

transcript
T. H. H. H.

ADDRESS BY THE HONORABLE HUBERT H. HUMPHREY, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,
AT THE ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE NATIONAL FARMERS UNION HELD IN OKLAHOMA CITY,
OKLAHOMA, ON MONDAY, MARCH 13, 1967.

Thank you very much. Thank you very much my good and dear long-time friends. My goodness, what a wonderful crowd we have here today, Tony. This is just about a nice a thing as could ever happen to a man, particularly if he is Vice President. I didn't know this number of people ever wanted to listen to a Vice President, unless he was Vice President of the Farmers Union. And I've been listening to the Vice President of the Farmers Union for a long, long time. My old friend Ed Christianson back here, he's been telling me what to do.

I have a whole sheet full of notes here and I just poured a glass of water, so I want to tell all you folks - you just lean back now, we're going to have quite a meeting. You knew it before I got up here. Some of our friends down here from the eastern newspapers, they think these speeches ought to be short. I want to tip you off fellows, it's not going to be. It's going to be long, so get used to it, because we've got a lot to talk about.

The National President of the Farmers Union just mentioned that I was from a small town out in South Dakota, and that's a fact. Where I grew up, was a boy. And interesting enough, the general in charge of the Tinker Air Force Base out here, where I just had a lunch, is another Doland, South Dakota, boy, and we went to high school at the same time. And his name is General Melvin McNickle. So we South Dakota boys are just running things around here right now for a moment. I wouldn't be a bit surprised but what Tony was in South Dakota some time or other. I don't see how he could have succeeded as well as he has without being there. Except that he got a Minnesotan along with him. Well you're going to have a great program and you've already had quite a gathering. I think I've shaken hands with a substantial portion of audience, met your children, had a wonderful visit with many of you. Last evening, for those of you that were not in on the meeting, all of these state presidents that are here on the platform, met, had a meeting and invited me to come on in, and we had a good couple of hours, it might have been a little longer than that, of cussing and discussing all of the things that we needed to discuss. And it was a give and take meeting where I learned a great deal from your leaders and where I hope I was able to give some words of assurance and, at least, of understanding to them.

You're going to have a tremendous program and you already have had. Just before I came to this platform I received a telephone call from Washington, D. C., from an old friend of yours wanted to be remembered. And, when the operator

(more)

gave the call to me, she said the White House is calling. Well, you just know the White House doesn't talk. It has to be somebody in the White House that's calling. And the message came through and it was to you, Tony, from the President of the United States, President Johnson. He said, "Will you convey to President Tony Dechant and to the officers and the members of National Farmers Union the sincere, friendly, warm greetings of the President of the United States, rancher from Johnson City, Texas?"

I've been looking over your program and I see my old friend Bill Thatcher is going to come up here and talk to you. And I am delighted that he is going to be able, I hope he is going to be able to make this meeting. I gather he is scheduled to do so. I trust that you will give very serious attention to his proposal for a National Agricultural Relations Act. At least discuss it, because I know he is deeply committed to it. I know that our distinguished fellow Minnesotan, who has worked his heart out in the most thankless job in the Cabinet, the job of Secretary of Agriculture, Orville Freeman, is going to be here. And I hope you will give Orville a very good reception. Because believe me, he is one of your friends. I know that you are going to have a gentleman here that has carried the legislative fight for you in the councils of government in the Senate of the United States, my next door neighbor, one of the best friends I ever had or ever will have. One of the greatest Senators I think that serves in the Congress of the United States, Senator George McGovern, is going to be here.

And you have on this platform, you have on this platform, one of the most articulate and effective and determined and able spokesmen for rural America and indeed, for all Americans, but particularly for rural Americans, that any state ever sent to the United States Senate. And how lucky the people of Oklahoma are to have Fred Harris in the United States Senate. And he has a good partner, too. Don't forget it, Mike Monroney. He's on your side too.

And you're going to have another Senator here. And I want to tell you that the fact that he is coming here has interested so many people. I've been going to these meetings and never could get this many to come and listen. And I went to my friend Bob Kennedy and I said....."Listen, let's just put the Farmers Union convention on the map. Why don't you come down and I'll come down. And you know everybody thinks maybe we're going to disagree. Well, I'm going to let you in on a secret. He's for you and so am I. We're both for you. And I know you're going to give him a wonderful reception. And he'll give you a fine and very intelligent and thoughtfull message. You are going to have a great, great opportunity and a great experience here.

(more)

Roger Blobaum is sort of a refugee from Washington these days. He's out there in Denver with Tony and Glenn and others out there. And I just want to say about my friend Roger Blobaum who worked for Senator Gaylord Nelson, who has been one of my long-time friends, that when I saw the National Farmers Union engaged this young man's services, I said well this another one of the great turning points in the history of the National Farmers Union. And I want to salute Roger from this platform. I want to thank him for what he's done for you, what he's done for his country, what he's done for me and what I know he is going to do for you because he deserves that kind of help and praise. Now he's not one of your elected officers, he's one of those you hire. Frankly, you're underpaying him and he's giving you a mighty good lot of work for what you're paying him for.

By the way, is Mrs. Harris, where's my friend LaDonna? Well let me tell you what made, let me tell you who makes Fred Harris good. There's LaDonna Harris right over there. Oh that was great when they sent the Harris' to Washington.

I wanted to talk to you a little bit about, about your program and about the relationships of this government of yours to your program. I've been going to Farmers Union conventions ever since the 1940's. I think I've gone..... that's when I was Mayor of Minneapolis and even before. I think I've been to almost as many Farmers Union conventions as Ed Christianson, Tony Dechant, or Glen Talbott, or any other of these fellows up here on the platform. Whenever there was one available, I went to it. I haven't missed a Farmers Union GTA meeting since 1949. And that's a fact - out in St. Paul. And I want to tell you that I've always gone away feeling a little better. I'm not sure that the folks that heard me felt better, but I felt better by the fact that I went out there. And in my office - and if you come to Washington, D. C., and many of you have been there. You come to the office of the Vice President, you'll see that I proudly display in that office the award for outstanding service to agriculture that you gave me two years ago. Now your standards weren't as high then, you were kind of weak in them, they included me in. But you gave me the award and I go around telling everybody I deserved it. And I want to thank you for it very, very much.

Now I hope that you are goind to remember to reward your friends as you rewarded me. Old Samuel Gompers, the great old labor leader in the early days of the AFL, he said, "Reward your enem.....your friends and punish your enemies." Now I'm not a negative sort of fellow. I don't want you to go around punishing anybody. But don't forget your friends. Don't forget your friends. Don't forget George

McGovern, for example. I just want to mention that right here. You folks from out there in Dakota. And you can do it all over the country. No, don't forget Mike Monroney. Don't forget these people that have been your friends, that have gone down the line for you in agriculture.

You know my Dad was a great inspiration in my life. I talk about him practically every place I go. He was a wonderful human being, kind of a country philosopher, and he was always a great pal to me. I remember one time, speaking about rewarding your friends in politics and I was really talking politics then. I want you to get the idea of what I'm talking about you know. I remember one time when I was a boy I got sassy with my mother and my father called me aside. He always demanded one thing from his sons and that was respect for mother. And he said, "I just wanted to tell you something young fellow," he said, "The person you have been sassing happens, the person you have been sassing is my wife and my sweetheart. She just happens to be your mother. And I - I want you to treat her with respect. Your mother is a wonderous, marvelous woman. She has only one weakness or one limitation that I am aware of. She's politically unreliable."

