

Speech to Ada Chamber of Commerce, May 19, 1949

ad lib introd.

It is a pleasure to be back among home folks. I was impressed by some of the fellows I went to school with--how they've gotten bald and fat and some of them look like they might be 35 or 40 years old!

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Making a speech to a crowd like this is just about as tough an assignment as you could ~~make~~ <sup>draw</sup>. The eager looks on your faces might be intense interest, curiosity or just watch the dumb cluck make a donkey out of himself.

Really, you're not fooling me on that. I've been to enough banquets to know that a tough steak and a poor speaker is a perfect way to spend a miserable evening. We didn't have a tough steak but that may not make this event an exception.

In the past 60 days, I can recall having attended something like 100 meetings, breakfasts, barbecues, luncheons and dinners, making about two dozen speeches in the process and listening to 794 others, with varying degrees of interest.

In doing this, I have eaten everything from ~~standard~~ <sup>tender</sup> beef steak, with pie ala mode, to fried mutton that had been given a ham cure. I've traveled (in the last 60 days) over 9,500 miles---about 5,000 miles by train, 2800 miles by air, 1700 or 1800 miles by car, a couple of hundred miles by bus, and quite a piece by taxicabs. I've stayed in hotels where I couldn't get

a wink of sleep and attended banquets where I couldn't stay awake. I've tried to take care of my correspondence, write a few columns of type now and then, manage the editorial end of a fairly large and widespread publication, stay on the company payroll and church roll, and still find time to visit with my widow and orphans occasionally.

Well, it's a great business, and I like it, and I'm getting fat on it. Bald, too. Wear glasses and false teeth and may start pricing hearing aids any year now.

One thing I enjoy as I go around the country is meeting people who used to live at Ada. I don't know how many things Ada manufactures and exports, but I am keenly aware that it exports people. I don't know how much of a chamber of commerce project it is to get people out of town, but there sure are a lot of former residents around the country. I remember when I left here---well, let's forget that. It might turn out it was a chamber of commerce achievement to get me out of town. Anyway, Th' Pessimist commented about that time that when a feller left his home town for the city, you couldn't always tell whether it was ambition or gossip that caused him to go. Well, lots of people leave Ada for some reason. And most of them look back on it with considerable pride.

There is good reason for people to take pride in their Ada residence. I do. I'd be proud of it if I still lived here, too. Ada is a nice sized city, beautiful homes, fine schools, great churches, loyal citizens, good neighbors, excellent stores, thriving business and progressive agriculture. What more could you want? I'll tell you this---I've visited a good many dozen cities in the size group with Ada that doesn't have half the advantages that Ada has.

I have looked over your 1949 chamber of commerce program of work, and can find in it evidences that all of these desirable features of a good city are going to be maintained, and others added. We know that because we have seen it done and we know the men who are in positions of leadership, the men who have the responsibility to see that it is done.

Your committees on agriculture, education, legislation, industries, civic affairs, highways and roads, retail business and aviation just about cover the field. Under each of these headings you have outlined most constructive and ambitious goals. There may be some things you have overlooked, but I am at a loss to suggest any additions. The way your membership has grown in recent years shows that the town is behind the projects, and that's steam enough to move nearly anything. *Community Center building for 25 shows, meetings, etc.*

I was impressed by the size and scope of your agricultural program for the coming year. You are recognizing agriculture for what it means to Ada's prosperity. Right along with it, you are giving full-scale assistance to the farm boys and girls. Their future will largely be determined by the encouragement you are giving them, and the future of our country will be shaped by the way they turn out. *I like your program, especially the farm boys and girls program, which is a very good thing.*

From time to time we hear the remark made that Oklahoma is changing from a farming to a manufacturing state. Recently I have heard a speaker in Oklahoma City assert: "We are making the transition from an agrarian to an industrial economy in Oklahoma."

It is a fact that Oklahoma is doing a great deal toward development of present and new industries that will provide jobs for many people and payrolls to make business. We should do more along these lines and no doubt will, but

to assume that we are discarding or diminishing agriculture's importance in favor of industry is a mistake. We are fooling only ourselves if we make that conclusion.

The life blood of Oklahoma <sup>is it</sup> ~~depends on~~ agriculture. Income from farm marketings in Oklahoma in 1948 amounted to over 706 million dollars. Income from agriculture is probably twice the income from the producing oil wells in this state. It is greater than that of any other industry. Agriculture employs more people than any other industry in the state.

Agriculture always has been and will continue to be Oklahoma's most important industry. It is the only one we can't get along without. We can do away with our oil wells, our airplanes, our retail stores, the banks, post offices, and railroads. It would be inconvenient, surely, but in times past we have gotten along without them, and I think that is proof we could do it again. But stop farming and you stop eating. In bad years with short crops or with poor distribution, who gets hungry first? It is the city people who suffer first and longest. Look at the situation in Germany, or remember the line-ups in New York City during the meat shortage. It doesn't prove that city people are any more dependent on agriculture than farm people, but I think you will agree that they are just as dependent on agriculture as the man who grows the crops.

