

Rural Americans are sometimes shortchanged

ATLANTA, Ga. - U.S. Senator Herman E. Talmadge charged recently that rural America is being "shortchanged" on some government activities and

said that farm families are entitled to "economic opportunities and a quality of life on par with the rest of the population."

Speaking to a National

Conference of state and local 4-H leaders, Talmadge cited two recent studies by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that he said provide "dramatic evidence of the shortchanging of rural America."

One study cited by the Georgia Senator showed that per capita spending for all traceable domestic Federal activities was substantially higher in metropolitan areas than in rural areas. Per-person Federal spending in Fiscal 1976 - the year covered in the study - was \$1,555 in metropolitan areas compared to \$1,271 in rural communities.

A separate study, Talmadge said, showed that all government expenditures for public education was more than one third greater for students in metropolitan schools than for those in rural schools.

"The study found that rural children are being treated as second-class citizens in virtually every educational aspect - in teachers, in facilities, in

services, and in revenue," Talmadge said.

"Whether intentional or not, this amounts to discrimination of a cruel sort," he added. "It should not be permitted to exist in this country. Where it does exist, it should be pulled out by the roots."

Talmadge, who is chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry and a Congressional champion of rural development legislation, told the 4-H leaders that American farm families should be on an "equal footing in our National economy" with the non-farm sector, but that this is often not the case.

"As in any business, farmers must earn a profit in order to stay in business," Talmadge said. "Just as any other segment of our society, farmers want to provide a better life for their families and an education for their children."

"In order to do this, farmers must be assured of a fair price for the com-

modities they produce in terms of prices they must pay.

"The financial strength of American agriculture is vital to the economic well-being of America. Agriculture remains this Nation's single largest business enterprise, and one out of every four jobs in this country is in some way related to agriculture."

"Indeed, the American farmer may well hold the destiny of the world in his hands. Farmers account for fewer than four percent of the national population. Yet, they provide enough food and fiber that make our people the best fed and best clothed in the world - and at very reasonable prices. Our farmers also supply much of the world's food requirements."

"The standard of living that we Americans enjoy is due in no small part to this phenomenal productivity and efficiency of the family farmers."

"The miracle of American agriculture is that we are able to feed a constantly increasing number of the world's people with a constantly decreasing number of producers."

"It is imperative that we maintain the conditions and programs that will enable American farmers to continue their production miracle," Talmadge said.

Talmadge had high praise for the 4-H youth program and for its leaders for

adapting the organization to social changes in America. While 4-H clubs were once almost exclusively a rural and small town activity, Talmadge said the program is now directed as well toward metropolitan areas - including inner-city and minority young people.

Talmadge noted that many national youth organizations have declined in recent years, while 4-H participation has continued to grow. He said membership had increased from approximately one million when he was a teen-age 4-H'er, to some 5.5 million last year. He said urban 4-H membership had doubled in the past five years.

With the current demands for reduced government spending, Talmadge said some questions may be raised about continued Federal funding of the National 4-H program, which is part of USDA's Extension Service activities.

"No member of Congress is more dedicated than I am to reducing runaway government spending and to eliminating unnecessary Federal programs," Talmadge said. "But I can assure you that I stand unalterably opposed to any attempts to apply meat-axe reductions to Extensions funding for 4-H."

"In my view, 4-H remains one of this country's most unique and valuable programs directed to young people."

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Dairy goat meeting set

NORRISTOWN - All interested boys and girls ages 8 to 19 are invited to attend the next meeting of the Silver Pails 4-H Dairy Goat Club to be held November 13, at 7:30 p.m. at the Montgomery County 4-H Center.

A special program on "Goat Registration - How, Why & Who" will be presented by Ruth Seber, breeder of Limerick. In addition to this session, any new members will be welcomed,

project books explained, and club officers elected.

All young people interested in dairy goats are welcomed. One does not need to currently own a goat but should plan to obtain one in the future. Parents are encouraged to attend this meeting.

The 4-H Center is located on Snyder Road off Route 363 near Lansdale. For further information one can call the 4-H office at 215-277-0574.

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