If I were paranoid, I would say the delays we always face here are due to the fact that we are dealing with Africa."•

THE HEZBALLAH CONFESSION

• Mr. D'AMATO. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss something that most people who follow the subject, I am sure already knew, but is nevertheless an interesting admission. In a Reuters interview, yesterday, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary General of Hezballah in Lebanon, flatly admitted to Iranian funding when he said:

> We are not shy and they (Iranians) are not afraid about it . . . we don't hide Iranian support. There is no need to deny that we receive financial and political support from Iran.

Moreover, he admitted that Syrian forces in Lebanon's Bekkah valley help greatly in getting weapons to his forces, when he stated:

> Syrian forces are stationed in the Bekaa [sic] (valley) and the north. These two areas constituted the background of support for resistance fighters in (Israeli)-occupied areas.

These admissions, especially that of implicit Syrian support for Iranian terrorism are vital to understanding the relationship of these terrorist organizations and how they operate in the region. If we are going to support Israel while it wages peace, are we going to ignore Syria and Iran while they wage war against Israel?

We cannot ignore what is going on for mere political expediency. We must confront the facts as they exist and this means that we must question the Syrians on this admission. With Iran, I am sure that there is no disagreement. But Syria is another question altogether.

Mr. President, I ask that the text of this important interview be printed in the RECORD.

The text follows:

[From Reuters, Mar. 11, 1996]

HEZBOLLAH CHIEF ADMITS IRAN IS FINANCING GROUP WITH BC-IRAN-PRESIDENT

BEIRUT, LEBANON.—For the first time, the leader of Hezbollah acknowledged publicly in an interview published Monday that Iran is financing the group.

"We don't hide Iranian support. There is no need to deny that we receive financial and political support from Iran" said Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary-General of the Shiite Muslim Militant Group.

"We are not shy and they (Iranians) are not afraid about it," he said in an interview with the London-based Arabic Language Weekly Al Wasat.

It was the first public admission of Iranian financial support by a senior leader of Hezbollah, or Party of God.

The group has vociferously denounced the planned counter-terrorism summit at Egypt's Red Sea resort of Sharm El-Sheik Wednesday.

Why doesn't one wonder why the United States is paying 3 billion dollars to the Zionist entity, which is attacking the entire region while condemnation is voiced over Iran's financial support for Hezbollah or any Islamic resistance faction fighting to liberate its land?" Nasrallah said.

Hezbollah guerrillas are fighting to oust the 1,200 Israeli soldiers and 2,500 Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army militiamen from an occupied border enclave in South Lebanon.

Israel established the enclave, known as a "security zone," in 1985 as a buffer against cross-border guerrilla attacks on its northern towns.

Hezbollah guerrillas mounted a string of attacks on Israeli troops in the "security zone" Sunday, killing one and wounding five.

Nasrallah also said that Syria, the main power broker in Lebanon, was facilitating Hezbollah's arms supplies through routes in northern and eastern Lebanon.

Syria maintains an estimated 40,000 troops in Lebanon, ostensibly as peacekeepers to prevent a rekindling of the 1975–90 civil war.

Nasrallah said since Hezbollah was founded in 1982 following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon that year, Syria has provided the party with "a political cover, moral support and field facilities."

"Syrian forces are stationed in the Bekaa (Valley) and the north. These two areas constituted the background of support for resistance fighters in (Israeli)-occupied areas," he said.

"Of course, Syria didn't give us money. It has supported us and facilitated" arms supplies, Nasrallah added.

Like its sponsor, Iran, Hezbollah opposes the U.S.-sponsored Middle East peace process and has vowed to torpedo it through intensified attacks in South Lebanon, the last active Arab-Israeli war front.

The Sharm El-Sheik Summit, which will be attended by U.S. President Clinton and more than 30 other world leaders, was called to bolster Israel following a wave of suicide bombings which killed 61 people.

Hezbollah has hailed the bombings, which have been claimed by the Palestinian militant Hamas group, as an "Act of Heroic Jihad (holy war) against occupation." •

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— S. 942

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that on Thursday, March 14, at 10 a.m., the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 342, S. 942, the small business regulatory reform bill, to be considered under the following limitation: 90 minutes of total debate equally divided between the two managers; that the only amendments in order to the bill be the following: the managers' amendment to be offered by Senators BOND and BUMPERS, an amendment to be offered by Senator NICKLES regarding congressional review, one additional amendment, if agreed to by both leaders after consultation with the two managers; further, that following the disposition of all amendments, the bill be read a third time, the Senate then proceed to vote on final passage of the bill, all without any intervening debate or action.

Mr. REID addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Yes. I have two things I wish to correct. One would be the Nickles-Reid amendment in the body of the text, and if the Senator from Montana wishes an explanation, I would be happy to give one, but I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I helped craft this legislation, and if there is one thing that we hear going down the road every day from the people who live in my State of Montana it is the way we write our rules and regulations here in Washington. This regulatory reform bill addresses those fears. This bill was reported out of the Small Business Committee with strong bipartisan support for the work that was done by Senator BUMPERS, who was chairman of that committee and has worked on this issue for so long, and I am sorry that it will not be allowed to come to the floor.

Mr. REID. Will my friend yield?

Mr. BURNS. Yes.

Mr. REID. I say to my friend, I personally feel as if the unanimous-consent request is excellent. I think the content of the unanimous-consent request would allow us to go forward with regulatory reform which is badly needed. It especially directs attention to the small business community which has been hammered with regulations with which they have difficulty complying.

I say to my friend from Montana that we have a Member on this side of the aisle who has worked very long and hard, in his own words, not hours or days but weeks with Members on the Senator's side, and his objection relates to a much bigger piece of regulatory reform that I think frankly will kill all regulatory reform, but that is what he wants. And so in the next few hours, maybe days, we are going to work with him to see if we can get him to agree to our unanimous consent request.

Mr. BURNS. I think my friend from Nevada understands the problems small business is going through right now and the margin they have to worry about. This gives them a great deal of flexibility. But it also allows Congress to take a look to see how the rules are really written with regard to legislation that we pass. It is fairly simple for us to pass legislation. We beat ourselves on the chest, and we say what a good thing we have done, but then when the law goes down and the administrative rules are written, sometimes those rules do not even look like the legislation, let alone the intent of the legislation. So I think this addresses that, and I hope we can work out something. Knowing my friend from Nevada, I understand the possibility is very good.

Mr. REID. Will my friend yield again?

The Senator is absolutely correct. This unanimous-consent request contains a provision that was passed in this body by a vote of 100 to nothing, the Nickles-Reid amendment, which would allow the Congress to look at regulations promulgated by Federal agencies. If it has a financial impact of $100 million, it would not go into effect until a reasonable period of time. This calls for 60 days, which I think is appropriate. It was originally 45 days. If it has a financial impact of less than $100 million, it goes into effect immediately but we can rescind it within 60 days. That is really I think farsighted legislation, something that is long overdue. And so I agree with my friend from Montana. I hope we can work it out so that we can debate it for a period of time as indicated in the unanimous consent request and in effect claim victory for the American people. We would be doing something that is bipartisan in nature. Heaven knows, we need to do some things on a bipartisan basis in this body.

Mr. BURNS. No question about it. The Senator from Nevada is exactly correct.

AGRICULTURE MARKET TRANSITION ACT

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 338, H.R. 2584; further, that all after the enacting clause be stricken and the text of S. 1541, as passed the Senate, be inserted in lieu thereof, the bill be read the third time, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid on the table; further, the Senate insist on its amendments, request a conference with the House and the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees, provided that the total number of Democratic conferees signing the conference report does not exceed five.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. EXON. Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. EXON. Mr. President, for the information of the Senate and my colleagues who are in the Chamber, I wish to say that I intend to discuss with appropriate remarks my concerns about the agriculture bill and very likely at the end of those comments I will withdraw my objection for the reasons I will state during the remarks I intend to make about the farm bill. If the Chair will recognize me for that purpose, I will make my remarks as brief as I can but not as brief as the Senator from Nebraska usually is.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska is recognized.

Mr. EXON. Mr. President, my strong objections to the so-called freedom-to-farm act, or son of freedom to farm act, or whatever it is called now, both the version passed by the Senate and the one that passed the House of Representatives, and the technical amendments and the appointment of the conferees that has just been suggested by the acting majority leader give me pause for great concern.

I wish to state once again, in trying to wrap up, if I might, the strong objections this Senator has along with many other Senators from the farm belt with regard to the basic thrust of this law, what it does do and what it does not do, the reasons I think it is very bad legislation; and if I withdraw my objection to the unanimous-consent request it would only be with the hope, a wing and a prayer, if you will, that the conference committee itself, when it discusses the farm bill in conference and reports back the conference report for approval of both the House and the Senate, that significant changes will be made so that I will be able to accept the conference report.

However, I say that with a great deal of optimism and a great deal of concern that that in the end might not happen. Therefore, I think it is time once again as we contemplate taking the action that has just been suggested by the acting majority leader to understand what we are doing, which I think is not in the long-term interests of a sound food policy or in the long-range interests of the safety net that basically from its very beginning the freedom-to-farm act was designed to end in 7 years, notwithstanding the protestations, notwithstanding some of the efforts which have tried to be explained as providing a safety net for agriculture after 7 years.

Mr. President, I take a back seat to no one in the support of agriculture and family-size farmers and rural America. During my 8 years as Governor of Nebraska before I came to this body, until now, my 18th year in the U.S. Senate, I have fought hard for agriculture. I have joined with many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to try to tell the majority of the Members of this body that the safety net that we have had for a long, long time with regard to farm legislation has not been perfect, but it has led to a solid, firm food supply for America. The genius of production of our farmers feeds not only the United States but many parts of the world.

Last but not least, the farm programs that have been often criticized because of the safety net feature and the expenditures have still provided the United States with an abundance of food, more abundance than any place in the whole world. At the same time, it has provided prices for food at very competitive rates. The facts of the matter are that the cost of food in the United States of America is the cheapest of any of the industrialized nations in the world. So, certainly the farm programs that have been often abused and cursed over the last several years since the Great Depression of the 1930's, have served America and agriculture overall very well.

But where are we going from here? Where are we going to be if the freedom to farm act encompassed in the Senate version, and likewise the freedom to farm act as encompassed in the version passed by the House of Representatives, basically is designed in the form of transition payments to lead to nowhere at the end of 7 years? Mr. President, 7 years of handsome, expensive payouts to agriculture, that, in my view, is essentially a welfare system, going ahead with massive—billions of dollars in expenditures, welfare to farmers, at a time when we are trying to reduce the budget and at a time when we are trying to curtail welfare, defies reason.

I say that once again, Mr. President, as a strong supporter of family-size farms in rural Nebraska and rural America. I simply point out, first with regard to the estimates of the costs of the program, we all know, and it has been well established, that the so-called freedom to farm act came out of the budget discussions and agreements and disagreements. The freedom to farm act and the transition payments have been fostered early on as a great budget saver, to help us balance the budget by the year 2002.