'Cause Dad always used to think that Mom occassionally voted Republican and that was bad in our family you know. And frankly, she did. Dad knew what was going on alright. But I want you, regardless of party, I want you to remember who your friends are. Because, my farm neighbors and farm friends, you need friends. And you need staunch friends in the Congress of the United States. And don't you ever forget it. You can forgive a man for many minor transgressions but you had better take a look at what he does for this country and what he does for rural America. And you chalk it up and then when the time comes and I'm not talking partisan politics, I'm talking about your interests. I'm talking about rural America's interest. You go and try to help him. Well now....that's right, you betcha. Now if any of you think I'm here today to tell you how well off you are, you're wrong. I didn't come here with that message. If you are well off, I don't need to tell you and if you're not, you wouldn't want me to tell you.

I know what you're concerned about because we spent a couple of hours last night talking about that concern. You're concerned about farm prices. You're concerned about credit. And you're concerned about income assurances when you're

(more)

asked to produce more. These are just a few of the things you are concerned about. Unless you think this is unique to you, let me tell you.....I'm concerned about these things, and the President is concerned about these things. And I want to talk to you about all of these things. We have a tremendous job of public relations, my fellow Americans. It's mighty difficult to get the large urban centers and people who live in them to understand your problems. And one of the things that I've tried to do as your Vice President and I am your Vice President, as well as other's, is to carry one message where ever I go.....the importance of the American family farmer and the American family farm system and American agriculture to this whole country. And I'm going to talk to you about it.

Farm people - their problems, their setbacks, and their future, and their importance to freedom in this world have been the concern of President Johnson and Vice President Humphrey for many years, and we haven't changed. We've both seen farm depressions. First job your president every had, he got \$50 a month teaching in a little Mexican-American school. I want to tell you that he was overpaid compared to what I got on my first job. We've seen depressions and we've seen huge farm surplusses build up, low farm prices, and the heavy migration of our farm people to our over-crowded cities. We've seen more than enough of all of this. And I know that in talking to your leaders that you have serious misgivings about producing a lot more wheat and feed grains because of the possibility of over-production and low prices. You went through this before and, you know, after you've been burned once you don't have to be very smart not to want to get it twice. And your administration, the Johnson-Humphrey Administration, I put my name in there now because my friend Everett Dirksen said, "Let's include Hubert in too." So,..... Well this administration is keenly aware of this price and this income problem. Now we want enough production to meet requirements both here and overseas including reasonable reserves, but we want this, and I am here to tell you that we want to assure you of this with fair prices. And I repeat, fair prices. And fair prices means a price on which you can make a profit otherwise it is not fair. And we just as well understand that.

Now government programs, government farm programs, are every bit as essential today as they ever were. We don't want to throw these programs out the window, simply because some of the conditions have changed. We want to build these programs. The voluntary feed program for example. Now that's been a good one. That's been a real success and we had a real battle a couple of years ago to hold it. About one and one-half million farms have been signed up every year since 1961 and with this program we have been able, together - farmers and government,

(more)

to increase the farmers' feed grain income, increase the exports, reduce the price-destroying effects of the heavy surpluses we inherited. Now no one knows what the weather will do this year to this year's winter wheat crop or, indeed, the spring wheat. This is just one thing that they haven't been able to work out on the computer. I lived through enough years of drought to know that when them hot winds start to blow, when you haven't had any rain in these plains, I can just feel it coming and you know that all you have to do is go through it. We don't know what the weather's going to be like, particularly here in Oklahoma, and in Texas, or in Kansas, just to mention three states. And I think I know how worried George Stone, Jay Naman, Bill Daniels and others are must be over the effects of a dry winter on the wheat crop. With an indicated 400 million bushel carry-over on July 1, 1967, that's just around the corner, which is 200 million bushels less than the desired reserve or level, I am sure there will be a real need for a higher 1967 wheat crop both at home and abroad. And let me tell you my dear friends, that a good wheat crop is more important to the safety and security of this country than almost anything you can think of.

If I could get as many of our friends who write lead articles, concerned about the wheat crop as they do about balance of payments, which most of us don't understand anyhow, why we'd be able to get our message to the American people. Ever since the early 1950's we've needed better prices so farmers could earn enough to generate their own capital requirements. Now this must be accomplished and this is one of the goals I want to talk to you about, what I've talked to your President about. What we're going to have something more to say about - this year. We have to be able to have income so that you can generate your own capital. Or the family farm system which is the efficient base of our agriculture will neither survive nor prosper. Let me make something clear right from this platform for one and for all and I want this message to go to New York and to Los Angeles, to Seattle and down to Miami, and Chicago and Detroit and Minneapolis and Tulsa and Houston and Dallas too. I want it to cover the whole business. Good farm prices are good for America. Good for American business, good for American labor, good for the American economy, and good for the American consumer. That's what good farm prices mean. Or to put it another way, poor farm prices are disastrous to everyone.

Now last year the American consumer, and we talk a great deal about our consuming friends and we're all consumers - you're consumers too. You'd think that somehow or other that's a special breed. Everybody's a consumer.

(more)

Last year the American consumer needed only eighteen cents of his pay, out of each dollar that he received, for food. Now that's the lowest percentage of payment out of income for food of any consumer in the world. So when people start complaining about that they are paying too much, let me just say this, whatever they are paying, nobody else is getting as good a deal. And I'm not here to level any blame on anybody, I know everybody keeps looking for a scape-goat if the eggs go up, or the oatmeal goes up, or something else goes up. I'm just simply saying that most of the people that complain about that just paid an extra quarter for a martini. And they have.

That is the professionals that complain. Yet the people responsible for this bargain, this food bargain, have in fact been left behind the rest of our nation. Now let's just put the case on the table. Farmers are hit year after year with higher production costs, higher living costs, higher interest costs, boy and how high. Higher machinery costs. Production costs alone last year were up $2\frac{1}{2}$ billion dollars. These are the reasons that farmers are worried about farm prices. And I think the whole nation needs to know why you're worried. And that's why the Vice President of the United States is here in the hopes that by my presence, as your Vice President, we can get this out of any narrow state interest, any narrow little production or commodity interest. I want you to know that your government is concerned. I want you to know that this nation ought to be concerned and I want the people of America to know what our farm producers in the main are having to go through these days in terms of income and price.

It not only costs more to do business in the city, and it does, it costs more to do business on the farm. And if a worker is entitled to a better wage because of the increase in the cost of living or increased productivity, and he is. I happen to believe, you know, in trade unions. I don't travel under false colors. I've told farm friends all over America that the best friend you have is a well-paid worker. You don't sell any more pork chops to some of those folks who have a million dollars than you sell to a worker who has \$8,000. In fact if he has a million dollars he buys stomach tablets in Humphrey's Drug Store.

Your a customer, you're real customers add purchasing power of the average American family. So when a worker, an automobile worker or somebody else gets a good pat....gets good pay envelope, don't you complain. You just tell him to join you, just to help you a little bit.