Ada is not far from the farm. Shut down the dairy and a few other industries here that depend directly on the soil to keep them going, and you will have a lot of clerks, baners, and filling station operators looking to see where the next dollar is coming from. With few exceptions, all the people in this room either came from a farm, or their parents came from a farm, or they now own a farm somewhere, or would like to own one. You are only one



generation away from the farm by ancestry and you are only a few days away from the farm as far as your appetite, your business, and your prosperity are concerned. Your very life is interlocked with that of the farm.

In Oklahoma we can't say: "Here is the city, and there is the country." It is really all one unit, and we are all Oklahomans together. Whether we run a tractor on a farm, a store on main street, a machine in a factory, a typewriter in an office, or a bank on the corner, we are all Oklahomans together. As Oklahomans, we've got to pull together for our mutual prosperity.

We are now producing about one-third more agricultural commodities in the United States than we did in the years before the war but our population also has been increasing and probably will continue to increase. Application of conservation and soil improvement measures are making much of our land more productive. As we continue to mechanize our farms, develop higher producing crop varieties, and more thrifty livestock, agricultural production will increase further. We have under way a program for fertilizing our land and irrigating thousands of acres in Oklahoma alone. That means more production. Chemicals are making it possible to avoid many disastrous crop years due to insects and disease. Our biggest problem in the years ahead is to help feed our increasing population on a better basis, by doing a better job of processing and marketing the agricultural products of Oklahoma.

The Secretary of Agriculture, Charles F. Brannon, ~~about two~~ <sup>a few</sup> weeks ago emphasized this point very forcibly. He said: "For now agriculture must do a better job of managing. After the First World War we failed to maintain our markets and we failed to adjust our agriculture to postwar conditions. We lost markets abroad and we lost markets at home. Farm prices crashed soon after the war and stayed low in relation to other prices for many heartbreaking

years. Our economy was out of balance, and the nation paid a bitter price."

Many of you remember that price that we paid, and I know that you are interested in doing everything that is possible to avoid paying that price again. In an interview I had with Senator Robert S. Kerr, he expressed the belief that we do not have a surplus problem in this country, but rather a problem of distribution. He believes our greatest problem is find enough acres to support the available demand rather than finding demand for what we can produce. What we have seen in the use of by-products of agriculture for plastics and industrial uses, and what we have seen of feeding sweet potatoes as a substitute for corn or other high-protein concentrates, evidence the vast and unexplored field and, therefore, opportunity for greater and varied uses of farm products now being produced.

We have had much to say about developing our industries in Oklahoma, and that we must do. I am convinced, however, that the industries we build must be based upon the soil. If we are expecting to move General Motors down here from Detroit, we are certain of disappointment. I think the same is true in expecting some other big industry to move its major operations from the East to the West. If we are to do a real job of developing our industry in Oklahoma, it will be along the lines of providing means to do a more thorough job of processing our agricultural commodities before shipping them to the consumers in other states.

The nation's farm problem is not a question of how to grow it, but how to use it up after we grow it. The administration's approach to the answer now appears to be an effort to compel the consumers to eat it up and wear it out because farm commodities will be so cheap they can't do otherwise. The

proposal is to pay the difference between that and a fair price to the farmer out of the treasury. Thus the administration's "farm program" becomes a consumer subsidy.

Earlier this month I spent a week in Washington attending the spring meeting of the American Agricultural Editors' association. Our program consisted of conferences with top agricultural leaders, both in the government and out. We even called on President Truman and had our picture made with him on the White House lawn.

The President received us cordially, reminded us that the present farm program started in 1933 when the democrats took over and that it would continue if the farmers knew which side their bread was buttered on. This last quip was omitted from the official White House release of the meeting. Some radio commentators found out and tried to make something of it, but the editors didn't take it seriously.

What we did take seriously was the alarming stampede toward socialism that is taking place in Washington. We didn't see any Communists that we know of but we did see a lot of Socialists.

Hottest session of the week, perhaps, was with O.V. Wells of Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Ralph Trigg, president of Comodity Credit Corp. and PMA representative, and E. A. Meyer, Reserach and Marketing Act administrator. The marketing problem was brought out as the fundamental fram problem in the 3½ hour crossfire discussion.

"Some observers think that disaster has always been just about six months ahead of us," said Wells, one of the nation's top economists, "but BAE has indications of a bright outlook for as long as 25 years. Most economic forecasts are based on the markets of the last two or three days."

In general, Wells was optimistic. He was asked, "What do you mean when you refer to normal?" Wells replied, "I'd say normal is when workers have an affection for their jobs, which a great many people do not now have."

As the CCC and PMA are the agencies set up to handle the present (or proposed) farm programs, Ralph Trigg came in for some sharp questions. He said adjustments definitely are ahead and several hundred people already have been added to loan operations on commitments now scheduled for cotton, peanuts, wheat and other commodities. "We will have a farm program from now on," Trigg said. "The people and congress have decided that." There is no quota on corn this year. The decision about wheat supplies must be made by July 15, 1949, and a vote taken by July 25 if there are to be quotas on next year's wheat crop. The cotton declaration is due by November.