I would simply point out that the facts, as the way this bill has come out of the House and the Senate, are just the opposite. The most recent CBO estimates show that the Senate farm bill will cost $1.13 billion more than the current law over the next 7 years. Some had claimed that was too expensive. In the first 2 years alone, the Senate farm bill will cost almost $4.6 billion more—and I emphasize more—than current law. Turning to the House bill, to cite the figures therein, the House bill saves only $1.8 billion over 7 years, a far cry from the savings touted earlier in the year. And what do farmers get for this? A healthy payoff but no long-term farm policy or safety net.

The CBO figures have just come out. I would like to cite those at this time. For the 1996 crop, the one that we hope will be planted or is being planted now, a corn farmer will get paid 37 cents per bushel up to the limit of $40,000 that he can receive each and every year. The corn farmer will get that 37 cents per bushel regardless of what the market price is and what the farmers receive from the market price for the products that I will identify, starting out with corn.

In other words, if corn, which is now at a price of about $3.40 a bushel at the marketplace, if that would be maintained—and the Department of Agriculture predicts that those prices will very likely be maintained for 1996 and 1997—that would mean that the farmer getting $3.40 a bushel would get 37 cents per bushel on top of that, roughly over $3.75 a bushel. Wheat farmers will get paid 98 cents per bushel over and above, as a gift from the taxpayers of America. Sorghum farmers will be paid 44 cents per bushel. And so on, and so on, and so on.

Mr. President, I point this out because I think the Republican farm bill has strayed way off course. It is not good for agriculture in the long term and it is certainly not good for balancing the budget. I simply say that, at $3.40 a bushel, we should not be paying any money out to corn farmers, unless there are some circumstances where his crop would be wiped out. I point this out because this is just one of the things wrong with this farm bill. This cost estimate brings the fact home loud and clear, that S. 1541 is a sham. It is a sham to the taxpayers, and it is a sham to the farmers over the long term.

How so? For taxpayers, it is a sham because it does not make good on deficit reduction. For months, taxpayers have been told that Congress was going to crack the whip and enact deficit reduction. Now we learn that the farm program's revisions, which were advertised as saving money, are actually going to cost more than if we would simply continue with the farm program and its costs that we have today. In fact, for 1996 and 1997, they will cost about $4.5 billion more than the current law.

For farmers, this sham is a little different. They have been led to believe that the freedom to farm contracts will protect them from fiscal unpleasantness that will surely follow. I am sad to say that these contracts that are widely heralded have been grossly oversold. Farmers have been led to believe that, once they sign up, their payments from the Federal Government will be locked in and no one can do anything about it.

A few moments ago, we were talking about the rules of the U.S. Senate. One of the rules that we all know very well is that one Congress cannot bind the succeeding Congress. Farmers should bear this in mind. The reality is that future Congresses will almost certainly take a butcher knife to the Freedom to Farm Act, and I believe that we all should recognize and realize that. These farm payments that will be received under the Freedom to Farm Act have no relationship to farm production or to the commodity prices that the farmers receive.

I agree that we should be cutting out all or most of the red tape that the farmers have to wrestle with each and every year. We should provide a piece of farm legislation that provides much more flexibility, if not total flexibility, as to what the farmers plant and how much they plant of a given product. But what kind of protection will the freedom to farm contracts provide? Not enough. The National Center for Agricultural Law Research and Information was asked to make a careful review of the freedom to farm bill. They concluded that, ''* * * the annual payments are not guaranteed for the life of the Freedom to Farm legislation.''

The facts, Mr. President, could not be clearer. This is a sad commentary on the way the farm bill has been handled, and I simply want to set the record straight, make it very clear on several very important points.

Mr. President, let me start out by quoting from several publications with regard to the costs that very likely will skyrocket and make it even that much more difficult to balance a budget.

I quote first from an article from the Omaha World Herald of February 27, 1996. The headline is: ''Glickman Says New Farm Plan's Costs are Higher.'' We all know that Dan Glickman is Secretary of Agriculture and a farm expert who previously served on the Agriculture Committee of the House of Representatives with great distinction.

This article is by David Beeder of the Omaha World Herald:

WASHINGTON—Legislation guaranteeing farmers more than $40 billion over seven years would cost the Federal Government $20 billion more than it could cost to extend a farm law that expired December 31, Agricultural Secretary Dan Glickman said on Monday.

''For the first 2 or 3 years, we know we are going to be spending much more on this farm bill,'' Glickman said in a speech to the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture.

To save time and to stay away from being redundant, I ask unanimous consent that all of the articles I quote be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. EXON. Mr. President, I wish to carry on the discussion of the skyrocketing costs under the new farm bill. I wish to also quote from an article from the Omaha World Herald of February 25, 1996. The headline is: ''USDA: Dairy, Cereal Prices Expected to Rise.''

This story goes on to say that:

Food prices in the United States are likely to increase less than the rate of inflation this year, with meat prices expected to decline, Government economists say.

However, the price of milk should rise by 4 percent to 5 percent over last year because of the lowest surpluses of dairy products since the mid-1970's, the Agriculture Department said.

This goes on to explain what is happening and what the freedom to farm policy, if you want to call it that, will do for both the consumers of America and the producers as well.

Mr. President, I will further comment on an article from the Lincoln Journal Star of February 25, 1996, and this one is headlined: ''Bill Raises Farm Costs, Officials Say,'' by Robert Greene of the Associated Press.

WASHINGTON.—A farm-program overhaul that the Senate passed this month will raise spending rather than save billions of dollars as Senate budget writers had planned, the Senate Budget Committee says.

''We've lost all our savings,'' said Bill Hoagland, the committee's staff director.

The original farm-program changes in the budget-balancing legislation vetoed by President Clinton last year would have cut spending for agriculture programs by $4.6 billion. The Senate-passed farm bill instead costs $200 million to $380 million more over the next seven years than if the farm bill had been left alone, Hoagland said.

Mr. President, I simply say that this farm bill, indeed, is backed by some farm organizations. I happen to think that they are taking a very shortsighted approach to the whole proposition.

This farm bill leaves beginning farmers out in the cold. It provides a rather handsome payment for the next 7 years. To those who have participated in farm programs in the past, I have cited earlier in speeches on the floor in this regard that if you take, for example, a 500-acre corn farm—and those of us who know and understand agriculture know that that is not a big farm—but 500 acres of corn, and if the farmer would sell that for $3.10 a bushel, which is under the $3.30 to $3.40 price today, he would receive, in addition to that good price for corn, a check free from the Federal Government, free from the taxpayers, of $16,000 on top of the $186,000 that that corn farmer would receive, assuming a return of about 110 bushel per acre, which is reasonable.

Many farmers and many farm organizations that I will cite in my remarks realize and recognize that if you are a 57-year-old farmer today, and I must say that that is about the average age of our farmers in Nebraska and very likely near the average age of our farmers in the United States as a whole, if you are going to farm 7 more years, and then when you are 65 and retire, this is a pretty good bill, because it gives you handsome payments from the taxpayers that cannot be justified.

In the end, it leads to nowhere, 7 years of transition payments. What does transition payments mean? Transition payments were intended and I predict eventually will be a payoff to farmers in rather handsome numbers through welfare, and they will receive this check from the Federal Government whether they even plant or not, whether they even go to the field. They get this check from the taxpayers.

But many farm groups are protesting this, and rightly so.

Mr. President, I cite an article that I have in my hand from the Omaha World Herald, again, on February 23, 1996, and this headline says: ''Hundreds Expected to Protest Farm Bill,'' by Ann Toner of the Omaha World Herald.

By bus, car and van, farmers from as far away as North Dakota are expected to gather in Wichita, KS, today to voice their opposition to the latest farm program proposals to gain House and Senate approval.

Loosely dubbed the Freedom to Farm Act, the proposed law—officially, the Agricultural Marketing Transition Act in the Senate—is in its final stages in Washington.

This goes on to identify the farm organizations and some of the farmers who made that trip to Wichita.

The next article that I will reference is, again, from the Lincoln Journal Star. This is Sunday, February 25, 1996.

The headline is, ''Only people who eat need to worry about our food policy.'' And the first paragraph of this article by Sally Herrin says:

The United States Senate put the family farm up for sale when it voted 64–32 to send Bob Dole's Agricultural Marketing Transition Act, S. 1541, to the House of Representatives tomorrow morning, Feb. 26. This is a modified version of Bill Barrett's and Newt Gingrich's Freedom to Farm proposal which is the ''final solution'' to farm programs.

But farm programs are just for farmers rights? Think again.

And Sally Herrin goes on to explain in great detail how bad this freedom to farm bill actually is.

Likewise, I will include in the RECORD an editorial from the Lincoln Journal Star of February 18, 1996. This editorial is entitled ''Freedom To Farm: An excuse To Abandon Agriculture.''

I will read the first two or three paragraphs of this editorial because, in summation in a few words, this does about as good a job as I could imagine in saying what is wrong with this measure.

Blow a little dust off your memories of the 1988 Senate race in Nebraska. David Karnes is at the podium at State Fair Park in Lincoln. Row after row of Republican cheerleaders lean forward, gathering themselves for their next explosion. But coming out of Karnes' mouth are these fateful words: ''We need fewer farmers at this point in time.''

Groans. Gasps. Even boos. Cheerleaders slump in their seats. Bob Kerrey seizes on what Karnes later describes as a slip of the tongue and delivers a stern lecture. A few weeks later, voters elect Kerrey and cast Karnes into the basement of political esteem.

But guess what? Eight years after a promising conservative showed his poor grasp of acceptable rhetoric, the underpinnings of the once unutterable are being uttered daily. As Congress and President Clinton stumble toward passage of a new farm policy, the words ''freedom to farm'' are much in vogue. They are represented, not as the first step [the real steps] towards abandonment of agriculture, but as breath-taking reform.

Likewise, Mr. President, I will quote very briefly from another editorial, this time of February 29, 1996, again from the Lincoln Journal Star. This headline is ''Freedom To Farm: Freedom To Plunder Treasury.'' And I quote:

Farming experts will tell you that a farmer who can't make money raising corn at $3 a bushel should sell the tractor and move to town. Fortunately, most Nebraska farmers are much too smart to miss out on the $3 corn and the profits that appear well within reach as the 1996 growing season approaches.

But misfortune is in this picture, too—misfortune for taxpayers. Congress is hammering out a farm bill that proposes to give these same savvy farmers as much as $40,000 each in extra income, in precious tax money, this year. Why? Because that's how Freedom To Farm, the new approach that is supposed to get the government off the farmer's back is supposed to work. It puts more government, more cost, on the taxpayer's back instead.

Mr. President, next I will quote from a news release from the National Farmers Union, which is one of the leading farm organizations whom I have worked closely with all of my 26 years in Government service. This news release from the Farmers Union is headlined:

Senate Farm Bill A ''Sell out'' Of Farm families, Says [the National Farmers Union] President.

