

Chapter I

The President and the Department--An Overview

Introduction

When Lyndon Baines Johnson became President on November 22, 1963, the thirty-fifth man to hold that office, the United States Department of Agriculture was over 101 years old. President Abraham Lincoln signed the law establishing it on May 15, 1862.

The new Department, headed by a Commissioner until it attained cabinet status in 1889, was "to acquire and to diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with agriculture in the most general and comprehensive sense of the word." In carrying out his duties, the Commissioner was authorized to conduct experiments, collect statistics, and to collect, test, and distribute new seeds and plants. 1/ This law, very broad in scope, has remained the basic authority for the Department to the present time.

In 1864, when reviewing the progress of the Department, Lincoln said: "It is precisely the people's Department, in which they feel more directly concerned than in any other." 2/

1/ 25 Stat. 659.

2/ Abraham Lincoln, Fourth Annual Message, in J. D. Richardson, ed., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents (New York, 1897), Vol. VIII, p. 3452.

From 1862, when it was established with 9 professional employees, the Department has seen three major periods of change. The first was from 1896 to 1912, when the Department became one of the world's major agricultural research organizations. The second was from 1933 to 1940, when the Department was assigned, for the first time, responsibility for direct economic assistance to farmers. This included programs for production adjustment, price support, improved credit, soil conservation, aid for poverty-stricken farmers to acquire farms, and loans for rural electrification. At the same time, the Department, working with welfare agencies, set up programs for distributing surpluses to the needy in both cities and rural areas.

The third period of change came during the 1960's, when the Department, under the leadership of President Johnson and Secretary Freeman, was charged with the additional responsibilities of ending poverty in rural America and protecting the interests of the American consumer in food and other farm products.

The Department Today

Emphasis upon different problems and the gradual addition of functions has led to reorganization of the Department from time to time. The Department is headed by the Secretary of Agriculture, Under Secretary, and four Assistant Secretaries. The agencies of the Department are divided into six major groups, each headed by an Assistant Secretary or Director. In addition, the Office of the General Counsel and the

Office of the Inspector General report to the Secretary. The Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, the Commodity Credit Corporation, the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, and the Planning Evaluation and Programming Staff report to the Under Secretary.

The Agricultural Economics group includes the Economic Research Service and the Statistical Reporting Service. The International Affairs group is made up of the Foreign Agricultural Service and the International Agricultural Development Service. The Marketing and Consumer Services group includes the Commodity Exchange Authority Consumer and Marketing Service, and the Packers and Stockyards Administration. The Rural Development and Conservation group is composed of the Farmer Cooperative Service, Farmers Home Administration, Forest Service, Rural Community Development Service, Rural Electrification Administration, and Soil Conservation Service. The Science and Education group includes the Agricultural Research Service, Cooperative State Research Service, Federal Extension Service, National Agricultural Library, and Research Program Development and Evaluation Staff. The Departmental Administration group is made up of the Office of Budget and Finance, Office of Hearing Examiners, Office of Information, Office of Management Improvement, Office of Management Services, Office of Personnel, and Office of Plant and Operations.

The President's Programs

During the first 90 days of his administration, President Johnson proposed programs for agriculture which were to become blueprints for action. And, within 300 days, the President had secured legislation for carrying them out. He continued Orville L. Freeman as Secretary of Agriculture and Charles S. Murphy as Under Secretary. When Murphy was appointed Chairman of the Civil Aeronautics Board, the President appointed John A. Schnittker as Under Secretary. Previous to being sworn in as Under Secretary on June 1, 1965, Schnittker was serving as Director of Agricultural Economics. 1/

In March 1964, the President nominated Dorothy H. Jacobson, who had served as Assistant to the Secretary of Agriculture since 1961, as Assistant Secretary for International Affairs. Mrs. Jacobson was the first woman in the Department's history to be named to that high a post. On September 11, 1968, the President announced his intention to nominate Ted J. Davis, a cattleman and lawyer in Oklahoma, to be Assistant Secretary for Marketing and Consumer Services. 2/

Although President Johnson named no other persons to the Department, two other general ~~thrusts~~--giving greater consideration to the employment of women and of members of minority groups--influenced Department personnel policies. Early in his administration, President Johnson asked agencies for reports on such employment. Then, in his

1/ U. S. Department of Agriculture, Press release, June 1, 1965.

