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Agriculture Speech

Max S. Baucus

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(1) Subject*: **Agriculture**

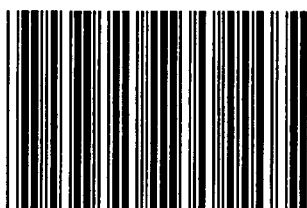
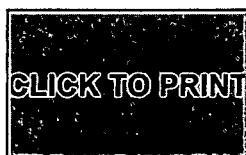
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(2) Subject* **none**

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BAUCUS

MAX BAUCUS
HYSHAM, MONTANA
JANUARY 10, 1980

IN THIS EARLY DAY OF A NEW DECADE, I'D LIKE TO TALK ABOUT AGRICULTURE IN THE 1980'S.

THIS IS A GOOD TIME TO TALK ABOUT BOTH THE CHALLENGES WE WILL FACE AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES THAT MAY DEVELOP. I'D ALSO LIKE TO TALK ABOUT WHAT YOU FARMERS AND BUSINESS PEOPLE CAN DO TO IMPROVE THE WAY YOUR GOVERNMENT WORKS AND THE AGRICULTURAL OUTLOOK.

I THINK THAT MUCH OF THE INSTABILITY OF THE 1970'S WILL CONTINUE INTO THE NEW DECADE. GRAIN PRICES WILL CONTINUE TO FLUCTUATE WITH WORLD HARVESTS AND POLITICAL EVENTS.

WE WILL STILL HAVE CATTLE CYCLES. SUGAR PRICES WILL BE UP, THEN DOWN. POLITICIANS WILL COME AND GO.

WE WILL FACE SOME NEW PROBLEMS. DURING THE 1980'S, WE MUST GET DOWN TO THE SERIOUS BUSINESS OF SOLVING ENERGY PROBLEMS.

WE MUST DEAL WITH POLITICAL INSTABILITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND IN CENTRAL ASIA.

WE WILL HAVE TO STABILIZE AND IMPROVE A RURAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM THAT IS ON THE VERGE OF COLLAPSE.

AND WE MUST STREAMLINE A FEDERAL BUREAUCRACY THAT IS TOO BIG, TOO UNRESPONSIVE, AND TOO EXPENSIVE.

ONE THING IS SURE ABOUT THE 1980'S. AS FARMERS CONTINUE TO BE A SMALLER FRACTION OF THE TOTAL POPULATION, GOVERNMENT WILL BE LESS SYMPATHETIC TO FARM PROBLEMS.

POLITICIANS WILL BE ABLE TO IGNORE FARM PROBLEMS AND CONTINUE TO BE ELECTED. ALSO, FEWER AND FEWER REPRESENTATIVES WILL HAVE GOOD UNDERSTANDINGS OF AGRICULTURE.

NOWDAYS, WE HAVE A LOT OF MEMBERS OF CONGRESS WHO DON'T HAVE ANY FARMERS IN THEIR DISTRICTS. IN FACT, I DON'T THINK TIP O'NEILL'S DISTRICT IN BOSTON HAS SO MUCH AS A BLADE OF GRASS.

THE RESULT IS TOUGH SLEDDING FOR FARM BILLS. SUGAR LEGISLATION IS THE BEST EXAMPLE.

BOTH THE HOUSE AND SENATE APPROVED BILLS TO ESTABLISH SUGAR PROGRAMS DURING 1978. IN THE LAST HOURS OF THE CONGRESS, A COMPROMISE BETWEEN THE HOUSE AND SENATE VERSIONS WAS WRITTEN.

BUT CORN SUGAR PRODUCERS WOULD NOT SUPPORT THE COMPROMISE AND IT WAS DEFEATED IN THE HOUSE.

EARLY IN 1978 I JOINED SENATOR LONG AND OTHERS TO INTRODUCE A BILL TO USE TARIFFS AND QUOTAS TO KEEP SUGAR PRICES ABOVE 17¢ PER POUND. I THINK THAT IS A MINIMUM TO PROTECT OUR DOMESTIC INDUSTRY.

BUT THERE WAS MORE TROUBLE IN THE HOUSE. AFTER MONTHS OF DELAY, THE AGRICULTURE AND WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEES APPROVED A PROPOSAL TO SET A MARKET PRICE OF 15.3¢ PLUS PROVIDE DIRECT PAYMENTS OF 0.5¢ PER POUND.

WHEN THE BILL CAME TO THE HOUSE FLOOR, CONSUMER INTERESTS RALLIED. LARGE SUGAR USERS LIKE COCA-COLA SPENT A LOT OF TIME AND MONEY LOBBYING AGAINST THE PROPOSAL.

ANTI-SUGAR REPRESENTATIVES SAID THAT THE BILL WOULD INCREASE CONSUMER FOOD PRICES. THEY CALLED IT INFLATIONARY AND SAID IT WOULD BENEFIT ONLY A FEW RICH FARMERS.

IN THE END, THEY MANAGED TO DEFEAT THE BILL BY ALMOST 100 VOTES.

NOW YOU KNOW AND I KNOW THAT THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST SUGAR LEGISLATION DON'T HOLD WATER. WE NEED A DOMESTIC PROGRAM TO MAINTAIN PRODUCTION HERE AT HOME. WE DON'T WANT TO GET INTO THE SAME SITUATION WITH SUGAR THAT WE HAVE WITH OIL.

