Block Wants Higher Profits For Farmers

WASHINGTON, D.C. -During confirmation hearings January 6 before the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, Agriculture Secretary-designate John R. Block told an overflow audience he will do all he can to improve profitability for farmers.

Block, 45, is Presidentelect Ronald Reagan's nominee for Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Currently, Block is Director of Agriculture for the State of Illinois.

Block told the committee, which is chaired by Sen. Jesse Helms of North Carolina, "One of the first items of business will be to get inflation under control. We've got to bring interest rates down. None of this will happen overnight - but we just have to restore profitability for the far-

Block was introducted at the hearing by Sen. Charles Percy of Illinois, who said Block has "combined in his background many of the very qualifications required for this important Cabinet position. He is a working farmer with a complete understanding of what is required to operate our complex food production system."

In an opening statement, Chairman Helms said that a vote on Block will come later this month when the committee receives a report Block's financial holdings and other matters from the Office of Government Ethics.

In his testimony and in response to questions, Block said he is a strong supporter of efforts to develop additional export markets for U.S. farm products.

To a question on food stamps, Block told the committee he is not informed of the precise extent of fraud and abuse in the program - estimated to cost over \$11-billion this year but feels he would have a duty to the American people as secretary to find out and to end what waste and abuse there is "so the truly needy are not shortchanged."

One of the most persistent subjects of interest to the Senators was the Secretarydesignate's position on the Soviet grain embargo and the use of food as a foreign policy tool. Block expressed his opposition to the agricultural production in general, but indicated his conviction that agricultural production is one of the country's greatest assets, is vitally important to the United States, and therefore, could be properly used to help develop strong ties and friendships for the U.S. with other nations.

Sen. David L. Boren, Democrat of Oklahoma, said he is "highly enthusiastic" about Block and praised what he termed Block's "revolutionary common sense."

Block also said it was his feeling that farmers are the better judge of how to manage their affairs than is the Federal government. and stressed his fundamental belief in the strength of the marketplace.

The ranking minority member of the committee, Sen. Walter (Dee) Huddleston of Kentucky, opened his remarks with a comment to the new chairman that he looked forward to a continuation of the bipartisan approach to committee business which Helms has endorsed, and which has been a part of the committee's tradition.

Airman Free Cited For Skills

Airman Cheryl L. Free, daughter of the Rev. and Mrs. Virgil L. Free of Tyner, has been named outstanding airman of the quarter at Langley Air

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A chapel management specialist, the airman was selected for professional skill, duty performance and exemplary behavior.

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