

Hansen's negative vote kills Farm Crisis Act in committee

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Rep. George V. Hansen cast a vote last week that killed the new farm bill, declaring it would not help farmers. But the House Agriculture Committee chairman, Rep. Kika de la Garza, D-Texas, gives an entirely different version as to its benefits.

The crucial vote came last week in the committee on the so-called Farm Crisis Act but it failed to get out of committee on a 21-21 tie vote, with Hansen casting a ballot in opposition. If he had voted aye, the bill would have advanced to the floor on a 22-20 vote for further action.

De la Garza said after the hearing that if any committee members can come up with other proposals, they can be considered, but the prospects for this appear bleak.



Rep. George Hansen

Hansen, in a news release commending on the bill's defeat, said the "committee members demonstrated that they are too concerned with finding real solutions to the economic plight facing the nation's farmers to be drawn into the political charade."

Hansen's biased views in issuing such a news release, however, do not square with the facts and certainly are opposed by many farmers. It means now the farmers will be governed by the 1981 Farm Bill which was enacted for a four-year program and fails to give farmers some of the benefits contained in the proposed 1982 legislation.

The vote on the bill drew the support of 20 Democrats and one Republican, Rep. Arlan Stangeland, Minnesota. It was opposed by 18 Republicans, including Hansen, and three Democrats who do not come from wheat producing states, Reps. Tony Coelho, California; David R. Bowen, Mississippi, and Jerry Huckabee, of Louisiana.

It would appear the vote was along generally party and philosophical lines, rather than merits.

De la Garza voted for the bill but he said

he also was not pleased on a provision that required a joint referendum vote on wheat and feed grains, preferring such votes be kept separate.

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Hansen lashed strongly against the bill in his news release but he may need to justify these actions to many Idaho wheat and feed grain farmers who face financial ruin if not helped immediately.

Without going into the specifics, Hansen said further on the bill "it was a too-little, too-late proposition that would not really help farmers who are victims of high interest rates and worldwide crop surpluses."

Hansen said he was concerned the legislation would have served to reopen all sections of the 1981 Agriculture and Food Act passed last year, such as sugar, wheat and feed grains. He said this would endanger, in the middle of a crop year, programs for those commodities not covered by the new bill.

Hansen said the best solution is to increase exports, not federal farm management and control.

"There was also concern that the legislation would have altered the original intent of the bill," said Hansen. "This would have created specific crop provisions and unclear acreage details that would have allowed producers who didn't comply to benefit for those who sacrificed and complied," Hansen said.

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De la Garza said the measure, House Resolution 6274, would offer producers who are already enrolled in acreage reduction programs for 1982 crops a chance to voluntarily make a further 5 percent reduction in return for acreage diversion.

He added for 1983, 1984 and 1985, the legislation would allow farmers to vote in a referendum on whether they want to accept a 15 percent acreage cutback for major crops which are not already subject to marketing quota and marketing order programs.

Other features include a directive to activate an Economic Emergency Credit program which Congress had previously authorized on a discretionary basis, and a section outlining the intent of Congress to activate an export credit revolving fund which was authorized by 1981 legislation.

De la Garza said in a statement to The Post-Register: "The Farm Crisis Bill had

Ned June 27, 1982

some flaws and we had a situation in which some farmers were for it, and others were opposed, but I think it had the potential to help some segments of agriculture.

"My main concern in voting for the bill was to practice the art of the possible, to try to get some legislation before the House, even though it might not be perfect.

"We will continue to explore the situation to see what it may be possible to do."

He noted finally that an analysis of the bill by the Congressional Budget Office indicated that over the four years beginning in fiscal 1983, it would cut federal spending by nearly \$900 million below levels projected under current law. The savings would be due largely to acreage reduction programs which would reduce surplus stocks, explained de la Garza. Hansen has said he is dedicated to reducing federal spending but votes against this measure.

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Nyal Rydalch, a former longtime farmer at Egin Bench west of St. Anthony and now director of commodities for the Idaho Farm Bureau at Pocatello, has mixed emotions.

He said there are two sharply contrasting points of views: (1) The legislation would have helped the economy by establishing a support program at a high price level, and would have helped the situation of agriculture immediately; and (2) It would not solve the permanent agriculture problems.

"What we need," said Rydalch, "is to build markets."

Rydalch said one of the outstanding benefits of the new legislation is the payment for diversion while under the present law such diversion is voluntary.

"I would feel that paid diversion should be considered in this crash program," said Rydalch. "This should be done for 1983 when all farmers have a chance to participate. To institute such a program during the middle of the current season would be unfair to farmers who already have launched their programs."

Rydalch said in his opinion Hansen may have been more right than wrong in his vote but acknowledged that many financially hard-pressed farmers need government help immediately or face another unprofitable year and even bankruptcy in many cases.