

Agriculture Is Not Political, Benson Asserts

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cultural economy fluid, to keep this God-given right of freedom to choice, so we don't freeze agriculture in uneconomic patterns," he added.

"Price times volume determines your gross income. Price is just one factor. Your right to produce in abundance is just as important. Some of our commodities have learned this on price alone. The emphasis on price in the case of cotton priced itself right out of world markets. We've lost our mar-

kets abroad, some at home, due to all this emphasis on price — an artificial price," Mr. Benson asserted in another extension of his script.

Secretary Benson's appearance before the 5000 in the grandstands was important in another way — it was his first major speech since conclusion of the major political party campaigns, and caused him to say, "The farm problem has not changed since this is a political year. . . . Farm people have problems, serious ones. These problems have been brought on in large part by political maneuvering, unwise government policies. They will not be solved by more political maneuvering. They will be solved only by facing facts — by sound thinking, and sound action."

He complimented President Eisenhower on having the political courage to veto, in an election year, the first farm bill produced by Congress this year: "That bill was an economic monstrosity."

"American agriculture is neither Republican nor Democrat. Farm people cannot, and must not, be thought of as a group who may be put on the political auction block. Their problems cannot and will not be solved that way."

"At the same time, Mr. Benson explained, "I am glad this is a presidential election year, and I am not unhappy that some people are choosing to make agricultural problems an issue in the campaign. Out of all the discussion — and even controversy — will come better understanding of farm problems than we have had for a long time. I am confident of the good judgment of farm people — because they know, perhaps better than most, that 'as ye sow so shall ye reap.' We will not resort to nostrums and panaceas for political pressures."

"Our objective is markets. A government warehouse is not a market. I will not support any program which is not to the best interests of the farmers — regardless of political pressures," he said in another added note.

The use of government police powers, to restrain farmers in restricted production, rationed production, "is a sequence of cause and effect that is bitter as gall to me. As a permanent condition in our agriculture, it is no more necessary than it is desirable," he asserted.

High prices in agricultural products came as a result of "the insatiable demands of war; we have the surpluses primarily because we carried wartime incentive price supports too long into the postwar years. We didn't have the political courage to make the change when the war ended." Mr. Benson asserted. Wartime price supports stimulated all-out production, and farmers responded magnificently, but, "in the end, the farmer must pay the price. The Government does not make the price."

"The record is now clear — rigid price fixing shrinks markets, it increases taxes, reduces farm income. In the past two weeks there have been some who seek a return to rigid price fixing," the USDA chief explained.

"We have proven you cannot control production; all you do is chase acres around," — and as a result, Mr. Benson told his audience, production has increased in many lines the Government sought decreases. Surplus stockpiles have a depress price-depressing effect upon markets. "There is not satisfactory substitute for a market," he asserted.

"We've got to fight vigorously — but honestly — for markets in the world. At last our surpluses are on the run and our prices are on the rise. That's what we want," he added in another footnote.

Speaking of the Soil Bank legislation, Mr. Benson told, "Never before has a piece of farm legislation been put into effect as quickly."

"We must avoid, as we would a plague, all price-support schemes or other programs of a kind that would build up sur-



Admiring fancy work on exhibit during Pennsylvania Dutch Days at Hershey last weekend were the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture and Mrs. Ezra Taft Benson, shown above in the arena where scores of displays caught their eyes. (Lancaster Farming Staff Photo by Neill).

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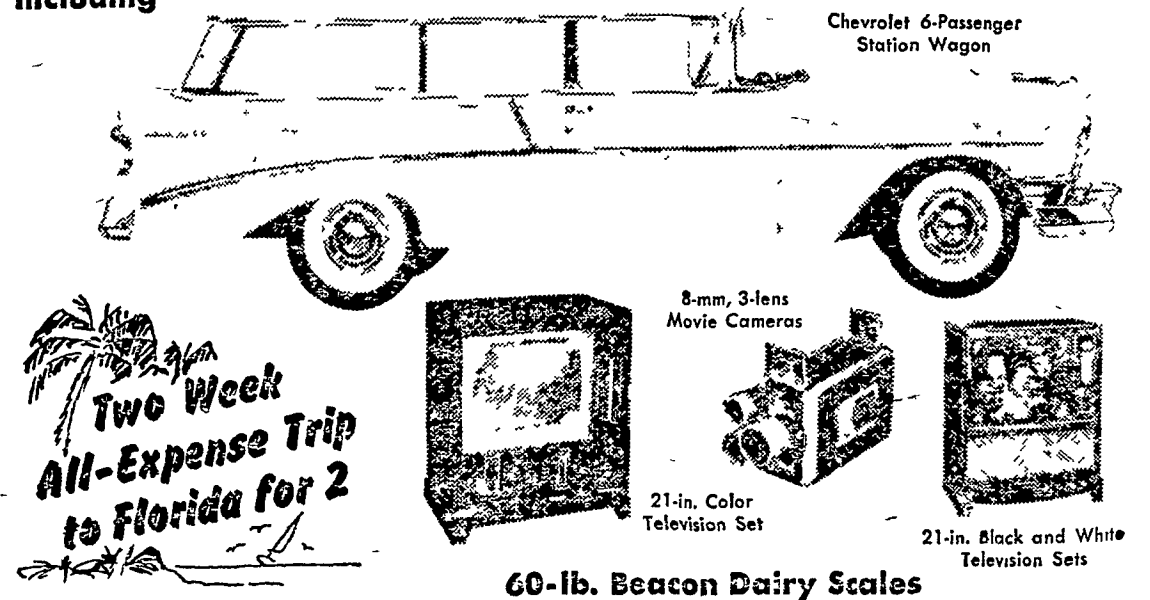
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