(more)

Now the profits of industry are up, up 36 percent in the last three years. And who can deny the farmer a better price for his products? And I submit, a price that is not only a better price, but a price that permits him to make a profit. A price that makes his farm....farming a rewarding way of life and not a national sacrifice.

I must tell you that I believe that farm income with the government payments and all is better, of course, than it was in 1961. I hope that we have made it a little better or we have sure been spinning our wheels. But I also want to make quite clear it's not good enough. And I speak not only for myself, I speak the concern of your government. And therefor I come here to tell you that we must and we will do better. Now the natural market forces are going to help us somewhat. They'll help us do better. With most of our surpluses gone, the market is today more responsive to supply and demand than any time in the last thirty years. And strong world demand, and it will continue both in commercial markets and in countries receiving food aid, means a good long-term farm income outlook. Certainly demand is increasing here at home, if only because of increased population. But it is also increasing because of income. And it is increasing in other developing nations. But there is a far greater demand in the under-developed nations. A demand that will continue to grow for the foreseeable future.

World population is growing so fast that we have the equivalent of one new India with 500 million people every seven years. And the increase is the greatest in the countries that are the hungriest. Need I not.....I don't think I need to tell you that we cannot afford in this day and age to let people starve. It just can't be done, either morally or politically. Because if there is any one sure source of war and trouble it is poverty, want.....poverty, want, and hunger. Where there is constant want there is no peace.

President Johnson said just a few weeks past, the time is not far off when all of the combined production of all the acres of all of the agriculturally productive nations will not meet the food needs of the developing nations, unless present trends are changed. Now that's the setting in which we must survey the future, what I've said to you. And it is the setting in which we must formulate new national farm policies. And when I say new national farm policies I don't mean you scuttle what you have. I mean you build on what you have. It's sort of like the way Mrs. Humphrey got me to build our house. It's a series of enclosed patios and porches. You start out with the basic structure which she tells you it costs only a little bit and then you add a porch, and then you put on a screened porch, and then you enclose it. And that's what I mean....you don't tear down the

(more)

house, you keep on building. By the way I think I want to tell you that what a nice compliment Mrs. Humphrey gave me the other day. We moved you know. We moved into a nice apartment. I already had that one house paid for. It's the only house I ever had paid for in my whole life. I thought that was my greatest accomplishment. But she just feels that I guess I just have all kinds of vitality. Young at heart at least. So we moved on into this beautiful new apartment, and I signed up.... its a cooperative apartment....you have to buy it. When she came around with the papers with that real estate man I signed down there and I noticed that it was a thirty year mortgage. Isn't that a compliment for a fellow my age? Just makes you feel good to know that your wife has that much faith in you.

Well now I said that we'd laid the predicet, so to speak, of the situation as it is. With this year's production expansion is aimed at meeting our growing domestic needs. It's aimed at meeting the requirements of expanding commercial markets. And they're going to expand. And a food aid programs, the overseas program, and it's still having enough left for our own strategic reserve.

You know, my fellow Americans, city and rural, someday we're going to have a bad crop. It is an inevitable as the rising of the sun in the east and the setting in the west. Someday it's going to happen. If we have a bad wheat crop this year and a bad feed grain crop this year, may God bless us because it'll be a major disaster. We're depending on all the breaks this year. The increase in animal population, the increase in demand for food products, lowering of our reserves, the fact that we have used up our surpluses for all practical purposes, we're just depending upon the efficiency of agriculture and the love of God Almighty to pull us through. That's what we're depending on.

This is why I say that we need to have reasonable working stocks as a minimum for normal business operations. And we need a little extra for emergencies. I know that you support National food reserves. We've worked together on this for years. I've taken your resolutions, I've brought them into committees in Congress. I've been your spokesman many times on the floor of the Senate. I know that you're for national food reserves as I am provided that they are insulated from the market. And that's a reasonable position. And that's a reasonable position, and I support it. And I speak for your government. We can't have large food reserves hanging over the market with a constant threat to the price structure. We went through that once. You see, when you've been in this business a little while, even on the legislative side, you begin to understand, to know the difference between a ukulele and a corn cob.

Now we took a step last December, we took a step last December, in boosting prices for the Commodity Credit Corporation sales of government-held

stocks. This is a very intricate business, all of this legislative program. This is why many people get lost, you know, in it. These prices are now directly tied to carry-over levels. The lower carry-over levels mean higher resale prices of grain in government hands. The government can't sell its grain now for less than 115 percent of loan value plus carrying charges. You fought for this. I fought for this. We were both right. And finally we convinced some other folks that we were right. We got it.....115 percent. That was quite a battle. Boy, did that mean something to market prices. In increasing these sales prices, we changed the whole level of agricultural pricing. We took the Commodity Credit Corporation out of business of competing with farmers. And believe me, you ought not to have a corporation that has 15 or 14 million dollars assets competing with a farmer from Wright County in Minnesota. It just ain't fair, as they say.

No, it isn't fair. We want market prices substantially above loan levels. Let me just repeat it. We want market prices substantially above loan levels. Loans should be a floor, not a ceiling. And the Commodity Credit Corporation shouldn't be used to depress prices. It should be used to bolster prices. That's what it's there for.

We need a common sense level of set-aside reserves, clearly insulated from the market, understood by the public in Brooklyn, and in Edina, Minnesota. In Oklahoma City and in Milwaukee. Understood by the public that these are reserves. Just like you have your reserves in the army. Or like you have reserves in your balance of payments at Fort Knox, Kentucky. And they're not surpluses. We need, now, more than ever before, your continuing help in this program because I want you to know that, quite frankly, I told your state presidents last night I... we just had a real, real sort of mutual confessional. And I said....look, let's face it, the farm population of this country represents a small segment of the total population. We have got to talk to all the people. We have to have programs that are sensible to all the people. We simply have to be able to convince somebody that's never even visited a farm. We have to convince somebody that thinks that milk really comes in bottles and not out of cows. We've got to convince them that this program is right. And that's our job. That's what you call a public relations job.

(more)

Now just a word about the Food for Peace Program. I think you know that I have spent many years on this program. I am happy to tell you and you know that I was one of its authors. I want to thank you again for the loyal support that you have given this program. Food for Peace has been, continues to be a major constructive force. It's one of your programs. I first talked about Food for Peace program in 1951 at the Farmers Union GTA in St. Paul. That's when we first outlined it. I have a copy of that address. Since 1954 it has accounted for over 15 million dollars in exports of farm products. It has saved hundreds of millions of lives. This is a real moral program as well as an economic program. In some one hundred countries or more we've helped through Food for Peace are now commercial markets for our farm products. And they are dollar markets. The program deserves credit for much of the recent increase in farm exports. It wasn't only good humanitarianism, it was good economics. Let no one underestimate the humanitarian goals of our food and technical assistance in meeting the challenge of world hunger.

We are going to save more lives in India this year.....now get this.... we are going to save more lives in India this year, as a result of American food aid, than the total populations of North and South Veitnam. We'll save more lives. Now I wish I could get people excited about that.

President Johnson is showing effective leadership in insisting that the food abundance of our food abundance and technical know how shall be used to help food-short nations help themselves. This is now our policy. We'll help them. We ask them to help themselves. And we are asking other developed nations, other nations with money, with know-how and resources to pitch in. This isn't something that we Americans can do alone, because every taxpayer has to pay for this.

