

MESSAGE FROM SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY
MINNESOTA FARMERS UNION ANNUAL CONVENTION

Bloomington, Minnesota

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I sincerely appreciate this opportunity to share my thoughts with you on the direction of American agriculture. Before I begin, however, I would like to take a moment to salute the leadership and dedication of an outstanding Minnesotan, Cy Carpenter. As you may know, people in Washington are beginning to recognize Cy's outstanding performance.

In the past couple of weeks he has been named to the Grain Standards Advisory Committee to the Secretary of Agriculture and to the Advisory Committee to the Food Staff of the Office of Technology Assessment of the U. S. Congress. Both of these groups will play a crucial role in the formulation of various food policies, and it is a tribute to Cy that he has been selected to serve on these committees.

This has been a very important year for American agriculture. We now have a new and improved Farm Bill, one that many of you labored long and hard to see enacted. And while you and I would have preferred a stronger bill, the Food and Agriculture Act of 1977 does constitute a major forward step in effectively addressing the basic concerns of our farmers. The job before us now is to help implement the provisions of this important legislation in order to bring about a strong farm economy.

Agriculture constitutes one of our most basic forms of wealth in this country. The welfare of rural America is interlocked with the welfare of life in the cities. Without a strong and viable rural America we cannot have a strong nation.

Since the Farm Bill was signed into law on September 29, the farm economy has shown some improvement. Demand is greater than was previously anticipated, and prices have increased correspondingly. We have, at long last, a new sugar program. In the near future, farmers will be getting a more decent return on this important crop.

Next year should be even better. I believe that prices will rise, probably more so in feed grains than in wheat. Beef prices are beginning to recover, and the dairy outlook is promising. Pork, also, should be strong.

Next year is going to be an important year for American agriculture. There is a good chance that we will have a new International Wheat Agreement. And perhaps more importantly, some steps will be taken in reforming international agricultural trade in the multi-lateral trade negotiation talks at Geneva. Some observers are predicting that these measures could have even more of an impact than the new Farm Bill.

I also want to take this opportunity to commend our friend Bob Bergland. Bob has been getting some criticism in recent weeks, but I think we all share his clear recognition, when he signed on as Secretary of Agriculture, that this would be a very tough job. And in every situation that I am familiar with, Bob has advocated the best interests of American farmers.

I am confident that over the coming months, Secretary Bergland will continue to make every possible effort to forge agreement in the Carter Administration on policies and programs that must be implemented on behalf of our farmers.

I very much regret not being able to be with all of you. The Farmers Union is a vital group in the formulation and execution of agricultural policy. And I know of no more lively and involved part of the Farmers Union than the Minnesota organization. I hope you have a great convention and I wish you all the best in 1978.

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