"It is becoming increasingly difficult to sell our surplus commodities," Trigg said. "Europe will continue to buy as long as they can get dollars. They can get dollars as long as the ECA program continues." He pointed out CCC has authority to borrow \$4,750,000,000, plus other money to run the total above \$5 billions. He defended production payments as a means of assuring producers of getting dollars spent for price supports. He said the proposed program is "one of abundance instead of one of scarcity."

"The whole goal of the department of agriculture is to shift over to a livestock economy," said Trigg. I asked what we are going to shift out of. He replied we're shifting out of grain and row crops. (U.S. income from crops last year was \$13,593,844,000, from livestock and livestock products \$17,424,359,000. In Oklahoma last year our income from crops was just a little more than half our total cash farm income.

You are on the right track here in basing your agricultural program on dairying and other livestock. Dr. Karl D. Butler of Washington D.C. was a recent caller at my office. He said: "Animal agriculture is important to labor and to industry because more than half of the gainfully employed people of the United States are engaged, directly or indirectly, in the production, processing and handling of food.

"Of these, eight out of ten are engaged in producing, processing and handling the high-protein foods - the animal products. When animal products disappear from our tables, labor and industry feel the effects even before the farmers. Labor loses both its jobs and its good meals."

*On the trip to Washington that I mentioned.*  
One official was asked about socialism. He replied that socialism may mean government co-operation, participation or interference, depending on how you look at it. In any case, he said, the trend is toward increasing government influence on the economy.

Secretary Brannan and aides often used the term "to set a floor on farm income below which it is not in the interest of the national economy to fall." We wondered if there were a ceiling above which it is "not in the interest of national economy" for farm income to rise?

A few days ago Sec. Brannan visited Texas and Oklahoma to try to drum up some enthusiasm for his proposed farm program. It has generally met with a cold reception thus far. He spoke at Stillwater, and I was discussing the occasion with a friend. I asked: "Did the secretary sell you on his farm program?" The fellow, who isn't a farm expert, "Well, not exactly, but he sure confused hell out of me!"

This adds up to something that is most important to the future of freedom and democracy in this country. Right now, we are all pretty badly confused.

I am convinced that the politicians want us to stay that way. They can put  
over nearly anything if the people are confused.

The real solution to the farm problem is to produce efficiently and  
abundantly, to grade and process and market properly, so that the consumer  
can have plenty at a reasonable price. That is somewhat oversimplified,  
but it shows that the business men of Ada, and of every other town have a  
stake in agriculture. If we are to save ourselves from complete regimentation,  
we must think and act together to solve some of our own problems, instead of  
depending entirely on Washington to do it. The politicians may solve our  
problems and dissolve us.

One significant development that symbolizes what agriculture means to  
all of Oklahoma is the new agricultural center in Oklahoma City. It was  
dedicated last October with a dramatization depicting the reclamation of  
Oklahoma lands for the new day ahead. It was only a little over a half century  
ago that Oklahomans made the historic run to claim land and begin development  
of that part of our state. This run became the symbol of rapid settlement  
and exploitation of the new land. Today, after the bitter experience of drouth  
and dust bowls in the midst of the depression of the 1930's, Oklahoma is a  
different state. We recognize the importance of conserving the soil and  
building for the future.

Now in operation, under the direction of Oklahoma A. and M. College, the  
160 acres demonstration farm that will become a show-place for all Oklahoma  
crops so that visitors may see what we are doing in an agricultural way in  
this state.

Plans are near completion for a vocational and technical high school  
that will provide extraordinary opportunities for our young people to learn

to make a living for themselves is in the making under the direction of the Oklahoma City School Board, and the northeast quarter of this tract of land has been reserved for this purpose.

The south half is the site for the new Oklahoma State Fair Grounds, with a coliseum that will house our 4-H Club boys and girls for all their livestock shows, plus a stadium that will provide opportunity for all sorts of entertainment features. This Fair Grounds will then become the connecting link, in that it will provide a show place for the industrial and commercial agencies of Oklahoma's business life as well as the high point of the agricultural world.

The development of this piece of property into an agricultural center that will be unsurpassed anywhere in the United States is symbolic of the development that is taking place in Oklahoma in which agriculture, business, and industry are coming to recognize that their interests are interlocked and interwoven to such an extent that each must work for the others' prosperity if our state is to prosper. We must seek out our opportunities and make the most of them. We must recognize our limitations and not waste effort on futile ambitions.

Ada is <sup>a</sup> fortunate city, the capitol of a rich farming area. Oklahoma is a great state, and it will become even greater as all of us devote our energies to a better understanding of the problems and opportunities that are ours and then work for the general development of our greatest industry - Agriculture. We are not city, not country; we are all Oklahomans together. And all Oklahoma's future rests upon the soil.