This administration is also promoting farm exports in commercial markets. No other nation can even touch us in terms of farm efficiency. And I think we must take full advantage of this edge in world trade. Agricultural exports last year reached a new high of nearly 7 billion dollars. More than 5 billion of this was in dollars. Straight outright commercial transactions. And it was a major constructive contribution to our balance of payments problem. So Mr. and Mrs. Farmer, when you walk out of this auditorium today, you just go out and the first person you meet particularly if he's somebody who wants to talk about balance of payments....say, "What have you done for it lately?" Because the farmers of America have done more for the balance of payments problem, and that's the gold reserve problem of this government than any other single segment of the American economy, through our farm exports.

(more)

Now we think these exports ought to go higher. And we're trying to get them higher at what we call the Trade Negotiations, the Kennedy Round, to open up Western Europe. And I submit they could go substantially higher if President Johnson's proposals for increased east-west trade were adopted. Now what does that mean? That simply means being willing to sell in other markets. A whole new generation of foreign markets is looking to us for food requirements. And we ought to wake up to the opportunity. The American farmer should share in the hard currency markets created through trade with the Soviet Union and eastern Europe. It's good international policy. It's good economics. And it makes sense.

An old friend of mine out in South Dakota said he was for selling the Russians anything they couldn't shoot back. And isn't it kind of ridiculous my friends, isn't it kind of ridiculous that there is such emotion in this country that we deny ourselves a good market when our neighbors to the north, Canada, use that market? When our neighbors to the south, the Argentine, use that market? When every other country in the world uses that market? And yet, because of some emotionalism in this country and a hangover from World War II and the Cold War period, we deny the American farmer a chance to make an honest living and a good living by closing off a vast market in East Europe and the Soviet Union for foodstuffs? It's ridiculous.

So put some pressure on the Congress. We have an East-West Trade Bill up there. We need a little help. Food sales are not only good economics they promote peace and understanding. You don't make anybody mad selling them something to eat. And why deny the American farmer that market? All in the name of anti-communism when it is our national policy, is it not, to build bridges of understanding and peaceful trade to that part of the world?

Now a word about farm credit. I want to talk to you about production expansion. That's what we're talking about. We're talking about greater efficiency in agriculture. We're talking about adopting all the latest technological advances. About higher net farm income. But to accomplish any of this we must provide financing with terms and interest levels that farmers can handle. And we are going to see that it is done. The entire, I think I should tell you and I am privileged to tell you, that our whole farm credit financing operation is now under review. I had a little talk with Tony and with Ed Christianson here when I came today. I am not at liberty to give you all of the details. I can simply tell you this. We know that it costs more to farm today than it used to. We know that the credit is tight. We know that the interest rates are high. We

know that we need you to plow up some more acres. We know that that is going to require some more equipment and some more supplies. And we know that we can't expect you, as farmers, to do what your government asks you to do in the name of national security if you don't have farm credit at reasonable terms. And I'm here to tell you that you got to have it and we're going to get it for you.

The total investment in agriculture is 250 billion dollars. That's equal to three-fourths of all the assets of American corporations. This is a tremendous burden for an industry that has a low profit history for the past 15 years. So we're going to do a lot better job. We must do a better job. I'm going to work with your officers to see that we do a better job. Adequate farm credit on reasonable terms is the lifeline in a free enterprise agriculture. It's just that simple. It's not in the interest of consumers nor is it in the interest of national policy to have American agriculture starved so that the control passes to non-farm operators. The incentive for efficient production and ingenuity and efficiency of the family farm is a precious national asset that we must protect. We intend to do so. So we're not standing still. Your government is fully aware of what your officers have been talking to us about and I think that our meeting last night will be exceedingly helpful in seeing that these things move along.

But once again I must come to you and tell you there are more members of Congress from one large city than there are from twelve agricultural states, in the House of Representatives. You've got to be able to tell this story in a way that is appealing to those people. They're fair. A Congressman whether he comes from Brooklyn or whether he comes from out here in Oklahoma or up there in Beadle County, South Dakota. He wants to be fair. He doesn't always get all the evidence. He doesn't get the whole story. And sometimes we spend our time talking to each other. Get acquainted with your city cousins. Quick. Get acquainted with the Congressman who happens to come from an area where there are no farms. Soon. Because when farm bills come up in Congress they don't say...."All those who come from areas that are rural will be entitled to vote on this measure and all of those who come from areas like Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Chicago and Detroit will not be entitled to vote." They don't do that at all. They vote 'em all. And I repeat, I am not being critical of a single member of the Congress. I submit that members of Congress are fair-minded men if they get the information. And our job is one of communication. And it isn't just communication from the President to the Congress because Lincoln was right. This is a government of the people, by the people and for the people. This isn't a government of the President,

(more)

by the President, and for the President and it isn't a government of the Farmers Union, by the Farmers Union and for the Farmers Union. It's by the people. We have to get to them all. We need to take our message to them.

Now the world marvels at the strength and productivity of American agriculture. It is incredible. It's increased more than 150.....100 percent in fifteen years. We have powerful weapons. So do other nations. We have atom bombs. So do other nations. We have missiles. So do others. We have science and technology and so do others. We have large resources of capital and so do others. But your America has all of this and it has the extra measure that flows from an abundance of food and fibre which comes from the most successful social, economic system ever devised by the mind of man. Free enterprise, independent family farms, the family farmer and his free independent cooperative. Now let me just put it another way because it always gets better if you put it another way. Imagine what Mr. Kruchev would have done had he had all the food and fiber we had in the 1950's. He'd still be running things. Imagine if you please what communist China would have been able to do in the past, would be able to do today if they had our vast abundance of food and fiber. And imagine what we wouldn't have been able to do if we had been as striped as they were, of food and fiber. If we see things in these terms, and I think I'm not exaggerating when I put it in these terms, that how can anyone.....how can anyone ever permit anything to weaken our agricultural economy? I think you know that your President and Vice President know the importance of agriculture. We come from rural people. We come from rural America. We both lived through a farm depression and we've seen the farmer victimized by burdensome surpluses and deliberate, not accidental, deliberate economic policies that were unfair and unjust. And I come here today as your Vice President with a promise and a pledge. A promise of enduring true friendship and a pledge of an honest deal for every farmer in this land and every farm producer.

I come here to tell you that we will examine every policy of this government to assure you that the farmer receives a fair share of the national prosperity. And I'll tell you why. Because he's earned it. And this is no special favor to you. Because he deserves it. And because he's earned it and deserves it he'll get it. The gap between farm income and income in other parts of our economy. The prosperity gap must be closed. It must be eliminated

(more)

or we are going to lose our farmers. We are going to lose our family farmers. Your sons and daughters aren't going to stay on those farms. We are going to find American agriculture corporatized. Absentee owners. Non-farm operators. I'll tell you what we seek. We are seeking a stronger and a finer, better rural America. And I think we need some ideals, my dear friends. We don't just want to talk price. One in which young men and women can pursue the careers of their choice. Make a good living on their farms if they want to, right there in their home area. In their home district. We want a better America, one in which educational and health and cultural facilities in rural America are as good as they are in the best of the cities. Why not? They ought to be. As a matter of fact you've got something going for you anyway. At least you can breath fresh air, most of the time.

