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Press Release - Senator Edmund S. Muskie Opposes Nomination of Earl Butz as Secretary of Agriculture

Edmund S. Muskie

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MUSKIE

Maine

(202) 225-5844

FOR RELEASE

Contact: Dick Stewart
Herb Hadad
[202] 833-3850

Immediately
November 22, 1971

Senator Edmund S. Muskie [D-Maine] today announced his opposition to the nomination of Dr. Earl Butz as Secretary of Agriculture. The full text of the Senate statement follows:

All Americans have suffered from rising costs, rising unemployment, and a growing lack of confidence in the economic leadership of the Nixon Administration during the last three years. Many have seen their pay increases wiped out by rising prices. Many others have lost their jobs.

When economic anxieties are so widespread, it is harder to focus on the ongoing plight of the forgotten American farmer. American agriculture has made an extraordinary contribution to the wealth of our land -- and yet, because of its own great capacity for production, the agricultural sector of our economy has been suffering for many years from downward pressures on the prices of its products.

I do not believe such a fundamental sector of our economy should be punished because of its own great productive accomplishments. That is why I have supported programs initiated by Democratic Administrations to protect farm income by assisting the farmer in the management of market supply and in helping to guarantee a fair price that will cover his costs of production plus a reasonable profit.

Under the Nixon Administration, as under previous Republican Administrations, the condition of the American farmer has deteriorated. Farm prices have declined in relation to farm costs, and more and more family farms have gone out of operation as the large agribusiness corporations extend their control. I believe farmers deserve a fair price. I do not

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believe that the family farm has become obsolete. Corporate farming must not be allowed to displace the family farm -- which continues to play a vital role in the American economy and in the life of rural America.

The Administration must provide the leadership necessary to help the farmer, to protect the family farm as a viable institution, and to give American farmers the confidence that their voice is being heard in Washington.

I do not believe that the appointment of Dr. Earl L. Butz to be Secretary of Agriculture will accomplish this purpose. Dr. Butz does not have the confidence of the majority of American farmers because they have experienced his policies in the past -- under Agricultural Secretary Ezra Taft Benson. He does not have the confidence of the farmers because they do not believe that a man who has served on the Board of Directors of three agribusiness corporations would really defend the family farm against corporate expansion into agriculture. I believe the nomination of Dr. Butz has further undermined the confidence of American farmers in their government at a time that their faith in American government must be restored.

The Administration did not consult with American farmers on this nomination. It did not consult with the farm organizations. If the newspaper accounts are true, the White House apparently did not even consult with some key members of its own party from farm areas who understand the concerns of farmers. I believe farmers should have a Secretary of Agriculture whom they trust as someone who will represent their interests in Washington. Dr. Butz does not have that trust.

For all these reasons, I will oppose the Butz nomination in the Senate.

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