well, we all change. We get to the "B" stage in life, that "B" stage of baldness, and bi-focals, and bridge-work, and bulge and bunions. All of us can expect that stage in life when there are some changes. At one stage, it is Wine, Women, and Song. Later on, it's Metrecal, the same old gal, and Sing along with Mitch.

5. CHANGE

You know what middle age is. It's the time of life when a man stops worrying about how to resist temptation, and starts wondering whether he missed anything.

Or, as someone else has said, it's a time when women are still interested in you but the army isn't.

6. I Mentioned Organization

At a military base, one of the privates cut his finger. He looked up the sergeant, and said, "Sergeant, I cut my finger. What should I do?" "Well," the sergeant said, "You just go over to the building marked 'Dispensary,' and they'll take care of you." So, he went over and he read, "Dispensary" up on the building, so he went in. He found himself in a big room; nothing at all in the room, just a big room. Two doors were facing him. One said, "Sickness," the other said, "Injuries." Well, he had sense enough to look at his finger and realize that he had an injury there on his finger, so he went through the door thus marked. He found himself in another large room, nothing at all in it; big room -- two doors. One said "Head and Body", the other said "Arms and Legs". He found himself in a third large room, nothing at all in it; big room, two doors. One said "Major", the other, "Minor". He looked at his finger and realized it was simply a minor injury, so he went through the door thus marked, and low and behold, he found himself outside again. He went back to the barracks, and in the course of time, he found the sergeant. The sergeant said, "Private, did you get that finger fixed up?" He said, "No sir, I didn't get that finger fixed up, but boy, are they organized over there!"

7. SPECIALIZATION

We are living in a day of intense specialization. Everything is specialized to the very ultimate today. Matter of fact, some years back Notre Dame was going down south to play SMU in a post season game. Well, one of these enterprising news-sports writers got on the train en route. He'd heard they had a chaplain they carried with them. He thought it might be a colorful story if he could interview the chaplain, so he boarded the train, he looked up the manager, and he said, "I understand you carry a chaplain everywhere you go; every game you play, you take along a chaplain." The coach said, "Yes sir. That's right." The writer said, "I wonder if I might interview him?" Coach said, "Which chaplain do you want, the offensive or the defensive chaplain?" (With college teams shifting back to the two-platoon system this fall, I thought you would want to know how specialized we are really getting to be.)

SPECIALIZATION

Now, you don't go to one doctor today. He invites four other consulting physicians. The reason for that is this doctor doesn't want to share all the blame for your death.

Matter of fact, I was just reading, coming on the plane today, that actually, if our doctors didn't use so many drugs and medicines, we'd all normally get well from our diseases. It's the doctors sometimes that kill us, the specialists. You know what a specialist is: a fellow who knows quite a bit about very little. In the course of time, he learns more and more about less and less, and finally ends up knowing practically everything about absolutely nothing. And we call him a specialist. He's an expert.

9. I Mentioned Communicating Ideas. Let Me Illustrate.

The little girl said, "You know, my boy friend is so intelligent. All he wants to talk about is me."

Who doesn't feel that the best conversationalist in all the world is that person that talks about you. That's communication.

10. COMMUNICATING

Like that couple; they had just been married when the big brawny groom looked down into the brilliant brown eyes of the pretty little thing he'd taken for his bride, and said, "Now that we're married, there are certain things that I've noticed about you that I want to point out." She turned those brilliant brown eyes up at the groom she'd taken as her husband, and said, "Honey, if it weren't for those defects, I could have gotten myself a better husband."

11. COMMUNICATING

Go home and tell your wife, when you get home tonight, that she's an angel. And tell her she's an angel for these three reasons. In the first place, she's always up in the air. Secondly, she's constantly harping on something. And thirdly, she always tells you she has nothing to wear.

But tell her she's an angel. That's communicating.

12. We Are At Times Frustrated.

Like that man who was suspected by his wife of having a few extra-curricular activities. And she was most suspicious of him, and one day he rushed out of the house, just after he had hidden something in a barrel of sawdust. Well, he hadn't any more gotten out of the house when she rushed to the barrel, she pulled out an object, she scraped it off, and not realizing it was a mirror, she looked into it and said, "So that's the old hag he's running around with!"

13. We All Must Be Motivated.

For instance, let me illustrate it in this way. There was a chap who was in a big office building. This was where he worked. It was usually dark before he ever got through with his work in the day. In the pitch black night he would usually make his way across the cemetery. This was a short cut. Otherwise he had about 6 blocks to walk around. And so he just jauntily went on through the path. He knew it step by step. But one night, as he was making his way through the cemetery, he hadn't realized that they'd just dug an open grave across the path. And so, as jauntily he walked along the path, low and behold, he came up to the open grave, and he toppled in. But he struggled, and he scratched and he scrambled to get out, but all to no avail; and finally he just reconciled himself to sitting down in the corner to wait for the dawn and help of a new day. Well, it wasn't too long before an old drunk came reeling along the same path, and he, too, came to the same spot, and he toppled into the grave. Well, he too, struggled, and he scratched, and he scrambled to get out. All of a sudden the chap who was settled over in the corner walked over and he tapped the old drunk on the shoulder, and he said, "You can't get out of here." BUT HE DID!

That's Motivation.

All of these things are the product of a flood of change. Fortunately, we in America are also faced with a flood of opportunity, as President Johnson has dramatized so well in challenging us to the creation of a Great Society in America. We are living at a great moment in the history of our country and our world. You who are just embarking on your service as Farmer Committeemen are coming into the ASCS family at a particularly crucial time.

1. It is a crucial time because the farm programs are more important now than ever before -- not less important as you may have heard some people say.