Washington, DC—The farm bill passed by the U.S. Senate Wednesday was termed a ''sell out of American farm families and their values to the special interests of agribusiness and a license for a few corporations to further dominate the marketing, processing and trading of agricultural commodities'' by National Farmers Union President Leland Swenson. Representing 250,000 farm, ranch and other rural families across the nation, Swenson expressed concern that the Agricultural Transition Act would escalate the move of U.S. agriculture away from its system of independently owned and operated family farms to that of contract production.

Mr. President, in addition to that, which will be printed in the RECORD, there is a bulletin of about 9 or 10 items entitled: ''What's wrong with the Farm Bill approved by the Senate?''

Clearly, in the opinion of the reliable National Farmers Union it is a disaster.

What are other knowledgeable people who have had great experience in agriculture saying? This time from the Republican side of the fence.

I refer to an article in the Sioux Falls Argus Leader of February 25, 1996, by George Anthan. George is with the Georgia Net News Service and is a columnist.

The headline of his column is: ''Iowans wary about Freedom to Farm bill.''

It goes on to say:

Two of Iowa's most respected voices on national agricultural policy—both of them Republicans and farmers—expressed strong misgivings over the GOP's Freedom to Farm bill, which would guarantee subsidies to farmers regardless of market price. Cooper Evans of Grundy Center, a former Congressman and former agriculture advisor to President Bush's White House, said the policy advanced under the Freedom to Farm bill ''would be a disaster.''

Mr. President, the article goes on and says:

Thurman Gaskill of Corwith—long active in national farm policy affairs and a high-ranking political operative for Presidents Nixon, Ford and Bush—said: ''I don't understand the thinking behind this. In the short term, it's a hell of a deal. But I don't think it's good for the long-term farm policy of this country.''

Evans, an influential member of the House Agriculture Committee during his congressional service, said: ''To me, the important point is that now is not the time for a program that can be viewed as strictly a gift in the sense that it's not at all tied to need, not all tied to current prices, not at all tied to supplies.

''It's just a gift, which seems to me to be totally incompatible with the fundamental interest of both parties to whip the budget deficit.''

Evans continued: ''We're making all kinds of claims on programs that have a much larger constituency, and I think it makes those who support [the] (Freedom to Farm) [Act] extremely vulnerable to the criticism that you're cutting Medicare, [yes,] you're cutting Medicaid . . . and yet you're giving this money to farmers regardless of what they do, regardless of what they plant, regardless of what the prices are.''

I continue to quote:

''It would be most inappropriate to do this.''

Mr. President, who are some of the supporters of the freedom to farm act, other than the Republican majorities in both the House and the Senate?

I reference at this point an article, again from the Lincoln Journal, of February 19, 1996. This headline says, ''Big Agribusiness Enjoyed Benefits in Senate Farm Bill.''

Washington, Associated Press. With a mix of luck, work and unusual organization, the lobby for big grain companies, railroads, meat companies, millers and shippers scored a big win in the Senate-passed overhaul of the farm bill.

The ''Freedom to Farm'' bill, as it's called, stops the government from forcing growers to idle land in order to keep their Federal payments. It says farmers can grow the crop that they most likely will sell without losing government payments usually tied to a particular crop. For 7 years, at least, the government would fix the price of corn, wheat and other row crops.

Further down in the article is an interesting quote from our distinguished friend and colleague, the Senator from Minnesota:

''In the long run it says you're on your own with Cargill. You're on your own with the Chicago Board of Trade,'' said Sen. PAUL WELLSTONE, Democrat from Minnesota, taking on the Minnesota-based food giant.

Cargill Inc. and the Chicago Board of Trade did work Congress. So did such giants as General Mills Inc., Tysons Foods, Kraft Foods, Procter & Gamble, Union Pacific Railroad, Rabobank Netherlands, the Fertilizer Institute and others who build a business from agriculture.

Unlike before, the food companies and the trade groups banded together. In the fall of 1994, more than 120 formed the Coalition for Competitive Food and Agricultural Systems.

''It was probably the first time in history that a broad-based group in the food industry had gotten together with market-oriented reforms in mind,'' said spokesman Stu Hardy, a former staffer on the Senate Agriculture Committee, now with the United States Chamber of Commerce.

It is really interesting, Mr. President. Any farmer or any farm organization that really believes that business interests such as I have just mentioned, who for years have lived off of cheap product prices, were very much instrumental in writing the freedom to farm bill. I think that fact alone, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Tysons foods, General Mills, Kraft Foods, Procter and Gamble, Union Pacific, the Fertilizer Institute—if those people helped write this farm bill, there is no way that it can be both good for them and good for the producers.

Mr. President, there was another article that drives home this point. This is from the Omaha World Herald of February 25, 1996. This headline reads: ''Businesses Put Muscle Behind Farm Bill Push,'' by David Beeder, Washington, DC:

Major changes in U.S. farm policy—passed by the Senate and pending in the House—will get a big push all the way to the White House from a powerful coalition of more than 120 grain traders, processors, shippers, retailers and producer organizations.

''We wanted to retain a farm income safety net but also eliminate acreage reduction programs (ARP),'' said Mary Waters of ConAgra Inc. of Omaha. ''Both of these bills will do that.''

Now, Mr. President, ConAgra is located in my State. It is a very fine organization. They are processors of food. I can see why they would be involved in writing a farm bill, because, basically speaking, the cheaper the cost of the raw products that they produce into edible food, the more money they make. I do not criticize ConAgra for being concerned about agriculture prices, but I do not think they represent the family-size farmer:

Stu Hardy of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce said the legislation could have been strengthened if it had reduced the amount of acreage in the $36 million Conservation Reserve Program in which farmers are paid to idle land. If there is one part of the previous farm bill and if there is one part of the new farm bill that is generally supported by all farm organizations—as far as I know, all or most farmers—it is the Conservation Reserve Program, which has been very popular. According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, we would have been a whole lot better off if we cut down the Conservation Reserve Program.

Mr. President, there is a lot of misinformation out there today about what this program does. I have referenced several times this evening in my remarks the fact that the freedom to farm act from its very beginning and inception was to provide transition payments originally to help reduce the costs—that has gone by the board now—but primarily to have a transition from the present payments we have historically had as part of the program, when prices were low but not when they were high as they are now, but we have been pounding this home.

Now, even some of the introducers of the legislation have come around to say we should have something in there very cleverly in the Senate bill incorporated as permanent law. The 1949 act has been permanent law for a long, long time as a fall-back position. That is soft soap to agriculture because when the people understand what is going on, and after the ''60 Minutes'' type program exposes this for what it is, it will be tough to get any kind of responsible farm program through the Congress.

For years I have fought, along with many of my colleagues, on the basic concept of selling to the 535 Members of the House and Senate the need for a farm bill, a safety net farm bill, that did not pay the farmers anything when prices were high but gave them a stipend that would get them somewhere near the cost of production when the corn price—as it has historically—not stayed at $3.10 to $3.50 a bushel, but when it drops to $2.10 to $2.50 a bushel below the cost of production. That is when we should have farm programs. That is when they should kick in. They should not kick in in a rich man type fashion of selling and buying off farmers with this healthy hefty payment for the next 7 years.

I make reference, Mr. President, to the Congressional RECORD of February 28, 1996, page 1429, to bring home how there is so much misunderstanding with regard to whether the safety net is going to be eliminated. There is included on that page a letter from the Farm Bureau to a Member of Congress. It says here by the writer of the letter, who is an official of the Farm Bureau:

> In my view, concerns about the ''freedom to farm'' approach have centered on two points: First, opponents are concerned that the contract payments will be viewed as welfare payments.

I do not know what else they are, but I think it rancors them a great deal when we call them welfare payments.

> Secondly, some are concerned that there will not be any farm program after the seventh year of the bill. These issues were also the same as some members' of the Farm Bureau. The following points were used, in part, to make our policy determination.

Then it goes on to another paragraph. I would like to quote from the same letter from the Farm Bureau:

> In regard to the future farm policy after 7 years, it is important to keep in mind that there are no provisions in the bill that require farm programs to be eliminated after 7 years. In fact, it is our view that public policymakers should actively debate what farm policy should be after the year 2002, while considering such issues as supply and demand factors, international trade barriers, financial conditions of agriculture, monetary policy, trade policy, and other issues important to our farmers and ranchers.

Soft sell. Soft soap, because the very thrust of the farm bill, known as the freedom to farm act, was to use the transition payments to eliminate farm programs in the year 2002. Why else would you pay the handsome payments from the taxpayers to the farmer regardless of what the farmer is receiving for his commodity? Certainly, that is the attitude of the New York Times. I think it is rather interesting, Mr. President, that in addition to big business writing the farm bill, we have those great defenders of the American family-size farmer, the New York Times and the Washington Post, approving of this farm bill. They have never approved of any farm bill in the history of the United States of America, but this one. Why is that? Because they know what the intent is. They know they are buying off the farmer, and it will all come to an end at the end of 7 years.

Mr. President, I quote from a New York Times editorial of March 6, 1996. The headline is: ''Big Changes Down on the Farm.''

It says:

> The Senate and House-passed bills would phase out wheat, corn, rice and cotton subsidies over a 7-year period. The Senate-House conferees need to make it clear, as the House bill attempts to do, that after 2002, farm welfare supplicants cannot count on reverting to the old discredited law.

Further, it says:

> The House bill would make it harder for lobbyists to extend the dole after 7 years and is thus preferable to the Senate version.

Mr. President, also, I think it is interesting to note this on the front page of the New York Times of Friday, March 1, 1996. I reference that at this point. Big farm paper, the New York Times. It says:

> House approves biggest change in farm policy since the New Deal.

Well, that is an honest statement. Below that, it says:

> Legislation phases out subsidies over 7 years.

You cannot have it both ways. Yet, that is being sold today.

I simply say that the whole article will appear in the RECORD. It, once again, shows that the New York Times, an opponent of agriculture as long as I can remember, has a right, and they are getting what they want, along with the chamber of commerce, along with the big-money interests that live off the products of the American farmer. If I were a farmer, I would not want those organizations saluted and backed by the New York Times, and to write a farm bill, because down the road, in the future, this is going to come home to haunt the safety net that we have relied on for so long.

Then there is another newspaper that is well known as a big booster of agriculture. This time it is the Wall Street Journal of Friday March 1, 1996. It is interesting to note that that is the same date of the article that I just quoted from the New York Times. But the farmer friendly Wall Street gurus, who speak frequently through the Wall Street Journal, had this story. The headline is: ''House Approves Ending Costliest Farm Programs.''

How ridiculous. I have just cited the facts of the matter. Yet, the Wall Street Journal, who understands the stock market but has not a clue about agriculture, says, ''House Approves Ending Costliest Farm Programs.'' The Sub-headline is, ''Plan to Be Phased in Over 7 Years, Would Stop Restrictions On Crop.''

The story:

> The House measure would spend $46.6 billion through fiscal year 2002, including $35.6 billion for transition payment.

