

CAUTION: PLEASE NOTE RELEASE DATE - 2 P.M. Tuesday, June 9.

From Washington State Grange, 3104 Western Avenue, Seattle, 1, Washington.

Wenatchee, June 9 -- American farmers should work for expansion of their markets abroad as well as for stabilization of their marketings at home, State Grange Master Henry P. Carstensen today told delegates to the 64th annual session of the Grange.

To stimulate agricultural exports he recommended "a complete study and revision of the present tariff structure so that American produce may readily find world markets and American farmers receive the protection now offered to labor and industry."

In addition Carstensen called for expansion of the International Wheat Agreement plan to other farm commodities.

He proposed regulation of domestic farm marketings under a "multi-price" program and extension of federal marketing agreements to commodities not now included.

On the state level Carstensen proposed reconsideration and passage of the farm marketing enabling bill which was shelved by the 1953 State Legislature following a controversy over some of its provisions. The Grange leader declared such legislation was needed to protect producers from seasonal market gluts which result in "ruinous prices." Only through such legislation, he said, can farmers be protected "from the disastrous results of an over-abundant crop."

The state marketing act, Carstensen explained, would enable farm commodity groups to establish minimum standards for their products, control the marketings of inferior grades, conduct advertising and research activities and benefit consumers "who would be able to buy the desired grade at a commensurate price."

The State Grange was urged to support National Grange legislative proposals including the creation by Congress of a national agricultural advisory commission "to bring about a realistic consideration of agricultural problems," a bill revising the Farm Credit system and placing it "more in the hands of the farmers," and a measure providing for coordination of federal, state and local government activities in soil and water conservation.

Carstensen reiterated his opposition to a Universal Military Training bill, asked for extension of social security coverage to farmers, and recommended active participation by Grange members in the civil defense program.

He pointed out that the current re-examination of federal farm programs by Secretary of Agriculture Ezra T. Benson had provided an unusual opportunity for farmers to offer suggestions. "I recommend to the committee and delegates that they study all material carefully so that our final action will be truly representative of the thinking of the Granges of this state in regard to a national agriculture program."

Carstensen gave qualified endorsement to the state highway expansion program which is being financed through bond issues. He commented that additional funds would be needed for roads in the Columbia Basin area. On the other hand, he said, existing taxes on motor fuels have about reached a saturation point, and tools are "the only remaining means of paying for" the additional super-highways needed by congested areas. He criticized large cities for "opposing efforts to clear their streets of parked vehicles" and for asserted failure "to supply adequate off-street parking facilities," declaring that the resultant congestion was wasting highway funds that otherwise would be available for farm-to-market, mine-to-mill, forest-to-mill roads and "scenic development to attract tourist traffic."

"Chambers of Commerce attempt to justify this relief of the cities at state expense by arguing that the greater part of the gas tax is paid by urban residents. They overlook the fact that the cities could not exist were it not for the revenue drained from farms, mines and forests."

Toll roads, said Carstensen, "will at least place the financial burden squarely upon the users rather than the appropriation of funds for such work from other sources such as those needed for rural road construction."

Turning to state taxation, Carstensen urged enactment of a constitutional amendment permitting classification of property for tax purposes as "the only solution to our state's serious financial situation." Existing tax sources are inadequate, he said, to take care of the state services required by a rapidly expanding population.

To alleviate mounting public school support costs, he urged greater concentration of available funds to support the primary and high school grades because they "constitute the only education of 80% of our students."

Re-emphasizing the traditional Grange stand for public ownership of electric power, Carstensen vigorously attacked the proposed merger of the Washington Water Power and Puget Sound Power & Light Companies. "Through manipulations of this type," he declared, "the private utilities can gain control of our economy, and thereby our civic life. You may be sure that we of the Grange will use every possible means at our disposal to block this action."

Carstensen criticized the recent action of Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay in withdrawing Government opposition to the Idaho Power Company's proposed power dams on the Snake River, which would block construction of a federal multipurpose project on the Hells Canyon site. He described McKay's action as "the first step on a path which would ultimately lead to the withdrawal of the federal government from over-all river development for flood control, conservation and navigation. This could, in turn, bring about destruction of our public utility district and municipal utility operations; and finally abolishment of the Bureau of Public Lands, Reclamation Bureau, and the U. S. Forest Service."

Carstensen opposed "exclusive federal activity" in river development, however. "I hold that our rivers are a joint problem of federal, state and local agencies; that they can best be developed through a broad partnership between Uncle Sam, state and local agencies -- even the provinces of Canada."

He hoped that "more local participation" could be achieved through the new State Power Commission, adding that this would depend on "the type of personnel appointed to the commission."

Carstensen briefly noted the recent \$1.7 million increase in Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company rates by saying, "We are becoming accustomed to an annual application" by the company for such increases.

He warned that recent uniform classification of railroad freight rates might result in higher rates on farm products, which move on commodity rates.

The National Grange will be invited to hold its 1954 convention in the State of Washington, Carstensen indicated. He is chairman of the National Grange executive committee.

The State Grange since 1941 has increased its membership from 36,471 to 50,984, this being the 12-year period in which he has been State Grange Master, Carstensen said.

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