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Press Release - Muskie Urges 90 Percent Parity for Milk

Edmund S. Muskie

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FOR RELEASE

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IMMEDIATELY
March 2, 1972

MUSKIE URGES 90 PERCENT PARITY FOR MILK

Senator Edmund S. Muskie (D-Me) today, March 2, in a letter to Secretary of Agriculture Earl L. Butz, urged that the Department of Agriculture take immediate action to increase the price support level of milk to 90% of parity.

In his letter to the Secretary, Senator Muskie said that "Unless the federal government takes immediate and vigorous action, thousands of American family farmers may be forced to sell their farms in the next few months,"

Senator Muskie pointed out that the number of dairy farmers in America has dropped significantly in the last few years "because they can no longer make a living from the land."

"If we continue to force American families from their farms," the Maine Senator said, "I believe it will severely damage the fabric of our society and seriously harm the quality of life in the United States."

Senator Muskie stated that in the last twelve years, dairy farmers have gained only 2% in actual purchase power compared to 35.5% for all other wage earners and that while their costs for production have substantially increased, the price of milk has dropped to less than 80% of parity in the same period.

In his letter, Senator Muskie said, "I am writing you today because you, as Secretary of Agriculture, could take immediate action to provide relief for the family dairy farmer."

I therefore urge you to move promptly to increase the price support level of milk to 90% of parity.

Senator Muskie is co-sponsor of S. 3195, a bill to require an increase in the price support for milk to "not less than 90% of the parity price."

The full text of the Muskie letter is attached:

- COPY -

March 2, 1972

Honorable Earl L. Butz
Secretary of Agriculture
Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Unless the federal government takes immediate and vigorous action, thousands of American family farmers may be forced to sell their farms in the next few months.

In 1960, there were over a million dairy farmers. Today, there are less than 400,000. Most experts predict that the number of American dairy farmers will drop to 200,000 by 1980. I find this trend to be extremely alarming. If we continue to force American families from their farms, I believe it will severely damage the fabric of our society and seriously harm the quality of life in the United States.

The reason so many of these hardworking Americans must leave their homes is because they can no longer make a living from the land. During the last twelve years, for example, the dairy farmers have gained only 2% in actual purchasing power compared to 35.6% for all other wage earners, and this in the face of disastrous inflation. The costs of production for the farmer have skyrocketed: just last year, the cost of farm machinery and equipment increased 6.7%, farm wages increased 5.3%, and farm property taxes climbed 6.7%. During this same period, the price of milk has dropped to less than 80% of parity.

I am writing you today because you, as Secretary of Agriculture, could take immediate action to provide relief for the family dairy farmer. The need is critical, we have little time left, and we must act boldly. I therefore urge you, in your capacity as Secretary, to move promptly to increase the price support level of milk to 90% of parity.

Sincerely,

(signed Edmund S. Muskie)

Edmund S. Muskie
United States Senator