We want an America in which rural and urban people alike can replenish their spirits and bodies through recreation. And one in which all that is beautiful in rural America is developed and preserved. We want a rural America in which young people and old people alike can live in opportunity, real opportunity and security and happiness. That's what we mean by eliminating the so called prosperity gap. And these are not goals beyond our reach. My fellow Americans, any nation that has the ability and the willingness to put enough money on the job and enough men to put a man on the moon, and we will. It will be done very shortly. We'll make the necessary investment to do it. I think that same nation ought to have the willingness and the resources to help put a man on his feet right here on earth.

Now I've kept you a long time and I just want to conclude on a note that the international responsibility. We're all burdened and torn today by the war and threats of war. I look over this audience I know there are mothers and fathers who have their sons in far away places. Some of you in places where their lives are in danger. Some of your sons are in places where it is fortunately more secure. The business of your government in these post war years has been the business of organizing the peace. And it's a difficult business in this kind of world. A world in transition, a world in violent change, a world of violently contested ideologies. The main business, even as it sometimes seems to be clouded by current events is to organize peace. Now most of the people in this world live in rural areas. The late beloved Pope John XXIII told us that where there is constant want, as I said a while ago, there is no peace. And the single greatest threat to peace in this world today is want, and poverty, just as it is in America. The threat to tranquility, the threat to peace in our streets is want and poverty, hatred and bitterness that comes from want and poverty. Surely

we ought to do everything we can to get an America that is law abiding, law observing, in which there is peace and justice and tranquility. This is the least we can do to set an example for the rest of the world. So what's going on in all the world today is not just a war. That's what gets the headlines and naturally so because it is more dramatic. But there are other things that go on and I don't want to take your time now. I've been talking to others about this and you've heard me many times. Not going to take the time about the military operation or the differences of view. I think that the President is getting the best advice this country has to offer. I think that he's doing the best that he knows how to do. I happen to think that the people who advise the President possibly know more about it than some of his critics.

And I happen to know as the Lord God is my judge that there is no man in America that wants peace any more than the President of the United States. I know that. But I also know that wanting it doesn't necessarily bring it. I know that it takes more than one to want peace. It takes more than one to settle a fight.

Let me say a few words about another war that's going on. The war to build a nation. Because what's the purpose of America, even in Veitnam, it's not merely to prevent the success of aggression and promote self-determination. But it is also to help build a nation. We're nation builders. We build a lot of nations, America has, we've helped people build nations. We built a great one here and it wasn't always as good as this. You know that our government changed its capitol eleven times in the first twelve years of our national independence? You didn't know that did you? We weren't always looking around as though we had perfume, and deodorant and nylons. We also were once a rather rural, primitive people that didn't have all the niceties of life. We had a few traitors too. We had cessionists as early as 1815. We had a war between the states in the 1860's. We had a chief of staff in the United States Army who, in the early 1800's, that was in pay of the Spanish King. We've had a few characters of our own. And we've had our troubles. And we also had 1/3 of the people of the United States when we were fighting for our independence who were on the side of King George. Don't forget that. And remember this, we would never have gotten our independence had not the French sent their fleet and sent their men so that we could have a decisive battle at Yorktown and finally beat the British and gain our independence. Don't forget that. We too got some help once.

(more)

And I imagine there were a few folks who said what are the Frenchmen doing over here? But all I can say is thank goodness that they arrived on time, or old Cornwallis might have been the fellow we were saluting instead of George Washington.

The struggle in Veitnam in the last analysis will be won or lost in the countryside. This is not just a military struggle. There is no power on the face of the earth that can beat us militarily. Let me tell you here that the finest forces this nation has ever put in the field, the finest troops, the most uncomplaining forces, the forces that know exactly what they're fighting for are in battle today in Veitnam. They are the best that this nation has ever put into the field. They are the best fed, best equipped, and the best trained, and they have the best hospital and medical care of any military forces that the American Republic has ever put to battle. But this struggle in Veitnam is not military alone. It's political. It's economic and it is diplomatic and we have to win and proceed on four fronts, not just one. We can win every battle militarily and still not have a victory. Or you can win every battle economically and still not have a victory. You have to win on all fronts.

And believe it or not, one of the real struggles today that needs to be won is in rural Veitnam. Militarily we defeat the enemy every time we come in contact. We demolish them. But the struggle is, how do you build a nation, how do you help build a nation? And be patient with them. A thousand years of Mandarin rule, a hundred years of French colonialism, twenty-seven years of constant war has had the people of Veitnam. No wonder they have troubles. No wonder there is confusion. But we're there. Eighty-five percent of the people in Veitnam live or work in rural areas. And the struggle in Veitnam will be won when the Veitnamese peasant becomes convinced that his government offers him and his children a better future than communism. That's when that struggle is going to be won.

That struggle will be won when that peasant ceases to think of himself as a peasant eeking out a bare existence by back-breaking toil and deprived of all human dignity. It will be won when he comes to think of himself as a farmer and that, fortunately, is happening now. And it's not just because of our aid, seed and fertilizer, pesticides and money. It's because of the fine people that we have out there. Good rural Americans like yourselves. They're out there in every part of Veitnam and there are twenty some countries that are there doing it with them. Helping us. And they're at work and when I say that these civilians are at work, let me tell you that I've seen them. They're at work under great pain and sacrifice and danger. Unarmed. They're out there working with the peasantry of Veitnam so that the peasantry of Veitnam can be what you are....a self-respecting,

dignified human being and farmer standing on his own two feet when this struggle is all over. I've met and talked with these people. I noticed that many of the critics of our policy out there have never got any further.....closer to it than Los Angeles. And it does get a little smoggy out in Los Angeles. Despite the discomfort, despite the disease, despite the ever-present danger, these same people tell me that it is a rewarding experience. The Veitnamese people are a vigorous, vital, alert and eager to learn. There is very little apathy among them. There is little or no resistance to new ideas. They'd all be good members of the Farmers Union. I suggest you go over and organize a few of them too.

And they're learning, they're learning rapidly. They're putting what they've learned to use. And the results show it. Listen to this. Rice is the basic crop in Veitnam counting for 4/5's of the cultivated land. As recently as up to five years ago, up to 600 varieties were grown. Many of them were mediocre or downright poor. These have all been screened now, screened out, and a few dozen superior varieties identified and over 20,000 tons of this improved seed are being distributed every year and planted and rice production is going up and up and up despite the war. You know who's doing it? People from your country out of the farm cooperatives, out of the Farmers Union, out of the Department of Agriculture, the Peace Corps boys and girls would be doing it if it were a peaceful country. But the International Volunteer Service is doing it. Some thirty new varieties of vegetables, sugar cane, root crops, grains, foods, are being grown. And they're providing from 20 to 100 percent more productive. They're proving to be 20 to 100 percent more productive than the old varieties. Within four years the application of fertilizer has amounted to over 250 thousand tons annually. And there are still complaints among the farmers that the supply is falling behind the demand. Pesticides, literally unknown a few years ago are being used by half a million farmers. Some thirty thousand sprayers are being rotated around amongst the farmers and many of them have bought their own. Why is it we don't see on these television cameras a sprayer once in a while? When you have a picture in your living room about this war? Wouldn't that be interesting? Why don't we see the other side of the war? Why is it that all we have to see is the killing? Why don't we see them building the schoolhouses? And the public health institutions, the hospitals? Why don't we see what our boys are doing even in the Armed Forces to educate, to distribute books, to build schools and to teach? I think that's a dramatic story. New breeds of hogs have been introduced. The scrawny, sway-backed hog of former times is on the way out.

