

Lebanon Co. agent visiting South America

Editor's Note: The following report was prepared by Newton Bair, a former York County dairyman and now Lebanon County Extension Agent. It is one of a series of reports from Mr. Bair which LANCASTER FARMING will be publishing while he is getting a glimpse of agriculture in other parts of the world.

By **NEWTON BAIR**
While Henry Kissinger's visit to South America dominated the headlines the past three weeks, a group of Central Pennsylvanians were also filling the role of Good Will Ambassadors in five South American

countries. I was lucky enough to be among the People - To - People agricultural delegation which visited Panama, Peru, Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil.

We met with U.S. Embassy personnel, Agricultural Ministers, and Cooperative and Farm Organization leaders and we were welcomed on the farms and in the homes of all types of farm people in each of the five countries we visited. Here are some of my personal impressions of the lands, the people, and the agriculture of South America.

Panama
Panama is the only place in the world where the sun rises over the Pacific Ocean and sets over the Atlantic. The Canal Zone, 10 miles wide and 50 miles long, runs from the Atlantic side eastward to the Gulf of Panama, which is on the Pacific coast. The United States has only 27 years left on a 99 year lease and already there is some resentment toward our presence, although the Panamanians realize that they need the economic stimulus of United States management of the Canal. They have very little commercial agriculture - all of the farms we visited are subsistence-type farms.

By our standard, farming in these small subsistence farms is very primitive but the people seem to be well fed and fairly content. Many adobe shacks in the country have a TV antenna on the roof and an old Ford parked in front.

Peru
We got our first view of the peaks of the Andes as we flew over the equator at sunrise, about 6:10 a.m. on February 7th. It's pretty hard to imagine that people live and even do some farming on the steep slopes of many of the andean peaks. The city of Cuzco, at 11,000 feet above sea level, is heavily populated by poor but picturesque Indians, descendants of the once proud Inca's who were humiliated and slaughtered by the Spanish conquistadors. For centuries they have worked as laborers on the fertile valley

farms owned by wealthy people of European descent, and many are subsisting on unbelievably steep hillside gardens on the mountain peaks around Cuzco. Peru has started a land reform program by sub-dividing the large, productive farms and giving smaller parcels of land to the laborers, mostly Indians. The result has been catastrophic since the small landowners have no incentive to produce any more than they need themselves. Farm production has dropped while the population continues to rise at an astronomical rate even though infant mortality among the Indians is nearly 50 percent.

Lima, the capital city, has four million people, which is over one fourth of the population of Peru. It was for many years the gateway to South America for the Spanish explorers.

Peru's agricultural potential is limited except along the Pacific coastal plain. The central portion is slashed by the Andes Mountains and the eastern part is mostly tropical jungle. The United States Agency for International Development (AID) is setting up a program of technical aid to assist Peruvians to become self-sufficient in agriculture. James Stone, the United States AID coordinator in Peru was our dinner guest in Lima.

The coastal plain soils of Peru are rich in nutrients but production is limited by only four inches of rainfall per year. Under irrigation, fabulous corn crops are produced - using hybrids that require 180 days to mature.

We visited the Hacienda Ceres, a good Holstein herd owned by Jose Risso who is improving his herd with A.I. service imported from Atlantic Breeders Co-op in Lancaster. There are only a few herds of the caliber of this one in all of Peru - most of the cattle we saw are scrubby, underfed, and parasite infested.

Paraguay
Paraguay is a rather poor nation, landlocked in the center of the Continent. The only navigable outlet is by way of the Parana River, through Argentina. Large areas of the country are

swampy and unproductive. Eastern Paraguay seems to be fairly productive, but needs a lot of technical help. Again, we are offering them assistance through the US AID program. An AID technician, Don Waugh from Madison, Wisconsin, went with us to visit a cooperating farmer near Asuncion.

Paraguay has an Extension Service and our People-To-People group received the red carpet treatment from the head of the Servicio De Extension Agricola Granideria. As a representative of the Pennsylvania Agricultural Extension Service, I was honored by the presentation of a small flag symbolic of Paraguay's 4-C youth clubs, similar to our 4-H clubs.