What we have here is total allocations, if subsequent Congresses approve it—at least this is the plan—to provide $46.6 billion through fiscal year 2002, including all but $10 billion, or $35.6 billion for transition payments:

> It will have to be reconciled with a similar Senate bill in a House-Senate conference before going to the White House for the President's consideration.

Just some more, Mr. President, of what is going on today with regard to the people who wrote the farm bill that some farmers and some farm organizations think is just hunky-dory.

Mr. President, I may be wrong. Maybe this bill will be the greatest thing for agriculture that we have ever seen. If so, on down the road I will salute the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post, the New York Times, the Union Pacific Railroad, Kraft Foods, and the many farmers in my State, and many of my friends and colleagues here in the U.S. Senate who support this. I will salute all of you.

I will salute all of you. I might be wrong. But as one who has wrestled with farm programs in fairness to rural America for a long, long time, and who consults regularly with farmers and farm organizations—in fact, just this afternoon in Nebraska wheat growers were in to see me. And since this is my last year in the U.S. Senate they presented me with a plaque that I treasure saluting me for the help I have given to—and have been part of in—protecting the interests of family-sized farmers and the food production in America. Each and every one of them—

there were seven there—were firmly opposed to the so-called freedom-to-farm act. Yes. There are lots of farmers out there that have bought on to this very expensive and unfair program that I am very fearful will be the death knell for farm safety nets and make it almost impossible for young farmers who do not share in this program. The money only goes to farmers who have been in the program previously. It is a bad piece of legislation.

I am about to withdraw my objection only with the hope that maybe some miracle will occur and we will be able to get some changes in a whole series of areas made in the conference with the House, and that a conference report which is eventually forwarded back to the House and the Senate will have a much improved farm bill.

In the meantime, I have consulted with the Secretary of Agriculture about this on several occasions. I have discussed this with the President of the United States. Some people are speculating right now that the President will sign the bill, or that he will not sign the bill. I know that the President of the United States has not made up his mind. The Secretary of Agriculture has not made up his mind. They are waiting the outcome of the conference. I hope we can have a bill that makes some sense.

With that I withdraw my objection that I raised earlier, and I will work constructively with all concerned to make changes in this bill in conference that I think are absolutely essential.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

EXHIBIT 1

[From the Omaha World-Herald, Feb. 27, 1996]

GLICKMAN SAYS NEW FARM PLAN'S COSTS ARE HIGHER

(By David C. Beeder)

WASHINGTON.—Legislation guaranteeing farmers more than $40 billion over seven years would cost the federal government $20 billion more than it could cost to extend a farm law that expired Dec. 31, Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman said Monday.

"For the first two or three years, we know we are going to be spending much more on this farm bill," Glickman said in a speech to the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture.

Farmers would receive little or no subsidy payments if the five-year 1990 farm law still were in effect, Glickman said.

"Why? Because prices are higher now," he said.

Subsidies, under 60-year-old U.S. farm policy, have been based on the difference between the market price of crops and the so-called target price set by Congress, which is usually higher.

Glickman said economists at the U.S. Agriculture Department expect the market price of corn and wheat to match or exceed target prices for two or three years.

He said giving farmers a guaranteed annual payment in a period when they are being paid high market prices "could create potential political problems" for farm legislation in the future.

"We need a well-rounded farm bill, one that people in nonrural areas can support," he said. "That's what we are working on, and we think the Senate bill moved a few steps in that direction."

Glickman's speech before state agricultural directors was followed a few hours later by Rep. Pat Roberts, R-Kan., chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, who defended the plan to guarantee annual payments to farmers.

He disputed Glickman's estimate that the legislation would cost $20 billion more than would extending the farm law that expired Dec. 31.

Roberts said the Freedom to Farm Act, which he has co-sponsored with Rep. Bill Barrett, R-Neb., would reduce the average annual cost of commodity subsidies from $10 billion a year to $5 billion.

"The Freedom to Farm Act will save $5.2 billion over seven years, and that's what I intend to say on the House floor Thursday when we debate this legislation." Roberts said.

"What this debate is all about is who makes the decision," he said. "We feel very strongly that under Freedom to Farm, the farmers make the decision. They have the freedom to plant whatever they want to plant."

Roberts said the high prices being paid for crops this year have had little effect in the Great Plains, where poor growing conditions left many farmers with little or nothing to sell.

Under the 1990 farm law, many of these farmers received subsidy payments in advance, he said.

Those subsidies must now be repaid even though a farmer may have lost the crop, Roberts said.

"It is true that if you have the current (1990) farm bill the farmer gets no payment this year or next year, but he has to pay back advanced deficiency payments and there is no requirement for conservation compliance," Roberts said.

[From the Omaha World-Herald, Feb. 27, 1996]

STATE AG LEADERS WON'T BACK PLAN

WASHINGTON.—State agriculture leaders from Nebraska and Iowa said Monday they could not support farm legislation that guarantees a fixed government payment to farmers regardless what they are paid for their crops.

Larry Sitzman, Nebraska director of agriculture, said the plan would be politically vulnerable in a period like today when farmers are receiving high crop prices.

"I am concerned that a seven-year program with guaranteed benefits would be difficult to sell with the mood of Congress and the mood of taxpayers in this country," Sitzman said.

He said the plan, if adopted, could lead to elimination of a long-standing policy of subsidizing farmers during periods of low crop prices.

"The safety net probably would be gone in two years," said Sitzman, who operates a 2,000-acre farm near Culbertson, Neb.

Dale Cochran, Iowa secretary of agriculture said he expects Congress to pass a farm bill that includes guaranteed payments while continuing to provide subsidies when crop prices fall.

Cochran, of Eagle Grove, Iowa, said it would be difficult to convince taxpayers that farmers should receive a payment when crop prices are high.

Cochran, a Democrat who served more than 22 years in the Iowa House of Representatives, is in his third term a secretary of agriculture, an elective office in Iowa.

Sitzman, a Democrat, was appointed director of the Nebraska Agriculture Department by Gov. Nelson in 1991.

[From the Omaha World-Herald, Feb. 25, 1996]

USDA: DAIRY, CEREAL PRICES EXPECTED TO RISE

WASHINGTON.—Food prices in the United States are likely to increase less than the rate of inflation this year, with meat prices expected to decline, government economists say.

However, the price of milk should rise by 4 percent to 5 percent over last year because of the lowest surpluses of dairy products since the mid-1970s, the Agriculture Department predicted.

The Consumer Price Index for food rose 2.8 percent last year—the overall CPI was up 2.5 percent—and higher prices for fruits and vegetables were the prime reason, USDA Chief Economist Keith Collins noted in a report to the annual Agricultural Outlook Forum.

"In 1996 the highlight for the American consumer will be food-price increases below the overall inflation rate, as the strong increase in meat production lowers meat prices slightly," Collins said. Red meat and poultry account for 24 percent of the at-home food CPI.

With average weather, Collins added, this year's fruit and vegetable price increases should be less than last year's. Although the price of cereal and baked goods should go up because of rising grain costs, the increase is likely to be no more than about 5 percent because farm-level grain prices represent only about one-tenth of the retail prices of the finished products.

The USDA forecast relies in large part on the expectation that 1996 beef production will increase by 2 percent to 3 percent despite higher feed costs. This envisions feed corn prices peaking at about $3.70 per bushel.

However, Collins said, "If 1996-crop corn prices were to move into the $4-per-bushel range due to reduced yield prospects, hog and poultry producers would reduce animal numbers first with cow-calf operators making their big reductions in the fall.

"The result would be higher meat prices in late 1996 and into 1997, and, for beef, into 1998 and beyond."

USDA foresees record-high season-average farm prices for wheat in this harvest year and near-record prices for corn. Carryover stocks of wheat on June 1 are forecast at 346 million bushels, which, as a percent of total use, would be the lowest since 1947–1948. Corn carryover was put at 457 million bushels, lowest as a percent of use since 1937–1938.

Such low stocks make it very difficult to forecast prices, Collins acknowledged. "The low stocks have put feeders, processors, traders and consumers at much greater risk if 1996 harvests are subpar."

With higher corn prices, better planting weather and no reduction in acreage, USDA said corn planted this year may increase nearly 15 percent, to more than 80 million acres. Winter wheat acreage was up 7 percent, and total wheat acreage this year could rise about 6 percent, to 73 million acres. That would support a wheat price near the $4-a-bushel level.

[From the Lincoln Journal Star, Feb. 25, 1996]

BILL RAISES FARM COSTS, OFFICIALS SAY

(By Robert Greene)

WASHINGTON.—A farm-program overhaul that the Senate passed this month will raise spending rather than save billions of dollars as Senate budget writers had planned, the Senate Budget Committee says.

"We've lost all our savings," said Bill Hoagland, the committee's staff director.

The original farm-program changes in the budget-balancing legislation vetoed by President Clinton last year would have cut spending for agricultural programs by $4.6 billion.

The Senate-passed farm bill instead costs $200 million to $380 million more over seven years than if farm law had been left alone. Hoagland said.

The new estimates create problems for the farm bill as the House prepares to take it up this week. Many added costs were the result of amendments needed to ensure its 64–32 passage Feb. 7. Those amendments included guaranteed spending for new conservation, rural development and farmland preservation programs.

Stripping down the bill could lose votes, many from Democrats, when a final version is crafted. Or law-makers could be forced to tinker with the core ''Freedom to Farm'' proposal, which substitutes fixed-but-declining payments for unpredictable, price-based crop subsidies.

Democrats remain opposed to ''Freedom to Farm'' because it continues to pay farmers even when crop prices are high. New projections released last week by the U.S. Department of Agriculture suggest that farmers will cash in big if Congress removes the link between farmer payments and movements in crop prices.

Prices for major crops are expected to be high for several years because of heavy world demand and extreme shortages going into the wheat and corn harvests this year.

As a result, crop subsidies could wind up costing a little more than $12 billion over seven years, the figures show, if farm law is unchanged.

The Senate bill and the version headed for the House calls for giving farmers $35.5 billion over seven years—nearly three times what the Agricultural Department forecasts.

The department estimates are based on more optimistic forecasts for crop prices than those used by the Congressional Budget Office, which Congress uses for estimating program costs, and other forecasters.

The wide gap points to the larger debate over the massive overhaul, including who should get the money.

The Republican bill guarantees the payments against future budget cuts and leaves the way open for farm programs to end after seven years. The high payments in 1996 will offset the $2 billion in advance subsidies that farmers will have to refund from 1995 because prices shot up.

The Democrats, including Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, say farmers still need a safety net in case crop prices unexpectedly plunge—despite the department's rosy predictions.

Advocates for conservation and more help to small farmers say that locking in payments to farmers, including the large ones, means danger, especially if the House version passes without any of the Senate amendments.

''The likely result will be that future agriculture budget cuts will be in beginning farmer, rural development, research and conservation programs,''said Chuck Hassebrook, an analyst with the Center for Rural Affairs in Walthill, Neb.

Andy Fisher, spokesman for the Senate Agriculture Committee, hinted that the Freedom to Farm payments may have to be cut. He also said the committee was awaiting final cost estimates from the Congressional Budget Office.