(more)

I went out there and saw some of these hogs, you know, and I even gave them the old yell. You know the old call. That got on CBS. You ought to heard...you ought to see all the letters I got saying that was undignified for the Vice President. Well I don't think it's undignified for anybody to call hogs, especially when they're better hogs than they used to have. As a result hog production is now running at three million, six hundred thousand annually. Double over three years ago. Despite the war. And the average hog going to market. Ed, you've always been talking to me about hogs, weighs 220 pounds of good solid meat instead of 130 pounds of scrawny hide and poor fat. That's what we've done out there with our technicians.

In every province they are already farmers who are raising thoroughbred piglets and chicks for sale to their neighbors. Improved poultry is catching on rapidly. And the brisk market for meat and eggs. Thousands of farm demonstrations are being carried on each year. Popularized the fertilizer and improved crops.

Some people ask what will happen when it is all over and peace is restored? And peace will come here. And that's the day that we need to be prepared for. Will the tempo of progress be maintained? Will it be stopped? Or will it increase? I think it will not only be maintained but it will be increased because the people have tasted modern science and modern farming. They have sensed what it means to have some technical assistance. The agriculture experiment stations. They know what it means. And their government and their farm institutions are better organized and maintained and step up agricultural progress. Veitnamese farmers in increasing numbers are joining together to help themselves. Listen to this report. There are over 20,000 farm youngsters in Veitnam today in 700 4-H Clubs. Two years ago there were none. None. You know who did that? You folks. Your marines. You know that we have marines organizing 4-H clubs? They fight all day and they help children at night and families. There are 60 district farmers organizations and 250 farmer-fisherman's cooperatives that have been organized in the last 2½ years. You know who did that? Your people, working with the AID program under the Humphrey Amendment that we celebrated the other day in Washington, D. C., which passed only five years ago. Agricultural credit associations which have extended loans to thousands of farmers and will continue to do so. The first rural electric cooperative has just been opened. I was out with Clyde Ellis at NRECA with some of you folks right here out to San Francisco. The first rural electric. Only 90 families are on that line. Well, that's not unusual. Remember when you had one like that? Wasn't long ago. By the end of this year there will be 12,000 farm families and the goal is 250,000 farm families. And you know who did it? The rural electric cooperative leaders

of the United States of America. Farmers just like yourselves.

And my dear friends, with all of this very shortly there will be free elections in the villages and the districts. They'll elect their mayor and city councilman and others. And they'll do it under the threat of assassination. You know in the last election here in the United States, I don't want to go into the results because they weren't very pleasing to me, frankly, but in the last election here in the United States we didn't get sixty percent of the vote out. And we spent millions. We sent cars to pick up the voters. We almost bribed them to come. Come have lunch. Come have coffee. Come vote. In Veitnam they had an election within the same period of time a constituent assembly. A free election. And so free that 400 of our own reporters went to cover it. And frankly they found more election indesgressions in Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Chicago and Oklahoma than they did out there in Veitnam. And over 80 percent, over 80 percent of the people of Veitnam cast their vote. Eighty percent of those 21 years of age and over went to the ballot box and voted. Even though some of them were shot down in cold blood. Why? They want freedom.

Why are they organizing these cooperatives? Because they want freedom. Why have a million refugees come to the south. Because they want freedom. Why is it they're asking today from this government to send more and more people to help them build their farm associations because they know that rural Veitnam is the hope of a free Veitnam. So you see it's all tied in together. What we learned here in America in the old farmers' Farm Security Administration. Remember the old Farm Security Administration? Some of you older-timers? The days of Roosevelt would apply now in Veitnam. What we learned in the first grain cooperatives we're applying. What we learned in the first REA we're applying. What we learned in modern American agriculture we're applying. We're building a nation. And my fellow Americans, nation-building may not be very dramatic but it is the work of a free people. And in building that nation we have to give security. But it's not enough just to give security. There has to be more. We have to win this struggle if you please by preventing the success of aggression. Yes. We have to win this struggle by bringing it to the table for negotiation so that we can have peace. But even if we could have a cease-fire today, it would not be enough. Because we must help build social, economic institutions. And then we can say that our work has been well done. We've helped do this all over the world. And when people say to me, why are we concerned about others, I take you back to the Old Testament. Am I my brother's keeper? The story of Cain and Abel. And the wonderful thing about that story is it left it up to you to answer because the answer was not written. The answer, of course, comes down through the years.

We are our brother's keeper. And never forget it. Never forget it. Freedom is neither free nor devisible. Freedom requires sacrifice. It can never be protected by the weak and the timid any more than you own organization can. So my fellow Americans, I ask you to have faith in your Commander-in-chief. I ask you to have faith in your country. I ask you to remember what Abraham Lincoln once said about this blessed land of ours and he was so right. And yet he was so abused. He wouldn't have won any popularity contests. If they'd ever taken a Gallup Poll on Abraham Lincoln they couldn't have found a low enough figure to rate him. Because he was an unpopular president. And so was Harry Truman. But I tell you, Lincoln was right. Harry Truman was right and he was tough. He was couragous and he won and I happen to think that Lyndon B. Johnson is right. And he's tough and he's couragous, and he's for you.

Thank you very much.

② Poland
Deal Melvin M. Hill
Tucker Air Force
Base

Last night meeting

REMARKS

Tony Dechant
Ed Christman

VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT HUMPHREY

NATIONAL FARMERS UNION

OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA

MARCH 13, 1967

National
Agricultural
Relations Act

Martha Kline
Joe Freeman
Bob Kennedy
Go McQuinn

② Telephone from LBS

Roger Blobaum

Mr. Hill - 30 min

It is good to be back among the people I know

Remember
your
friends!

so well.

② Sen Harris
+ Ford

I have been going to Farmers Union events

ever since the 1940's, when I was mayor of Minneapolis.

I think it's safe to say that I've attended as many Farmers
Union conventions almost as Tony Dechant
as anybody in Washington.

And I proudly display in my office the award for

Outstanding Service to Agriculture you gave me two
years ago.

Well - < I am not here today to tell you how well off you
are. I know you are concerned about farm prices, credit, and

income assurances for added production, among other things.

So am I - and so is your
President Lyndon Johnson

② my Dad's mom
"Politically
unreliable"

∟ I want to talk to you about all these things.

Farm people -- their problems, their setbacks, their future prospects and their basic importance to freedom in the world -- have been the concern of President Johnson and Vice President Humphrey for many years.

∟ We have seen farm depressions ... and huge surplus buildups ... and low farm prices ... and heavy migration of farm people to our overcrowded cities. And we have seen enough of them.

∟ I know, from talking to Tony Dechant and other leaders in Farmers Union, that you have serious misgivings about producing a lot more wheat and other grain because of the possibility of over-production and low prices.

∟ The Johnson-Humphrey Administration is keenly aware of this price-income problem, too.

✓ We want enough production to meet requirements --
both here and overseas, including reasonable reserves,
but with fair prices -- I repeat, with fair prices. *propitable prices.*

✓ Government farm programs are as essential
now as ever. |

✓ The voluntary feed grain program, for example,
has been a real success. About one and a half million
farms have been signed up every year since 1961.

