

# Butz addresses York meeting

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distributing food and fibre. This is part of the agribusiness complex. And we do it very well in this country. I make no apology for it. I think it's a wonderful organization. When I was a youngster on a farm back in northern Indiana . . . you ask 'how long ago was that . . . well, I was born in 1909 . . .

that makes me 66 now and . . . well, like George Goodling, there's plenty of life left in us yet because I'm identically the same age as Wilbur Mills." (The audience burst out with laughter, as they had done several times previously.)

"When I was a youngster there were 40 per cent of us on farms in America . . . now five per cent or less. If we had known when I was a youngster how to make radios and TV's and nice air-conditioned automobiles and air conditioning for our homes, bathtubs and central heating and all that stuff, if we had . . . we had none of that, I didn't grow up with five rooms and a bath . . . I grew up with four rooms and a bath. On those cold mornings like this you learn how to do things in a hurry. If we had known how to do that (build modern conveniences, etc.) we couldn't have spared the man-power to do it — we had to have them on the farm with a pair of plow handles in their hands. We were so inefficient in this whole food business that it took almost half of us to feed the other half, and then not very well.

"Now in the short span of a lifetime come to the position where we do this tremendous feeding job for Americans and millions and millions beyond our shores with just a shirt-tail full of man-power and a relatively small input of resources. And we feed our people in this country for about 17 per cent of their take-home pay. I think that's pretty good. And a lot of people criticize us. They say food costs are high . . . they're always going to say that.

"Seventeen per cent of take-home pay — less than any other nation any place on the face of the Earth . . . and we feed them better too! In that 17 per cent . . . the food . . . you have all that built-in 'maid service.' Frozen TV dinners, they don't come for cheap; we process almost 60 per cent of our potatoes in America now . . . that's not for free . . . somebody gets paid for doing that. In that 17 per cent we have over a third of the meals eaten outside the home in America. That's not for free.

"When these people get to rearin' up and say that somebody is rippin' off by charging too much for food, let's make a few comparisons:

The only other nation in the world that's under 20 per cent is Canada . . . they're at 19. The best nations in Europe are 22 to 28. In Russia it's 35 to 40 per cent. You make the "great leap" forward in China and it takes 75 to 80 per cent. "We're doing pretty well . . . and because we spend such a small share of our income for food, we're a nation with over 90 per cent of our families owning an automobile, two-thirds of them have two automobiles. Two TV sets. Most of the stuff isn't good enough for one (referring to TV programming).

"We can afford that because we feed ourselves with just a

small share of our total productive effort. That's what this tremendous American agricultural plant and agribusiness have done. They've worked together. And when these demagogues . . . I've got other words for them sometimes . . . and you had one recently as Secretary of Agriculture in Pennsylvania here . . . (laughter, again) try to set one sector against the other . . . they're doing a great disservice to the whole food industry in America.

"Obviously you believe what I'm saying — you're nodding your heads. I'm preaching to the converted . . . I got the wrong crowd here. Like the preacher on Sunday morning — the guys he ought to reach are on the golf course, or by the ski slope this time of year.

"Food is the only thing left in American society we pay cash for . . . we sign a slip for anything else. And therefore once a week or twice a week the housewife goes to the check-out counter and thinks 'if I just didn't have to pay cash for this I could buy a new record or another TV set for the rec room in the basement.'

"The most popular committee in the House of Representatives a year ago was the House Committee on Agriculture. Twice, Speaker Albert enlarged that committee to make room for people who wanted on it. There are members on that committee who don't even have a greenhouse in their district. But they wanted on the House Committee of Agriculture. Why?

"The first goal of nearly every newly-elected congressman is to become a senator. The best way to do that is to get in front of the TV camera. The best way to get in front of the camera is to demagogue the food issue, because every housewife thinks you're great if you're going to give'em cheaper food. The best platform for that is the House Committee on Agriculture. That's what I put up with down there. Some of those characters wouldn't recognize the working end of a cow.

We got a PR job here in American agriculture. I just want to discuss a few things with you now that I think are on the plus side.

"We've got the most positive food policy we've had in years. It's a policy we can describe in a single word: PLENTY. A sharp contrast to the 40-year program of quotas and allotments and cut-backs and curtailment . . . of holding this great agricultural machine in check in a world that needs food, we've turned it around. A policy of heavy government payments, a policy of you fellows going down after dark to the ASCS office to pickup your check — you were kind of ashamed to get it — and sent it in by mail because you didn't want anybody see you depositing that . . . a policy where four years ago we were spending four-billion dollars a

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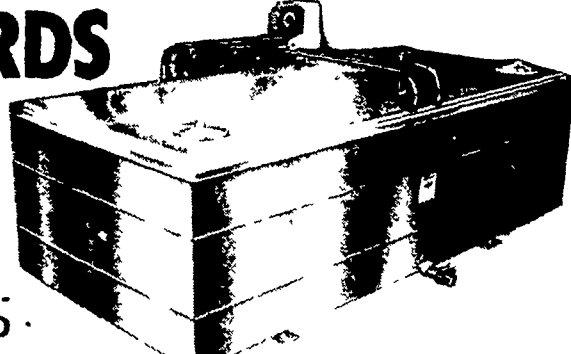
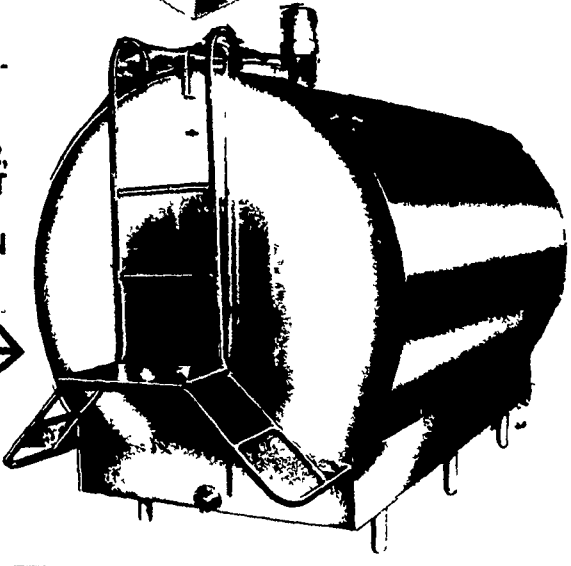
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