During the past week, I was greatly disturbed to hear reports from South Carolina that some farmers were being told they could not enter their farms under the soil bank program because all acreage allocations in certain counties had been used up before they made their applications.

The policy of the Department of Agriculture is to operate on a first-come, first-served basis in taking applications. Thus, if a farmer failed to get in line early enough, he was told that no more funds or acreage was available after he had waited long hours in line.

I sent a telegram to the Secretary of Agriculture urging him to investigate the situation in South Carolina immediately.

Also, I told him he should request Congress to appropriate sufficient funds to take care of all the farmers, not just the first ones in line to sign up for the soil bank.

Meanwhile, I urged that he divide the available acreage and funds among all applicants for the soil bank benefits. Such pro-rating of funds and acreage allocated to each county would be a fair and an equitable way to take care of everybody until additional funds are made available.

Senator Ellender, chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, questioned Secretary Benson at my request when the Secretary appeared before the Senate Committee. I regret that the Secretary did not indicate any plan to change the present
procedures of the Agriculture Department in connection with the soil bank program. However, I shall continue to do everything possible to see to it that every farmer who desires to enter a part of his farm in the soil bank has the privilege of doing so. I hope that the Secretary finds a way of doing this without additional legislation. If he does not, I shall seek action by the Agriculture Committee.

As an advocate of economy in Government, I voted against the bill approved by the Senate to provide an extravagant retirement fund for ex-Presidents of the United States. I do feel that former Presidents should receive an adequate retirement, but I could not agree with the bill presented to the Senate. This bill provided for a $25,000 per year retirement, plus $90,000 per year salaries for a staff, plus office space and free postage. I simply could not agree there is any necessity for a former President to receive $90,000 a year for a staff. Senators Byrd of Virginia and Lausche of Ohio and I were the only Senators who spoke out against this appropriation.

On Thursday, Governor Timmerman appealed to me to do what I could to restore funds for the blind and needy which had been cut out of a deficiency appropriations bill by the House of Representatives. I immediately wrote to the Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee urging him to ask his Committee to restore the reduction in funds when the House bill is considered.
I do not feel that our blind and needy old people should be the target of an economy move. I feel there are many other places where greater economy should be practiced — such as for foreign aid and in bills/to provide huge retirements for former Presidents. I hope the Senate will restore the House reduction in this welfare appropriation/ and I hope the advocates of the reduction will be as ardent in their efforts/to find other places to reduce really non-essential expenditures.

I have now been assigned to the subcommittees/on the principal Committees of which I am a member in the Senate.

On the Labor and Public Welfare Committee, I am chairman of the Veterans subcommittee/ and a member of the Railroad Retirement subcommittee.

On the Senate Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee, I am a member of the Communications subcommittee and of the special subcommittee on Automobile Marketing Practices on which I served in 1955 and 1956.

My third principal Committee is Government Operations, and I am on the Reorganization subcommittee. This subcommittee deals with the Hoover Commission recommendations/ and all matters relating to reorganizing for economy and efficiency. I am well pleased with these assignments. Each one is important/ and offers fine opportunities for service.

This is Strom Thurmond in Washington. Thank you for listening and this station for making this time available each week.

- END -