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Farm Statistics

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FARM STATISTICS

In recent years the economic welfare of the farmers has been tossed back and forth like a football. The Secretary of Agriculture speaks of increasing incomes for farmers, reduction in surpluses and reductions in the cost of his farm program. Then the statistical reports prepared by Secretary Benson’s own department tell a completely different story.

Farm prices are 15 percent below the level prevailing when President Eisenhower took office.

Farm surpluses are nearly three times as large as they were in January 1953.

The Federal Government spent more on agriculture in the first four years of the Eisenhower Administration than in the preceding 20 years.

In February 1957 Secretary Benson indicated that organized labor was to blame for this situation when he said, "When there is . . . strong demand for industrial products and a tight labor market, 'soft' settlements of wage disputes are all too frequently made . . . These increased costs are passed forward to consumers in the form of higher prices, and backwards to producers of many raw materials, especially farm products, in the form of lower returns."

However the facts show that the farm family income dropped by $3-1/2 billion between 1952 and 1956, but none of this drop is accounted for by increases in farm production expenses. These expenses were $300 million less in 1956 than in 1952.

Secretary Benson says that exports of farm commodities are running at an all-time high. Again the Departmental statistics show that annual agricultural exports between 1952 and 1956 average 4.7 percent less than annual exports between 1947 and 1952.

The Secretary of Agriculture has indicated on a number of occasions that farm surpluses were under control. This is what the departmental figures show. Commodity Credit Corporation losses between 1933 and 1953 were $1.1 billion. CCC losses between July 1, 1953 and January 31, 1957 were $2.9 billion. The total CCC inventory on January 31, 1953 was $1.09 billion. CCC total inventory on February 28, 1957 was $5.7 billion.

The CCC has three times as much corn on hand now as when Secretary Benson took office: 266,711,000 bushels in January 1953 and 967,122,000 bushels in February 1957.

There were 127,779,000 bushels of wheat in CCC storage in January 1953. In February of this year, 1957, there were 798,918,000 bushels of wheat on hand.

Secretary Benson and I agree that "The family farm has long held an important place in the economic and social life of our country." We do disagree about their present status. The Secretary says that their relative position has not changed. I
disagree, the family farm is disappearing from the American scene. Between 1952 and 1956 the total number of farms in the U. S. decreased by 1,600,000. The Farm population dropped by over 2 million.

During this four year period the farm debt rose $3,3 billion and the farm foreclosure rate doubled. Since 1952 the farm credit interest rates rose 108 percent over the 1947-1949 level.

In regard to the Department of Agriculture's budget, the Secretary says: "We don't want to increase our department by any number of thousands. We only want to have the people we need to carry out the programs for which we have responsibility."

The Department's modest employment increase has amounted to 16,258 persons since 1953 and the budget has risen over $2 billion since 1953.

These facts and figures indicate conclusively that we have a Secretary of Agriculture and a Department under his jurisdiction who tell completely different stories. Isn't it about time this came to an end. It is time that the Secretary of Agriculture recognized the dilemma faced by the small farmer and did something about it besides viewing the situation through rose tinted glasses.

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