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*Speech by Representative Gerald R. Ford Jr
Ottawa County Farm Bureau
8/19/49*

Mr. Chairman, guests, members of the Ottawa County Farm Bureau and your families. It is a distinct privilege and pleasure for me to be here with you on this occasion and I sincerely look forward to similar opportunities in the years to come.

Periodically many city dwellers in good faith question the need and necessity for basic farm product price support legislation. If I may interject a humorous note, which nevertheless answers in part this criticism, I would like to quote an old saying from an Arkansas farmer which reads as follows:

"The Arkansas farmer gets up in the morning at the Alarm of a Connecticut clock; buttons his Chicago suspenders to Detroit overalls; washes his face with Cincinnati soap in a Pennsylvania pan; sits down to a Grand Rapids table, eats his Chicago meat, and Tennessee flour, cooked with Kansas lard on a St. Louis stove. He puts a New York bridle on a Kansas mule, fed with Iowa corn. He ploughs a farm covered by an Ohio mortgage with a Chattanooga plough. He says a prayer written in Jerusalem and crawls under a blanket made in New Hampshire, only to be kept awake by an Arkansas dog—the only home product on his whole darn place."



As I make my few comments this afternoon I am not unmindful of the fact that all of you are true agricultural experts. The records show that Ottawa County is a diversified agricultural area. Furthermore, although it is small in size, Ottawa County ranks tenth as an agricultural county out of Michigan's 84 counties. Few areas in the State of Michigan can show a healthier livestock industry, a sounder crop program, a more sizeable poultry industry or a better fruit section. Each and every one of you are to be commended for making this achievement possible.

In another important field Ottawa County has been and will undoubtedly continue to be a leader, and I refer to soil conservation generally and specifically to the West Ottawa County Soil Conservation District. Those who have worked so diligently to make this mutually beneficial project successful are to be congratulated for their efforts.

Since the disastrous days back in the late 1920's and the early 1930's the Congress of the United States has been faced with a tremendous problem which not only affects the lives and livelihood of the farmers of this nation but also the countless millions who depend for sustenance on production from our farms. Because of the global influence of the United States at this time it is no exaggeration to

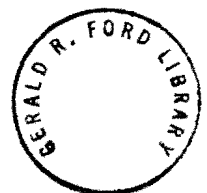


state that the American farm problem in the broadest sense is truly an international issue.

The 64 dollar question might well be phrased in this manner. What should Congress do on the legislative level to establish a system of practical regulations which will give the farmer reasonable protection against excessive price fluctuations without subjecting him to governmentally-imposed restrictions that will deprive him of all freedom of action and initiative. Tied in with this is the dangerous possibility of an eventual loss of a world market for our farm products and an excessive consumer cost either at the market or through the United States Treasury.

What is the basic cause or reason for this perplexing problem. I pretend to be no expert but the following facts and figures may throw some light on the matter. In 1945 each farm worker produced enough agricultural products to support himself and 13 others. In 1920 each farm worker produced only enough for himself and nine others; in 1910 he produced enough for himself and seven others. Through mechanization, fertilization and improved methods each farm worker now produces sufficient agricultural products for twice as many non-farm people as 50 years ago.

Furthermore, without any increase in the acreage of crop land farmed since 1920, farmers have increased the



total volume of agricultural production for sale and for home consumption by 46 per cent. During this period farm production increased faster than our population increased. Beginning in 1939 and continuing at the present time, food production has been great enough to meet military and lend-lease needs during the war, relief feeding needs following the war, and at the same time furnish our civilian population larger per capita food supplies than in pre-war years. Per capita food consumption in the United States in 1946-1948 averaged 17 per cent higher than in the 1935-1939 period. This greater farmer efficiency in the United States has resulted in added availability of farm products despite the per capita increase in consumption of farm products. Consequently, this great nation is faced with a real danger of super-abundance unless constructive action is taken by all concerned.

Recently the House of Representatives considered new farm legislation. The debate brought out one illuminating fact, namely, that heretofore the Congress has always attacked and tried to solve the farm problem on a non-partisan basis. This previous non-political approach was sound and sensible because the solution to our agricultural quandries affect too many of our citizens.



Since January, 1949, however, it has become perfectly obvious that the new Democratic Administration intends to throw farm legislation bi-partisanship in the ash can and substitute, to the detriment of this nation and probably the world as a whole, a plan conceived solely by those with the most extreme partisan leanings. Such an approach, which utterly disregards constructive contributions which may be made by able agriculturalists in all political parties, should be condemned by all clear-thinking citizens. No one can convince me that you farmers want your future welfare and way of life dictated by a plan emanating solely from a Denver lawyer. I'll put my faith, and I think you will also, in the collective minds of those who do not seek for themselves or others political aggrandizement.

