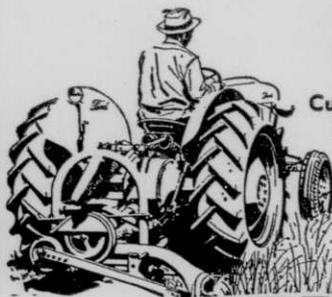


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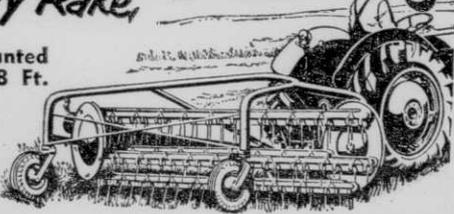
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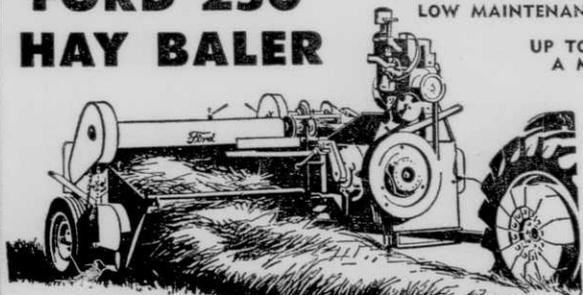


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Keeping in Touch With Washington

Farm Plan Changes Appear in Making

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Widespread and intense discussion of future farm price policy is under way here. Fundamental changes appear to be in the making that could have a major impact on farm income.

Discontent with present programs is extreme, say farm leaders. The figures tell why.

Farm price supports since 1952, says a recent House report, have gone down an average of 20 per cent. Acreage of basic crops has been reduced an equal percentage by stringent allotments and quota controls. Farm costs are up 10 per cent.

While income of the urban population has climbed more than 12 per cent, the report goes on, farm income has declined 20 per cent and more.

The result is mounting pressure to try something new.

Hearings on Capitol Hill appear to justify the proposition that past price policy has helped knock the props out from under demand and put the farmer in a strait-jacket. Agriculture Secretary Benson's solution is lower supports, which eventually, he insists, will create demand and bring the farmer more income.

Secretary Benson's suggestion has been met with resounding silence from Republicans in Congress and outraged cries from Democrats.

All hands agree that acreage controls should be fewer, market prices lower in order to build demand. Problem is how, at the same time, to maintain producer returns. Two approaches have been written into various bills introduced recently on Capitol Hill.

First, the domestic parity or two-price plan. Several versions of this approach are now in bill form. The idea is to build blended price floors from a combination of high domestic guarantees and the world price for that part of a crop which is exported. Wheat, rice and cotton are among commodities being seriously considered for the two-price treatment.

Second, the direct-payment plan. The idea is to allow market prices to go where they will, but maintain producer guarantees through Treasury payments.

Advocates of both two-pricing and direct payments are out to maintain high grower guarantees. But they differ on how to go about achieving it. Advocates of direct payments, generally speaking, would saddle the taxpayer with price support costs; two-pricers, on the other hand, tend to put the burden on the consumer.

FEED REPORT

A feed and livestock report from USDA, due to reach Capitol Hill by July 15, is being billed as most comprehensive study of its kind ever made.

Prepared by a 15-man department task force, the report will (1) review current livestock problems; (2) include 5-year and 20-year projections of the feed-livestock picture, and (3) analyze several alternative government programs.

The department analysis is expected to point up the desire of top officials to remove corn from the list of "basic" crops . . . treat it just like other feed grains. The study is being directed by Dr. F. V. Waugh, head of USDA's Di-

vision of Agricultural Economics.

FLOOD INSURANCE

Remember that flood insurance law? Congress approved, last year, a comprehensive program providing coverage up to \$10,000 on single farm dwellings, up to \$250,000 on a farm or business property.

The government was to bear administration costs and subsidize premiums up to 40 per cent. Private insurance firms were to sell and service policies. Details had been worked out by a new Washington agency, and policies were to be offered farmers late this spring or early summer. Then the economy wave washed over Capitol Hill. Result: No funds to start the program, despite expenditures already made to set it up.

You cannot now count on flood insurance until at least next spring and perhaps later.

GAS TAX REFUNDS

Gas tax refunds to farmers will be more important this year. The federal tax on gas has gone up from 2 cents to 3 cents per gallon. You must ask for a refund, in order to get it. File your claim on Internal Revenue Service Form 2240, available at the county agent's office or many banks and postoffices. Claims may be filed starting on July 1, but not later than Sept. 30. The law now exempts farmers from federal gas tax on fuel used for farm production purposes.

Refunds to more than a million farmers averaged \$20 each last year . . . will be considerably higher this year. For details, get Internal Revenue's newly revised booklet, "Farmer's Gas Tax Refund Guide."

MONTANA VOTES QUOTAS

Predictions that wheat growers, this year, would turn down marketing quotas on the '58 crop turned out to be way off the mark.

Preliminary figures (which won't change much) showed that more than 83 per cent of voting growers approved quotas. The comparable percentage last year was 87.4 per cent; the year before that, 77.3 per cent.

Of eligible Montana voters, 93.7 per cent favored quotas on next year's crop, according to the preliminary figures.

SMALL PROJECTS ACT

Local, state groups can now go ahead with irrigation work under the Small Reclamation Projects Act. The law has been amended to meet objections raised by the President when he signed the act last August.

Conservation groups in Western states, including Montana, may obtain through regional reclamation offices (1) federal loans at about 3 per cent interest or less for irrigation projects costing no more than \$10 million; (2) outright federal grants of up to \$5 million for works that benefit the public, such as flood control, fish and wildlife development.

Maximum federal loan will be \$5 million, minus the local contribution. Money may be had either for a new irrigation project, or to improve an existing one. Address of Region 6 of the Bureau of Reclamation is P.O. Box 2553, Billings, Montana.