

1947

(no month)

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Natural Resources

Conservation

Soil

- 1947 -
General Jones
(no month)
COMMITTEE ON
NAVAL AFFAIRS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN LYNDON B. JOHNSON TO RULES COMMITTEE URGING PASSAGE
OF SOIL CONSERVATION MACHINERY BILL.

"Farmers are just as poor as the land they live on," asserted Congressman Lyndon B. Johnson in a statement to the House Rules Committee Friday as he urged passage of the Poage Bill authorizing use of surplus Government equipment in soil conservation work by Conservation Districts and County Commissioners Courts. This legislation would enable these agencies to obtain surplus material, equipment and supplies to carry on conservation practices. Graders, tractors, trucks, maintainers, bulldozers, and other soil moving equipment would be made available immediately.

Stating that the soil conservation program, which has been necessarily curtailed drastically during the war years, must move full steam ahead if we are to maintain and rebuild our soil, Johnson went on to say, "Good soil practices have materially increased the productivity of farm lands in Central Texas. We have prevented waste, increased the yield, and consequently increased land values, but just a start has been made. My farm program for the Tenth District is simple but clear; high-lines and high-ways to our farms, high soil productivity, and high but stabilized farm prices. We cannot achieve our conservation aims unless machinery for carrying on the work is made available. The Army and Navy have this equipment stored in depots and warehouses here at home and all over the world. Much of it is out in the open, subject to rapid deterioration.

"Why waste them longer. We can and should stop the waste of material and in doing so stop the wasting of our soil. Give our local officials and our progressive farmers a chance and they will make the most of it."

AUSTIN, Tex. Sept. - Specific proposals for increasing soil productivity and fertility throughout the lower valley of the Colorado have been laid before the Lower Colorado River Authority by Congressman Lyndon B. Johnson. Such a program, he added, could become a pattern for every river valley in Texas.

In a detailed analysis presented to the Board of Directors, Johnson underlined the law creating the Authority as a conservation district -- for flood control, prevention of soil erosion, and forestation. Revenues from the sale of power were intended by the Legislature to be ploughed back into the district to increase its productivity and prosperity, Johnson said.

Since the Authority's financial reports now show a substantial surplus, he said the time has come for the District to comply with the law under which it was set up. He specifically proposed:

1. That the best man available in the United States be employed as a Director of Conservation; possibly with headquarters and some experimental work on land the Authority already owns in the vicinity of Buchanan Dam.

2. That the Authority immediately purchase, as a capital investment, heavy earth machinery for terracing and related soil conservation projects; and rent this equipment through the already-established soil conservation districts in each of the ten counties for the bare cost of the operator and the fuel -- possibly for \$2 an hour. As a precedent, the San Jacinto reclamation district has two such machines operating constantly.

3. That the board members from the ten counties consult with their local communities and recommend what needs to be done in the several counties, such as research on new uses for cedar in the Hill Country, and freeing the rice farms of the lower valley of weeds.

4. That as rapidly as practicable, check dams be built on the several tributaries to the Colorado, in order to save the soil and retard floods.

5. That a comprehensive program of resodding and other necessary steps be supported by the Authority on the proved theory that water must be controlled where it strikes the ground in order to use that water to the utmost advantage.

Striking at the recent statement of Republicans, Johnson asserted that the answer to the world's food problem is not to eat less but to produce more. "If we didn't have high production now," he said, "prices would be twice as high. The reason we have high production is because the farmers were guaranteed a fair return by support prices. The Republicans have tried to sabotage the support program, and if we don't watch them, they're liable to succeed. They went around poking fun at our over-supply of potatoes, but I haven't heard any complaints about too much grain -- which grew out of the same support program."

In order to make good on our promise to feed the world and wean other nations away from Russia, farmers must keep and raise their present high production levels, Johnson said. But in reaching those levels, we've been using up the soil.

Authorities everywhere, Johnson said, class the preservation of the soil as a major problem comparable to that of atomic energy. "The future of mankind," he said, "is buried in that thin layer of topsoil which we have been using so recklessly. If we continue to let it go, the hope of mankind's survival goes with it."

In exhibits laid before the board, Johnson disclosed that of the 1,350,691 acres in the ten counties of the valley, less than half -- 646,428 acres -- are participating in the soil conservation program of the Department of Agriculture.

Included were these counties:

(Note to editors: Suggest use the counties in which you are interested)

In Bastrop County, cropland acreage is 140,954, with 67,015 acres in programs.

Blanco County, 32,628 acres and 18,426 participating.

Burnet County, 62,393 acres participating out of 95,618 acres of croplands.

Colorado County, a total of 170,921 acres, with 75,020 participating.

Fayette County, 205,477 acres with 98,907 participating.

Llano County, 25,390 acres, with 12,948 participating.

Matagorda County, 88,320 acres with 41,784 participating.

San Saba County, 89,673 acres with 47,530 participating.

Travis County, 216,254 acres with 108,254 participating.

Wharton County, 286,456 acres, with 114,151 participating.