

Agriculture efforts

Church says he believes in a policy that would give the farmer a fair return. "It is not fair," he argues, "to place the burden of holding down inflation on the farmer's back, especially in an era of escalating costs that have driven more and more farmers and ranchers from the land."

A prime example of the "cost-price" squeeze is that faced by U.S. sugar growers, plagued by massive amounts of subsidized foreign sugar being dumped on the U.S. market. Church is the sponsor of legislation to enact a strong domestic sugar program that will assure U.S. growers a fair price for their crop in the open market. Sugar-state senators of both political parties turned to Church to lead the way.

In 1978, Church sponsored legislation to revitalize the public range, to make it productive once again, benefiting not only the livestock industry, but the public at large. The legislation, now law, also established an equitable and flexible fee for grazing permits on the public range that cattlemen and wool growers had long sought. Church has also joined as a sponsor of legislation to hold down beef imports at times when domestic cattle prices are low.

Church is the chief sponsor of the legislation, now pending, to completely overhaul the outdated 1902 Reclamation Act. Church's bill, the focal point of Senate debate on reclamation reform, would raise the acreage limitation to 1,280 acres, eliminate the leasing "loophole," strengthen family farms, and establish in law the idea of "equivalency," which means that the acreage limitation would be raised for land of less productive value.

The senator is also pressing legislation to mandate the use of gasoline/alcohol fuel blends throughout the country. By mixing alcohol with gasoline, the country could save one-fifth of the bill on imported pe-

troleum, create vast new markets for surplus farm crops and make use of wood waste and urban refuse. Church's proposal would require oil companies to begin producing gasohol, on a rising scale, until every gallon of gasoline sold in America would contain 10 percent alcohol.

Sometimes, congressional power is best used to block rather than promote an idea. Nowhere is there a better example than the continuing pressure from California and the Southwest to divert Idaho water. Using his seniority on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Church helped write legislation in both 1968 and 1978 to put a stop to any and

all diversion schemes.

Church also led the way when it came to saving Idaho farmers \$18 million for rebuilding American Falls Dam. When the dam was crumbling, the farmers didn't wait for the government to act; they financed the new dam themselves. Church pushed this legislation through Congress in the closing hours of the 95th Congress, and it's now law.

In late 1978, when a bumper harvest caused prices of Idaho potatoes to fall to levels that threatened growers' income, Church took the lead in urging the Department of Agriculture to implement a diversion program to bolster prices.

As chairman of the Senate Aging Committee, and now as its ranking member, Church has operated from a position of special significance to senior citizens. He has received every major honor conferred by the nation's leading senior citizens organizations, including the American Association of Retired Persons, the National Retired Teachers Association, and the National Council of Senior Citizens.

Church has sponsored many improvements in Social Security benefits which became law. Of crucial importance to senior citizens was the law he sponsored in 1972, after overcoming the opposition of the Nixon White House, to require

annual increases in Social Security benefits to reflect the surge in the cost of living — thus going a long way toward making Social Security "inflation-proof."

He has sponsored a number of tax relief measures for the elderly, including the new law in 1978 which ends, for the vast majority of taxpayers, the capital gains tax on the sale of a home for those over age 55, arguing the money could better be used to meet the needs of men and women who face retirement and lower incomes.

He was the sponsor, also, of other important legislation: the expansion of "meals on wheels," home health care, and other programs that make it

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possible for more elderly persons to stay in their homes rather than having to move to expensive nursing facilities; the increase in the age for mandatory retirement from 65 to 70.

After unearthing billions of dollars in Medicare and

Medicaid fraud through Senate Aging Committee investigations, Church helped write the Medicare/Medicaid anti-fraud and abuse legislation to fight corruption and stiffen penalties for those who prey on the elderly.