NEARLY EVERY MEMBER OF THE SENATE RECOGNIZES THIS, AND IF SUGAR LEGISLATION EVER PASSES THE HOUSE, IT WILL BE APPROVED QUICKLY IN THE SENATE.

WHEN I WAS FIRST ELECTED TO CONGRESS, I WONDERED WHY THE SENATE HAS A FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE WHILE THE HOUSE CALLS ITS EQUIVALENT THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE.

I LATER WAS TOLD THAT IT'S BECAUSE SENATORS ARE TOO OLD TO HAVE AFFAIRS.

A MORE IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SENATE AND HOUSE IS THAT EVERY SENATOR REPRESENTS SOME FARMERS AND HAS SOME UNDERSTANDING OF AGRICULTURE. THAT'S SIMPLY NOT THE CASE IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

SUGAR ORGANIZATIONS HAVE DECIDED TO TRY TO HAVE SUGAR CONSIDERED AS PART OF THE OMNIBUS FARM BILL THAT CONGRESS WILL BEGIN CONSIDERING THIS YEAR. THEY ARE AT WORK NOW DRAFTING A NEW PROPOSAL.

THAT OMNIBUS FARM BILL IS SURE TO FACE THE SAME CONSUMER OPPOSITION THAT SUGAR BILLS HAVE. SO WE AGRICULTURAL PEOPLE HAVE A TOUGH JOB AHEAD OF US.

I'D LIKE TO TAKE JUST A FEW MOMENTS NOW TO TALK ABOUT HOW PEOPLE LIKE YOU CAN HELP.

FIRST YOU HAVE TO LET YOUR REPRESENTATIVES KNOW WHAT YOUR CONCERNS ARE AND WHAT SOLUTIONS YOU THINK ARE BEST FOR DEALING WITH PROBLEMS.

YOU CAN DO THAT BY ATTENDING AND SPEAKING UP AT MEETINGS LIKE THIS ONE.

YOU CAN BE ACTIVE IN LOCAL, STATE AND NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS THAT REPRESENT YOUR INTERESTS. THIS COMMUNITY RECENTLY TOOK A BIG STEP FORWARD BY SETTING UP A CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS LIKE THE CATTLEMEN, FARM BUREAU, WHEATGROWERS, AND FARMERS UNION ARE A DRIVING FORCE BEHIND MUCH FARM LEGISLATION. THEY NEED YOUR SUPPORT AND HELP.

YOU NEED TO CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVES DIRECTLY WHEN YOU HAVE PROBLEMS, CONCERNS OR IDEAS.

YOU CAN PICK UP YOUR PHONE AND CALL ME DIRECTLY. I ALWAYS HAVE MONTANA CALLS PUT THROUGH TO ME WHEN I'M IN THE OFFICE.

YOU CAN WRITE. YOUR LETTER DOESN'T HAVE TO BE FANCY. JUST LET YOUR REPRESENTATIVES KNOW WHAT YOU ARE THINKING.

YOU CAN STOP BY MY OFFICES. IN ADDITION TO MY WASHINGTON OFFICE, I HAVE FIVE OFFICES IN MONTANA.

ONE IS IN BILLINGS. THE STAFF AT THESE DISTRICT OFFICES CAN HELP YOU WITH MANY OF THE PROBLEMS YOU MIGHT HAVE WITH FEDERAL AGENCIES.

ANOTHER IMPORTANT THING YOU CAN DO TO IMPROVE THE AGRICULTURAL OUTLOOK IS EDUCATE URBAN PEOPLE ABOUT AGRICULTURAL PROBLEMS.

I KNOW THIS ISN'T EASY. NEVERTHELESS, ALL OF US KNOW SOME URBAN PEOPLE THAT WE CAN TALK TO.

AND WE CAN USE THE PRESS. INDIVIDUALLY AND THROUGH FARM ORGANIZATIONS WE CAN USE TV, MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS TO HELP EXPLAIN FARM PROBLEMS.

I DON'T MEAN TO PAINT TOO BLACK A PICTURE. SOME AGRICULTURAL PROPOSALS HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL.

FOR EXAMPLE, THE PRESIDENT JUST SIGNED A MEAT IMPORT BILL I COSPONSORED. THE BILL WILL SHARPLY RESTRICT HIS ABILITY TO DISRUPT BEEF MARKETS BY SUSPENDING IMPORT QUOTAS. IT WILL ALSO ESTABLISH A COUNTER-CYCLICAL FORMULA THAT SHOULD HELP STABILIZE THE CATTLE CYCLE.

IN THIS CASE, WE WERE ABLE TO CONVINCCE CONSUMERS THAT A STRONG AND STABLE DOMESTIC MARKET FOR BEEF IS IN THEIR BEST INTEREST.

IF WE ALL WORK AT IT, REPRESENTATIVES LIKE MYSELF WILL BE ABLE TO RECOMMEND SOUND FARM LEGISLATION IN THE 1980'S.

AND TOGETHER WE WILL BE ABLE TO GAIN THE SUPPORT OF URBAN PEOPLE AND THEIR REPRESENTATIVES TO GET SUCH LEGISLATION ENACTED.

I KNOW THAT I HAVEN'T TOUCHED ON A LOT OF TOPICS YOU MAY BE INTERESTED IN -- ESPECIALLY THE SOVIET GRAIN EMBARGO.

SO AT THIS TIME, I'D LIKE TO RESPOND DIRECTLY TO ANY QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT HAVE.

- END -