With this program we have increased farmers' feed grain
income, increased exports, and reduced the price-destroying
effects of the heavy surplus we inherited.

No one knows what the weather will do to this

} year's wheat crop, particularly here in Oklahoma ... and
in Texas and Kansas. I know how worried George Stone
and Jay Naman and Bill Daniels must be over effects of such
a dry winter on the wheat crop.

With the indicated 400 million bushel wheat carry-over on July 1, 1967 -- 200 million bushels less than a desirable level -- I am sure there will be a real need for a higher 1967 wheat crop both at home and abroad.

Ever since the early 1950's we have needed better prices so farmers could earn enough to generate some of their own capital requirements. This must be accomplished or the family farm system -- the system on which our efficient agriculture is built -- will neither survive nor prosper.

(4) And let us make it crystal clear to all Americans. Good farm prices are good for America -- good for American business ... good for American labor ... good for the American economy ... and good for the American consumer.

American consumers have benefited -- usually with no thought of their benefactor -- from prices that at the farm level have consistently been too low.

In no other nation do consumers have so large a choice of nutritious food. And the percentage of disposable income that American consumers spend for food is far lower than anywhere else.

Last year the American consumer needed only 18 per cent of his pay for food.

Nowhere else is food such a bargain.

Yet the people responsible for this bargain have been left behind the rest of our nation.!

Farmers are hit year after year by higher production costs ... higher living costs ... higher interest costs ... and higher machinery costs. Production costs alone last year were up 2.5 billion dollars.

↳ These are the reasons that farmers are worried about farm prices.

It not only costs more to do business in the city. It costs more to do business on the farm.

And if a worker is entitled to a better wage because of his increased productivity ... because of an increase in living costs ... and because of the profits of industry, then who can deny the farmer the right of a better price for his products -- a price that brings him a profit ... a price that makes farming a rewarding way of life, not a sacrifice.

↳ Farm income is far better than it was before 1961, but it is still not good enough. We must do better.

and Natural market forces will help us do better.

With most of our surpluses gone, the market is more responsive today to supply and demand than anytime in the last 30 years. Strong world demand, both in commercial

markets and in countries receiving food aid, means a good long-term farm income outlook.

∠ Certainly demand is increasing here at home and in other developed nations.

But there is a far greater demand in the developing nations.

World population is growing so fast that we add the equivalent of a new India every 7 years -- and the increase is greatest in the countries that are the hungriest.

As President Johnson has said:

"...the time is not far off when all the combined production of all the acres, of all the agriculturally productive nations, will not meet the food needs of developing nations -- unless present trends are changed."

∠ This is the setting in which we must survey the future. And it is the setting in which we must formulate national farm policy.

This year's production expansion ~~here in the~~
~~United States~~ is ^{now} therefore aimed at meeting our growing
domestic needs ... at meeting requirements of expanding
commercial markets and food aid programs ... and at
still having some left for strategic reserves.

!!
L Some day we're going to have a bad crop. If we
have a bad wheat crop this year, it will be a major disaster.!!

That is why we need reasonable working stocks as
a minimum for normal business operations. And we need
a little extra for emergencies.

I know you support national food reserves --
provided they are insulated from the market. That is a
reasonable position and I support it.

^{Sidwell}
L We took a step last December in boosting prices for
Commodity Credit Corporation sales of government-held
stocks. These prices are now directly tied to carry-over levels.

Lower carry-over levels mean higher resale prices of grain in government hands.

The government can't sell its ~~wheat, corn,~~ ^{grain} ~~barley, oats or grain sorghum~~ now for less than 115 per cent of loan value, plus carrying charges. You fought for this. I fought for this. And we were right.

↙ In increasing these sale prices, we changed the whole level of agricultural pricing. We took the Commodity Credit Corporation of the business of competing with farmers. We want market prices substantially above the loan levels. I repeat!

We need a common sense level of "set aside" reserves, clearly insulated from the market, and understood by the public as "reserves" and not "surpluses." We need your help in developing this program.

~~When I come before a Farmers Union convention~~
Now a word about
~~I know I'm among the best friends of~~ Food for Peace
~~program has ever had.~~ I want to thank you again for your loyal support through all these years.

Food for Peace, ~~which once was a surplus disposal~~
~~program, now~~ is a major constructive force in the world.
Since 1954 it has accounted for over 15 billion dollars in
exports of farm products.

now
Some of the 100 or so countries we've helped ~~now~~
are commercial markets for our farm products ... dollar
markets. This program deserves credit for much of the recent increase in farm exports.

But let no one under-estimate the humanitarian role of our food and technical assistance in meeting the challenge of world hunger.

Governments have risen or fallen on their ability, or inability, to feed their people. And political leaders in the hungry countries are increasingly realizing that neither promises nor prestige can substitute for the basic nourishment of their people.

We will save more lives in India this year as a result of food aid than the total populations of North and South Vietnam.

President Johnson is showing ^{effective} ~~forceful~~ leadership in insisting that we use our food abundance and technical know-how to help food-short nations help themselves.

This now is our policy -- to use self-help to get people to stand on their own feet and to get other industrial nations to help us carry the world food burden.

This Administration also is promoting farm exports in commercial markets. No other nation can even touch us in terms of farm efficiency ... and we must take full advantage of this edge in world trade.

Agricultural exports last year reached a new high of nearly 7 billion dollars. More than 5 billion dollars of this was in dollars -- a major, constructive contribution to our balance of payments problem.

The total should go higher. And it could go very substantially higher if President Johnson's proposals for increased East-West trade are adopted and if the Kennedy Round negotiation, now in progress, helps to keep markets open around the world. I believe the chances are good that it will.

A whole new generation of foreign consumers is looking to us for its food requirements. We simply must wake up to this new opportunity.

L And the American farmer should share in the
hard currency markets created through trade with the
Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. It is good international
policy. It is good economics. It makes sense. !

~~Trade in farm products with these countries
should be put on the same basis as trade in other
non-strategic commodities.~~

L Food sales promote peace and understanding.
And why deny the American farmer a good market for
his production, in the name of anti-communism,
when it is our national policy to build peaceful bridges
and peaceful trade to this part of the world?

L Now I want to talk briefly about farm credit, which
~~I know is one of your greatest concerns.~~ We talk about
production expansion ... about greater efficiency in
agriculture ... about adopting all the latest technological
advances ... and about higher net farm income. !

└ But to accomplish all this, we must provide financing with the terms and the interest levels that farmers can handle.

└ Total investment in agriculture already is more than 250 billion dollars -- equal to three-fourths of all the assets of American corporations. This is a tremendous burden for an industry that has had a low profit history for the past 15 years.

└ We must do more to insure a fair and flexible system of financing farms and farming, or the farms of tomorrow will not be owned by the farmers who work them.

└ If we fail, the family farm system that is the envy of the world will simply disappear.

└ Adequate farm credit on reasonable terms is the life-line of free-enterprise family farming.

└ You're
Gov't is now reviewing
all aspects of farm credit

It is not in the interest of consumers, nor is it sound national policy, to have American agriculture so starved of capital that control passes to non-farm owners.

The incentive for efficient production and the ingenuity and efficiency of the family farm is a ^{precious} national asset that we must protect. And we intend to do so.