He noted that the 1990 farm bill cost $57 billion over five years—$15 billion more than forecast. The new bill would allow no such overruns.

Hoagland, at the Budget Committee, said that even though the farm bill had been separated from the budget-balancing bill: ''Most of our discussions had always assumed that we would still get some savings, even in any final negotiated agreement, in the $3 billion to $4 billion range. But we have no savings at all. We have a cost.''

[From the Omaha World-Herald, Feb. 23, 1996]

HUNDREDS EXPECTED TO PROTEST FARM BILL

(By Ann Toner)

By bus, car and van, farmers from as far away as North Dakota are expected to gather in Wichita, Kan., today to voice their opposition to the latest farm program proposals to gain House and Senate approval.

Loosely dubbed the Freedom to Farm Act, the proposed law—officially, the Agricultural Marketing Transition Act in the Senate—is in its final stages in Washington.

While some other farm groups favor the proposal, the opponents believe that unless substantial changes are made, President Clinton should veto the bill.

''Doing nothing is a far better option than committing economic suicide just to end the suspense of waiting,'' said John Hansen of Tilden, president of the Nebraska Farmers Union.

Proponents ''listened to the grain trade and shut out the interests of production agriculture,'' he said. ''It's a hostile takeover of ag policy by the grain trade that will flood the market with lots of cheap product at the expense of family farmers.''

John Whitaker, president of the Iowa Farmers Union, said he hopes to convince Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman that unless substantial changes are made in the bill, Clinton should veto it.

''Real farmers don't want welfare,'' Whitaker said. ''We want to veto it and unless it can be improved, revert to 1949 law.

''Under the Senate bill, you don't even have to farm for seven years to get a payment. Farm programs are supposed to be a safety net. In years when they don't need it, like this year, they shouldn't get a payment.''

The final bill isn't finished—House and Senate versions are due to be reconciled before being forwarded to Clinton—but opponents said they are meeting now to send their message to Washington.

But the proposal has strong defenders, said Rep. Bill Barrett, R-Neb.

''This bill echoes the sentiment of the majority of those in agriculture,'' Barrett said. ''This bill provides planting flexibility, promises full production, and allows farmers to manage their own businesses based on economic factors without government intervention.''

Rob Robertson, vice president of the Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation, said provisions of the law would ''benefit farmers by providing income stability over seven years and allowing U.S. agriculture to compete in the world marketplace.''

Opponents include Sen. J.J. Exon, D-Neb.

''If we buy into the Freedom to Farm Act now, by the year 2002 there would be no farm programs at all, no safety net, not anything,'' Exon said. ''For the next seven years, it turns farm programs into welfare programs.''

Today's rally is scheduled to start at 4 p.m. in the parking lot of the Cotillion Ballroom in Wichita. Between 1,500 and 2,000 farmers are expected to participate, representing several farm groups that oppose all or parts of the proposal.

Some of the groups represent mostly small farmers, but others have many large-farm members as well.

After the rally and a 6 p.m. barbecue, a 7 p.m. question-and-answer session with Glickman is planned inside the ballroom.

Glickman, a former Kansas congressman, opposes many aspects of both versions.

But sponsors of the Glickman dinner—Kansas Farmers Union and KFDI, a Kansas radio station—said Glickman is not coming to Wichita either to take part in the rally or to be rallied against.

In fact, Glickman isn't even scheduled to arrive until the rally is over.

The sponsors said Glickman is coming to Wichita for the sole purpose of breaking bread with the farmers, speaking and answering questions from farmers after dinner.

National Farmers Union President Leland Swenson and Farmers Union leaders from about 15 states are expected to be in attendance.

''After two years under this program, production would increase significantly, driving down prices,'' Swenson said. That would leave farmers no chance to sell their crops at a profit, he said.

Gene Paul of Delavan, Minn., president of the National Farmers Organization, also opposes the bill.

''Freedom to Farm will do nothing to improve the image of agriculture, nor will it deal with the solution of America's farm problem: sustained, profitable commodity prices,'' he said.

Wheat grower Tom Giesel of Larned, Kan., one of the organizers of the rally, said farmers, not farm leaders, will speak.

''We've invited speakers who can speak from the heart about how this farm bill will affect their farms and rural communities,'' Giesel said. ''Their message, that this bill will devastate the rural economy, is very important for people to understand.''

More than a busload of Nebraskans are expected to attend the Wichita event, said Hansen, the Nebraska Farmers Union president.

Other Nebraskans will represent the American Corn Growers Association, the Nebraska State Grange, the NFO, the Nebraska Wheat Growers Association and the League of Rural Voters.

Hansen said he and many of the attending Nebraskans believe the House and Senate bills would make their farms too vulnerable to the marketplace and the whims of grain trading giants.

''It's a political and economic bonanza to the grain trade,'' he said. ''They got what they've wanted for a long time.''

Hansen said the promise of payments to farmers during the transition without program restrictions would be so offensive to taxpayer groups and members of Congress that it will ''set us up for the political kill'' later on.

Roy Frederick, a public policy specialist for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, said calling it an Agricultural Market Transition Program is appropriate.

''It seems highly unlikely that flat payments without regard for market conditions could last beyond 2002,'' Frederick said.

John Dittrich of Meadow Grove, Neb., who will speak at the rally, said ending price supports would be ''extremely destabilizing to farmers and destabilizing to consumers.''

The increased risk of farming without a safety net would discourage young farmers from entering the business and jeopardize older farmers, Dittrich said.

He said the proposals are influenced by businesses and ''legislative theoreticians'' who don't understand the risks and instabilities of farming.

''They've never had to look nature in the eye the way farmers have had to do,'' he said.

KEY PROVISIONS OF ''FREEDOM TO FARM'' ACT

Subsidies

Eliminate crop subsidies and reduce payments annually to farmers, ending them altogether in seven years.

Planting

Eliminate crop acreage restrictions. Farmers would be allowed to plant as much or little of any crop as they choose.

Maximum payments

Lower the maximum payment to farmers under the programs from $50,000 to $40,000 but enlarge provisions that could increase payments to large farmers who create several subentities.

Conservation

Senate version: Reauthorize the Conservation Reserve Program through 2002 for up to 36.4 million acres, provide incentives for farmers leaving the program to protect the most environmentally sensitive land and fund a program to reduce pollution from farm and livestock runoff.

House version: Reduce the Conservation Reserve Program and allow land to be withdrawn from the program at any time.

Future

Senate version: Require Congress to pass additional farm legislation when the current bill expires.

House version: Instead of requiring a new bill, name a Commission on 21st Century Production Agriculture to make future policy recommendations.

LUGAR TO KEEP CAMPAIGNING, HOLD AG PANEL POSITION

WASHINGTON.—Sen. Dick Lugar, R–Ind., said Thursday that he would not consider stepping down as chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee while he continues campaigning for the Republican presidential nomination.

Lugar also said that Sen. Bob Dole, R–Kan., should remain as Senate majority leader while campaigning for the nomination.

''I think Bob Dole is doing a great job as our majority leader.'' Lugar said at a press conference. ''I hope I have done a good job getting a farm bill through the Senate.''

Lugar, who received less than 6 percent of the vote in the Iowa party caucuses and the New Hampshire primary election, said he plans to continue campaigning ''as long as there is money and some momentum.''

[From the Lincoln Journal Star, Feb. 25, 1996]

ONLY PEOPLE WHO EAT NEED TO WORRY ABOUT OUR FOOD POLICY

(By Sally Herrin)

The United States Senate put the family farm up for sale when it voted 64–32 to send Bob Dole's Agriculture Marketing Transition Act. S1541, to the House of Representatives tomorrow morning, Feb. 26. This is a modified version of Bill Barrett's and Newt Gingrich's Freedom to Farm proposal, which is the ''final solution'' to farm programs.

But farm programs are just for farmers, rights? Think again.

Concerned about the environment? No wilderness protection initiative has anything like the impact on soil and water quality that a national farm policy has, because farmers and ranchers own more than three-fourths of the non-public land in the country. And while S1541 retains authorization for the Conservation Reserve (the butt of many a late night's comic joke, this poorly understood program builds the nation's environmental capital), the stone truth is the carrot-and-stick good faith partnership between ag producers and the nation is broken. Added long-term conservation goals will be sacrificed for short-term economic survival.

Is food security national security? Europeans old enough to have survived World War II would say so. Yet, the proposed farm bill excludes farmers who haven't participated in farm programs in at least one of the last five years, cutting off farm kids at the knees.

The average farmer in Nebraska is 57. Seven years of declining severance pay takes most of them right up to retirement. Who will farm then?

Nebraska lost 33.9 percent of its rural population between 1980 and 1990. Just as agriculture is the prime economic base for the state as a whole, farm families are the economic base for the main street businesses which serve them. When the families leave and fail, the towns dry up and stand rattling like pin oaks in the wind.

Earl Butz—former secretary of agriculture, forced to resign for telling off-color, racist jokes and later convicted of income tax fraud, mentor to Clayton Yeutter and economic godfather to Freedom to Farm—Earl Butz described rural depopulation resulting from low commodity prices this way: ''This trend toward fewer farms isn't bad. Rather, it's good because it frees a larger percentage of the population to become productive members of society.''

While Butz and Yeutter laid the groundwork for the industrialization of our food supply, it has taken Dole and Gingrich to bring big business to its perilous new heights of corporate economic advantage, which is what Freedom to Farm is all about.

The only people who should care about farm policy are the people who eat. As for so much else in modern life, we are in denial about how food comes to our table. But no Martha Stewart recipe will take away the stink of corporate hog farming and the environmental and economic devastation that it means to communities just across the Missouri River in Iowa.

National food security is a matter of reasonable production goals that also give something back to the land, and it's a matter of a strategic food reserve. Freedom to Farm creates planting chaos and a world of boom-and-bust cycles with huge surpluses and terrible shortages. The last time the agricultural market was this ''free,'' they called it the Great Depression. It not only can happen here, it has.

Freedom to Farm means seven years of decoupled welfare payments to farmers, politically indefensible in times when welfare to poor women and children being gutted, and lending new meaning to ''planned obsolescence.''

In a letter to the editor (LJS, Feb. 21), Bill Barrett claimed his proposal was designed to let farmers get their income from the market. But his bill strips farmers of their traditional marketing tools, including the Farmer-Owned Reserve and the Emergency Livestock Fee Program, and caps the loan rate for corn at $1.89. Since loan caps in practice generally become price ceilings, this means farmers selling corn at or below the cost of production.

The food sector, the most profitable in the national economy bar none, is shared by four corporations: Cargill, ConAgra, ADM and IBP. Mexican farmers call them the Coyotes, and I'm hoping the tag will catch on.

There is no free market. The food sector has become a system of shared monopolies, and by letting men like Dole and Barrett shape our national policy who consistently favor big corporations at the expense of the public good, we permit it to happen.

While you may want government off your back as the shadow of tax time creeps near, you'd do well to remember that government is all you've got to mitigate, much less control, big business.