2/ U. S. Department of Agriculture, Press release No. 932-64, Mar. 20, 1964; White House, Press release, Sept. 11, 1968.

annual message to Congress on manpower of March 9, 1964, the President stated: "Action is being taken to insure fair-employment opportunities in the Federal service. Particular attention is being given to provide opportunities for groups that traditionally have not done as well as others in the American economy: women, members of minority groups, handicapped workers, and older workers." 1/

On October 31, 1963, the Department had 19,513 women employees; on October 31, 1967, 21,826. On the first date, 297 of the women employees were in grade GS-12 and above; four years later the number was 398. On June 30, 1963, the Department had 3,074 employees from minority groups, of whom 54 were in grade GS-12 and above. On October 30, 1967, the numbers were 5,214 and 132 respectively. 2/

The President's emphasis upon improved management and utmost economy in the Executive Branch, continued throughout his administration, influenced every program of the Department. The President, in his first memorandum on the subject to heads of Departments and agencies, dated November 30, 1963 wrote: "I have pledged that the Executive Branch will be administered with the utmost thrift and frugality; that the Government will get a dollar's value for a dollar spent; and that the Government will set an example of prudence and economy." In sending copies to heads of Department agencies, on December 16, 1963,

1/ Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963-64, Vol. I, pp. 354.

2/ Files, Office of Personnel, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Secretary Freeman asked for reports on major cost reduction actions and stated: "Operating our programs in the most efficient and economical manner demands our continuous personal attention and energies." These themes were stressed by both the President and the Secretary throughout the next five years. 1/

The Department has shown savings and management improvements over the years. In spite of the assignment of additional major functions, this is reflected to some extent in funds appropriated. In 1963, the total appropriations (adjusted to a 1969 basis) were \$6.7 billion, and in 1968, \$6.0 billion. Total employment on June 30, 1963 was 112,488 persons; on June 30, 1968 it was 122,715. 2/

Presidential Proposals and Congressional Action

On December 18, 1963, the President met with the leaders of nine major farm groups. He asked for their recommendations on a general farm bill and on specific poverty legislation for the lowest income groups. A few weeks later, in his message of January 8, 1964 on the State of the Union, the President declared war on poverty. He called

1/ Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963-64, Vol. I, pp. 15-16; U. S. Department of Agriculture, Memorandum to Heads of Department Agencies and Staff Offices, Report of Economy Measures in USDA, Dec. 16, 1963.

2/ U. S. Congress, 90th, 2d Sess., House of Representatives, Committee on Appropriations, Hearings...Department of Agriculture Appropriations for 1969, Part 1, p. 40; U. S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Personnel, Employment 1861 to Date, p. 2.

for a special effort in Appalachia, for economic development, and for a broader food stamp program. This was followed by discussions of rural and farm problems in his Economic Report and in his Special Message on Housing and Community Development. 1/

Specific recommendations for legislation were made by the President on January 31, 1964, in his Message to Congress on Agriculture. 2/ He recommended cotton legislation to: eliminate the two-price system; make it possible for growers who desired to do so to produce cotton at world prices, without any subsidy; and to maintain the income of cotton growers while reducing excessive carry-over stocks.

Wheat growers had rejected an acreage control program on May 21, 1963. The President now proposed that the price-support law be amended to permit producers to participate in a certificate program on a voluntary basis. This would raise the income of growers substantially above what it would be in the absence of new legislation.

The President recommended legislation to provide incentives to dairy farmers to reduce surplus production, and to permit farmers in Federal milk marketing order area to reduce their production of milk

1/ Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963-64, Vol. I, pp. 68, 114, 235; Economic Report of the President, January 1964, pp. 12-13.

2/ White House, Message on Agriculture, press release, Jan. 31, 1964. This document is not included in Public Papers of the Presidents.

without reducing their share of the Class I (essentially, milk for fresh fluid consumption) market. He also recommended the removal of marketing restrictions on the sale of domestically produced sugar during the calendar year 1964.

Finally, so far as specific commodities were concerned, the President recommended that potato producers be permitted, if approved by referendum, acreage allotments and marketing quotas aimed at stabilizing potato prices.