Because of a new grab for political power the American people and particularly farmers are now confronted with the so-called Brannan Plan. Where did it come from? What will it do to the farmer? Will it ruin or save the nation economically? These are legitimate questions and they must be answered to your complete satisfaction before the present farm program is pushed over the precipice to oblivion. Few will contend that the present farm program is perfect in



every detail, but does that mean we should entirely junk both it and the long-range farm law which had bi-partisan support in 1948? It seems a bit paradoxical to now have the President, the former Secretary of Agriculture Anderson, presently U. S. Senator from New Mexico, and the Democratic party platform in the year 1948 all demanding flexible price supports and now, in 1949, finding most of the same individuals and organizations turning a deaf ear to such a policy. Could it be that political considerations, rather than a desire for a sound American agricultural economy, affected this change of heart, this confusing flip-flop?

Some people contend, and it hasn't been disproven, that the Brannan Plan was written several years ago by some of the then experts in the Department of Agriculture, namely, Henry Wallace, Rexford Tugwell, and Alger Hiss. Regardless of the truth or falsity of these accusations, it is irrefutable that the Brannan Plan did not originate with the farmers themselves or with any of the great farm organizations, such as the Farm Bureau or the Grange. In reality it is a plan conceived, submitted and sponsored by certain federal employees in conjunction with politically powerful non-farm groups whose fundamental philosophy of government is diametrically opposed to the typical American means and methods.



This same kind of a scheme of complete regimentation has been tried before in Germany, in Argentina and in Great Britain. It has been found wanting even in those countries, so I am positive it is not the answer to your problems. To be specific, you might be interested in knowing how Germany handled the egg program. For example, every person who sold eggs was required to get a receipt in triplicate. One was to be sent to the Department of Agriculture, one was to be safely kept by the chicken raiser, the other was to be filed with the purchaser. Does that sound like a practical or workable plan for the poultry business in this county? I frankly fear that you who raise chickens and market the eggs and everyone else connected with the scheme, would get so fouled up in red tape that the snafu of O.P.A. days would look like paradise in comparison.

Let's consider for a moment the farmer's fate under this proposal. His great worries in the past have always been the vagaries of the weather, but he will find those worries utter bliss compared with the anxieties that will beset him when he becomes dependent upon the whims and fancies of the Congressional committees on appropriations for his livelihood.

The Brannan Scheme means government-administered farm prices and farm income, with absolute control of all land



and production. We have heard much in the past year about a slave-labor law. Make no mistake. If the Brannan Plan ever becomes law, we will have a slave farmer law. The Secretary of Agriculture will become a complete czar with totalitarian-like control of every acre of every farm in the nation. Oh, yes, proponents of this "bargain day" scheme claim that the farmers will have the chance to vote on accepting marketing quotas and that acreage allotments will be used only as a last resort. That is so much nonsense and prattle. If the farmer does not vote for control, he does not get any price support. Thus he has the privilege of voting whether he shall eat or starve. This is like the "free elections" held under Adolph Hitler and those now being held behind the Iron Curtain.

The over-all cost of this "propolition," to use the term of the Kingfish in the Amos 'n Andy show, is still very much a dark secret, but we can use Secretary Brannan's own illustration in the case of milk as an example. The Secretary said he wanted the average price to consumers down to 15 cents a quart. The average price throughout the United States today is around 21 cents per quart. The Secretary claims that for each one-cent-per-quart reduction in the price of milk the federal government would pay out \$150,000,000. Now, for a reduction of six cents per quart, which he would like to make,



the federal government would have to pay out nine hundred million dollars per year. Furthermore, this would take care of only about one-third of the milk produced that is sold as fluid milk. If the other two-thirds, which goes into the production of butter, cheese, ice cream, etc., received the same bounty, the total cost to the federal treasury on this one product alone would be two and a half billion annually. A sizeable amount even in these days.

As you know, the House of Representatives recently turned this program of the Democratic Administration down by an overwhelming vote and we approved a continuation of the present law. It is indeed unfortunate that the Administration made this a partisan issue at such a critical time for the farmers of this nation. As a result, much valuable time has been lost--time which could have been well spent working on corrective legislation so that the "bugs" in the present law would be no more. If unfortunate results do accrue in the next several years, the blame should fall on the Donkey and his followers who during the past eight months have been trying to foist a strictly political farm law on the American people instead of working in cooperation with those who have the farmers' future foremost in mind. I can assure you that we who are presently in the minority in Congress will continue to strive for sound and sensible farm legislation without resorting to political chicanery.



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Annual Ottawa County Farm Bureau Picnic
August 19, 1949*

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