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Letter, Colleague from David R. Bowen, April 4, 1979

The office of Congressman David R. Bowen

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Congress of the United States
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April 4, 1979

Dear Colleague:

During consideration of the International Development and Food Assistance Act this week you will have an opportunity to vote on an amendment offered by my colleague on the Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. Solarz, which is damaging to American foreign policy, to American agriculture, and to American taxpayers.

He will attempt to delete all of Title I, P.L.480 (Food for Peace) rice sales to Zaire. This year we are selling 30,000 metric tons of rice to Zaire for \$8.4 million in dollar sales under a long term loan. Zaire is America's third best P.L.480 rice customer.

Mr. Solarz will argue that this rice can be shifted to Title II of the program, the free gift section of the Act. Unfortunately, there are not remotely adequate charitable organizations operating in Zaire who are capable of distributing this quantity of rice, and even if there were, it would cost the American taxpayer the full price of the rice to give away and an additional one million dollars to ship it to Zaire.

The apparent purpose of this amendment is to deny any P.L.480 rice at all to Zaire. For what reason? He contends that the government of Zaire is corrupt and that some people make more money than they should in selling the rice they buy from us. If this is true, and it may well be, then it certainly is not unique to Zaire or to other nations on that continent or in other parts of the world with whom we do business.

There are, however, some things which do distinguish Zaire from most of its neighbors; the government of that country is not one of the so-called "front line" militant countries, it does not have a socialist or communist government, and it happens to be a friend of the United States.

The Solarz amendment to the P.L.480 rice program for Zaire is strongly opposed by the Administration, by the American Farm Bureau Federation, and, I sincerely hope, by the vast majority of House Members who would rather sell our products abroad than charge the taxpayers of the nation to buy them and then try to give them away.

Sincerely,

David R. Bowen