The President suggested that new legislation was needed to clarify the right of cooperatives to expand their operations by merger and acquisition and that additional credit facilities were needed to permit rural cooperatives to assume additional responsibilities in the war on poverty.

The Secretary needed additional authority to regulate commodity exchanges; the program to transfer cropland to less intensive uses should be markedly expanded; and there should be a study of agricultural marketing.

The President recommended legislation to place the food stamp program on a permanent basis and to make it more widely available. He also recommended that the Titles I and II of the Food for Peace law be extended for 5 years.

The President recommended several actions, including enlarging flood water detention projects, making better use of timber resources,

and improving rural housing and housing for farm workers, aimed at developing rural areas. He concluded that we must look beyond agriculture to rural America as a whole.

A bill combining recommendations on wheat and cotton was drawn up, and the decision was made to concentrate on getting it, limited though it was, through the Congress. Both the Department and the White House strongly urged passage upon individual Congressmen and Senators. 1/

The Cotton-Wheat Act passed by the Congress and was signed by the President on April 11, 1964. 2/ The President remarked that the legislation was another step forward in the goals of the administration to strengthen farm income, to reduce the cost of farm programs to the taxpayers, to bring surplus stocks to levels which the Nation required for its safety, and to make stronger the national economy and the well-being of the people by making better use of the great abundance of food and fiber. 3/

1/ Memoranda, Orville L. Freeman to The President, Feb. 10, Mar. 18, and Apr. 7, 1964. In: Orville L. Freeman, Chronological Correspondence File, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

2/ 78 Stat. 173.

3/ Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963-64, Vol. I, pp. 454-455.

In his recommendations on commodity programs on January 31, 1964, the President remarked upon resolutions to establish a bipartisan commission to study food and fiber programs. The first of what were to be a series of commissions to study rural problems was the National Commission on Food Marketing, established by a Joint Resolution of Congress, approved July 3, 1964, by the President. 1/

The President's recommendation that the food stamp program be enlarged and made permanent also became law in 1964. The original bill was introduced in the House of Representatives on April 22, 1963. Hearings were held and the bill was redrafted, but was tabled by the Committee on Agriculture on February 4, 1964. After further consideration, it was amended and reported out on March 9, 1964. 2/ The bill subsequently passed both the House and the Senate, and was signed by President Johnson on August 31, 1964. As he saw it, the new act was "a realistic and responsible step toward the fuller and wiser use of our agricultural abundance." 3/

1/ 78 Stat. 269.

2/ Memorandum to the President from the Secretary of Agriculture, Feb. 10, 1964. In: Orville L. Freeman, Chronological Correspondence File, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. See also: U. S. Congress, 88th, 2d Sess., House of Representatives, Report No. 1228, Mar. 9, 1964.

3/ 78 Stat. 703; and Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963-64, Vol. II, pp.1025-1026.

The passage of the Food Stamp Act was one step; the other step was to renew Titles I and II of the Food for Peace Act, referred to since its first passage in 1954 as Public Law 480. Although the President had asked for a five-year extension, Congress extended the titles for 2 years. The funds authorized were cut, but the major question in Congressional debate was how far the law should limit shipments to Communist nations. The law finally prohibited sales under Title I to any Communist country, or to any country permitting its ships or aircraft to go to Cuba.

The President, in his comments when he signed the law, noted that the effect of the restriction was somewhat offset by the authorization to make dollar sales on credit to such countries. He also expressed concern over provisions which would give the Congressional Agricultural Committees a veto power over certain dispositions of foreign currencies accruing under P. L. 480 sales and would prevent the President from making loans at interest rates below a specified level without concurrence of an advisory committee which included members of Congress. He regarded both provisions as unconstitutional. A fourth objectionable provision required that our surplus inventories of extra-long staple cotton be offered for sale at world prices, which was potentially harmful to world trade. However, the President concluded that "the overriding fact is that the bill I have just approved will permit the Food for Peace program to continue uninterrupted for another 2 years." 1/

1/ 78 Stat. 1035; and Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963-64, Vol. II, pp. 1249-1251.

The Food Stamp and Food for Peace legislation aided many people in the United States and abroad. However, the President had asked also for legislation that would aid in rural development. He obtained this in the Economic Opportunity Act, which he approved on August 20, 1964.

