

Congressman Jamie Whitten Answers Farm Program Critics

(Continued from page one)

come for the whole family. I mention these facts in view of the attacks that have been made in recent months on the farm support price program.

"The Congress has tried to meet this problem through its price support program financed by the Commodity Credit Corporation, the funds for which are recommended by this committee. It is interesting to note that throughout the operation of the Commodity Credit Corporation the total cost of all price support programs for the last ten years has been only approximately one billion dollars, less than one-fourth the amount spent on consumer subsidies on a few commodities during the war. Of course we have on hand many commodities in which the government now has invested something like three and

a half billion dollars, a reserve of commodities that could be a blessing in case of conflict or even in the event of a disastrous farm year. Complaints appear daily in the press about this program. It should be noted that the records show that the federal government spent about 6 billion and 200 million dollars in enabling industry to reconvert after industrial capacity had been expanded to meet war-time needs and sold an additional 3.9 billion dollars of real property to industry for one and one-quarter billion dollars. The Congress approved excess profit tax reductions totalling nearly 5.6 billion dollars. This is in addition to authority for corporations to receive certain tax credits for their operation during war-time.

"I mention these facts because the papers are continuously making attacks on the whole price

support program for agricultural commodities. Certainly these programs are justified though of course the present method of handling potatoes and certain other commodities cannot be justified and the Congress has corrected that for next year. It is likely that corrections will have to be made in regard to other commodities where there is no control of supply or which cannot be satisfactorily stored.

"It has been argued many times that the law of supply and demand should operate with regard to agriculture. It is said that people do not get all the food they could use. In this connection I point out that the law of supply and demand has been repealed insofar as labor is concerned by minimum wage laws and, by the bargaining power of labor unions all of which is reflected in higher prices for manufactured articles. It can just as readily be said that the people do not get all the refrigerators, automobiles or other manufactured articles they could use. Yet it is not argued that industry should sell its products below cost of production. I think almost all will agree that minimum wage laws and labor unions, even with their excesses on occasions, have resulted in prosperity for our nation and I know of no one that would go back to the old days when the law of supply and demand was completely operative with regard to labor.

"Many people ask why we don't export our farm surpluses. That is easier said than done. Where formerly this nation spent millions of dollars in other countries which gave to such countries dollars to buy from us, today we are largely self-sufficient.

"Records show that each depression has started first with a drop in farm prices. According to these records, a drop in farm prices shows up at about seven times that amount of drop in national income. Through the farm support program we have retarded such a drop. After World War I agricultural prices dropped 50 percent in 12 months. For two years after World War II the drop has been less than half as much for twice as long a period. In addition to that many of the charges made against the farm program have been relative to the increase in cost of various consumer goods. And yet the record shows that in the case of bread for instance, during the period October 1947 to October 1949, the cost of the ingredients in a loaf of bread paid by the baker went down from 5.9 cents to 4.7 cents. Yet during that same time due to the high cost of labor transportation and other elements in producing the finished loaf of bread, the retail price to the consumer increased from 13.3 cents to 14.5 cents.

"These matters are not mentioned to strike any argument with those that come from non-agricultural areas but is to point out that there is a real need that proper attention be given to agriculture."

The congressman, having answered the farm program critics, went on to show the importance of soil conservation, not as a socialized undertaking, but as one vital to the welfare of this nation, including those off the land as well as those on the land. He said:

"The records show that during the last ten years our population has increased by 19 million people. If that same rate of increase is maintained for the next fifty years you can easily see that the demands on our soil will become greater and greater. We, as a nation, need to use only that which

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AT THE FIRST SESSION of the Republican Party's "First National School of Politics" in Washington, two students learn how to win votes. The pupils, Mrs. Richard Prickett (left), of Albion, Ill., and Mrs. Catherine Scoman, of Arlington, Va., are shown by teacher John Da Grossa, of Philadelphia, how to relax facial muscles to increase speech volume and voice personality when making talks. (International Soundphoto)

is necessary, in soil depleting crops, and to place the balance in grass or to other uses that will save and restore this most vital natural resource.

