

Churchman, Two Politicians Key GOP Men In Ag Picture

(Editor's Note: A churchman and two politicians make up the high command in the administration's battle to work out a new farm program for American agriculture. In this third article of four, two AP reporters predict the generals may reach a parting of the ways in the months ahead.)

By OVID MARTIN and DON WHITEHEAD

WASHINGTON (AP)—Three men—a churchman and two politicians—hold the key positions today in the administration fight to carry out President Eisenhower's campaign promise of a new farm program for American agriculture. But this high command may be split wide open in the months ahead.

The churchman is Ezra Taft Benson, secretary of agriculture and long-time leader in the Mormon church. The politicians are Sen. George Aiken (R-Vt.), chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, and Rep. Clifford R. Hope, chairman of the House Agriculture Committee.

These three are, in effect, the ranking Republican generals in the farm world's civil war—a conflict centering around the administration's ideas on the best way to increase and stabilize farm income.

Their strategy and leadership will determine in large measure the kind of program Congress will adopt when the present law requiring fixed high support prices for basic crops expires next year. The basics are wheat, corn, cotton, tobacco, rice and peanuts.

But in the showdown fight, Eisenhower may find one of his generals at odds with the other two. And here's why:

Benson and Aiken are in strong agreement that the fixed high support price program developed under the Truman administration should be changed to a program of flexible price supports. But Hope—who comes from a wheat state—is "giving a go slow" signal.

Where Benson and Aiken are highly critical of the present high-level supports, Hope thinks this program has worked well and that support programs should be extended where possible to other crops.

As yet, Benson and his aides have developed no specific recommendations on a new program, and none are likely before fall.

But Benson has outlined a fairly clear picture of the direction in which he wants to go and there is every indication he has the full support of President Eisenhower.

On price supports, he said recently: "I doubt very much if any government can, by high, rigid supports, prevent some adjustment in prices, unless we step from one commodity to the next and then to the next, until finally we have control of all of them. When we have that, we will practically have state socialism, and I do not believe that farmers want that any more than you do or I do."

Benson believes high price supports tend to "freeze" crop production. In other words, if a farmer is guaranteed a profitable return for growing wheat, then there isn't much reason for him to shift to a more-needed but less profitable crop even though corn sur-

pluses do pile up in storage as is now the case.

Benson also thinks the fixed high supports tend to price a commodity out of the market in domestic and world competition.

The secretary says that as long as prices are supported at high levels, there is no pressure on farmers to increase efficiency and lower production costs by using better seed varieties and farming practices in order to be in a better position to compete in home and overseas markets.

In other words, he says, high supports subsidize inefficiency.

As a farmer, Benson never accepted a government subsidy payment himself. But he says there should be some price support structure to protect the farmer from economic disasters such as they experienced 20 years ago.

Judging from Benson's speeches, policy statements, interviews, and testimony before congressional groups, he favors in general a program that runs in this direction:

1. Flexible price supports ranging from 75 to 90 per cent of parity. But he says there should be a return estimate to be fair to both the farmer and the consumer. Under this flexibility, supports could be lowered to discourage overproduction, or raised to encourage shifts to needed crops.

2. A greater voice for farmers and commodity groups in drafting programs to fit their particular needs. This would mean, Benson says, decentralizing federal control with emphasis on controls at the state and county level.

3. Expanded efforts through private enterprise and government to build up foreign markets which have been sagging badly in the past year. This would call for expanded sales efforts and efforts to remove trade barriers at home and abroad.

4. Shifting to the Agriculture Department some of the authority and responsibility now held by the State Department in the field of foreign trade policies.

5. Government - industry efforts on a wider scale than in the past to find new uses for farm products through research—and thus siphon off some of the farm surpluses now plaguing the farm program.

6. A concentrated effort by government, farmers and food handlers to find ways to cut marketing costs. Costs have risen sharply in recent years and cut deeply into the farmer's share of the consumer dollar spent for food.

