11-14-1955

Statement before Senate Agriculture Committee

Strom Thurmond

Follow this and additional works at: https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/strom

Materials in this collection may be protected by copyright law (Title 17, U.S. code). Use of these materials beyond the exceptions provided for in the Fair Use and Educational Use clauses of the U.S. Copyright Law may violate federal law.

For additional rights information, please contact Kirstin O'Keefe (kokeefe [at] clemson [dot] edu)

For additional information about the collections, please contact the Special Collections and Archives by phone at 864.656.3031 or via email at cuscl [at] clemson [dot] edu

Recommended Citation
Thurmond, Strom, "Statement before Senate Agriculture Committee" (1955). Strom Thurmond Collection, Mss100. 1314.
https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/strom/1314

For additional information about the collection, please contact the Special Collections and Archives by phone at 864.656.3031 or via email at cuscl [at] clemson [dot] edu

This Speeches is brought to you for free and open access by the Manuscript Collections at TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in Strom Thurmond Collection, Mss100 by an authorized administrator of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact kokeefe@clemson.edu.
Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen of the Committee:

I would like to express my gratitude to you/him or her for this opportunity to express my views on the most perplexing economic problem confronting our nation. This problem is to provide our farmers with a fair income for their labors. During the Congressional recess, I have had the privilege of addressing a number of farm organizations and discussing farm problems with hundreds of farmers and farm leaders from border to border in South Carolina.

Every meeting and discussion has led me to the inescapable conclusion that our farmers are dangling from the horns of a twin dilemma—rising production costs and falling agriculture prices. The farmer's livelihood is constantly endangered by this dilemma from which no escape has yet been found.

Our nation's agricultural leaders and experts are—I believe—earnestly trying to come to grips with these problems. But thus far, no one has been able to come forward with an adequate solution to them.

I cannot today provide a cure-all answer to the problems which beset our farmers. I do believe, however, that I have some ideas that will aid the Senate Agriculture Committee in drafting legislation during the coming session of Congress.

Our farm problem must not be kicked around like a football for political gain by either party or any person. My sincere hope is that both political parties will work together in the best interests of the farmer. Political gain cannot be considered when the welfare of the nation's farmers is at stake. Any man of any political party who is willing to capitalize on the...
Suffering of our farmers for political gain is not worthy to be a public servant.

Permit me to suggest six major points which I hope the Committee will consider:

1. **Support of Basic Farm Crops at Not Less Than 90% of Parity.**
   
   Even if this is done, our farmers still receive, on the average, less than ½ as much income as persons engaged in other lines of endeavor. If producers are willing to make an honest effort to adjust production to consumption, there appears no sound reason to refuse the farmers this consideration. Let it be said to the credit of the farmers of South Carolina, that they have voted overwhelmingly for the acreage reduction program -- over 97% for it. We should continue to favor 90 per cent of parity on the basic crops until someone comes up with a better idea of insuring our farmers against price drops for their money crops such as cotton, tobacco, corn, wheat, peanuts, and rice. At the present time tobacco is the only crop on a permanent 90 per cent of parity basis. You have a House-approved bill now before your Committee that would restore rigid price supports for a period of three years. I have introduced a bill that would restore these supports on a permanent basis. If the Committee cannot agree to bring out this bill permanently restoring rigid supports, it should approve immediately the three-year bill already passed by the House and now pending in your Committee. I am sure it would receive swift approval on the floor of the Senate.

2. **Increase of Sales of Farm Produce On Foreign Markets.**

As a result of our price support system and our continual loss of world markets, the Federal Government has accumulated huge stockpiles of farm surpluses in Commodity Credit Corporation warehouses. In approaching a solution to our farm problems, one of the first steps to be taken must be...
to be taken must be the establishment of an orderly program for disposing of government surpluses.

One of the most feasible plans for disposing of these surpluses is to be found through increased sales on the world markets, which in recent years we have been rapidly losing.

However, I was pleased to note Secretary of Agriculture Benson's statement of November 9 that, in the first nine months of 1955, one-third more CCC surpluses were disposed of overseas than during the same period of 1954. These sales have reached a total of one billion 300 million dollars.

