MR. PRESIDENT:

It has been a matter of serious concern to me that Congress has reached this advanced point in the session without the enactment of a general farm bill. The time for adjournment is almost upon us, and legislation is urgently needed to insure that the position of the farmer -- already poor -- will not rapidly get worse.

I recognize the difficulties in drawing up such legislation. The problems of the farmer are complex. They are not the same problems in all sections of the country. It is always a difficult task to write sound, long-range farm legislation which will meet with general approval in Congress.

I recognize, too, that many members of Congress have kept the farm problem in the forefront of their thinking and have been working diligently to bring suitable farm legislation to the floor. As a temporary measure, Congress passed a joint resolution in March, calling for a stay of any reduction in support prices or acreage allotments. The purpose of the resolution was to maintain the farmer's standard of living while work proceeded on measures of a more permanent nature. I was both alarmed and disappointed when the President vetoed that salutary resolution.

During the five years from 1952 to 1957, the deterioration of the farm position can be documented by the following facts, among others:
1. During the five year period, farm prices declined 16 per cent.

2. Realized net farm income declined 19 per cent.

3. The purchasing power of farm income declined 23 per cent.

4. Farm population declined 12 per cent from 24,283,000 in 1952 to 20,396,000 in 1957.

5. In 1957, the returns to all farm workers for their labor and management reached a low of 69 cents per hour, while the average wage of industrial workers reached a high of $2.07 per hour.

I am glad that American industrial workers are sharing as they are in the fruits of production. I hope that they will continue to maintain their high standard of living. The farmer, like the industrial worker, has been increasing his productivity, but, unlike the industrial worker, the farmer's increased productivity has not been rewarded. It is time that we take constructive steps to bring the income of the farmer more in line with his productivity, and more nearly on a par with the income of the industrial worker.

With the conditions which I have mentioned handicapping the farmer, it is small wonder that 12 per cent of the Americans who lived on farms in 1952 had moved off the farms by 1957.

There are those who say that this is as it should be -- that over-production on the farm should be eliminated by abandoning the farms, and that we should tell the farmer who fails to support himself on the farm to go out and find himself a job in industry.
This over-simplified solution is heartless, unrealistic under present conditions, and, in the long run, it is unsound.

It is heartless because it is shabby treatment for the people who love the land and labor on it, and who deserve a fair reward for their toil. It is unrealistic because it would throw on the industrial labor market men who are untrained and inexperienced in factory work to compete for jobs with the skilled workers. It is an unsound policy to abandon the farms because, in the long run, a strong agricultural economy is essential to the well-being of the whole nation.

Our nation's farmers will be called upon, in years to come, to produce the food, the cotton, and the wool, to feed and clothe our expanding population. In the event of war, we will call upon our farmers -- as we have called upon them in past emergencies -- to expand their production quickly. The nation's farms are as much a part of our war mobilization base as our steel mills.

I am particularly concerned about the plight of the small farmer. He has been described too often, in recent years, as a "marginal" farmer, because he is not as productive as the large-scale mechanized farmer. In times of depression on the farms, the small farmer is the first to be affected and the last to recover.

Nevertheless, the small farmer is needed and deserves a better fate than to be forced off his land. It has been estimated that agriculture serves as a basis for 35 to 40 per cent of the jobs of all workers in this country, even though only 12 per cent of the people make their living directly from the farm. It is important
to the total economy that the purchasing power represented by the farm population be maintained in the small-farm States as well as in the large-farm States. It is important that the elements of our agricultural economy be well distributed, so that the effect on production of a severe drought in one region of the country may be off-set by a good crop year in another region.

The nation's farmers do not share in the direct benefits of many federal programs in the field of public welfare. Neither are they the recipients of the various fringe benefits -- paid vacations, overtime pay, health insurance, pensions, and the like -- which many industrial workers now receive as a matter of course.

Our farmers have not asked for a welfare program. They have asked only for a chance to stay in business and keep their homes, to maintain that portion of God’s land which is in their trust, and to have the opportunity to earn a decent living.

I do not intend to tell the Senate today that I believe that S. 4071 is a perfect farm bill or that it will solve all of our agricultural problems. I do believe, however, that it is the best general farm bill that can be passed, under the circumstances, at this session of Congress. The Senate Agriculture Committee has worked diligently to bring this bill out, and the Committee should be commended for its efforts.

The bill does not do everything that it should do for the farm economy, but it is a good program of minimum agricultural assistance.

I am glad to support the bill in its present form.