

# Bergland cites rural poverty

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland recently told delegates to the Conference on Rural America here that despite recent population growth in rural areas, "rural people still have the highest percentage levels of poverty, the poorest housing, the most inadequate medical care, and the least access to public transportation."

He said the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Administration were determined "to develop a new national strategy for meeting these problems through a comprehensive

and coordinated rural development program."

The secretary said that elements of this program were:

- Reorganization of USDA's Rural Development Service so that it works more closely with programs of the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA), which has budgeted programs for rural development;

- A 20 per cent increase in fiscal 1978 program budget for the Farmers Home Administration - to \$8.2 billion;
- Redirection of FmHA

insured lending to families of low and moderate incomes;

- An FmHA rent supplement program that will provide subsidies for 20,000 rental units with renters paying 25 per cent of their income as rent with the government making up the difference.

Bergland said that, "Despite the fact that the FmHA budget is up 2500 per cent over 1961, we have never as a nation had a real rural America policy or

strategy since the enactment of the Homestead Act more than 100 years ago.

"We have had some earnest and sincere attempts to understand rural America's problems. But it has been a piecemeal effort - with no unified and comprehensive national policy or even a complete understanding of the magnitude of the problem.

"We intend to use our administrative authorities to the fullest in developing such a strategy."

## Injunction issued

FRESNO, Calif. - Farm Bureau has won the first round in its fight against the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation over proposed acreage limitation regulations on land irrigated from USBR projects.

A preliminary injunction restricting Secretary of Interior Cecil B. Andrus and R. Keith Higginson, commissioner of USBR, from continuing rulemaking proceedings was granted in district court by Judge M.D. Crocker.

The American Farm Bureau and California Farm Bureau Federations had filed suit against Andrus and Higginson in an effort to delay their proposed rulemaking under a 75-year-old law restricting one person to owning no more than 160 acres in USBR projects.

In the injunction, Judge Crocker ordered the defendants to prepare and publicly circulate an adequate environmental impact statement. The judge ordered the defendants to allow interested parties a reasonable opportunity to comment both on the impact statement and the proposed regulations.

Andrus and Higginson also were ordered to reconsider the proposed regulations and make appropriate revisions as indicated by the impact statement and comments.

Farm Bureau contended in the suit that Andrus and Higginson were violating the law by not filing an environmental impact statement before publishing the proposed regulations in the Federal Register last August.

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