

National Farmers Organization Concerned with Grain Sales

U.S. Department of Agriculture sales and releases of grain have damaged farm prices as much or more than the dock strikes, the National Farmers Organization charged today, demanding that all sales of government stocks for either domestic or export use cease until prices rise beyond cost of production level for producers

"USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation has dumped nearly 100 million bushels of grain in the export market since the beginning of the current marketing year," President Oren Lee Staley of NFO charged. "It has dumped 30 million bushels of wheat and feed grains, plus 11½ million bushels of flaxseed, into the domestic market, this marketing year to March 10. (Marketing year begins July 1 for wheat, oats, barley, rye, and flax; begins October 1 for corn and grain sorghum.)

It sold more grain sorghum into the domestic feed market than it took out in corn during the Secretary's much publicized corn purchase program; 14½ million bushels of milo were sold as 13 million bushels of corn were bought.

And it is right now sending more than 20 million bushels of Montana and Dakota wheat to

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Portland and Gulf ports as 'showcase' wheat, ready for quick loading and export, which puts downward pressure on world wheat prices.

The Department's sales policy has done much more damage to farmers than the dock strikes, about which Secretary of Agriculture Butz has been ranting from the stump. Wheat export volume of grain dumped into the markets by the CCC which should have come out of the commercial grain supply

It is clear that the Department does not want higher grain prices. They admitted in congressional hearings that they had not pressed or attempted to work out with ship owners an offer by dock strikers to load out wheat during the strike. The Administration wasn't apparently eager to get grain moving.

The Secretary indicated that he was satisfied with current prices when he discontinued his corn purchase program in February

The record shows that the Department is making the Russian feed grain sale completely meaningless to farmer producers by dumping Commodity Credit Corporation stocks, or calling up resealed grain, to fill the order instead of letting it come out of free supplies.

The Department claims credit for killing a bill to raise price support loans 25 per cent. The Secretary has publicly stated, in effect, that some members of the Senate Agricultural Committee were bought off with campaign contributions. He killed the Smith-Melcher bill in the Senate Committee, he told the Washington Star, by contacting the 'financial angels' of some committee members and having them line up their senators against it

This is just as shocking and improper as the ITT influencing an antitrust case with a large

convention contribution, as has been alleged in Senate hearings. The only difference is that a Secretary in the President's Cabinet has revealed the facts instead of a columnist. Yet nothing has been done to determine if the 'financial angels' involved were Dr. Butz's old colleagues and associates in the integrated hog and broiler business, who want cheap feed. Are they the real architects of the cheap feed policy?

Producers have placed hundreds of millions of bushels of their 1971 feed and wheat crops in storage under loan to keep it out of the market and strengthen the prices that are now bankrupting them, but grain is leaking out of the government stocks like they were stored in a sieve

There is no recourse but for farmers to rely on whatever strength they have to reverse the current cheap grain policy.

We demand that all sales in government grain for either domestic or export use, be halted until grain prices rise at least to the resale price level as prescribed by law for domestic sales, so government stocks can no longer be used to hold the market at or below the support loan level.

We demand that Secretary Butz name the 'financial angels' who helped him kill the Smith-Melcher bill, and if he does not, that he be required to do so by Congress.

Agri-business giants who want cheap feed regardless of family farm bankruptcies should not be allowed to control farm program administration in their own financial interests with campaign gifts," Staley concluded.

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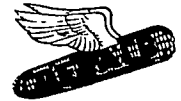
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