The new act established the Office of Economic Opportunity, and an Economic Opportunity Council, of which the Secretary of Agriculture was a member. The Director of OEO was authorized to make several types of loans to low income rural families. He was also authorized to make loans to certain local cooperative associations, and was to assist programs to benefit migrant agricultural workers. As the President saw the rural program under the new law, it would "help poor farmers get back on their feet and help poor farmers stay on their farms." 1/

While not aimed solely at agriculture, the President's recommendations of April 28, 1964, for a special effort to overcome poverty in the Appalachian Region emphasized programs for farmers and rural people. On October 25, 1964, the President, by Executive Order 11186, established the Federal Development Planning Committee for Appalachia. The Secretary of Agriculture was to be represented on the Committee. Basically, the Committee was to develop and review plans and recommendations for the development of the region. 2/

1/ 78 Stat. 508; and Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963-64, Vol. II, pp. 988-990.

2/ Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963-64, Vol. I, pp. 586-588; Vol. II, pp. 1433-1434.

The Appalachian Regional Development Act, approved by the President on March 9, 1965, authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to make grants to farmers for land development and erosion control. It also authorized technical assistance and loans to private timber development organizations. Many of the activities assigned to other agencies assisted farmers and rural people. 1/

Nearly all of the farm legislation which was passed in 1964 and early 1965 had its origins in an earlier period. This was particularly true of the Amendment to Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, usually called the Pesticide Control Act. In 1962, Rachael Carson had published a volume, Silent Spring, which was an indictment of pesticides and of those in the state experiment stations and the U. S. Department of Agriculture who had any responsibility for their use. Miss Carson's message was that man was poisoning his environment and possibly sowing the seeds of his own destruction through use of the new and potentially dangerous pesticides. The charge captured the public imagination. Congress held extensive hearings, and the President's Science Advisory Committee made a report. 2/

1/ 79 Stat. 5.

2/ Ernest G. Moore, The Agricultural Research Service (New York, 1967), pp. 194-207.

On February 10, 1964, in a message to Congress on the nation's health, President Johnson recommended additional research and proposed enactment of then pending legislation prohibiting the registration and marketing of pesticides until a positive finding of safety had been made. This became law on May 12, 1964. When he signed the bill, the President spoke of Miss Carson's contribution to a safer and healthier America. 1/

In his State of the Union Message of January 4, 1965, the President reported that he had instructed the Secretary of Agriculture to "find new approaches to reduce the heavy cost of our farm programs and to direct more of our effort to the small farmer who needs the help the most." He also spoke of the need to save the beauty of the countryside--a program which later was to be of much importance in the Department. 2/

On February 4, 1965, the President sent to Congress a message on agriculture. This comprehensive message was the result of many weeks of work and of exchanging ideas between the White House and the Department. The President pointed out the problems found in rural America, and called for action, backed by legislation where necessary, to carry Federal programs to rural areas. He called for extension and

1/ 78 Stat. 190; Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963-64, Vol. I, pp. 279, 342.

2/ Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, Vol. I, pp. 6, 8.

improvement of programs for wheat and feed grain, cotton, tobacco, rice, and wool. He recommended that acreage allotments be transferable among family farmers in the same state. A long-term Cropland Adjustment Program was proposed. The President suggested that attention be given to reserve stocks. Agricultural trade should be encouraged, while our agricultural abundance and technical skills in agriculture should be used to assist the developing nations to stand on their own feet. The President announced that he planned to conduct a fundamental examination into the entire agricultural policy of the United States by reorganizing the National Agricultural Advisory Commission into a new Commission on Food and Fiber, which would be charged with that task. 1/

Other messages of importance to the Department of Agriculture followed. The message on the conservation and restoration of natural beauty, sent to Congress on February 8, 1965, emphasized the need to add outdoor recreation areas to our National Forest system and to develop cooperative programs for improving the beauty of rural lands. The President also suggested that the Department be given authority for grants for research in environmental pollution control in its areas of responsibility. 2/

1/ Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, Vol. I, pp. 139-148. See also: Memorandum to the President from the Secretary of Agriculture, Jan. 22, 1965, and Feb. 12, 1965, and Memorandum to the Vice President from the Secretary of Agriculture, Jan. 26, 1965. In: Orville L. Freeman, Chronological Correspondence File, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

2/ Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, Vol. I, pp. 155-165.

