

STATEMENT OF CARVIN GUY, PRESIDENT, MARSHALL COUNTY NATIONAL FARMERS ORGANIZATION

My name is Carvin Guy. I operate a family-size farm near Veblen, South Dakota, and I am president of the NFO in Marshall County.

Our organization is deeply worried about the sick state of family-type agriculture today. We believe collective bargaining at the marketplace can help solve our problems. We also believe that the irrigation and flood control features of the Oahe Project will help solve this problem.

The prices we receive for our production have dropped 8 per cent just since last August. The price we must pay for production items is up 2 and 3 per cent in the same period. We are clearly caught in a cost-price squeeze. Because farm family income has not kept pace with the increased income of other segments of our economy, the farmers are deserting South Dakota at the rate of 1,500 a year. As the big manufacturers and the research agencies come up with more efficient ways of farming bigger, this trend could well increase.

The Marshall County NFO supports the Oahe Project as a partial answer to stopping this regrettable trend. The first stage will make possible 500 new farms. The second stage might mean even more new farms.

The Oahe Project also will mean a greater tax base for the entire region. As property taxes on our farms and homes go up and up, it will be welcome relief to have new wealth in the region, sharing the tax load.

We stand today on the threshold of a new agricultural boom as the population of the world continues to grow by leaps and bounds. Certainly the mere presence of a growing market does not assure the farmer will share in the increased income of the food and fiber market. We in the NFO believe quite strongly that the farm income problem will not be solved until we gain a strong bargaining position in the market place. We do hope that this can come hand-in-hand with the development of our economy through the authorization of the Oahe Project.

We must think seriously about increasing the income of the farmer, and about increasing our production of food and fiber both to feed a hungry world and to provide for our young people farm opportunities which do not exist today.

We urge your committee to take favorable action on this legislation. Thank you.

STATEMENT BY WEBSTER (S. DAK.), CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The main street of Webster and the economic life of its people are dependent fully and entirely on the surrounding agricultural area. This is true of every small town in South Dakota and probably every small town in the Great Plains. This fact makes the Webster Chamber of Commerce acutely aware of the continuing loss of farms in our area.

It has been documented, in every irrigation project now operating that widespread irrigation not only reverses this trend of loss of farms but turns it around to begin actually increasing farms. This has been especially true in the Columbia River Basin Project in the Pacific Northwest.

Webster is the trade center of Day County, South Dakota. We can document the number of farms which have ceased to operate. But equally frightening, and going hand in hand with the loss of farms, is the loss of retail businesses. Day County, from 1958 through 1968, the period covered by the last U.S. Census of Business, lost 21 retail trade establishments. The drop was from 163 to 142, a loss of nearly one-eighth.

The first stage of the Oahe Unit will not encompass Day County land. The second stage will cover only a handful of acres in our county. But we know full well the need for regional thinking and regional planning in this age of modern highways and fast transportation. A community no longer is measured by a day's ride by horseback, but must be measured in much larger terms. Therefore we conclude that the great economic benefits of the Oahe Unit, although they may be a few miles from our front door, will have a great beneficial effect on our businesses and our families.

What we are saying is that if Oahe can be built and authorized, will mean new dollars in the economy of our business communities—helping to raise the standard of living for many and providing new jobs for many others.

In addition to the economic benefits inherent in better yields and more farms, the Oahe Unit can provide additional fish, wildlife and recreation benefits that