

Opinions

End of farm supports sought



Cliff Blue

People and Issues

President Reagan is seeking, over a period of years, to get the government out of its growing role in farm supports.

The president is right in arguing all farmers can't be protected by the federal government, that some, each year will fail. That has always been the situation in farming, one of the greatest gambles of all the professions.

But what must be kept in mind, in trying to limit federal costs, is that farmers everywhere else are subsidized. French farmers are notoriously subsidized, both by their government and the European Economic Community.

West German farmers are subsidized. Farmers in Japan are protected by tariffs and other restrictions on competitive imports.

U.S. Farmers shouldn't be asked to compete as if in a free economy when there is seldom such a thing — in farming. Practically every country protects and subsidizes its farmers.

Reform can come only slowly, and must be achieved with compassion keeping in mind that American farmers can't operate successfully in a free world market until there is one.

But the president shouldn't allow reform of the federal government's farm policies to put massive numbers of farmers out of business. That simply isn't in the national interest.

DEMOCRATS IN DIXIE ... Democratic politicians in the South are in trouble. That's behind the creation of the Democratic Leadership Council.

Walter Mondale's disastrous leadership and campaign in 1984 lost the entire South. He has been seen by most southerners as too far left; he flipfopped after naming a southerner to head the party and didn't choose a southerner as running mate. Gov. Bob Graham of Florida is concerned over the party's image since it will directly affect his race against Paula Hawkins (R-Fla) next year.

In North Carolina, a

Stevens, whose son was killed while being hazed, is now a national force, traveling the country speaking against hazing on the nation's campuses.

Since membership in Greek-letter fraternities is on the rise after a period of decline, it's important that reform be implemented without delay. Not another student should be killed in a hazing "accident."

SPORTS? ... In Miami an amateur boxer from Virginia has been in a coma about a week after a boxing contest as this is written. By the time you read it, the chemical engineer, a graduate of the University of Virginia might or might not be alive.

At the same time a race car driver, from Florida, lay near death in Phoenix, Arizona, after a terrible crash on the track. His pregnant wife is at the hospital. By the time you read this, he may or may not be alive.

This happens regularly in both these so-called sports. There's no money to be made, and fame lures competitors; but recurring deaths should, eventually lead to legislation limiting the risks.

THE BAD NEWS IS, WE'VE BEEN SOLD.



THE GOOD NEWS IS, NOT TO JESSE HELMS.



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Farm bill should be transitional

The 1985 Farm Bill will be put together during the worst farm crisis since the Great Depression. Caught between sagging prices for their products and rising debt, thousands of farm families are facing foreclosure. These farm bankruptcies threaten numerous banks, hundreds of farm equipment suppliers and the economic health of entire rural communities.

Congress and the administration must face the fact that the complex, 50-year-old system of price supports controls are in need of reform.

The Reagan administration's idea is to make agriculture more "market-oriented." All the evidence suggests, however, that the markets cannot possibly absorb all the commodities now in surplus if more keep being produced in their current volumes. The administration plan really means,

Congressman Bill Hefner



in the words of Agriculture Secretary John Block, that farmers will have to "take their lumps."

Others in Congress have suggested even more complex programs in which farmers would be required to participate. Instead of relying on exports to underpin farm earnings, the prices of commodities would be raised by a rigid system of controlling how much each farmer produced (in order to eliminate surpluses). Farms would be limited to a specific size, and conservation of soil and water would be strictly regulated rather

than left voluntary. If this sounds like big, expensive government, it would be. And if it came down to a choice, it is doubtful that many farmers would support anything resembling this approach.

The agriculture sector is not ready for the big government solution, and probably would not tolerate it. On the other hand, farmers cannot settle for just cutting costs in the 1985 Farm Bill, as Reagan has proposed. We should devise policies that will make for a smoother transition from government-managed agriculture of the past, to the competitive, businesslike sector of the future. The government should do everything possible to ease the personal and financial hardships of individual farmers who cannot withstand economic forces and events beyond their control.

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