Three Groups Trying For Control Of Agriculture

LOS ANGELES — Three separate and often opposing groups will be trying to influence Congressional action in 1973 on the issue of who will control agriculture. Roger Fleming, secretary-treasurer of the American Farm Bureau Federation, said he challenged the title in his report to the members of the National Federation in the Convention Center.

"We are being "neutralized," he said, "when I suggest that farm and ranch families, themselves, should be the only Self-policers of these groups. The policies agreed upon at this meeting will express the best thinking of Farm Bureau families as to how farmers can control their own future."

Those Competing

Among those competing for the control of agriculture, Fleming said, are farmers and ranchers, themselves, numerically the largest group, and the agribusiness-men and political activists.

"They advocate government as a means of preserving the small family farm, industries providing low-cost, good, perishable agriculture, they would force family farmers into a sort of government managed peasant agriculture."

"When the new 93rd Congress convenes, the proponents of government take full advantage of their political allies — will be back in Washington trying to influence the Congress and farmers on the merits of government control of the domestic and international commodity situations, so-called "Fair Trade" agreements, and reliance on the crutch of government payments as the basis for farm income."

Also In Race

Another group in the race for power, Fleming said, is the director of the Federation's Fleeting office, said, is composed of agribusinessmen.

"Too often the agribusinessmen oppose government control of farming through the commodity committees of the ones who should do the controlling of farmers. They sometimes a third force in the tug of war that is taking place."

"It is evident that in mind, it is easy to understand why the interest of family farmers, the feed dealers, and other handlers react so venomously to action of the National Agriculture lobby."

Barry Fleming currently is considering action in the Congress. "They understand that the Siss bill would require them to negotiate in good faith for controls on prices and wages when farmers and ranchers voluntarily develop qualified associations of producers for this purpose."

"More would be forced tob disclose their political allies — will be back in Washington trying to influence the Congress and farmers on the merits of government control of agriculture."

Another Area

Turning to another area of concern to farmers and ranchers, Fleming said that government spending will be an over- rising issue."

"The implications to farmers and ranchers of impending Congressional "showdowns" on this issue will be far-reaching. For example, it is unwise to expect an end to direct controls on prices and wages unless the Congress attacks the root cause of inflation — i.e., deficit spending by the federal government."

"The President has good reason to want to phase out direct controls as soon as possible. He knows that they have many potential disadvantages."

Fleming pointed out that federal spending will exceed $258 million over a quarter of a billion dollars in the current fiscal year."

"The Congress has authorized even greater spending in the years to come. And, the appropriations for most such authorizations will be voted to join in the battle for fiscal responsibility. They are to be pressed into joining in such a campaign in the public interest — or made to feel guilty about fiscal responsibility. They should be pressed into joining in such a campaign in the public interest — or made to feel guilty about fiscal responsibility."

Congress to reduce federal spending — and by setting a state-of-the-art budget, listen to our recommendations for govern men't spending in the agricultural field.

"In addition, we need help from the organizations which speak for other segments of agriculture, labor, and consumers — if we are to be a convincing voice. We cannot convince members of the Congress that cuts in federal spending would be beneficial to the farmer. We need help from the organizations which have yet to make a gesture — feel free or otherwise of fiscal responsibility. They should be pressed into joining in such a campaign in the public interest — or made to feel guilty about their failure to do so."

Join Battle

"Maybe it is time to call upon other farm organizations and the various commodity groups to join in a statesmanlike example in our efforts to make our case."

"We are to be joined in such a campaign in the public interest — or made to feel guilty about our failure to do so."

Fleming reported that an all time membership high was attained by the American Farm Bureau Federation in 1972, total membership in 1972 is 2,175,780 families in 49 states and Puerto Rico and the Territory of Alaska. This represents an increase of 118,115 members over 1971 and is the largest annual gain since 1947.