Now let us consider the cotton surplus as an illustration of the problem. We have approximately 8 million bales of cotton in government warehouses and by the end of this year we may have 4 million or more additional bales. At the same time, our share of the world markets for this great money crop for South Carolina and many other Southern States, has dwindled from 60 per cent to less than 30 per cent of the world total. It is in danger of being lost altogether. Cotton acreage in this country has been reduced 25% million acres in 1953 to 17 million acres in 1955. By reason of the drastic acreage cut in 1955 alone, 55,000 cotton farm families were put out of business. An additional 130,000 farmers already making less than $1,000 per year were reduced to an income of less than $900 per year. Senator Eastland of Mississippi and I, with the support of 60 Senate colleagues, have introduced a bill which we believe will help the Government cope with this grave situation confronting our cotton farmers. It has two purposes: To assure cotton sales in the world market at competitive
prices and to establish quotas on imported foreign manufactured cotton goods.

A program of this nature is essential if we are to prevent complete disruption of the economy of the cotton-producing and manufacturing areas of this country. South Carolina, as you know, is a leader in both of these functions which are so vital to our national economy. I advocate increasing world sales on an orderly basis not only for our cotton surpluses, but also for other crops which are so vital to our economy, such as tobacco, corn, grains and dairy products.

3. **Improvement of Domestic Marketing System For Farm Produce.** I believe it is imperative to improve our domestic marketing system of farm produce throughout the United States. Last summer cantaloupes which sold at 3 cents each in South Carolina were sold in Washington for 35 cents each. This is a deplorable situation which should be remedied. Growers must get more of the profit out of the crops they produce.

4. **Expansion of Agricultural Research To Enable The Farmer To Produce At a Lower Cost.** I favor more expenditures for expanded research projects and extension services such as those at Clemson College to teach our farmers how to produce their crops for less money. Increased research is vital to secure greater knowledge on the use of fertilizer, methods for fighting insects, diseases, soil erosion, marketing, etc. Certainly one way to offset the problem of rising prices on farm implements and supplies is to find methods of reducing the costs of raising the crops. With the farmer paying more and getting less, he must learn to produce at a lower cost.
5. Study Of Acreage Allotment System For More Equitable Acreage Distribution. We must arrive at a system for allocating acreage allotments on cotton and tobacco that will be most satisfactory to the greatest number of farmers. Much of the mail I have received has been on this subject. A study should be made of our family-size farms under the acreage allotment system. Under the present setup, acreage restrictions are driving some small-acreage farmers off the land. Others are being pushed into marginal operations.

6. Improvement Of Disaster Relief Program. Recent natural disasters such as floods, droughts and freezes have cost farmers millions of dollars. We must improve our disaster relief programs. Drought aid should be extended to cover hogs, poultry and farm workstock as well as cattle. Legislation should be enacted to provide assistance to cover farm animals affected by a shortage of feed grains as a result of natural disasters.

7. Payments To Farmers For Retiring Acreage Growing Price-Supported Crops. If the diverted acreage is planted in legumes or other soil-conserving crops, a larger payment should be allowed than if this is not done. This proposal is not a complete solution, but it is believed the reduction in acreage would aid greatly in avoiding large surpluses, thereby relieving the government of the expense of disposing of the same. If such a plan is adopted, it would be preferable for it to be tried on a voluntary basis -- a voluntary plan is more desirable than a mandatory one -- however, if it should not function properly on a voluntary basis, then compulsion may have to be used, and the Secretary of Agriculture
should be given the needed authority to make it work.

During the past session, I joined Senator Russell and several other Senators in introducing legislation that would have given relief to thousands of peach farmers in South Carolina, Georgia, and other states who lost their crops as a result of an early-season freeze. This bill would have granted temporary additional crop acreage to these farmers. Had the bill passed, such farmers would have been authorized to grow a substitute money crop to provide a livelihood for their families and farm workers. This bill was approved by your Committee and by the Senate. The House Agriculture Committee tabled the bill. Legislation of this type is just as needed as ever and should be enacted as soon as possible.

I am happy to inform you that the Agriculture Department has agreed, at my urging, to negotiate a peach crop insurance program with South Carolina peach growers. It is hoped that such a pilot program will be available to our peach growers in 1957.

As I conclude these remarks, let me urge as I know you will, to give thorough study to any suggestions which might be made by the agriculture leaders you will hear during the course of these hearings. It is not difficult for any of us to recognize the problems existent in agriculture. It is extremely difficult to arrive at workable solutions to these problems. Nobody knows the practical approach to their consideration like the farmer himself.

Also permit me to commend the Agriculture Committee for the interest and time it has devoted to the problems of the farmer during this year. With unity of purpose, I am confident that adjustments can be made in agricultural laws which will improve the lot of the farmer in this State and Nation.