

FARM, PRODUCER GROUPS ASK WHITE HOUSE HELP
IN CLIPPING ENFORCEMENT WINGS OF FLEMMING

(Taken from FOOD FIELD REPORTER - February 1, 1960 - Page 1)

WASHINGTON -- A group of eleven powerful farm and food producing organizations is looking to the White House for help to clip the law enforcement wings of Health, Education, and Welfare Secretary Arthur S. Flemming.

Whether such help would be forthcoming in the manner and degree demanded by the producer organizations seemed doubtful at press time, though there was a possibility that some action along this line might be taken. A White House spokesman told FOOD FIELD REPORTER no decision has been made on a proposal submitted by the farm groups.

Fact-Finding Body Urged

The proposal was that the President appoint a "public fact-finding body" which would "evaluate pertinent facts relating to the use of agricultural chemicals and drugs in the production, processing, marketing, and distribution of food; study existing laws and procedures providing for the approval and use of agricultural chemicals and drugs, and the administration of those procedures by federal departments and agencies involved, and recommend changes in existing laws and procedures, including additions thereto and deletions therefrom, on the basis of the findings of the group."

It was presented to Mr. Flemming, Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson and Don Paarlberg, special assistant to the President and former Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, as well as to some members of Congress, and at press time was under consideration by the two secretaries and Mr. Paarlberg.

Charles B. Shuman, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation is acting as chairman of the group. Other organizations represented in the conferences include the National Grange, National Farmers Union, National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association, National Milk Producers Federation, National Poultry Producers Federation, and a number of other "commodity" farm organizations representing producers of livestock and cotton.

Protection Backed

Spokesmen for the group asserted the organizations have "no quarrel whatsoever with positive protection of public health through the enforcement of laws and regulations governing the use of agricultural chemicals and drugs." However, they declared with equal fervor against Mr. Flemming's "headline trial and conviction," which, they said, was "arbitrary, capricious and completely unnecessary," especially in the cranberry and caponette situations.

First purpose of the proposal, according to the farm representatives is to "put an immediate stop" to the techniques demonstrated by Mr. Flemming in the two incidents mentioned. The second is to provide "a mechanism for a longer range solution to the problems inherent in the present situation."

The fact-finding commission proposed by the farm groups would consist of seven non-government people with a scientific knowledge in the field of food additives and agricultural drugs, preferably with "working knowledge of the problems involved." They would be selected from nominations submitted by "such impartial groups" as the National Academy of Sciences, land grant colleges, American Medical Association, university and private research organizations.

Mr. Paarlberg told FOOD FIELD REPORTER there was "full information and concern here with this most difficult problem." The White House, he said, wants the two federal agencies to work together to resolve differences they may have over enforcement of the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act, and will have "continued concern" that this will come about.

It is essential that the wholesomeness of the nation's food supply be preserved and that the people of the country have confidence that the supply is wholesome and confidence in the federal officials who administer our food programs, Mr. Paarlberg asserted. The interest of the White House is to see that the responsibilities of government officials in this field are properly carried out, he said.

Mr. Paarlberg also confirmed earlier reports (see FFR Jan. 4, p. 2) that no suggestion has been given Mr. Flemming by the White House that enforcement of the food and drug law should be eased.

Mr. Flemming told FOOD FIELD REPORTER he could not accept the portion of the farm organizations' proposal which contemplates using a public "fact-finding body" to pass upon prospective Food and Drug Administration actions, such as in the cranberry and caponette cases. He said he would not object to a fact-finding commission to study his department's laws, policies and procedures, but saw no need for such a group. Health, Education, and Welfare Department scientists are fully capable of advising him on scientific matters, Mr. Flemming said.