The world marvels at the ~~strength~~ strength and the productivity of our American agriculture -- a productivity that has increased more than 100 per cent in less than 15 years.

We have powerful weapons -- and so do other nations.

We have advanced science and technology -- and so do other nations.

We have large resources of capital -- and so do other nations.

But America has all of this and the extra measure
of strength that flows from an abundance of food and fiber.

It is this extra measure which gives us unmatched
resources for world leadership.

Let me put it another way.

Imagine what Mr. Khrushchev would have been
able to do in the 1950's with our reserves of food and fiber.

Imagine what Communist China would have been
able to do in the past and would be able to do today --
with our vast abundance of food and fiber.

If we see things in these terms, then how can we
ever permit anything to weaken our agricultural economy?

Your President and your Vice President know the
importance of American agriculture. We come from farm
people. We come from rural America. We have lived through
a farm depression.

We have seen the American farmer victimized by burdensome surpluses and deliberate economic policies that were unfair and unjust.

I come here today with a promise and a pledge -- a promise of friendship and the pledge of an Honest Deal.

It is time that the American farmer received a fair share of our national prosperity.

He has earned it.

He deserves it.

And he will get it.

The gap between farm income and income in other parts of our economy -- the Prosperity Gap -- must be closed --
yes eliminated.

For we seek a better and stronger rural America.

-- One in which young men and women can pursue the careers of their choice and make a good living right at home or in a nearby town.

↳ One in which educational, health, and cultural facilities are as good as the best in the cities.

↳ One in which urban and rural people alike can replenish their spirits and bodies through recreation.

↳ One in which all that is beautiful in rural America is developed and preserved.

↳ One in which young people and old people alike can live a life of opportunity, and security, and happiness.

↳ That is why the Prosperity Gap must be eliminated.

And the Johnson-Humphrey Administration will stand by its pledges that it shall be eliminated.

let me
Now, ~~in conclusion, I should like to~~ say a few words about rural areas in a country many thousands of miles away from us, but very much in all our minds. --
I mean South Vietnam.

In the last analysis, the struggle in Vietnam will be won or lost in the countryside, where 85 per cent of the Vietnamese people live and work.

lie
The struggle will be won when the Vietnamese peasant becomes convinced that democratic government offers him -- and his children -- a better future than communism.

It will be won when he ceases to think of himself as a "peasant," eking out a bare existence by back-breaking toil and deprived of all human dignity.

It will be won when he comes to think of himself as a "farmer," using his mind as well as his hands, enjoying a decent standard of living, and being treated as a human being rather than a beast of burden.

~~There is nothing more important in Vietnam than to offer its peasants a foretaste of the better future that freedom can offer them -- a foretaste of being farmers rather than peasants.~~

That is happening now.

And it is not just because of our material aid -- seed and fertilizer and pesticides.

It is even more because of the fine people we have out there, good rural Americans like yourselves. They are at work in every part of Vietnam, and when I say "work"

I mean "work." !

our people

~~They~~ are out there in the mud and the heat, side by side with the Vietnamese farmers, showing them how to grow more and better crops -- how to achieve a higher standard of living.

⌞ I have met and talked with our people out there.
⌞ Despite discomfort, disease, and ever-present danger, they tell me it's a deeply rewarding experience.

⌞ The Vietnamese are vigorous, alert, and eager to learn. There's little of the apathy ... little of the resistance to new ideas, that persists in some other developing areas.

⌞ They are learning.! They are putting what they have learned to use. The results show it. ~~And we should know about those results.~~

-- Rice is the basic crop of Vietnam, accounting for four-fifths of the cultivated land. As recently as five years ago, up to 600 varieties were grown, many of them mediocre or downright poor.

These have all been screened, and a few dozen superior varieties identified. Over 20 thousand tons of this improved seed are being distributed every year -- and planted.

└-- Some thirty new varieties of vegetables -- legumes, grains, sugar cane and root crops -- are being grown, and they are proving 20 to 100 per cent more productive than the varieties traditionally grown.

└-- Within four years, the application of fertilizer has mounted to over 250 thousand tons annually -- and there are still complaints about the supply falling behind the demand.

└-- Pesticides, almost unknown a few years ago, are being used by half a million farmers. Some 30 thousand sprayers are being rotated among the farmers, and many have bought their own.

2 -- New breeds of hogs have been introduced -- the scrawny, swaybacked hog of former times is on its way out. As a result, hog production is now running at three million 600 thousand annually, over double the level three years ago -- and the average hog going to market weighs 220 pounds instead of 130 pounds.

new Hampshire ~~Old Hampshire~~ New Hampshire Red chickens are gradually replacing the native stock. This improved poultry is catching on rapidly, and there is a brisk market for their meat and eggs.

2 -- In every province, there are already farmers who are raising purebred piglets and chicks for sale to their neighbors.

2 -- Thousands of farm demonstrations are being carried out each year to popularize the use of fertilizer, improved crops, and improved breeds of livestock.

Some people ask: What will happen when we pull out, once peace is restored? Will the tempo of progress be maintained? Will it be increased?

Indeed it will ~~be~~ because the people and their government are far better organized to maintain and step up agricultural progress than they were.

Vietnamese farmers, in increasing numbers, are joining together to help themselves by helping each other. Today:

Coops

└-- There are over 20 thousand farm youngsters in 700 4-H clubs.

└-- There are 60 district farmer's associations and 250 farmers' and fishermen's cooperatives.

└-- Agricultural credit associations have extended loans to thousands of farmers, and will go right on expanding.

└-- The first rural electric cooperation association is in operation -- and plans call for bringing electricity to 12 thousand rural people by the end of this year.

└ Through these organizations of their own making, Vietnamese farmers are gaining a voice and a vote in their own economic future, just as they will have their say in their political future in the village elections beginning next month and the national elections later this year.

└ This is very real progress -- progress made despite Communist subversion from within and invasion from without.

The help we and other nations have been privileged to give has not been wasted. On the contrary, its effectiveness has been multiplied by the work and sacrifice of the Vietnamese people themselves.

What is being done in the Vietnamese countryside has a significance far beyond Vietnam.

For Vietnam is only one developing country among many, and its millions of peasants share the problems and the hopes of hundreds of millions of other Asian peasants.

All have suffered in the past -- and some still do -- from regimes which, to paraphrase Tolstoy, professed willingness to "lighten (their) load by all possible means -- except by getting off (their)back. "

All of them are seeking to become farmers rather than peasants ... free citizens rather than virtual serfs.

In this surge forward to freedom and well-being -- this revolution that is sweeping the hundreds of thousands of Asian villages and the many millions of its people -- much that is being learned in Vietnam can be of incalculable value elsewhere.

And we shall do our part in seeing that it is.

For, despite voices raised to the contrary, I believe our own freedom will ultimately depend on the freedom of nations elsewhere -- even those nations where the people have unfamiliar languages and names.

I believe, as President Harry Truman expressed it 20 years ago in another difficult period of our national history: "If we falter in our leadership we may endanger the peace of the world, and we shall surely endanger the welfare of the nation."

We must not, and shall not, falter.



Minnesota Historical Society

Copyright in this digital version belongs to the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, link to, or email content, however, for individual use.

To request permission for commercial or educational use, please contact the Minnesota Historical Society.



www.mnhs.org