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OPENING REMARKS

G. Burton Wood, Chairman

National Committee on Agricultural Policy

It is my pleasure, on behalf of the National Committee, to welcome you to this Fifteenth National Conference on Agricultural Policy. We appreciate having the opportunity to hold this conference at the Allerton Park Center of the University of Illinois. If my memory is correct, this the the third time that we have met at Allerton Park.

The objective of these national conferences is to increase understanding of public problems and policies. It has been my good fortune to have attended most of the fifteen conferences. I well recall the discussion of an early conference held at Green Lake, Wisconsin, which led to the conclusion that effective public affairs education can be conducted only by people who are professionally trained to work in this area. Over the years we have developed a three-point program format for professionals in public affairs education. One program objective has been to extend the knowledge of extension workers of subject matter in the area of agricultural policy. A second program objective has been to probe new areas where greater understanding is needed if we are to deal successfully with public affairs issues. The third aspect of our program format has been to develop appropriate methodology for use in public meetings to help people increase their understanding of public problems and policies. This always has involved demonstrations by state personnel of how they are getting the communications job done in their respective states. The program of the next few days will follow this three-point format.

We may well ask the question, what have these national conferences on agricultural policy accomplished? Of course, it is not easy to provide a full evaluation of this question. It is interesting to note, however, that 17 states have sent representatives to every national conference without a miss; 13 states have missed only one conference; and 11 states have missed only two conferences. Over a period of fifteen years 41 states have been sufficiently impressed with the value of the national conference that they have seen fit to send representatives on a rather regular basis. It has been gratifying to me that we are now developing a hard core of professionalism in the area of public affairs education. We need only to look at this group assembled here today to recognize this fact.

We now have four regional public affairs committees functioning

successfully in respective areas of the country. Your National Committee and the Farm Foundation have sponsored public affairs training courses for hundreds of county agricultural agents. Your National Committee has been working effectively in coordinating work on public affairs issues with the Iowa Adjustment Center and the Agricultural Policy Institute. In addition, effective teamwork in public affairs education has been maintained with the Federal Extension Service and with other governmental agencies.

Another aspect of the impact of these national conferences has been the publication of the proceeding of all of these national conferences. Most of you have a library of these proceedings. Some of the issues already are out of print and have become "collector's items." These proceedings go to every county agent in the United States and are widely used by local people as reference sources in the area of public affairs.

All of this would not have been possible without the substantial and continued support of the Farm Foundation over the years. We are indeed grateful for this financial support which has made these national conferences and related educational activities such a rewarding and stimulating experience.

We hope that this conference will be stimulating to each of you and that you will be able to take something home that will enrich your work in public affairs education.

PART I

*Emerging Foreign Policy
Issues*