In another special message to Congress on March 31, 1965, the President stressed the importance of the Food for Peace program. This was followed on April 5, 1965, by specific legislative proposals for farm commodity programs. 1/

The first legislation to come from recommendations made in the message on agriculture was a bill providing for acreage-poundage tobacco marketing quotas. This law, as the President said when he signed it on April 17, 1965, would permit tobacco growers, if they so voted, to operate a program with real quantitative limits on marketings. 2/

The legislation embodying other commodity programs was, meanwhile, undergoing various compromises and modifications on its way to becoming law. The most difficult question was whether to adopt a one-price or a two-price plan for cotton. The transfer of acreage allotments and the right to plant unlimited acreage without price supports were also in question. The other problem was in working out a satisfactory wheat program in which the loan rate would be lowered and a payment made to growers who signed up in a voluntary program. The administration had proposed that the payment be made from a tax on wheat for milling, but

1/ Ibid., pp. 351-354, 383-386

2/ 79 Stat. 66; and Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, Vol. I, pp. 427.

this proposal aroused strong opposition. The editor of a farm newsletter suggested that the outcome was "hazy" in the House. 1/

As the bill passed the House, the one-price plan for cotton was approved, the tax on wheat was disapproved, and the provisions of the bill were to be effective for four years. While the President had not asked for this last provision, the Department was strongly in favor of it. In the bill passed by the Senate the same basic provisions were included. 2/

The Food and Agriculture Act of 1965 was signed by the President on November 4, 1965. When he signed it, he said: "In combining the principles of competitive pricing for farm products with direct payments to producers, Congress has forged a new link with the future." At the same time, he said that new ways must be explored to keep agriculture and agricultural policy up to date. He was, therefore, establishing a Committee on Food and Fiber, to be chaired by the Secretary of Agriculture, and a National Advisory Committee on Food and Fiber,

1/ Washington Farmlletter, Aug. 13, 1965.

2/ Memorandum to the President from the Secretary of Agriculture, Aug. 5, 1965, Aug. 19, 1965, Sept. 3, 1965, Sept. 17, 1965, and Oct. 9, 1965.
In: Orville L. Freeman, Chronological Correspondence File, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

to be chaired by Sherwood Berg, dean of the School of Agriculture at the University of Minnesota. The Commission was to make a long-range appraisal of our agricultural and related foreign trade policies in terms of the national interest, the welfare of rural Americans, the well-being of our farmers, the needs of our workers, and the interests of our consumers. 1/

Later, the Secretary of Agriculture wrote: "The Food and Agriculture Act of 1965 gives us a flexible domestic farm program so that we can produce the commodities we need to meet food requirements at home and abroad.... These two programs, the modernized P. L. 480 and the Food and Agriculture Act of 1965, supplement each other... in most years, we can produce enough of what is needed, but not so much that farm prices are depressed." 2/

The National Advisory Commission on Food and Fiber held hearings in several places throughout the country, and contracted for a series of technical papers. Its staff then prepared a 361-page report, which the Secretary of Agriculture sent to the President on July 14, 1967.

1/ 79 Stat. 1187; Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, pp. 1095-1097; and 30 F. R. 14137.

2/ Orville L. Freeman, World Without Hunger (New York, 1968), pp. 171-172.

According to the Secretary, the Commission endorsed the shift to market-oriented farm price support and production payment systems authorized by the Food and Agriculture Act of 1965. 1/

By 1966, the Department and the President were emphasizing poverty and rural development programs. In a message of January 25, 1966, the President asked Congress to help overcome poverty in rural America. He pointed out that nearly one-half of the poor in the United States lived in rural areas, and that almost one in every two rural families had a cash income of under \$3,000. He reviewed the work being carried on by the Rural Community Development Service and the Office of Economic Opportunity and stated that coordinated planning was needed. This could be carried out by proposed Community Development Districts. While the Senate passed a bill to establish Community Development Districts, it did not pass the House. The President also said that he planned to appoint a Commission on Rural Poverty to study the most efficient and promising means of sharing America's abundance with these people. The Commission was appointed by Executive Order 11306 of September 27, 1966. 2/

The problems of rural poverty were widely discussed in the Department. Some of the difficulties and achievements in developing and carrying effective programs are discussed in a subsequent chapter.

