



Mrs. Jane Alexander Addresses Farm Women Convention

by Sally Bair
Farm Feature Writer

Mrs. Jane Alexander, deputy secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture painted a grim picture of the world food situation when she spoke to the 57th annual convention of the Lancaster County Society of Farm Women held Saturday at the Lancaster Bible College.

Her advice to 375 women was, "Next year, if you have only a flowerbox, don't plant a geranium, plant a tomato." She added, "If you think you've seen high food prices, the worst is yet to come. Food will be the battleground for maintaining world peace, and in Pennsylvania, we have a lot of weapons, so let's use them."

She urged the Farm Women to "be concerned, be alert and make sure you get what you pay for, and be heard. Women need to be listened to, not as fanatics, but as seriously interested people. Farm Women should get involved and tell the real story of the food crisis, and believe me, there is a real crisis. Food is very short here and abroad."

She explained that the policy in Pennsylvania is to encourage increased production, but added, "We must get costs down and prevent the big fellow from squeezing the little fellow." She termed the economic situation "ridiculous", and said, "The farmer is getting less and less, while the processor, retailer and big corporations are getting the profits."

She called the influence of women "tremendous", giving as an example the meat boycott of the previous summer. But, she pointed out, while the boycott brought down the price in the retail store briefly, it didn't affect the farmer.

Mrs. Alexander's recurring question was, "Where are the women when we need them?" "Where are they," she asked, "When we need opinions with regards to how the family unit is affected by today's food prices and by regulations involving food, or when we talk about agriculture and the family farm, corporate farms and farm partnerships?" She said it is well known that "if the women weren't there, we wouldn't have the glue that



One of the many attractive outfits modeled for the fashion show during the Farm Women Convention.

holds the whole thing together."

She lamented the fact that there are so few women in policy making roles in state government. She is, for instance, the first and only woman in her capacity in the nation. There are no women on the Farm Show Commission and no women on the numerous marketing councils in Pennsylvania. She said, "I would like to see women appointed to the marketing councils to help tell the way our products should be marketed, and to tell about the high quality and nutritional value of Pennsylvania agricultural products. Who knows better than women how to catch the eye and tell the nutritional appeal of these products?"

She mentioned the roadside marketing council as one specific area where women's voices should be heard, and where they should get their "full appreciation". Roadside marketing is a growing industry in Pennsylvania. Family farmers realize that the best way to get the fullest return of your dollar is to shorten the marketing line. Don't let someone else package and shine your farm products. Do it yourself and sell it out at the road."

"And who usually pleasantly staffs the stand, decorates it, and makes sure the displays are properly arranged and everything looks its best? The women in the family." Mrs. Alexander added, "To hear the men talk, you'd think they did it all themselves."

Mrs. Alexander talked about the regulatory role of the Department, saying, "The Department must become ever more alert and tougher."

She said, "We should have women in regulatory activities. A woman can just as pleasantly and effectively go into a grocery store and see whether there are bugs in the flour and whether the meat cutter is clean."

She stresses that the Department makes spot checks, so that stores, farmers, bakeries and the like don't know when to expect them. He said, "We need women in another way. We can't always be alert and can't always know when someone who is handling food is doing it improperly. Housewives must help if we are to protect the consumer. Why aren't they on our reporting staff?"

She said, "You are the ones who buy cottage cheese, take it home and find that it's green. You should have the courage to take it back to the store and demand your money back." But an important extra step, according to Mrs. Alexander, is to send a post card to a regional office or the Department in Harrisburg and state the nature of your complaint and the store and product involved. Consumers also can save the questionable food package and contact the department which will send an agent to pick it up. Mrs. Alexander said emphatically, "It is worth bothering about."

An example of a complaint that paid off was one which came from a housewife who bought hamburger which didn't cook like hamburger and didn't smell like hamburger. The Department processed it and through another tip, confiscated three tons of improperly slaughtered meat from five stores in the Pittsburgh area.

The meat consisted of horse meat and 4-D beef, that is, meat which was uninspected, diseased, drugged and had developed a reaction to the drug, or which had simply died in the field. She emphasized that the sale of horsemeat is legal in Pennsylvania if it is properly labeled and sold as pet food. Horses may not be slaughtered for horsemeat in Pennsylvania.

Mrs. Alexander said one purpose of her talk was to stress just "how desperately we do need women today when we talk about food and agriculture. By God's grace fortune has shown on us this year. We have had good weather - no destructive weather patterns in the Commonwealth. It's almost as if a hand stopped the bad weather at the Ohio line."

However, she warned, "For all of our dedication to the family farm, we really can't survive without assistance." She cited the Clean and Green Amendment, which, with appropriate legislation, can help preserve farmland. However, she said, "A battle must be fought in the legislature to get the necessary legislation." She said she is always saddened when she sees fields filled with houses or trailer parks where there was once cornfields. "What are we doing when we plant houses on our prime agricultural land in Pennsylvania, when we have so much land that is not prime, that would be certainly adequate and pleasant to live in - wooded areas or rougher areas - where we could develop housing?"

It might cost more to run sewer and water to this secondary land, but according to Mrs. Alexander, "We must learn to accept some of the difficulties and live with



Jane Alexander speaking to the 57th annual Farm Women Convention.

it. How much better off we'd be in the long run."

At the conclusion of her presentation Mrs. Alexander was given a market basket filled with good things from Lancaster County. She expressed her delight and immediately dug out a bag of apple snitz, declaring that they have always been a favorite of hers.

In other business at the Convention officers were elected for 1975. Secretary will be Mrs. Harry Hershey, Jr., Society 26 and treasurer is Mrs. Charles H. Rohrer, Society 7. Continuing in their second term will be president, Mrs. Carl Johnson, Society 15; First Vice President, Mrs. Robert Gregory, Society 3; and Second Vice-President, Mrs. Carl Diller, Society 22.

The afternoon program featured a style show, with floor-length dresses sewn by the Farm Women. Winners, who will represent Lancaster County at the state convention in Harrisburg, include: Mrs. Melvin Nolt, Ephrata, Society 3; Mrs. Aaron Denlinger, Paradise, Society 7; Mrs. John Ruhl, Lancaster, Society 19; Mrs. Curtis Akers, Quarryville, Society 31; Mrs. Jay Charles, Washington Boro, Society 23; Mrs. Henry Balmer, Lampeter, Society 22; Mrs. Robert Spahr, Lititz, Society 19; Mrs. Ken Kreider, Strasburg, Society 28; Mrs. Elvin Hess, Strasburg, Society 28 and Mrs. Harold Miller, Lancaster, Society 4. Judges were Mrs. Doris Thomas, Extension Home Economist and Mrs. Judy Bowlby, former home economics teacher at Manheim Township High School. The women were judged on the general appearance of their outfit, the suitability of fabric and pattern and accessories.

In her report to the Farm Women, President Johnson said that the county Farm Women have "individually and collectively been responsible for doing Christ's work". She added, "Roads going in every direction have led me to cover 3200 miles. The pleasure you have given me exceeds any work I might have done."

Attendance awards this year went to Society 16 for having 56 percent of their members present, and Society 24 for having 53 percent present.

Mrs. S. Lee Richards, state president, conducted in-

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