7. The possible wider use of marketing agreements, price insurance and a two-price system for exports. The two-price system would mean one price at home and a world price that would seek its competitive level in foreign markets.

Aiken stands close to Benson in the fight and the senator says farm sentiment is swinging toward something better. But he is confident something better can be found.

Benson, in recent speeches and statements also has promised that he will seek no changes in the present program until something is found that will "do better" by farmers.

Aiken was asked why it was he and other administration leaders favor a flexible price support plan now when the flexible plan of the 1930s wasn't considered a success.

"In those days," he said, "price supports were fixed at 50 to 75 per cent of parity. But this support couldn't be given until prices dropped to a trouble point. The program was designed to get us out of trouble, rather than to keep out of trouble."

He added that supports in the 30s were held to less than 80 per cent of parity and were kept close to the minimum allowed by law.

As a result, he said, Congress

began thinking in terms of a program "that would keep us out of trouble" and he added that is the thinking that will prevail in any new program that is developed.

Aiken argues that any program must be constantly changing to meet new conditions.

"If you should write a law and say you will guarantee farmers 90 to 100 per cent of parity, you'll have to break the law sooner or later," he said. "But this administration is dedicated to a prosperous agriculture, and we'll use whatever means it takes, if it's support at 90 per cent or whatever is needed."

Over on the House side, Hope takes a more cautious attitude than Aiken toward change in the present farm program and he believes the mood of Congress right now is "don't move too fast" toward change.

Hope certainly isn't the outspoken supporter of the Eisenhower-Benson ideas that Aiken has been. And it is known he is not convinced a flexible support system for basic crops would bring about the desired shifts in production—unless the incentive to farmers was a support price higher than 90 per cent of parity.

In one of his farm-state speeches Hope made this point: "I believe that during 1933-34 Congress should

restudy all of our price support programs with a view of making those which are now in operation more effective if possible, and of extending them where possible to other commodities."

"In saying this I want to make it perfectly clear that I do not think we should give up any program which is working at least reasonably well until we are sure we have something better to take its place."

Later this summer, Hope will head a group from the House Agriculture Committee which will visit the farm regions to get first-hand views from farmers.

In all this battle, the weather and the still - silent voice of the general public are factors which could scramble the best-laid plans. Both are unpredictable.

Tomorrow: Two unpredictable—the weather and public opinion—may prove to be decisive factors in the farm world's civil war.

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Dog Costs Army \$200 - Same As Mule or Horse

WASHINGTON (AP)—A dog takes a pretty big bite out of the Army's pocketbook.

The average cost of a dog—used for patrol duty with sentries and guards—is about \$200, a witness told a House appropriations subcommittee in testimony released today.

But the Army shouldn't kick at the price for a mule or horse. A mule also averages \$200, and a horse \$205.

Gideon Cabinet To Meet June 27

A number of Oregon State Gideons auxiliaries will converge on Klamath Falls this weekend for the regular quarterly cabinet meeting, which will be held in the First Baptist Church all day Saturday, starting at 9 a.m.

This meeting of all state officers is scheduled to assist the Klamath Falls Camp of Gideons to complete arrangements for the State Convention which is to be held September 18-20 in Klamath Falls.

The local Camp is looking forward to, and hoping for a larger representation of Gideons than was in Coquille last year when 193 sat down to the banquet. This year we hope to have the annual banquet for over 200 in one of the local churches. Rodney C. Larsen, the president of the local camp, is hopeful that a large number of local Gideons and friends will be present at the dinner to be given by the ladies of the local Auxiliary this Saturday evening. In meal with and talk with the State Officers, who will be led by Harry Reecher, Forest Grove, the state president. A program has been provided to follow the evening meal.

Any one wishing to attend the banquet is requested to phone 5093, or 6063 and make your reservation so the ladies will know how many to prepare for.

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