Bob Dole has been one of Archer Daniels Midland's best long-term political investments. Bill Barrett, ConAgra's largest single PAC recipient for the years 1980–92, is repaying his contributor with the Freedom to Farm the Farmer is Spades.

The farm hits the auction block tomorrow morning when the House takes up debate. The land is the only thing the Coyotes don't own. Yet. But unless our president and representatives get a lot of calls and wires tonight, we've just sold the family farm.

[From the Lincoln Journal Star, Feb. 18, 1996]

FREEDOM TO FARM: AN EXCUSE TO ABANDON AGRICULTURE

Blow a little dust off your memories of the 1988 Senate race in Nebraska. David Karnes is at the podium at State Fair Park in Lincoln. Row after row of Republican cheerleaders lean forward, gathering themselves for their next explosion. But coming out of Karnes' mouth are these fateful words: ''We need fewer farmers at this point in time.''

Groans. Gasps. Even boos. Cheerleaders slump in their seats. Bob Kerrey seizes on what Karnes later describes as a slip of the tongue and delivers a stern lecture. A few weeks later, voters elect Kerrey and cast Karnes into the basement of political esteem.

But guess what? Eight years after a promising conservative showed his poor grasp for acceptable rhetoric, the underpinnings of the once unutterable are being uttered daily. As Congress and President Clinton stumble toward passage of new farm policy, the words ''freedom to farm'' are much in vogue. They are represented, not as the first step toward abandonment of agriculture, but as breathtaking reform.

When Karnes charged into Lincoln with a solid shot at beating Kerrey, the underpinnings for sweeping change were called ''decoupling.'' It was a simply slogan meant to break the link between public payments to financially challenged farmers and public attempts to manage grain supplies and natural resources.

Eight years later, ''freedom to farm'' is a softer sell of essentially the same thing. If conservatives have their way with the next farm bill, farmers will still get money from the government over the next seven years, but there will no longer be any requirement of idle acres.

The trouble with this policy is that it neglects farmers' protection against mountainous and ruinous grain surpluses. It neglects consumers' protection against shortage. It edges farmers away from earning their way by conserving and under-utilizing their land assets. The new policy has the government doling out compassion and dollars in diminishing increments over the next seven years.

Momentum is still building to send this very message to farmers by mid March, before the last-ditch deadline for enrollment in the payment-compliance system and the start of planting season. The freedom to farm crowd continues to describe it as the one true path toward self-reliance and cutting into the federal debt.

It is not. It's not even close. Reformers could save tons of money if they just targeted farm payments toward the smaller and often younger farmers who need them and cut off the big farmers who have plenty of equity and cash. In what may be the only country in the world that has never known food shortages, rational policy makers could keep a proven food security system in place, cut costs and still offer farmers familiar incentives for controlling erosion and groundwater contamination.

According to the most recent portrayals of its leadership, the American Farm Bureau Federation, the largest alliance of grain producers nationally and in Nebraska, is among those sold on much rasher behavior. Its legions are ready to roll up their sleeves, renounce reliance on tax dollars, and exercise this new freedom to farm.

According to recent portrayals by Sen. Jim Exon, the Farm Bureau is mentally ill. It must be schizophrenia. Exon said, that has its spokesmen calling for more of the same in the federal-farmer partnership one moment and much less of the same the next.

Those eager to demolish farm programs suggest the average farmer is a millionaire, because he has a million dollars' worth of paper assets. They smugly suggest that the government could have bought all the farmland in 41 states with the money it spent on the farm program in the last 10 years.

Much of this is the rhetoric of insanity. But regardless of what farm groups and farmers really want, consumers should embrace sanity and a system that can continue to serve their food needs at a more acceptable budget price.

Reform is a wonderful thing. Adjusting farm policy so that farmers are cast in the role of welfare recipients is not reform. It is a calculated abandonment of government's crucial role in ensuring a good supply and reasonable food prices.

TERM LIMITS CAN'T GO ON '96 BALLOT

Any attempt to put another question dealing with term limits on the November ballot could run afoul of the Nebraska Constitution, said Secretary of State Scott Moore.

Article III, Section 2 of the constitution says: ''The same measure, either in form or in essential substance, shall not be submitted to the people by initiative petition, either affirmatively or negatively, more often than once in three years.''

The Nebraska Supreme Court last week threw out term limits that were placed on the ballot in 1994.

Moore said his warning did not apply to a petition already filed that would seek to force legislators to support term limits. Rather than putting term limits in the State constitution, that measure seeks to label on the ballot those candidates who do not support the idea.

FREEDOM TO FARM: FREEDOM TO PLUNDER TREASURY

Farming experts will tell you that a farmer who can't make money raising corn at $3 a bushel should sell the tractor and move to town. Fortunately, most Nebraska farmers are much too smart to miss out on the $3 corn and the profits that appear will within reach as the 1996 growing season approaches.

But misfortune is in this picture, too—misfortune for taxpayers. Congress is hammering out a farm bill that proposes to give these same savvy farmers as much as $40,000 each in extra income, in precious tax money, this year. Why? Because that how Freedom To Farm, the new approach that is supposed to get the government off the farmer's back, is supposed to work. It put more government, more cost, on the taxpayer's back instead.

It does this by severing the long-standing connection between grain supplies, market conditions and levels of price support payments to producers.

Conservatives have opened the door to one of the biggest boondoggles in farm program history. In the first year of this ill-named ''reform,'' farmers can get almost $4 a bushel for any corn they have in the bin right now. The have every night to expect that they can lock in prices of $3 per bushel or better on their 1996 production—and they will still qualify for thousands of dollars in government support!

Freedom to Farm sets aside several billions dollars for the first of seven years of annually declining financial support to farmers. Allocators of that amount are completely oblivious to need and profit influences. Right in front of us here, in fact, is a year when farmers are unlikely to need any help at all.

A typical Nebraska farmers could easily make $200 an irrigated acre in profit in 1996—$200 after expenses. If he has 1,000 acres of corn, that's profit in six figures. That's not the sort of financial statement that ought to be supported by another $40,000 from taxpayers.

Much less likely, but not impossible is this market scenario: A bad export forecast or the kind of weather that causes bin-busting surpluses intrudes in the next few weeks, prices plummet, and this financial safety net is suddenly woefully inadequate.

The point in either case is that this twisted vision of farm policy helps farmers when they don't need help and could well help them too little when they need lots of help. That's what Freedom to Farm would do if it passes in present form.

As it exists in the House, scene of the debate this week, it is even worse. Freedom to Farm on the House side is also woefully deficient in protection of soil and water resources and in support for rural development of things that should matter to farmers, to consumers, and anybody who understands that farm policy is also food policy and environmental policy.

In all of those areas, Congress has edged dangerously close to handing us bad policy.

SENATE FARM BILL A ''SELL OUT'' OF FARM FAMILIES, SAYS NFU PRESIDENT

WASHINGTON, DC.—The farm bill passed by the U.S. Senate Wednesday was termed a ''sell out of American farm families and their values to the special interests of agibusiness and a licence for a few corporations to further dominate the marketing, processing and trading of agricultural commodities'' by National Farmers Union President Leland Swenson. Representing 250,000 farm, ranch and other rural families across the nation, Swenson expressed concern that the Agricultural Transition Act would escalate the move of U.S. agriculture away from its system of independently owned and operated family farms to that of contract production.

''How ironic it is for this reform-mined Congress to establish a brand new bureaucracy instead of enacting real farm policy reforms. The Agricultural Transition Act guarantees payments regardless of commodity prices and regardless of whether or not a crop is even planted,'' Said Swenson. ''This bill would provide producers with a short-term gain, but it will inevitably lead to long-term economic pain for independent family farmers and for other rural communities,'' said Swenson.

The Senate is irresponsible in this proposal to enact policies which maximize production, lower commodity prices at the farm gate and make set payment,'' said Swenson. He also notes that under this bill farmers would be asked to sign seven-year compliance contracts without even knowing what their transition payments will be.

The Agricultural Transition Act caps marketing loan rates for seven years. The maximum loan rates under this bill would be: corn—$1.89 per bushel; wheat—$2.58 per bushel; soybeans—$5.26 per bushel; cotton—52 cents per pound; and rice—$6.50 cwt.

''Loan rates are capped at artifically low levels, stripping away any opportunity producers might have to market their commodities in a manner that positively affects farm income,'' said Swenson. ''After two years under this program, production would increase significantly, driving down prices.''

Farmers Union supports the U.S. Senate's retention of permanent farm law and the reauthorization of nutrition, conservation and rural development programs, as well as increased planting flexibility.

''The bottom line is that the Agricultural Transition Act will drive down commodity prices, lower farm income and make it difficult for young farmers to enter production agriculture,'' said Swenson. ''We will urge President Clinton to veto the proposal if it reaches his desk.''

''Beyond the devastating economic impact this proposal would have on rural communities, we need to question the long-term consequences of a food supply controlled by a handful of multi-national corporations. We also need to ask ourselves if such a system of food production is worth the environmental degradation and the loss of rural businesses and infrastructrue,'' said Swenson.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE FARM BILL APPROVED BY THE SENATE?

S. 1541, the Agriculture Market Transition Act, is still ''Freedom to Farm.'' This is the grain trade bill, designed as a watershed legislation to end farm programs.

This bill decouples production from payments. Farmers don't want decoupled welfare payment, they want a fair price for what they produce. In a political climate where welfare payments to the poorest children are under attack, given the already massive national negative press characterizations of farmers as rich welfare cheats, given the declining population and political base of farmers, given the fact that farmers will collect decoupled welfare type payments during periods of relatively high commodity prices, Congress will most likely eliminate the Farm Bill before its scheduled 7 years. This amounts to an invitation to our own hanging.

How can anyone be expected to sign a seven-year contract for declining payments without knowing what is being offered? There is nothing in S. 1541 to even allow producers to calculate what their transition payment would be. All we know is that payment is limited to 85 percent of contract acres, and based on historical yields, frozen since 1985. There is no price factor in this formula. USDA just divides the available pool of money between contracting farmers.

S. 1541 provides what amounts to as ''severance payment'' to older farmers looking to get out of farming, but what about young farmers trying to get in? Young farmers are locked out.

This bill actually reduces marketing flexibility. It eliminates traditional marketing tools used by farmers to store farm commodities during periods of low commodity prices: The Farmer Owned Reserve is dead. So is the Emergency Feed Program and the Emergency Livestock Feed Assistance Program.

This lowers the non-recourse marketing assistance loans down to: corn—$1.89, wheat—$2.58, rice—$6.50/cwt, and soybeans based on 85% of recent average prices, using the same formula used for wheat and feed grains or between $4.92 to $5.25/bu. In addition, it gives the Secretary of Agriculture the authority to make downward adjustments to wheat and feed grain loan rates based on stocks-to-use-formulas, but no authority to raise loan rates.

Contracts must be signed by April 15. The House has yet to act on the Farm Bill, and will not likely do so until the end of February. The House and Senate versions will then need to go to Conference Committee, and then reported to the President. Will that be enough time to develop new rules and program regs by then? No.

