

STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT V. DENNEY, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEBRASKA

Mr. DENNEY. Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. On May 3, 1967, Mr. Scherle and I introduced H.R. 9616, a bill to revise the quota control system on the importation of certain meat and meat products. I know, Mr. Chairman, that you and several other gentlemen have introduced similar legislation. H.R. 9616 is also similar to S. 1588, introduced by Senator Hruska of the other body.

H.R. 9616 would eliminate the extra 10 percent of imports now permitted before the quotas become effective. Similarly, the quota would be imposed based upon the actual imports rather than estimates by the Secretary of Agriculture, and it would be applied quarterly rather than annually. Also, offshore purchases of meat by the Defense Department for use by our troops abroad or otherwise would be charged against the applicable quota.

Under present law, the base quota was derived from the average annual imports for the years 1959-63. However, 1963 was the highest year on record and resulted in a base quota of 725 million pounds. This bill would use the years 1958-62 as the base years, with the resulting base quota being 585.5 million pounds.

H.R. 9616 would also include prepared and preserved beef, veal, and mutton within the quota, without increasing the base quota. Finally, it would authorize quotas on pork and lamb when imports of these items are tending to interfere with the purposes of the Meat Import Act.

Mr. Chairman, the Meat Import Act of 1964 has been ineffective in providing any real relief for the meat producers because it allows for too many exemptions and does not adequately protect our livestock industry. With the parity ratio at about 74, which is the lowest since 1933, and with the price per hundredweight for cattle being the same as 20 years ago, whereas the cost of production is so much greater, I think the committee knows that any assist to agriculture will be helpful indeed.

H.R. 9616 is a fair and reasonable bill, a bill designed to stabilize the role of imports in our meat supply, to protect our domestic industry without doing harm to our foreign suppliers.

The livestock industry is the most widespread of all our farm industries in this country, and also the largest in terms of value of output. The prosperity of the livestock industry is also of fundamental importance to the continued well-being of producers of feed crops for sale.

I hope this committee will approach this problem recognizing the historic role of agriculture in this country, the new problems that beset the farmer in this era, and the pressures which have made it most difficult to preserve a healthy rural economy and society. To stem the unhealthy tide of migration away from the farms, to give the livestock man at least a small assist in his effort to maintain the healthy rural economy and rural society of the past, we ask that the House Ways and Means Committee help strengthen the import quota system in the manner provided by H.R. 9616.

The CHAIRMAN. We appreciate your bringing us your thoughts, Mr. Denney.

Our next witness is Senator Clifford P. Hansen, of Wyoming. Welcome, Senator, you are recognized.