1/ 3 Weekly Comp. Pres. Docs. 1015.

2/ Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1966, Vol. I, pp. 77-81; 31 F. R. 12769.

The report of the President's National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty, entitled The People Left Behind, was released late in 1967. The Commission pointed out that rural poverty is not generally recognized by the public as being extensive or serious. Most people do not know that price supports and production subsidies do not really reach poor farmers, and that most residents of rural America are no longer farmers. The Commission and its staff made more than 150 recommendations, covering virtually every aspect of rural life.

Meanwhile, the President, on March 1, 1966, had directed the attention of Congress to problems of domestic health and nutrition. He stated that he was directing the Secretary of Agriculture and others to examine the means by which the benefits of sound nutrition could be extended to every child who needed help. The President was submitting to the Congress the Child Nutrition Act as a step towards this goal. 1/

The President signed the Child Nutrition Act, as passed by the Congress, on October 11, 1966. He remarked that it was "a memorable day for the children of America." The law extended the Special Milk Program for three years, established a two-year pilot program for school breakfasts, provided equipment for food service in schools attended by children from low-income families, provided more aid for the States, extended school food programs to pre-school children enrolled in

1/ Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1966, Vol. I, pp. 242-243.

activities administered through the school system, and centralized in the Department authority for all Federally aided food service. 1/

The year 1966 saw another emphasis in addition to the alleviation of poverty--food and technical assistance abroad. On February 10, 1966, the President sent a Food for Freedom message to Congress, asking for an extension and revision of Public Law 480. He proposed making self-help an integral part of the program, eliminating the "surplus" requirement for food aid, authorizing greater food aid shipments than the current rate, and emphasizing financing food aid through long-term dollar credits rather than sales for foreign currencies. 2/

Some of the proposed shifts, while giving greater flexibility, posed problems. Thus, eliminating the "surplus" requirement would permit the adoption of what the Secretary of Agriculture called the "world food budget" approach, but, at the same time, the planning involved might require changes in procedures and new assignments of responsibilities. 3/ However, it was agreed that the bill would be handled in Congress by the Agricultural Committees, and that basic responsibilities for carrying out the act would remain in the Department

1/ Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 1140-1141; and 80 Stat. 885.

2/ Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1966, Vol. I, pp. 163-169.

3/ Memorandum for the Files, Secretary of Agriculture, Jan. 21, 1966; and Memorandum, Secretary of Agriculture to the President, Sept. 20, 1966. In: Orville L. Freeman, Chronological Correspondence File, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

of Agriculture. Another point at issue was the title of the new act. The President had proposed "Food for Freedom," but Congress was adamant in keeping the title "Food for Peace."

In signing the act on November 12, 1966, the President referred to it as the "Food for Freedom program." The President had reservations about the ban on food aid to countries that traded with either North Vietnam or Cuba. While he opposed such trade, he also opposed such legislative restrictions. 1/

Meanwhile, a major crisis had arisen in food aid. India had suffered successive droughts in the 1965-66 and 1966-67 crop years, even as production normally was lagging behind both population growth and increasing needs. By early 1966, shortages had accelerated into famine. There was no doubt that the United States would help India with grain shipments, but there were questions as to whether or not other countries should be encouraged to help and as to how our aid might best be used. 2/

At a news conference on February 4, 1966, President Johnson announced an allotment of 2 million tons of wheat and 1 million tons of maize, to be available to India at once. He also stated that he expected to review the entire problem with Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India. 3/

1/ Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1966, Vol. II, pp. 608-609; and 80 Stat. 1526.

2/ Memorandum, Secretary of Agriculture to the President, Dec. 1, 1965. In: Orville L. Freeman, Chronological Correspondence File, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

3/ Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1966, Vol. I, pp. 143-144.