This Farm Bill will cause a tremendous amount of uncertainty in crop production as farmers chase whatever crop they think will work best this year. Boom and Bust. Huge surpluses, and major crop shortages. National Food Safety is clearly at risk. Land values and other assets will decrease as crop prices wildly gyrate and auger their way to the bottom of the unprotected world market price, which tends to be the ''dump price.''

So what is so bad about the 1949 Permanent Farm Bill? Not much. Is it better than the current law or the proposed Farm Bills in either the Senate or House? Yes, much better.

What do we want the President to do? VETO the Farm Bill.

[From the Sioux Falls Argus Leader, Feb. 25, 1996]

IOWANS WARY ABOUT FREEDOM TO FARM BILL

(By George Anthan)

WASHINGTON.—Two of Iowa's most respected voices on national agricultural policy—both of them Republicans and farmers—express strong misgivings over the GOP's Freedom to Farm bill, which would guarantee subsidies to farmers regardless of market prices.

Cooper Evans of Grundy Center, a former congressman and former agriculture adviser to President Bush's White House, said the policy advanced under the Freedom To Farm bill ''would be a disaster.''

Thurman Gaskill of Corwith—long active in national farm policy affairs and a high-ranking political operative for Presidents Nixon, Ford and Bush—said: ''I don't understand the thinking behind this. In the short term, it's a hell of a deal. But I don't think it's good for the long-term farm policy of this country.''

Evans, an influential member of the House Agriculture Committee during his congressional service, said: ''To me, the important point is that now is not the time for a program that can be viewed as strictly a gift in the sense that it's not at all tied to need, not at all tied to current prices, not at all tied to supplies.

''It's just a gift, which seems to me to be totally incompatible with the fundamental interest of both parties to whip the budget deficit.''

Evans continued: ''We're making all kinds of claims on programs that have a much larger constituency, and I think it makes those who support (Freedom To Farm) extremely vulnerable to the criticism that you're cutting Medicare, you're cutting Medicaid . . . and yet you're giving this money to farmers regardless of what they do, regardless of what they plant, regardless of what the prices are.

''It would be most inappropriate to do this.''

Conversely, Rep. Tom Latham, R-Iowa, who strongly supports Freedom To Farm, said it ''eases our farm economy into a market-oriented economy though guaranteed market transition payments.''

But Freedom To Farm, approved recently by the Senate, isn't law, yet. The House returns this week to take it up amid signs of rebellion among conservatives, environmentalists, consumer advocates and even farm-state legislators.

House conservatives are upset because the Senate, to avoid a filibuster, added $4 billion to the bill's cost and reauthorized food stamps and other nutrition programs they wanted to cut back as part of welfare reform.

Also, the Senate avoided dealing with the complex dairy issue. But a House proposal is being attacked by consumer and food manufacturing interests as a measure that would force higher milk prices.

ECONOMIST: FARM BILL WILL DROP CROP PRICES

The Freedom to Farm bill, as written, would mean lower crop prices, more production and could ultimately affect property tax revenues, an agricultural economist said.

The bill, passed by the U.S. Senate, would phase out crop subsidies to producers over a seven-year period.

Because farmers will no longer be told what to plant and how much to plant, production will increase, said Gene Murra, an economist at South Dakota State University.

''I think it would be very easy, in many cases, for producers to say, 'Well heck, I might just as well plant as much as I can,' and given the fact that we have a relatively high price this year, that's going to encourage even more of that kind of thing. So we could have very large production in any given year if the weather is just right,'' Murra said.

Lower crop prices could lower values of agricultural property lending to lower property tax collections, he said.

NFO OPPOSES ''FREEDOM TO FARM ACT'' AS PASSED BY SENATE

AMES, IA.—The National Farmers Organization (NFO) opposes the Freedom to Farm Act as passed by the U.S. Senate.

''The statement that Iowa U.S. Senator Charles Grassley is circulating that all farm organizations support the Freedom to Farm Act is erroneous,'' says NFO president Gene Paul. ''The NFO cannot support the act because in the long run it will not benefit NFO members, nor rural communities.''

''The one thing that farmers and ranchers in this country need is more economic stability and sustained profitability based on fair farm commodity prices. Otherwise, they are unable to make sound farm management and marketing decisions. Freedom to Farm does just the opposite. It transitions farmers into a world market that is anything but free, and is most notable for price instability,'' Paul explains.''

''Furthermore, while no one wants deep government intrusion into day-to-day farming decisions, the federal government has a legitimate role in agriculture,'' Paul notes. ''It needs to insure fair competition, both domestic and foreign. It needs to keep accurate records of the agricultural industry. And it needs to provide some form of an income safety net to food and fiber producers who are the victims of circumstances beyond their control, such as severe weather, political shenanigans, and market manipulations.''

Another NFO concern about Freedom to Farm, according to Paul, is the image it will convey to consumers and taxpayers that farmers are benefitting from an unnecessary government subsidy or handout.

''The American public already has a false conception that family farmers are doing well economically, when in fact thousands of them continue to go out of business each year,'' Paul concludes. ''Freedom to Farm will do nothing to improve the image of agriculture, nor will it deal with the solution to America's farm problem, which is sustained, profitable commodity prices.''

[From the New York Times, Mar. 1, 1996]

HOUSE APPROVES BIGGEST CHANGE IN FARM POLICY SINCE NEW DEAL

LEGISLATION PHASES OUT SUBSIDIES OVER 7 YEARS

(By Eric Schmitt)

WASHINGTON.—The House today approved a major overhaul of American farm programs, voting to end 1930's policies that pay farmers not to plant certain crops and to replace many subsidies with fixed payments that would end after seven years.

The $46 billion legislation, the most far-reaching agricultural bill since the New Deal, ends most Government controls over planting decisions for America's 1.5 million farmers. The vote was 270 to 155, with 54 Democrats voting for the bill and 19 Republicans voting against.

''We've now changed the farm-program world,'' said Representative Pat Roberts, a Kansas Republican who heads the House Agriculture Committee.

The Senate approved a similar, but slightly more costly bill earlier this month. Lawmakers from both chambers will likely meet next week to hammer out a compromise version. Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman said the House bill ''fell short'' in maintaining financing for research, rural development and food for the poor. He said he would not recommend the bill to Mr. Clinton unless the conference committee altered these and other provisions.

The Administration and Congress both want to pass a farm bill soon and farmers are clamoring for a resolution because planting season has begun or will begin soon in many areas.

Mr. Glickman also complained that elimination of the market-based subsidy payments would deprive farmers of a vital safety net. But with crop prices at 10-year highs, consumer groups say the fixed payments the bill calls for would actually cost more in the next few years than the current subsidies, which fall when prices are high.

From the New York Times, Mar. 6, 1996]

BIG CHANGES DOWN ON THE FARM

Reforming the nation's bloated farm subsidy programs is no overnight task. It has taken 60 years for an emergency relief program to mutate into what now amounts to a welfare system for the rural middle class. Nevertheless, Congress has moved an amazing distance toward ending support programs for wheat, corn, rice and cotton. It even took aim, although it missed, at peanuts, sugar and dairy support systems that milk consumers.

The Senate and House have passed bills that would phase out wheat, corn, rice and cotton subsidies over a seven-year period. The House came within a few votes of ending peanut and sugar programs and beat back an audacious attempt by some dairy interests to make milk marketing even more costly to consumers. Senate-House conferees need to make clear, as the House bill attempts to do, that after 2002 the farm welfare supplicants cannot count on reverting to old, discredited law.

The seven-year weaning process, a schedule of declining annual payments to farmers regardless of their planting decisions, is itself a form of welfare designed to appease long-pampered farm lobbyists. The House bill would make it harder for lobbyists to extend the dole after seven years and is thus preferable to the Senate version.

Peanuts and sugar have narrowly survived but they are rapidly becoming endangered species at a time of budget constraints and growing impatience with wasteful government spending. It is now planting season, time for the Senate and House to adopt the better elements of both bills.

[From the Lincoln Journal-Star, Feb. 19, 1996]

BIG AGRIBUSINESS ENJOYED BENEFITS IN SENATE FARM BILL

WASHINGTON.—With a mix of luck, work and unusual organization, the lobby for big grain companies, railroads, meat companies, millers and shippers scored a big win in the Senate-passed overhaul of farm programs.

The ''Freedom to Farm'' bill, as it's called, stops the government from forcing growers to idle land in order to keep getting federal payments. It says farmers can grow the crop that's most likely to sell without losing government payments usually tied to a particular crop. For seven years, at least, the government won't fix the price of corn, wheat and other row crops.

Those things please the people who depend on a steady stream of raw farm goods. The stress on volume over price has made farmers suspicious of being exploited. Still, farmers wanted some of the same things, too, which is one reason the Senate could pass the bill 64–32 on Feb. 7.

Not that the antagonisms, dating to the last century, will end. Democratic advocates for small farmers from states like North Dakota and Minnesota futilely hammered the bill for helping corporate America while leaving the yeoman farmer out in the cold when price-based subsidies end.

''In the long run it says you're on your own with Cargill. You're on your own with the Chicago Board of Trade,'' said Sen. Paul Wellstone, D-Minn., taking on the Minnesota-based food giant during the Senate debate.

Cargill Inc., and the Chicago Board of Trade did work Congress. So did such giants as General Mills Inc., Tyson Foods, Kraft Foods and Procter & Gamble, Union Pacific Railroad, Rabobank Nederland, The Fertilizer Institute and others who build a business from agriculture.

Unlike before, the food companies and trade groups banded together. In the fall of 1994, more than 120 formed the Coalition for a Competitive Food & Agricultural System.

''It was probably the first time in history that a broad-based group in the food industry had gotten together with market-oriented reforms in mind,'' said spokesman Stu Hardy, a former staffer on the Senate Agriculture Committee, now with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Individual members had tried to shape earlier farm bills, he said, but congressional committees answered mainly to grower groups and general farm organizations like the American Farm Bureau Federation. Others were ''pesky intruders,'' he said.

This time the coalition planned and carried out a lobbying campaign to show urban and suburban lawmakers what their stake was in farm law. Farmers who depend on crop subsidies number in the hundreds of thousands. The mills, railroads, ports and food companies and rest of the business provide 19 million jobs, often a long distance from the fields.

The group and its members met with every member of Congress or their staffs, putting together information on each district. It held farm bill seminars for congressional staff and the media.

The job turned out to be a lot easier than first thought. The Republican takeover of Congress, the move to overhaul government and the push to balance the budget were not sure things.

Wanting to keep the safety net but have more freedom to switch crops, farmers were ready for some change, then more. The Agriculture Department made corn growers idle 8 percent of their land in 1995. The way the market went, growers could have planted those acres and sold the crop at a good price. Western Kansas wheat growers suffered a crop disaster, but had to repay advance subsidies when prices soared.

Rep. Pat Roberts, R–Kan., chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, came up with the Freedom to Farm bill, which guaranteed a payment for farmers that falls over seven years and is not linked to crop prices.

