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Letter from Charles B. Hoeven, Eighth District Congressman

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The Second Session of the 87th Congress opened without much fanfare or excitement. There was a lot of hand-shaking and Majority Leader McCormack of Massachusetts, was elected Speaker of the House of Representatives to take the place of the late speaker Rayburn. On Thursday, Jan. 11, President Kennedy in person delivered his State of the Union message to a joint session of the Congress. Among other things, he recommended a strong national defense, and the congress of course will appropriate all the money necessary to keep our country strong and alert. The President also trotted out some of the "old horses" which were sent back to the barn last session. Among them are the proposal for aid to education, including teachers salaries, and the proposal which would afford medical care in a tie-up with Social Security. Both of these measures will have hard sledding this year. The President also advocated stand-by authority to raise and lower personal income tax rates. This is clearly an attempt by the Executive Branch of the Government to usurp the rights and prerogatives of the Legislative Branch. Under the Constitution, the Congress is one only body which can raise or lower taxes. The Congress will also not look kindly on the proposal that the United States bail out the United Nations by purchasing several millions dollars worth of United Nations bonds. The Congress will be especially hesitant in this respect in view of the fact that Russia, France, and some other countries have refused to pay their assessments covering the United Nations expenses. The President promises a new comprehensive farm program but as yet has given no details. We will await the propos-

als with a great deal of interest. The most significant omission in the President's address was his proposal to raise the national debt limit, or any mention of the situation in Cuba.

Breakfast

As Chairman of the Republican Conference of the House of Representatives, I had breakfast with President Kennedy at the White House on the morning of January 8, along with other Congressional leaders in both the House and Senate. After the breakfast, held in the State Dining Room, we met in the Cabinet Room where we were thoroughly briefed on the world situation by Secretary of State Rusk, Secretary of Defense McNamara, Central Intelligence Director McClune, and General Lemnitzer, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, among others. I came away with the feeling that the world situation was in a mess, and that it was high time we reviewed our entire foreign policy. Miserably in Laos, Cuba, and other areas of the world. It also remains to be seen whether or not the United States will take a firm stand on the Berlin problem as most everyone expects us to do.

Conservation Reserve Contracts

I have just introduced a bill in the Congress which would extend this term of expiring Conservation Reserve Contracts. This program failed to be extended by Congress last year. Five years of experience has shown that this approach to crop adjustment is attractive to many farmers and can be an effective tool for land, capital, and labor

adjustments in our over-expanded agriculture. As of the end of 1960, when the program was terminated there were more than 206 thousand Conservation Reserve contracts in effect covering 28.7 million acres of Reserve cropland in 47 States. I am happy to introduce legislation to provide an opportunity for farmers to extend contracts on the 26.2 million acres of Conservation Reserve land which otherwise will likely come back into production as the contracts expire. I am very hopeful that my Committee on Agriculture will hold prompt hearings on my bill.

Reciprocal Trade Fight

The biggest fight in the new Congress is likely to involve the extension of the Reciprocal Trade Agreement Act which expires in June, 1962. This year the Administration is not asking for an extension. Instead, the President wants authority to do anything he pleases with regard to tariffs. He wants uncontrolled power to abolish or reduce all American tariffs at once or at his discretion. Furthermore, he asks authority to subsidize out of the Federal Treasury any American workers or industries hurt by such tariff changes. This proposal is another attempt by the Executive Branch of the Government to usurp the rights and prerogatives granted by the Constitution to the Congress. I am sure the Congress won't grant the President the power he requests. All he can expect is an extension of the law now on the statute books with perhaps some slight modifications.