

# American Farm Bureau Federation Holds Annual Meeting In K. C.

The head of the nation's largest general farm organization today called for a farm program to provide a transition to a market-oriented farm economy, expansion of farm exports, reorganization of the agricultural research structure, increased voluntary farm marketing and bargaining, and a cut in government spending.

Charles B. Shuman, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, in his annual address to the 1968 convention, said, "We should not waste time and resources in petty arguments over the procedure by which the worn out and discredited government farm programs are dismantled."

Government farm policy, he said, should recognize that the low income problems in agriculture are of two distinctly different kinds — those of the commercial farmers who receive most of their income from farming and those of the part-time, subsistence and rural resident farmers.

For the part-time and subsistence farmers, Shuman suggested a program that might include a combination of grants and loans to assist them in learning new skills, establishing small business enterprises and becoming more productive either in agriculture or some other activity.

For farm families who are in the farming business as their principal source of income, he said programs should be aimed at improving the opportunity for them to earn a satisfactory income in the market place instead of making their production decisions or doling out payments in lieu of fair prices.

However, since control pro-

grams are largely responsible for the present distortions in farm production patterns and current low farm prices, it is reasonable for farmers to expect the government to provide transitional assistance or a reasonable assurance against losses in the adjustment period, he said.

"This transitional assistance," he continued, "could take the form of substantial land retirement programs, indemnity or adjustment payments to compensate for the capitalized value of allotments loans to facilitate orderly marketing and protection against dumping of government held stocks on the market to depress prices."

On expansion of farm exports, Shuman said it is entirely feasible to double agricultural export sales in the next four or five years.

"This can be done if the State Department and the Office of the Special Representative for Trade Negotiations are instructed to immediately begin negotiations with any or all free nations on either a multilateral or unilateral basis.

"Our negotiators must be prepared to demand reciprocal action. If the U.S. is to continue to permit the importation of automobiles, chemicals, wine and steel from the European Common Market countries, we should be assured of access to European markets for our farm products.

"In order to pursue this hard-nosed bargaining policy successfully, it will be necessary for Congress to discontinue direct subsidy payments to farmers. These payments are recognized by foreign nations as a form of export subsidy.

"We must also be willing to resist the demands for import barriers to protect a growing list of agricultural and industrial products which have been meeting increased competition from foreign producers. Trade is a two-way street," he said.

When imports threaten an industry or an important segment of agriculture, the remedy lies in action under the escape clause of the present trade expansion legislation after investi-

gation and a finding of damage by the Tariff Commission.

On agricultural research, Shuman reported that during the past several years the programs of the USDA and experiment stations of the land grant colleges have been allowed to deteriorate.

The USDA, he said, has been preoccupied with its "desperate attempts to make farm programs work and very little attention has been given to the badly needed reorganization of the entire agricultural research structure."

On government spending, Shuman said the principal responsibility for bringing government expenditures into balance with receipts rests upon Congress.

"It is high time," he said, "that members of Congress realize that the irresponsible domestic spending spree which they have been promoting by their liberal appropriations for everything from urban housing to limestone payments for farmers has brought this nation to the brink of financial disaster. The new Congress can balance the federal budget and it should cut

back on spending until this is accomplished."

While government has an essential role to play in helping farmers solve their economic problems," the principal responsibility for improving net farm income must be accepted by farm and ranch people," Shuman said.

Effective, farmer-managed marketing and bargaining affords one means of improving farm income, he said.

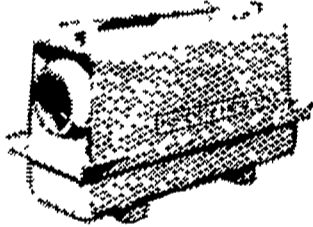
In such efforts, Shuman said, farmers should resist every effort to include government as a participant or supervisor of the marketing programs. Government, he said, instead could provide a favorable climate by defining fair practices and protecting the rights of bargaining associations.

Citing the lessons learned in eight years of bargaining activities by the Farm Bureau, Shuman suggested the following points:

1. Marketing and bargaining must be on a national basis
2. Negotiations for price and other terms of sale should take

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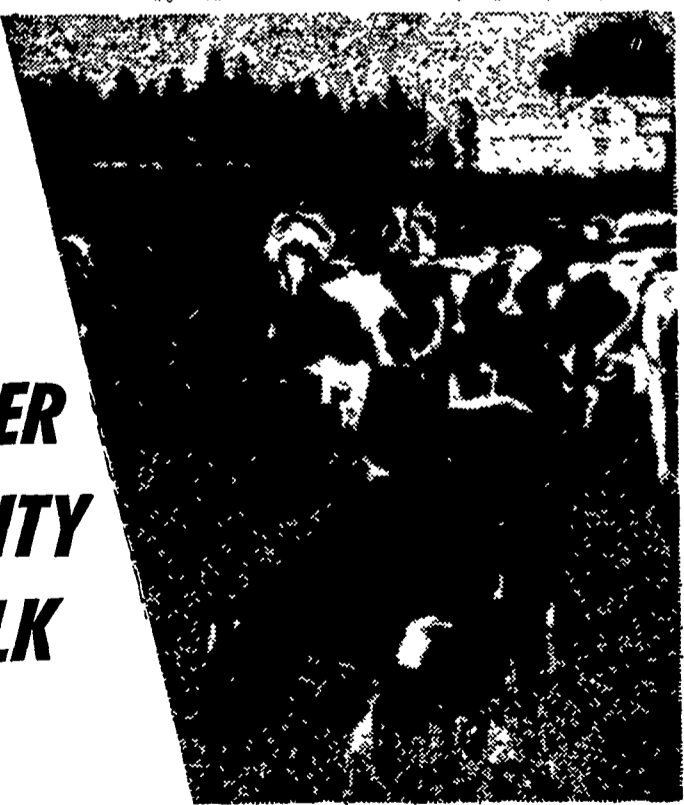

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