2. It is a crucial time because we are soon to be charged with carrying out a new legislative program -- a four-year authorization that will continue some of the more successful programs of the past four years and improved programs for other commodities.
3. It is a crucial time because the pressure is on for all of us to do the best possible administrative job. Perhaps never before in the history of the farm programs have this need and this emphasis been so strong.

15. Farm Programs Are More Important Than Ever.

Anyone who thinks that agriculture can just abandon the throttle and let the engine run wildly down the track should take a look at what is happening to crop yields. We are in the middle of a real burst of farm productivity, and the fact that this hasn't flooded us all is a real tribute to the farm programs.

Ten years ago, America's farmers harvested an average of 42 bushels of corn to the acre -- a record at that time. This year's average yield will be almost 30 bushels higher than that. Indicated Iowa corn yield: 83 bushels.

In 1955, wheat growers harvested a record high of just under 20 bushels an acre. Indications point to an average yield of close to 28 bushels an acre this year. And hybrid wheat varieties, which would bring a yield take-off similar to that experienced in corn, are just around the corner.

Sorghum grains will yield a new high this year -- as will oats and barley.

Soybean producers will harvest a near-record average of almost 25 bushels an acre.

Per-acre yields of cotton have gone up a fourth since 1955, and have almost doubled in the last decade and a half.

The extent to which Federal farm programs have enabled farmers to manage such a sudden and tremendous outpouring of abundance -- without swamping the entire economy -- is a development that has had too little understanding and appreciation. This has been accomplished with price support and adjustment programs aimed at a few basic crops, yet the programs have contributed significantly to the stability of perhaps 80 to 90 percent of all agriculture.

JOKE: So, while we have not been able to make use of all of our abundance -- we can still be grateful for it. Like the priest who was visited by a young man a few days before he was to be married. In the course of the conversation, which was serious at first but drifted to lighter topics, the priest commented on the abundance of good-looking young ladies in the parish.

"Father," the young man said, "you surprise me."

"Why?" he asked. "Just because I'm on a diet doesn't mean I can't look at the menu."

16. New Legislation Is On The Way.

So the flood tide of change in agriculture makes programs more important -- makes the Farmer Committeeman's job more important -- makes this a crucial time to be involved in man's most basic business -- agriculture.

It isn't easy to get sound farm programs on the books -- and keep them there -- in a Nation that is growing more citified -- and in a Nation where there is so little unity among farm groups themselves. Believe me, I have learned this the hard way. I keep learning it. I have learned it once again within the past week.

As you know, I have been in agriculture virtually all of my life -- and in farm program work for over thirty years. Four and a half years ago, I moved to Washington to deal with programs and problems in the rarefied atmosphere of the Potomac. And I must say it has been a rewarding experience and in many ways a more difficult and more confusing one than I had ever faced before.

Like the woman who was testifying at a prayer meeting: "I ain't what I ought to be; and I ain't what I'm going to be: but anyway, I ain't what I was."

Anyway, we have a new four-year package of farm legislation on the way. At least, I believe so. It isn't everything we hoped for. We don't know exactly what it will turn out to be in all respects. We do seem likely to have a continuation of the basic programs that are of most interest to the farmers of your State.

-- The feed grain program, for example, will be very little changed.

-- We will have a new Cropland Adjustment Program, which will be a big help to farmers who want to retire or to shift land out of production and who will now be helped to do this so that the loss of crop income is cushioned.

-- (ADD LIB STATUS OF LEGISLATION AS APPROPRIATE AT THE TIME)

17. The Drive For Economy and Efficiency.

Another tide that is running high in ASCS is the move toward improved management and greater efficiency in all of our offices. You have heard a great deal about this ... and will be hearing more about it ... so I won't labor on it now.

You may have heard about the woman whose husband was an efficiency expert in a large office. She was asked: "What does an efficiency expert do?" Her answer was: "Well, if we women did it, they'd call it nagging."

I don't want to nag. Nor does anyone else in the organization. We don't have efficiency experts as such, anyway. What we want is for everyone to become an efficiency expert as regards his own job.

A friend of mine encountered some efficiency recently when his wife gave birth to their first child earlier than expected. The new father was on a trip, and he received the glad tidings in a telegram:

"Hazel gave birth to a little girl this morning; both doing well."

On the message was a sticker reading: "When you want a boy, call Western Union." (Now that's efficiency!)

In ASCS, we're not interested in efficiency for the sake of efficiency. We are interested in efficiency because it means better service to farmers and it means more effective service at less cost. The Government has a great many obligations. Under the leadership of President Johnson, it has a great many aspirations for the welfare and advancement of its citizens. To get as much accomplished as possible, within a given amount of resources, means that we must get the most possible mileage out of every dollar.

18. CONCLUSION.

What I have been saying is that you Committeemen -- new and old -- are serving your neighbors as a part of ASCS at a time when the load is heavy.

When the responsibilities are great.

When affairs in agriculture are at a critical time.

When there is misunderstanding of agriculture and the farm programs among our city friends.

When there is a lack of unity among farmers and farm organizations.

But you are serving your neighbors at a time when this service is very important.

When the ASCS programs are proving their success.

When -- as Secretary Freeman has said -- agriculture is in better shape and better balance than it has been for a decade.

When consumers are benefiting from the farmer's achievements as never before.

When the success of American agriculture is a growing beacon of promise in a world concerned about hunger.

Secretary Freeman has spoken optimistically of the prospects for the twin goals of parity of income for the adequate family farm and parity of opportunity for all of rural America. You are just in time to play an important role in the policies that seek those ends.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men,

Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." (Shakespeare-Julius Caesar)

Thank you for having me with you.



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