

Aid Speeded to Southwest Drouth Area

Congress has made good on President Eisenhower's personal promise to Southwest cattlemen that federal drouth aid would be forthcoming — and quickly. Legislation has been passed for loans to farmers and stockmen in disaster areas and for Agriculture Department assistance in furnishing them with seed and feed.

This prompt action was preceded by anticipatory moves by Agriculture Department agencies to buy and get hay, grain and cottonseed products on the way to the needy area. Whether further aid will be made available remains to be seen, and whether more is required to meet the situation probably will continue to be a matter of dispute. But the action so far taken is evidence of the sincerity of President Eisenhower's statement, on his flying visit to Texas last week, that aid would not be delayed "until the last cow is starving on the range."

As a demonstration of his personal interest in relieving the drouth-created hardship, the President's unheralded flight to confer with governors and cattlemen of the stricken states was immensely heartening. The President, as well as Congress, has shown concern over distress in the multi-state dry region and

realization that adverse conditions in so large an area can have adverse effects upon the whole nation.

That fact is reason enough for extending federal assistance to those who have been hard hit by the prolonged drouth. In fact, the basis and the justification for the government's whole agricultural program is that disaster to the farm industry, or any considerable segment of it, spells danger to our entire economic system. Aside from that, there hardly can be a calculated weighing of the pros and cons when disaster strikes, whether suddenly or with gradually cumulating effects. In such cases relief is needed, and needed immediately. If expediency conflicts with principle—in this instance, the obvious need with the administration's hopes of budget balancing and a change in the direction of the farm program—that is no more than usually occurs when disaster strikes.

Farmers and ranchmen affected by the drouth undoubtedly felt a lift of the spirit from the President's demonstration that he is sympathetically aware of their plight and determined to give them help. His flight to Texas at a time when critical world problems press for his attention in Washington is evidence of his determination to be the President of all the people.