

Eisenhower to Fight for Program

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Washington

Confronted with the first signs of congressional revolt, President Eisenhower has declared that his legislative program is for the good of the country and that he intends to fight for it.

Some Republican Farm Bloc members of Congress have commented that the administration's farm program, calling for flexible price supports, is not "politically feasible in this election year."

Others have questioned his labor recommendations.

President Eisenhower's reply, made to his press conference Jan. 13, is that the new farm program is the result of tremendous study, of consultation with farm experts and farmers all across the nation, and that he

believes the program is feasible and workable.

Intending to freeze no situation until the administration's salesmanship with Congress has had its impact, the President would not now name for reporters those items which he considered "must" legislation. Nor what percentage of his program he expected Congress would enact.

For Nation's Good

He simply declared—using speech impressive to the man on the street if not to Congress—that he and his associates believed the proposals being sent to Congress were for the good of the country, and that he intended to fight hard for them.

The President added that if his farm plan was not politically feasible, he would surely find it out, but that in the meantime he believes it is right.

Misgivings about the President's plan to abandon rigid, high farm price supports for a flexible, sliding scale were expressed at a top caucus of Republican senators, Jan. 12.

Senators Joseph R. McCarthy (R) of Wisconsin, Milton R. Young (R) of North Dakota, Edward J. Thye (R) of Minnesota, and Herman Welker (R) of Idaho, all from the Farm Belt, are reported to have expressed serious doubt whether the Benson farm program, no matter how sound, could be sold to the voters by election day—so misrepresented has it been up to now.

Meanwhile, a leading Republican member of the Senate Labor Committee, Senator Irving M. Ives of New York, criticized the administration's labor proposal requiring a government-supervised strike vote whenever a strike occurs.

Union Chiefs Protest

"It won't work," Senator Ives said, "and I'm against it."

As expected, leaders of both the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations denounced the strike-vote proposal, terming it "naked strike-breaking" and "union-busting."

As to the President's labor message as a whole, AFL president George Meany said, "it contains some minor improvements in the Taft-Harley Act, but it will contribute little, if anything, toward the improvement and stabilization of labor-management relations and peaceful collective bargaining."

This stormy reception to key

points in the President's farm and labor messages was not unanticipated. Administration spokesmen have argued that, although labor leaders would speak out against proposed amendments to the Taft-Hartley Act, labor's rank and file would take no such hostile view.

Whether the unexpected proposal for government-supervised strike votes would arouse the rank and file, was another matter.

Initial negative reactions to the administration's farm policy in the Farm Belt also were expected. The series of addresses by Secretary of Agriculture Ezra



T. Benson, plus administration publicity, plus conferences with farm organizations, are expected to do a job of "educating" farmers to the absolute necessity of devising new farm remedies.

Change Held Vital

"When previous farm programs have built up a six-billion-dollar surplus in government hands, you have got to try something new—something that will not continue to encourage more farm production than even the greatest nation on earth can absorb," a spokesman declared.

The administration's "education" program can still have major impact.

It was not, however, expected that farm policy would be worriedly discussed at a Senate Republican caucus summoned routinely to approve committee assignments.

Some Republican senators, it was reported, warned during the closed session that if the sliding-scale recommendations of the administration should be adopted—which could mean eventual lower prices for farm products—the Republicans would lose control of Congress at the November elections.

More than 30 Senate seats, some in the farming areas, will be at stake in these elections.

Under the President's proposal

rigid, high, "90 per cent parity" price supports would be abandoned in favor of flexible supports which might range from 75 to 90 per cent of parity, at the discretion of the Secretary of Agriculture.

Trouble Forecast

One senator reported that Senator McCarthy touched off the "unusual" debate by disagreeing with a roseate report presented by Senator Everett M. Dirksen of Illinois on Republican Senate prospects next November. Senator McCarthy is said to have declared the party was "in trouble" in the farm states.

He urged that Congress should try to boost farm prices up to where they were "at the end of the Truman farm depression," and favored price supports ranging from 80 to 100 per cent of parity, with the President having discretion to run them "as high as 110 per cent" if necessary.

Senator Thye said he had expressed doubts about abandoning present high supports without further convincing assurances that present surpluses would not lower farm prices. He wanted to know more about the proposed method of "sealing off" 26 billion dollars' worth of present farm surpluses from commercial channels—how would they be disposed of.

Farmers are supposed to switch plantings from surplus crops to those not in surplus. "What nonsurplus crops can we divert to?" Senator Thye asked.

Program Defended

Among those strongly defending the administration program was Senator Arthur V. Watkins of Utah, Mr. Benson's home state.

On the labor front, CIO president Walter P. Reuther charged that the strike-vote plan was "clearly a provision for government strike-breaking." A bill embodying the proposal to hold a strike vote sometime after the start of any strike was introduced to the Senate Jan. 11 by Senator H. Alexander Smith (R) of New Jersey. The President's proposal appeared to call for a vote before a strike started, not afterward.

So the rough weather has begun. Congressional hearings on the farm proposals begin next week.