

Kuhfuss Addresses Farm Bureau

Imposition of price and wage controls by the new Congress could trigger cutbacks in food output by farmers and ranchers, a national farm leader related recently.

Addressing the opening session of the 56th annual meeting of the American Farm Bureau Federation in the Rivergate Convention Center, William J. Kuhfuss, president of the Federation, expressed concern over recommendations of Congressional leaders for bringing back ceilings on food prices.

"Government price ceiling at any level of the food pipeline put a lid on returns to farmers. Livestock producers still find themselves in a loss position due to the effects of the 1973 price controls," Kuhfuss said.

"Hog and poultry producers have begun a cutback in production as the result of depressed prices in

the face of high production costs. Cattle feeding operations have been cut severely and culling and marketing of older cows for slaughter increased in 1974. The percentage of the calf crop marketed for slaughter also increased significantly last year. Livestock is the balance wheel for agriculture. Roughly 80 percent of our feed grains are marketed through livestock.

"Government interference in the operation of the market in the form of price controls in 1973 seriously disrupted livestock production cycles. If the government refrains from repeating such interference, the market will make needed adjustments and both farmers and consumers will be better off than they would be under price controls.

"Grain producers have lost confidence in politicians who bowed to pressures from

domestic users of farm commodities and allowed embargoes to be put on soybean exports in 1973 and thus threatened future export markets. This experience will cause farmers to hesitate to increase production this year unless there is definite assurance before planting time from the Administration and Congress that export controls will not be invoked on 1975 crops," Kuhfuss said.

With production costs such as fertilizer and seed at record highs, producers cannot afford to be shut out of the world markets. We are part of the world market and the world economy, the farm leader said.

"Freedom from trade restraints is the best incentive that can be provided for the increased U.S. grain production that is sorely needed for both domestic and foreign markets.

"A high level of agricultural exports is needed not only to provide markets for American farmers, but also to help pay for needed imports of oil and other products. Labor and business likewise have a great stake in world trade. Every \$1 billion of exports creates 40,000 to 50,000 jobs in service industries and agricultural exports amounted to \$21.3 billion in fiscal 1974.

In referring to the threat of price controls, Kuhfuss pointed out that Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield has proposed legislation to give President Ford authority to impose controls on every segment of the economy. House Speaker Carl B. Albert, he reported, recently proposed a New Deal type of economic relief

program and said that the time may soon come when the government will have to invoke price and wage controls.

"It is obvious that such recommendations are politically motivated," Kuhfuss said, "as some members of Congress seek to placate consumers about higher costs of everything they buy through invoking price controls.

"There is a real danger that Congress will embark on a wide range of inflationary spending programs and then use price and wage controls as a coverup and a diversion of public attention from the basic cause of inflation - government deficit spending. Such spending can only add to our double-digit inflation.

"The same Congressmen who express alarm over rising food prices and call for government price controls fail to express concern over the endless increases in wages gained by organized labor which have been a contributing factor to widening retail food margins.

"Some of these politicians are seeking a return to a cheap food policy with huge federal subsidies to farmers to compensate them for lower market prices.

"Farm Bureau, the largest general farm organization in the nation with 2.3 million member families, has this message for Congressmen who want to bring back the discredited farm subsidy programs: farmers and

ranchers have a right to seek a fair return in the market place and a right not to be dependent on the federal treasury for handouts to supplement family farm income.

"Farmers and ranchers can and will meet increasing demand at home and abroad for food, but only if they have an opportunity to receive a fair return for their labor and investment in a free market. We do not need more government regulations to interfere with production and add to the cost of doing business. We need less taxes, less waste, less politics and more statesmanship from our legislators and an assurance that producers will have freedom to buy and sell.

"It is time to quit playing

politics with inflation. Inflation has reached avalanche proportions in the past two decades, both here and around the world, and stern measures will be necessary just to slow it down. Some adjustments will be painful, but actions to stop inflation must be taken or the alternative is a continuing erosion of our economic strength, increasing unemployment, and an ultimate deflation that could be a national disaster.

"One way Congress can cut spending is to stop creating new federal agencies and thus halt costly additions to payrolls. Every new government agency swells the already bloated federal payrolls, puts a new

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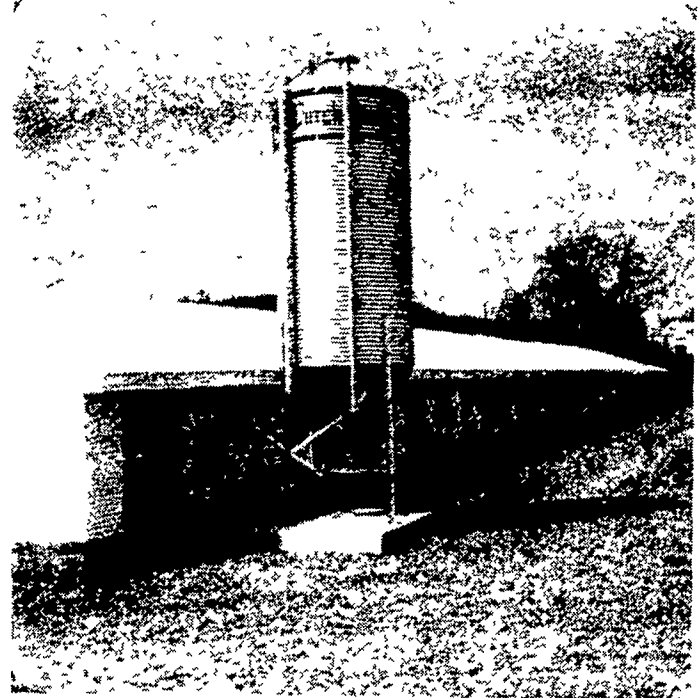
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