

State FFA officers meet Earl Butz

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Eighty state FFA officers, including Pennsylvania's FFA President Randy Ranck of Quarryville, met with President Ford, congressmen, and U.S. Agriculture Secretary Earl Butz recently. The meetings were part of a week-long FFA State Presidents' Conference, held annually in the Nation's capital. (See related story on page 1.)

The activities began on Sunday, July 18, with registration, and the first session was opened Monday morning by Senator Robert Dole, (R. Kansas). The group discussed current agricultural legislation on the floor of the House and Senate.

Following a Tuesday morning of visits to congressmen and senators on Capitol Hill, the state presidents gathered at the U. S. Department of Agriculture for a special meeting with Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz who told the officers that as agriculture students they "represent a great industry."

Citing the importance of agriculture in foreign trade Butz said, "Agriculture with \$22 billion in annual exports represents our number one source of foreign exchange, and enables this nation to have a strong balance of payments."

Butz urged the FFA state officers to pursue their leadership goals. "The main product of rural America is the leadership potential for the future," he said, challenging them to "dream, try new ideas and not be afraid to break out of a rut." He said the profit incentive is the "gas that makes this country go" and urged the students to do all in their power to keep government from discouraging advancement by passing legislation that over-regulates and discourages development.

Wednesday's activities included discussion of the operation and activities of the FFA Alumni Association and the National FFA Foundation. The FFA Alumni Association with over 12,000 annual and lifetime members has members in every state and state officers are actively involved in promoting the growth and development of alumni groups in their states.

State officers were told that more than 1500 businesses and individuals are now contributors to the FFA Foundation, Inc. Their sponsorship makes incentive awards available to FFA members at the local, state, and national levels. According to Don McDowell, executive director of the National FFA Foundation Sponsoring Committee, the Foundation will provide a record \$776,000 for FFA programs in 1976.

There was great interest in the Wednesday afternoon session on "Election Year Issues," since most of the state officers have only recently reached voting age. Guest speaker John Harms, editor of the Kiplinger Business Letter told the officers that the outcome of this election will have a lasting effect on them for the rest of their lives. He urged them to become politically active for the party of their choice and gave them some insights into the Washington political scene as well as some predictions on the '76 election.

Friday, the final day of the action packed week, began with a leadership workshop conducted by the six national officers. Guest speaker Walt J. Smith of the J. I Case Company, of Racine, Wisconsin, posed the question "Would you Sign the Declaration of Independence?". He pointed out that most of the signers were farmers, and others were men of wealth who had a great deal to lose as a result of their actions. At noon the officers boarded the busses for a short journey to the Arlington National Cemetery where they conducted a Wreath



Solanco's Randy Ranck, recently elected president of the Pennsylvania FFA Association, clasps hands with USDA Secretary Earl Butz.

Placing Ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers. The afternoon was open for visits to many of the historic sites, scenic monuments and museums in Washington, D.C.

The week concluded at a bicentennial banquet hosted by General Motors and featuring an American buffet with foods from across the nation. The evening's program featured a bicentennial sing along and entertainment by "The Young Columbians," an enthusiastic singing group that gives American history "a whole new look and sound." The 18 voice singing group portrayed America's history from Bunker Hill in 1776 to Broadway today.



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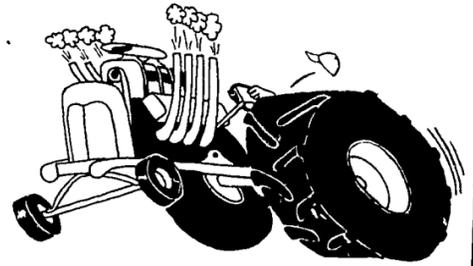
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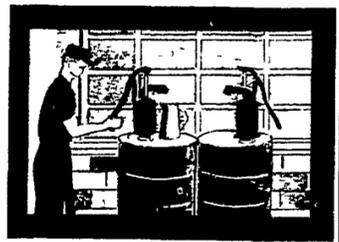
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