

# FARM TRENDS

(Continued from Page 1)

future supply of fertilizer. Natural gas is a basic component of anhydrous ammonia, a key ingredient in the production of fertilizers. Natural gas supply comes under the jurisdiction of the Federal Power Commission and we have urged FPC to follow our lead in

setting agriculture production as a key priority, along with national defense. We hope this will assure adequate supply."

Sawhill also said that he believes the nation can maintain economic growth and a rising standard of living without a comparable growth in energy consumption.

### More Fertilizer on the Way?

Edwin Wheeler, president of the Fertilizer Institute, told the group that natural gas deregulation was one of the most important steps to be taken in alleviating the fertilizer shortage. Nitrogen fertilizers are made from natural gas, and gas suppliers are not willing to search for new supplies as long as government edict holds natural gas prices at an artificially low level.

Wheeler expressed his feeling that it would not be wise for the U.S. to become dependent on a foreign source for nitrogen, and cited the recent oil embargo as a horrible example. He said we're already dependent on Canada for about 65 percent of our potash, and we could easily come to rely on other countries for nitrogen as well. The other key fertilizer ingredient, phosphate, is available in great enough quantities for the foreseeable future, from Florida mines.

### Boosting Local Government

"We have embarked on a program of new federalism, where the federal government is seeking to return local options to local governments," Richard Fairbanks told the group. Fairbanks is associate director for natural resources, energy and environment in the President's Domestic Council. Fairbanks said that all new programs from now on would be subjected first to the question: Is this program needed?; and secondly, "Should it be run by the federal government or local government?"

In response to a question from one of the editors, Fairbanks said he does not see any end to the U.S. Department of Agriculture in the near future, in spite of recent rumors to the contrary.

### The Income Picture

Dawson Ahalt, a USDA economist, told the editors that he foresees a period ahead when the economy will be picking up steam. He said consumers have been suffering lately from lowered incomes, but those problems should be over with shortly.

The outlook for beef feeders wasn't quite so cheery,

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Ahalt felt. He said feeders are edgy and they'll stay that way until they can be assured that they'll be able to make a profit in the cattle business. He does expect feeder calf prices to decline somewhat, and he thinks feed prices will take a dip sometime soon.

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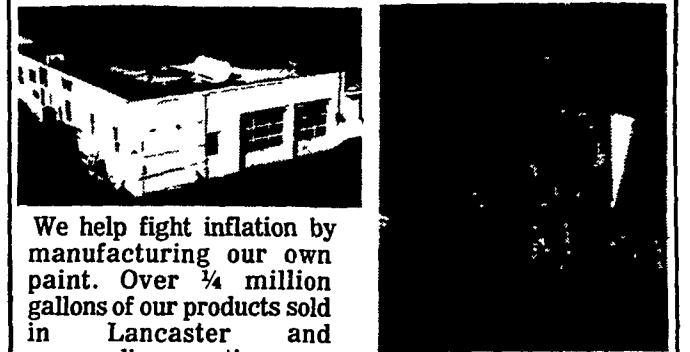
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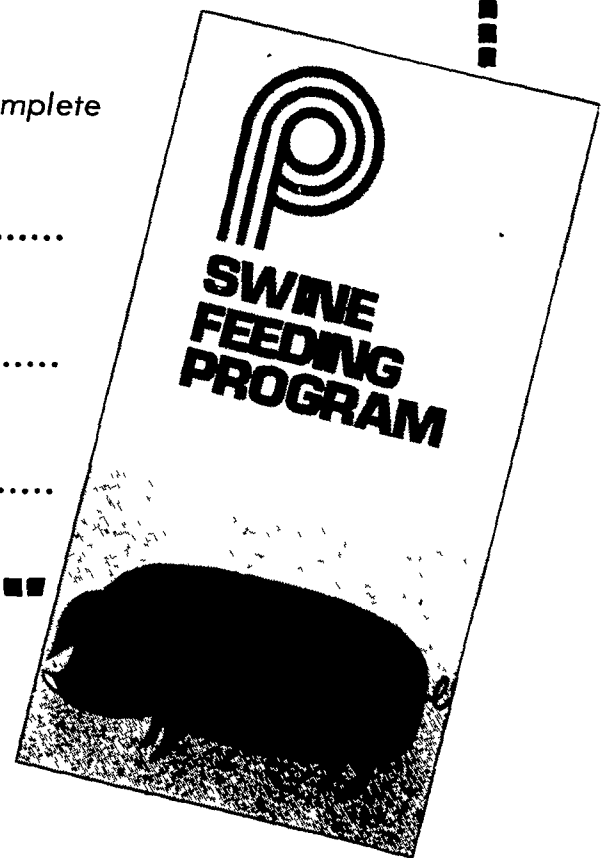
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