

Report From State Conference on Ag Waste Management

Natural resources are not unlimited and, once used, cannot be replaced; they must be recycled and reused repeatedly to satisfy the needs and demands of our growing population.

That was the opinion of speakers and panelists at the Pennsylvania Conference on Agricultural Waste Management as they explored possible solutions to the problems of pollution related to agriculture and agribusiness.

The conference was sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture in cooperation with the College of Agriculture of Pennsylvania State University. John W. Early, of the Agriculture Department, was conference coordinator.

Approximately 200 persons attended the sessions held at the Penn Harris Motor Inn Nov 17 and 18. "It represented a true cross section of society," State Agriculture Secretary Leland H. Bull said.

He pointed out that the group included bankers and farmers, manufacturers and processors, housewives and industrialists, educators and researchers, conservationists and utility representatives.

"We are here," Secretary Bull told the group, "in search of common sense and clear thinking in our efforts to deal with problems of pollution."

Expressing his concern about "pollution and the effect of waste products on the environment," he pointed out that "I realize, as you do, that man's basic needs for life are clean air, pure water and the good, productive earth. But I also am deeply concerned about the harm that may result from precipitate action when it is motivated by fear, anxiety, or impatience."

Dr. Russell E. Larson, dean of the College of Agriculture at Pennsylvania State University, pointed out that "research in waste disposal and utilization is needed now by all of us who have to share this crowded and polluted planet."

He told the group that "products and processes must and will be developed so that the producer and processor can con-

vert waste into a marketable by-product or return it to the natural environment in such a manner as to improve or at least not to harm the community."

Waste Management Center
Penn State researchers, he said, are working in numerous areas to obtain answers to these problems. "Our efforts have been on many fronts, but have been relatively disconnected. What is needed at the University level, and what we will have as soon as the resources are made available, is an agricultural waste management center at Penn State."

"We plan a full-time continuing staff of qualified people assigned to this center, whose total responsibility will be to work on the problems of waste management and waste utilization."

Another speaker Tuesday was Dr. Herbert Cole Jr., of Penn State, who reviewed problems related to the usage of pesticides and opposition to such usage. "This is a highly complex problem," he said.

"We cannot separate pesticide problems from population problems. As the number of people increases, we must face reality and recognize the need to produce more food from less land."

Dr. Paul Hess, of Hershey Foods Corp., spoke at the noon luncheon. He pointed out that technology has advanced faster than "our philosophy toward pollution." We must recycle and reuse the things we get from the earth, "because there is no more here than the resources we now have."

In a panel discussion of laws and regulations pertaining to pollution abatement, Charles F. Hess, executive secretary of the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission, and Robert J. Bielo, executive director of the State Fish Commission, pointed out that "it is imperative that we take the initiative in seeking to solve the problems of agricultural waste before others try to do it." Hess also charged that agriculture "is too prone to look at its responsibility as an individual problem instead of in total perspective."

Others on the panel were

Harry Steigman and Walter Lyons, of the State Health Department, and Merle Engenbrode, Washington Township supervisor. The moderator was Bernhard Larsen, of the State Agriculture Department.

Problems of agricultural waste were identified and described by Glenn Herr, of Ephrata, representing the poultry industry; Dr. Thomas King, Penn State, livestock; George Stahl, State Agriculture Department, dairy; James Yeatman, Avondale, mushroom industry, and James F. Staack, Peach Glen, fruit and vegetable producers and processors. The panel moderator was N. Henry Wooding, Jr., of Penn State.

Reuse Benefits Described
Benefits derived from recycling and reusing natural resources were described by Representative Benjamin Reynolds, who served on a legislative panel.

Reynolds, with a series of photographic slides, described a waste water renovation project on his Chester County dairy farm. The water, most of it from his dairy barn, flows into a lagoon and then is pumped through an irrigation system to cropland. As a result, he said, some fields produce two crops a season where only one had been produced in the past.

In addition, he pointed out, trees have made surprisingly fine growth; plant life along a small stream has benefited from nutrients in the water and now provides excellent food and shelter for birds and wildlife.

"I am convinced," he said, "that by recycling agricultural waste, we can provide many economic benefits for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania."

Senator D. Elmer Hawbaker warned against the "hazards of

over-reacting in an atmosphere of hysteria." The Legislature, he said, must remain responsible, not merely responsive to mass public opinion.

"If we maintain our sanity, our stability, and our willingness to think objectively, we will be able to solve these problems."

Representative Franklin L. Kury said Pennsylvania's new Clean Stream Law is a step forward in dealing with pollution problems. "The biggest need now is experience," he declared.

"We must find out how it works, and if any parts are unfair or ineffectual."

Bureaucracy?
He also declared that in view of projected population trends, "it is inevitable that we will have more government regulations of natural resources in the years ahead."

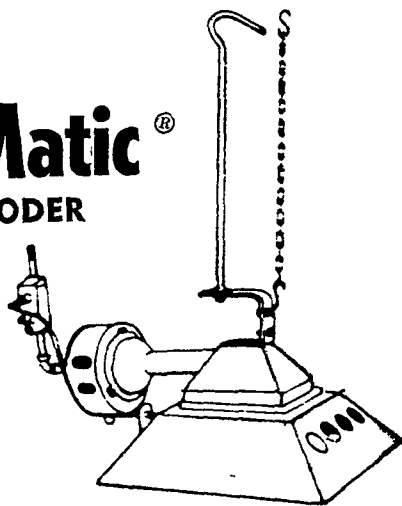
Representative W. Brady Hetrick expressed a different opinion. "In every instance where bureaucracy can be kept from

(Continued on Page 11)

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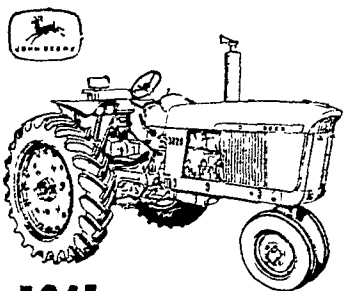


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