After Mrs. Gandhi had discussed the emergency with President Johnson, the President, on March 30, 1966, proposed to the Congress an emergency food aid program. In response, Congress passed a joint resolution supporting United States participation in food relief for India. As the President pointed out, our prompt response would encourage other nations to act. 1/

Aid to India required a considerable effort by the United States in 1966 and on into early 1967. On February 2, 1967, the President again asked the Congress for further aid for India. Congress passed a joint resolution providing additional assistance. In signing this resolution on April 1, 1967, the President remarked on India's efforts to help herself and on the aid that had been supplied by other nations and international organizations. 2/

Good weather, with new seeds, fertilizers and practices beginning to be felt, led to an excellent crop in India in 1967-68 and to good prospects for 1968-69. 3/

1/ Ibid., pp. 366-369, 425-426; and 80 Stat. 131.

2/ 3 Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 163, 579; 81 Stat. 7.

3/ Orville L. Freeman to Jagjivan Ram (Indian Minister for Food and Agriculture), Mar. 2, 1968. In: Orville L. Freeman, Chronological Correspondence File, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

On March 4, 1968, the President recommended that Congress extend the P. L. 480 program for an additional three years and ratify the International Grains Agreement. 1/

On March 14, 1967, and again on February 27, 1968, the President urged attention to the difficult problems of rural poverty. In the latter message he recommended permanent extension of the Food and Agriculture Act of 1965, repeated his earlier recommendation that the Food for Freedom program (P. L. 480) be extended through 1971, creation of a National Food Bank, new bargaining authority for farmers, stronger market regulation, help for the small farmer, and emphasis on rural development. 2/

The President approved a law on May 8, 1968, which extended the school lunch program to several types of private, nonprofit service institutions. The law also authorized appropriations for continuing the school breakfast program. 3/

The Food Stamp Act was extended by an act signed on September 27, 1967. 4/ During the summer of 1968, the food stamp program became a

1/ 4 Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 369.

2/ 3 Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 455; 4 Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 364.

3/ 82 Stat. 117.

4/ 81 Stat. 228.

matter of controversy. This was in part because the act of September 27, 1967, provided that the act be carried out only with funds appropriated for that specific purpose and not with permanent appropriations. The problem is discussed in a subsequent chapter.

The President continued to urge the protection and enhancement of America's natural beauty and the control of air and water pollution. These goals have been particularly important to the natural resource and research services of the Department.

The President also continued to urge the protection of consumer interests. While this affected the Department in a number of ways, the inspection of various foods for wholesomeness and quality was particularly important.

On December 15, 1967, the President signed the Wholesome Meat Act. He hailed it as a landmark in consumer protection because its goal was to extend Federal or equivalent State inspection to plants not shipping across State lines. 1/ Later, there was criticism of the law as not being fully effective. At the same time, some State people said that Federal inspectors were making unfavorable reports without adequate inspection of plants. 2/

1/ 3 Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 1715; and 81 Stat. 584.

2/ National Observer, Feb. 19, 1968. See also: Memorandum, the Secretary to Rod Leonard, Feb. 12, 1968. In: Orville L. Freeman, Chronological Correspondence File, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

In his message on consumer interests of February 6, 1968, the President recommended passage of a Wholesome Poultry Products Act. This, like the Wholesome Meat Act, would be directed primarily toward helping the States develop more effective programs. 1/

Summary

During the five years from November 23, 1963 to the end of 1968, the President, working with the Secretary of Agriculture, had made recommendations to the Congress for legislation which reoriented and added to the duties of the Department.

The most important changes and redirections can be listed under five major areas. Commodity--primarily price support--programs have shifted from mandatory programs with high price supports to voluntary programs with loan rates at world market prices and payments to producers.

The basic ideas of rural areas development have won acceptance and the programs are at a point where they could become more meaningful. The rural urban balance idea, as a way of looking at some of the nation's problems, has been well received by the public.

World food aid programs have shifted widely. The Department has moved away from the "surplus" disposal idea. The emphasis is on technical assistance in agriculture and upon self-help on the part of the recipient countries.

1/ 4 Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 227.

Much progress has been made in the natural resources area. The Secretary of Agriculture regards the increased recreational uses of these resources as particularly important.

Food programs, including school lunch and food stamp, have been further developed. Authority for meat inspection has been broadened. Even though some of these consumer-oriented programs have been and are the subject of controversy, they are more effective in 1968 than they were in 1963. 1/

The following chapters consider in greater detail these and other developments.

1/ Interview with Orville L. Freeman by Wayne D. Rasmussen, July 25, 1968.