

Sealtest closing 'no problem'

By DIETER KRIEG
 COCKEYSVILLE, Md. — The significance of the Sealtest plant closing in Philadelphia later this year is that "it represents one more step by Sealtest to reduce their position in the fluid milk market," says Ralph Strook, general manager of Maryland Cooperative Milk Producers. He notes that the dairy foods giant is practically out of New York City, and out of Pittsburgh and Cleveland and Washington.



Freeburn Love of Eastern Milk Producers says Sealtest's closing in Philadelphia will not affect his producers.

Mid-Atlantic Marketing Order, then prices will not be affected. "Producers in Order 4 will continue to enjoy those Class I sales," the executive said.

According to Strook, Sealtest is going out of fluid milk because many chain stores have put up their own bottling plants and the competition has therefore become rather stiff. It's a trend that has been occurring all over the country.

Strook says he does not believe that the closing of the Sealtest plant in Philadelphia will affect producer prices. The milk will just simply be bottled elsewhere, and if this continues to be done within the

The problem which Strook sees as a result of this is "how can little dealers stay in business when they're having to work with what little milk is left over after

big bottlers are done buying?"

Inter-State Milk Producers of Philadelphia may be more directly involved with the Sealtest closing, but they anticipate no problems either. "It appeared like a big decision," said Dr. James Honan, Inter-State's general manager, "but it didn't make a ripple in the market." He adds that none is expected and that his cooperative has things well under control.

Eastern Milk Producers Cooperative, which handles approximately half of the milk which goes into the Philadelphia Sealtest plant, does not expect any problems either. Freeburn

Love of that cooperative says other outlets will be found for that milk and some can be absorbed at their Chambersburg manufacturing plant.

According to a news story in the Philadelphia Bulletin, Sealtest will continue to stay in the manufactured dairy products category. The Philadelphia paper's account quotes Sealtest's general manager, Richard

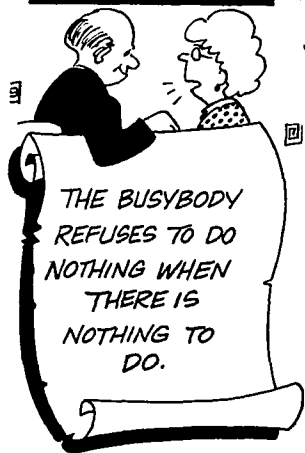
Leach, as saying: "It was an economic decision, the plant was losing money. The decision to close it was based on increasing production costs and a lack of volume and growth."

The milk companies affected are Pennbrook and Breuninger. Bottling will continue for approximately five more months due to bottling contracts with suppliers. Cooperatives

involved are working on that issue, and as mentioned earlier, they see no problems affecting them or their membership directly.

Leach noted in his interview with the Bulletin's reporter that the plant wasn't profitable because of a "surplus manufacturing capacity in the Philadelphia area. I doubt that any plant in the area is operating to its full capacity."

PUNCH LINE OF THE WEEK



Meet our Berks correspondent

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came to be a farm reporter. Although she and her husband are not in the business now, neither is a stranger to farming. She was raised on her uncle's 250 acre dairy farm where she tended chickens, helped with the milking and planting, and drove a tractor well enough to pull a hay rope. (She hasn't been able to find out whether anyone still lifts hay and straw into the barn loft with a rope and forks, but her uncle who worked the forks always said it took a good driver on the other end to handle that rope.) Stan lived and worked five years on a large truck farm operation where he was involved with produce from planting to marketing and also helped with the hog raising and butchering. The couple discussed going into farming in the early years of their marriage, but they unfortunately came of age when farming was a dying business in their area and land was so high that it was impossible for a young couple to buy a farm.

Her farm background left Judy with a zest for growing things which she exercises on an ever increasing number of houseplants and a summer flower garden, which she regrets is a much smaller version of the one she remembers on the farm. But space for flowers is limited, she points out, by her husband's energetic gardening habits. Vegetables are his line and considering their "home garden" in New Jersey which took up about a half-acre of land, Judy is sure that their garden in Stony Run will eventually replace most of the grass in their big side yard.

In addition to being a reporter and parttime student at Kutztown State College, Judy enjoys sewing and handcrafts. She admits that her new job limits the time she has to spend on those activities now, but she likes the work and the people she meets. In the short time

she's been with the paper, she has found that a lot has changed in the years since she lived on a farm, and agriculture has become a sophisticated business. But she adds that it is obvious that farm people haven't changed - most are as friendly and helpful as she remembers them to be.

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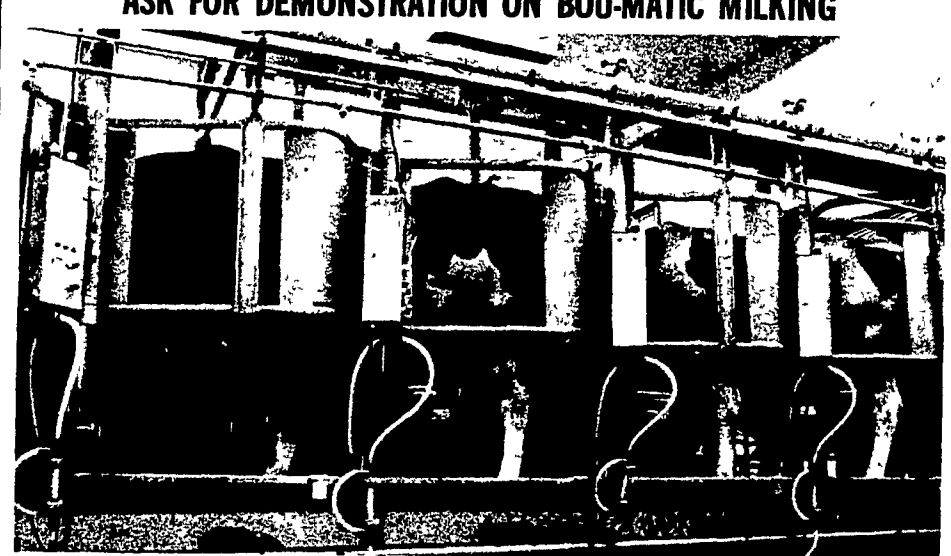
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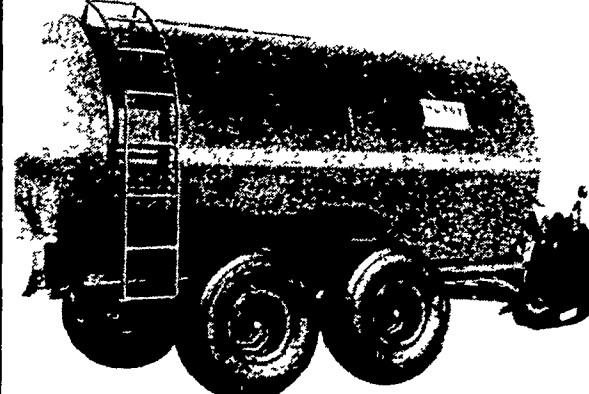
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