

REMARKS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

FARMFEST

Lake Crystal, Minnesota

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I am proud and honored to be able to introduce to the people of Minnesota the next President of the United States, Governor Jimmy Carter.

Governor Carter understands the needs, the hopes and the problems of rural America.

When I was holding hearings on rural development in 1972, I went to Tifton, Georgia. I was impressed with Governor Carter's interest in rural development and what he had done to deal with practical problems.

After eight years of embargoes, vetoes, rescissions, impoundments and misguided policies, our people are begging for some sense from Washington.

Farmers do not expect favored treatment or the dole. But they ask for the chance at a fair return on their labor and investment.

They are looking for a leader who will perform, not one who needs election year rhetoric to cover-up for a dismal record.

With Secretary Butz having visited you on Monday and Senator Dole scheduled to arrive this weekend, I feel somewhat like the wholesome piece of meat between two stale slices of bread.

One area in which we have seen all too well the difference between promise and performance is in the Administration's frequent grain embargoes.

The Republicans have accused the Democrats of being willing to interfere with export markets in serious contingencies such as short supplies here in the United States.

That position, my friends, is fully consistent with the existing Export Administration Act -- which was signed by one Gerry Ford.

Democrats and Republicans support the Export Administration Act, which provides that our export sales are not to be interfered with unless there are serious shortages here in the United States. And yet in 1973, 1974 and 1975 the Nixon-Ford Administration interfered with export markets when there was no shortage and in blatant disregard of established law.

These unwarranted interferences in your business have cost you millions and even billions of dollars.

The issue thus lies at the door of the Republican Administration. Are they finally prepared to obey the law, which is consistent with meeting our national security requirements? Or would they continue to make interventions which are not needed and are downright harmful?

This Administration has not shown the same interest in intervening to protect our producers against sharp increases in the importation of meat, sugar, palm oil or dairy products.

In the case of cheddar cheese, the Administration stepped up imports nearly ten fold in early 1974, leading to a disastrous drop of nearly 25 percent in prices paid to our dairy farmers in a six month period. Of course, no consumer ever saw this reflected in prices at the supermarket.

I hardly need remind our dairy farmers of the Administration's infamous Flanigan Report which called for increased dairy imports at the expense of our already hard-pressed producers.

Fortunately, I blew the whistle on that scheme and helped blow it out of the water.

In the case of palm oil, 1975 imports more than doubled from the 350 million pounds imported a year ago. But again the Administration has been reluctant even to recognize the problem, let alone act on it.

This Administration also has been most reluctant to face up to the issue of sugar imports and their impact on our domestic producers. Recently, prices have dropped well below the cost of production, and yet the Administration remains oblivious to what has been happening.

Everyone knows that our livestock producers have been hard hit by low prices over the last few years. Yet the Ford Administration has been unable to make sure that meat does not enter the free trade zone in Puerto Rico, as a means of circumventing the meat import quotas.

But now the Department of Agriculture has begun a meat promotion campaign without solving the import problem.

Congress alone has had to struggle with the problem of reforming our grain inspection system, since Secretary Butz and President Ford have been unwilling to deal with it.

The General Accounting Office's grain inspection report outlined wholesale abuses and indicated that some nations had reduced or eliminated their commodity purchases from the U.S.

And while our exports have been growing in recent years from around 50 million tons to nearly 100 million tons, the U.S.D.A. has been cutting back on its grain inspection staff.

I began hearings, introduced interim and permanent grain inspection legislation, and both bills were passed by the Senate. We also increased the funding to beef up the inspection staff.

I believe that workable reforms can be agreed upon -- and, hopefully, the President will approve them.

Another major shortcoming in the Administration's farm policies is the lack of adequate price protection for producers.

Apparently Mr. Butz has learned little from the lessons of the 1920's and the days of Ezra Taft Benson in the 1950's.

I applaud the increase in our export markets, and we can, with modest investments, encourage further increases in the years ahead.

Growing world demand for our food is the reason our farmers have been saved from overproduction and low prices. But the policies of Butz have left farmers to carry all of the risk.

The only thing that has saved our farmers from calamity has been weather in the Soviet Union. I don't believe the security of American agriculture should be placed in the hands of the leaders of the Soviet Union.

We need to remember that the export market can be extremely volatile, with sharp increases one year and declines the next as weather and crop production changes occur throughout the world.

Our farmers do not need to be told that they are almost totally without price protection under the presently existing target prices and loan levels.

For wheat, the target price is \$2.29 per bushel, while the loan level is \$1.50 per bushel. The target price for corn is \$1.57 per bushel, with the loan level at \$1.25 per bushel.

This translates into a target price for wheat and corn of about 47 percent of parity. The loan level for wheat is the equivalent of 31 percent of parity, and for corn it is 38 percent of parity.

The story is the same in other commodities, with a loan program of \$2.50 per bushel for soybeans.

These levels are an insult.

Thus, even the most innocent of bystanders could understand the anger of our farm producers when President Ford vetoed the one-year emergency farm bill in the spring of 1975 with its very modest increases in price protection.

Of course, this should come as no surprise. As a member of Congress, Gerald Ford voted against crucial Farm Bills in 1955, 1958 and 1973.

In the fall the Administration cut off our agricultural exports for the third time in three years.

Even Gerry Ford should know that three strikes means you are out.

Our dairy farmers have faced three Ford vetoes in the space of just over a year -- bills which would have set supports at 80 or 85 percent of parity and provided for a quarterly adjustment in prices paid to farmers.

As usual, the Administration answer was that these bills would cost too much.

But now, in an election year, the Administration is making early Food for Peace commodity purchases to support market prices. There also is some talk that loan levels may be raised. You may recall that in 1972 Secretary Butz bragged about "spending money like a drunken sailor" to re-elect Richard Nixon.

America's farmers need a friend in the White House every year.

Farm producers repeatedly have been promised access to world markets and encouraged to go all out and achieve maximum production because the world needs our food.

But how many times can an Administration promise and not deliver?

With this Administration's record for trying to thwart needed investments in conservation, housing, rural development and nutrition programs for the young and elderly, what can we believe in the way of Ford election year promises?

I am reminded of Adlai Stevenson's comment that if the Republicans would stop telling lies about us, we will stop telling the truth about them.

Next year we will begin the process of developing a new farm bill. If the Republicans are returned to office you will be treated to more of the same Republican policies under which you have suffered in recent years.

We can develop a more sensible approach which recognizes the high costs of production in today's agriculture.

The task will not be easy, and it is one which requires the understanding and leadership which Governor Carter will provide.

He will not be afraid to work with agricultural cooperatives and the total spectrum of farm organizations.

He also recognizes that the prosperity of agriculture is not separate from that of other segments of our economy. We need policies to provide jobs and promote prosperity at all levels of our economy.

The nation needs to rediscover its work ethic and get away from the waste and lost production which welfare and food stamps represent.

In 1972, the Republican cry was "Four More Years." We have had four painful years, and the nation can't take any more.

This bicentennial year is the time for the Democrats to return to office and provide the courageous, forceful and forward-looking leadership for which this nation yearns.

I am happy to introduce to you the leader who will bring a brand new start for all Americans in 1977.

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