

(Continued from Page A10)

perity that characterized much of the last decade for many Americans. In addition, as a result of poor commodity prices, reduced market competition and opportunity, and natural disasters, agricultural producers continue to be caught in an economic crisis. In response, Congress committed to address the long and continued economic hardship in rural America through the 2001 budget act and the farm bill enacted less than one year ago.

We believe the severe reductions in agricultural spending required by the House Budget Committee's proposal clearly suggest that some in Congress are willing to renege on that longterm commitment to agriculture.

In an attempt to achieve a balanced budget in the future while accommodating the majority of the President's new tax cut and economic growth initiative, the Committee resolution requires substantial reductions in both mandatory and discretionary spending that supports a wide

range of federal agriculture programs.

The Budget Committee approach would require \$19.17 billion in mandatory and discretionary program cuts. This represents in excess of a 25 percent reduction in the additional resources Congress provided to enhance the economic safety net, nutrition programs, resource conservation, and rural development. Compliance with the reconciliation instructions would require the House Agriculture Committee to reduce authorized Farm Bill spending by approximately 10 percent in the next 10 years.

We believe it is disingenuous to suggest that a balanced budget coupled with substantial tax reductions achieved at the expense of farmers, ranchers, and their communities represent our national priorities for economic growth.

We urge you to reject the

Committee's fiscal year 2004 federal budget proposal and support fulfilling the commitments made by Congress to our nation's farmers and ranchers. Thanks for your consideration of these issues.

Sincerely.

National Farmers Union American Farm Bureau Feder-

American Beekeepers Federation

American Corn Growers Association

American Sheep Industry Association

Burley Tobacco Growers Co-

operative Association

Intertribal Agriculture Council National Association of Farmer-Elected Committees

National Association of State

Departments of Agriculture National Association of Wheat

Growers

National Grange National Milk Producers Fed-

Northeast States Association for Agricultural Stewardship Southeast Dairy Farmers Asso-

Soybean Producers of America Western United Dairymen

- National Farmers Union

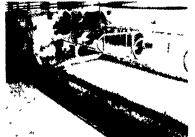
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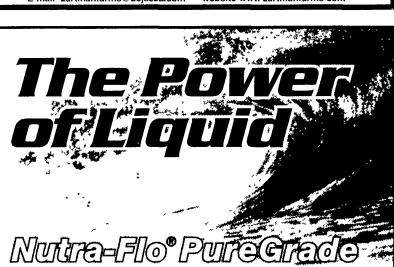
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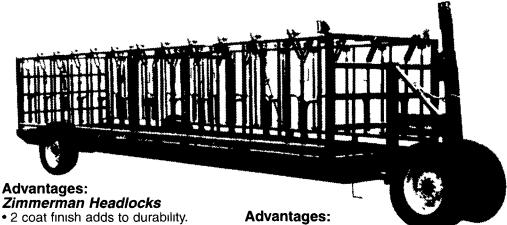
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