It makes us aware of the fact that our soil, which is perhaps our greatest natural resource on which the nation is dependent, is the basis for the real security of our people in the years to come. Certainly a study of other nations throughout history will show that once agriculture has been permitted to take more from the soil than is put back in, so that in effect more is being extracted than is being replaced, eventually it has led to the destruction of such nations. You can look around the earth today and any country that has paid attention to the fertility of the soil and to other natural resources you will find a prosperous nation. You can look then to Greece, Palestine, China, India and to any other countries where the people are having a terrible time existing and you will find that behind it all is a depleted soil structure and wasted natural resources. In other words this nation should have foresight enough to know that we must include as a part of the cost of food, shelter and clothing a reasonable amount to be set aside for the restoration of our production plant, our soil.

"In one way of looking at it we have done a wonderful job of production in this country. It is a matter in which we all can take pride. But when we consider the matter from another viewpoint no nation in history has wasted its natural resources through the same period of time to a greater extent than has the United States. I mention it to point out the real need that we have. We could well spend ten times the amount of money for agriculture and the money would be well spent if we had it. We do not have it.

"This depletion of our natural resources is easy to understand. When our forefathers settled this country, land was the cheapest thing available. It was good business insofar as present income was concerned, to drain the land of its fertility and then to clear more. Our forefathers followed that practice and succeeding generations grew up to believe that was the way to farm. Then in many States we became dependent on one crop, in my own area cotton, not simply because cotton would grow well in our States, but for the further reason that we had no cash markets for much of anything else. In other areas it was tobacco, in another, wheat, and so on. As all now know, this depleted the soil and in most cases financial returns were so small that the money was not to be had to protect or restore the soil. Recognizing that the Nation and future generations had an interest in this great natural resource, fertility of the soil, the Soil Conservation Program was set up by the National Congress. Under the program the National Government said to the farmer that if he would follow food soil practices and if he would restore his soil, the Nation would make a contribution toward the costs. This Federal contribution has averaged about one-half of the money cost with farmer putting up his labor in addition to his half of the cash outlay. The nation must see to it that our soil is preserved. You may say the farmer should do that on his own. He hasn't and there are only two ways to see that he does it, one is through our present system of

for all prosper only as the area around them prospers, the Nation prospers only as all its areas prosper. Let the farm production go down, let the land become exhausted and half the people will have to move out of our cities and the half remaining will have more of a struggle to make a living. Let that happen over the whole Nation and more and more people will have to be employed in the production of food and clothing and fewer people will be left to provide the manufactured articles that all enjoy. That has been the situation which helped to bring about the low standard of living in much of this troubled world today.

"The government has helped to finance practices only to bring about such practices by the farmers themselves. Whether that course was wise will be determined by what our farmers do on their own initiative in the future.

"For many years it was taken for granted that the farm people couldn't expect to have electricity or the same conveniences that others in our nation have had. The Congress a few years ago realizing that farmers were a part of our national economy, set out to enable the farmers to help themselves by making available electricity through the Rural Electrification Administration. We made it possible for farmers to secure loans to buy farms and made it possible for farmers to do many things for themselves with full payment to the government for services rendered. At that time in 1935 only 743,950 farms had electricity. Since that time through the REA the number has been increased to 4,850,000 farms not on a gift basis but by the use of government loans which are being repaid and on which the government actually is experiencing no loss. It may surprise you to know that less than six-tenths of one percent of REA cooperative borrowers are delinquent as much as 30 days on the amount due on these loans. This has actually freed these farm families from drudgery and has made the situation such that we can expect in the future a sufficient number of our people to be interested in farm life to stay on our farms and supply the food and clothing for the rest of us. As fine as that program has been

it still means little to the 16 percent of our farmers who still do not have electricity available to them. And the committee has constantly urged area coverage. During this same period many thousands of farmers have been enabled to buy and own a farm home and here to we find the record of repayment to the Farmers Home Administration is excellent. In other words we have helped the farmers to help themselves. These programs have both been considered by our committee and there again it was our problem to determine a reasonable basis on which these programs could be carried forward and the overhead expense kept at a minimum.

"Some may think that in view

of the present surpluses it is well enough to drop research. Nothing could be further from the truth. The history of the world will show that as nations get old and as land is used through the centuries, in all too many cases diseases that destroy plant life become more prevalent. In our own nation we have seen the chestnut tree go, the victim of disease. We have the problems of the white pine blister rust and recently oak wilt. The thousand and one diseases that strike at our tree and plant life at the present time must be retarded and if possible controlled. Except for research on the part of the Department and others today we would

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