The coalition didn't get everything. It couldn't cut the Conservation Reserve Program, which keeps 36 million acres of land out of production, including some good farm land. The Senate bill keeps ''permanent'' farm law in the attic, meaning the old system of crop-based subsidies could return.

[From the Omaha World-Herald, Feb. 25, 1996]

BUSINESSES PUT MUSCLE BEHIND FARM BILL PUSH

(By David C. Beeder)

WASHINGTON.—Major changes in U.S. farm policy—passed by the Senate and pending in the House—will get a big push all the way to the White House from a powerful coalition of more than 100 grain traders, processors, shippers, retailers and producer organizations.

''We wanted to retain a farm income safety net but also eliminate acreage reduction programs (ARPs),'' said Mary Waters of ConAgra Inc. of Omaha. ''Both of these bills do that.''

Stu Hardy of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce said the legislation could have been strengthened if it had reduced the amount of acreage in the 36 million acre Conservation Reserve Program, in which farmers are paid to idle land.

''This program goes on and on without adequate opportunities for an early out,'' Hardy said.

He said the Coalition for a Competitive Food & Agricultural System also was concerned about the Senate's retention of government programs restricting an open market for peanuts, sugar and dairy products.

''But we are pleased with the planting flexibility, the elimination of ARPs and the decoupling of income support and crop prices on a per-bushel or per-pound basis,'' Hardy said.

The seven-year Senate bill, which passed 64–32 Feb. 7, would end government subsidies for corn, wheat, cotton and rice on farms where those crops were planted on government-authorized acreage year after year.

Under the Senate bill, farmers would be allowed to plant any crop—or no crop at all—while continuing to receive government payments based on a declining percentage of subsidies paid in the past.

''It's a buyout. That's what it is,'' said Hardy. ''But the costs are fixed, and they are capped.''

In the past, he said, Congress would pass a five-year farm bill with a cost estimate that generally fell far short of the eventual expenditure.

Opponents of the Senate-passed bill include Sens. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, J.J. Exon, D-Neb., and Bob Kerrey, D-Neb., who contend it will destroy a system intended to protect consumers and America's food supply in years when commodity prices fall below the cost of production.

Bob Petersen of the National Grain Trade Council said the coalition would not have endorsed a bill without income protections for farmers.

''But we felt the time for a 1930s-style farm bill had come and gone,'' said Petersen, a native of Burwell, Neb. ''We wanted an income safety net that would not distort markets.''

Petersen, whose organization represents grain markets including the Chicago Board of Trade and the Lincoln, Neb., grain exchange, said U.S. farmers should have the opportunity to capture a greater share of global markets at a time when prices are strong.

He said the coalition of organizations supporting major change came together gradually over a period of a year.

''Some of the farm groups were pretty suspicious of us at first,'' Petersen said. ''As the year has gone on we've all gravitated toward the same position.''

Petersen said the bill passed by the House could be considerably different than the Senate bill.

''However, I think it will get done,'' he said. ''Farmers and farm groups have been quite vocal in telling Congress they want a bill.''

Stephanie Patrick of Cargill Inc. of Minneapolis, like ConAgra a large grain buyer and meat packer, said she couldn't predict the fate of the farm bill in the House or whether it might be vetoed by President Clinton.

However, she said, the coalition has been a major factor in moving the legislation to a point of decision.

''The most gratifying thing about this bill is that we all were going for the same goal,'' she said.

Floyd Gaibler of the 1,200-member, 8,000-outlet Agricultural Retailers Association, said his organization joined the coalition because it supported the goal of ending supply-management policies in agriculture.

''I think everybody agrees they don't work in today's global market,'' said Gaibler, a native of Farnam, Neb., who was an assistant to former Secretary of Agriculture Richard Lyng.

Drew Collier of Union Pacific Railroad, a coalition member, said the Senate-passed bill would move the country toward a market-oriented farm policy that would result in more grain being transported by rail to export markets.

''The market place ultimately is the best arbiter of these issues,'' Collier said. ''Supply-side management has not proved to be the solution.''

At the Chicago Board of Trade, where farm policy is translated into prices and price protections, Celesta Jurkovich said the need for more U.S. production has been apparent for some time.

''You can see it in what's happening to prices,'' she said. ''They've been going through the roof. The demand out there far exceeds the supply.''

Ms. Jurkovich, a senior vice president at the Chicago Board of Trade, said global trends in population and rising living standards indicate demand will remain strong into the next century.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator from Montana renew his unanimous-consent request?

Mr. BURNS. I propound that same unanimous-consent request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

So the bill (H.R. 2584), as amended, was passed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN) appointed Senators LUGAR, DOLE, HELMS, COCHRAN, MCCONNELL, CRAIG, LEAHY, PRYOR, HEFLIN, HARKIN, and CONRAD conferees on the part of the Senate.

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I inquire of my friend from Nebraska who probably knows more about football than the average Senator. I once heard Darrell Royal, who was head football coach at the University of Texas. They always asked him why he never passed the ball very much. He had a great running team, and had a couple of national championships. He said, ''You know, when you pass the football, three things happen. And two of them are bad.''

That is kind of like the way we are running the farm program now. When you are in the grain business because the grain companies can buy the grain cheap, if you take out a market loan on your grain you can forfeit the grain, if it is not market price. And that goes into the pockets of the taxpayer. Then the grain companies buy that after that happens probably at a lower price. Or they can go ahead and buy the grain, and the taxpayers pick up the difference between the grain and the target price. Three things happen. Two of them are bad for the taxpayer, and I think for agriculture.

The reason we have high prices right now is because we had a crop failure. How can you pay a deficiency payment when you do not have any wheat?

We had a great crop in Montana. We had a big crop and got a big price, and everybody is wealthy without the luxury of the deficiency payments.

So I think what we are doing is so that a majority of agriculture would like to get their dollars at the marketplace, and I hope that this will work. If it does not then I will be the first Senator on the door of the Senator from Nebraska after he has retired in Lincoln, NE, and we might enjoy a football game and watch Big Red roll. And then we will talk about all the mistakes that we made together.

Mr. EXON. If the Senator will yield, I thank him very much for his comments.

There is one thing that I want to correct, because no one knows it better than my friend and colleague from Montana. Certainly each and every cattle farmer is not doing well today. And no one knows that better than my friend from Montana because at one time he was a very prominent cattle person in Montana, and he knows better than anybody else the sad condition that our cattle industry is in today. I just wanted to correct the record. I know that he agrees with that. So everybody in Montana is not doing well. If there are any corn people up there, and the wheat people are probably doing pretty good and will the next 7 years, I do not know about the cattle business.

Mr. BURNS. We will hope for better times in the cattle business. The Senator from Nebraska knows that we have been through these times before, and we will go through this one.

I will be honest with you. I have a hard time, I say to the Senator from Nebraska, of going down the aisle in the grocery store. And these people are setting up here tonight. They buy a box of Wheaties. Wheaties is $3.46 cents a pound. It is not $3.46 cents a box, but a pound. Until this year we had a hard time getting $3.50 cents a bushel for a bushel of wheat, and there are 60 pounds in that bushel. I have a hard time dealing with that.

So I appreciate the comments of my friend from Nebraska.

WHITEWATER DEVELOPMENT CORP. AND RELATED MATTERS—MOTION TO PROCEED

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I now move to proceed to Senate Resolution 227, the Whitewater legislation, and I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to S. Res. 227 regarding the Whitewater extension.

Alfonse D'Amato, Trent Lott, C.S. Bond, Fred Thompson, Slade Gorton, Don Nickles, Paul Coverdell, Spencer Abraham, Chuck Grassley, Conrad Burns, Rod Grams, Richard G. Lugar, Mike DeWine, Mark Hatfield, Orrin G. Hatch, and Thad Cochran.

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the vote occur on Thursday, March 14, at a time to be determined by the two leaders and the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I now withdraw the motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is withdrawn.

AUTHORIZING THE USE OF THE CAPITOL ROTUNDA

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to Senate Concurrent Resolution 45, submitted earlier by Senators DOLE and HELMS.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:.

A concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 45) authorizing the use of the Capitol rotunda on May 2d, 1996, for the presentation of the Congressional Gold Medal to Reverend and Mrs. Billy Graham.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the concurrent resolution.

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the concurrent resolution be considered and agreed to, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the concurrent resolution appear in the appropriate place in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

So the concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 45) was agreed to, as follows:

S. CON. RES. 45

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That the rotunda of the United States Capitol is hereby authorized to be used on May 2, 1996, at 2 o'clock post meridian, for the presentation of the Congressional Gold Medal to Reverend and Mrs. Billy Graham. Physical preparations for the conduct of the ceremony shall be carried out in accordance with such conditions as may be prescribed by the Architect of the Capitol.

NOMINATION OF THOMAS A. FINK TO BE A MEMBER OF THE FEDERAL RETIREMENT THRIFT INVESTMENT BOARD

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, as in executive session, I ask unanimous consent that the Governmental Affairs Committee be immediately discharged of the nomination of Thomas Fink to be a Member of the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board; further, that the Senate proceed immediately to the consideration of the nomination; that the nomination be confirmed; that any statement appear in the RECORD as if read; that upon confirmation the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate then return to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

The nomination was considered and confirmed, as follows:

FEDERAL RETIREMENT THRIFT INVESTMENT BOARD

Thomas A. Fink, of Alaska, to be a Member of the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board for a term expiring October 11, 1999.

HOUSING OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM EXTENSION ACT OF 1995

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I ask that the Chair lay before the Senate a message from the House on S. 1494, a bill to provide an extension for fiscal year 1996 for certain programs administered by the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and the Secretary of Agriculture, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

Resolved, That the bill from the Senate (S. 1494) entitled ''An Act to provide an extension for fiscal year 1996 for certain programs administered by the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and the Secretary of Agriculture, and for other purposes.'', do pass with the following amendment:

Strike out all after the enacting clause, and insert:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Housing Opportunity Program Extension Act of 1996''.

SEC. 2. MULTIFAMILY HOUSING ASSISTANCE.

(a) SECTION 8 CONTRACT RENEWAL.—Notwithstanding section 405(b) of the Balanced Budget Downpayment Act, I (Public Law 104–99; 110 Stat. 44), at the request of the owner of any project assisted under section 8(e)(2) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (as such section existed immediately before October 1, 1991), the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development may renew, for a period of 1 year, the contract for assistance under such section for such project that expires or terminates during fiscal year 1996 at current rent levels.

(b) LOW-INCOME HOUSING PRESERVATION.—

(1) USE OF AMOUNTS.—Notwithstanding any provision of the Balanced Budget Downpayment Act, I (Public Law 104–99; 110 Stat. 26) or any other law, the Secretary shall use the amounts described in paragraph (2) of this subsection under the authority and conditions provided in the 2d undesignated paragraph of the item relating to ''HOUSING PROGRAMS—ANNUAL CONTRIBUTIONS FOR ASSISTED HOUSING'' in title II of