Later we visited the farm of a prominent 4-C leader and met some youth club members, an Extension Home Economist, and the local County Agent. The farmer milked about 50 cows and peddled the milk daily, door-to-door in the nearby town. His principal crops were corn, manioc (a root crop), sugar cane, soybeans, some peanuts, and Pangola grass for forage. Alfalfa can be grown, but the soil is acid and needs lime. Fertilizer is used very sparingly and is quite expensive.

While in Asuncion, the capital of Paraguay, the People-To-People group visited the U.S. Embassy and were personally greeted by the United States Ambassador to Paraguay, George Landaw. He briefed us on the political and cultural background of the Paraguayan nation. Although they hold elections every five years, there is

only one strong candidate, General Stroessner, who has been in power since 1954.

Paraguay exports some tea, hides, and wood products but must import many necessities such as foodstuffs, machinery and fuel.

A colony of Mennonite and Amish farmers has been established in central Paraguay. We didn't have time to visit them but on the flight from La Paz, Bolivia, we met a group of Amish people from Lancaster and surrounding counties who were on a pilgrimage to visit their relatives in Paraguay. An unusual but very pleasant encounter in a small, small world.

Paraguay's National Institute of Agronomy receives technical and research assistance from the University of Kansas, financed by U.S. AID. They are working to develop better forage crops from alfalfa, buffalo grass, Paspalum and Pangola. The institute has many pieces of modern farm equipment but these are rarely seen on the farms. Most farmers still use a small horse as their principal source of power, and we saw many ox carts on the road and some oxen pulling plows and cultivators in the fields.

Like most of the smaller South American nations, Paraguay is a land of extreme contrasts, where squatter's shacks can be seen nestled between fine homes. Education is the stumbling block - an educated person can command an excellent income, while the illiterate nearly starve.

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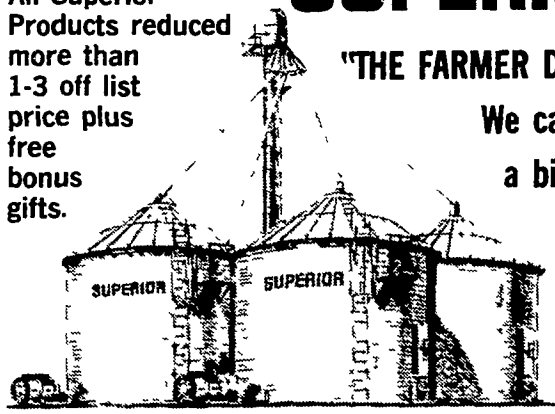
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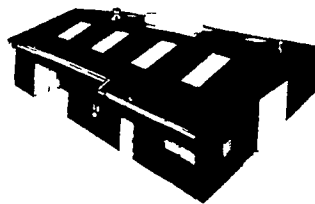
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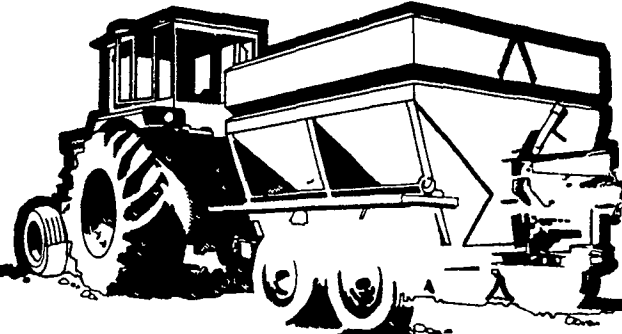
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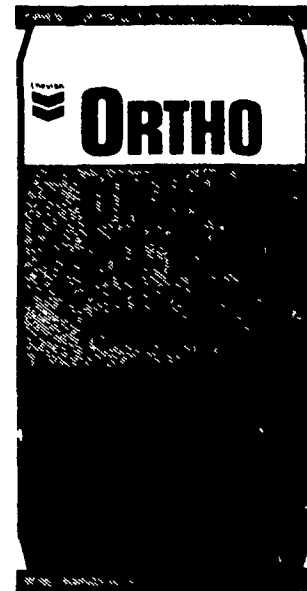
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