

## ACA Farm Line

# Land use is strictly local issue

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Farmers warned a panel of top level congressmen and government officials recently that "a day of reckoning is coming" unless federal influence on land use is reduced.

Comments such as this one by John Barrutia, a small beef producer from Mountain Home, Idaho, came over the Agriculture Council of America's "Farm Line" and were heard by a special panel headed by Senators Jim McClure (R-Idaho), Carl Curtis (R-Neb.), and Representatives Mo Udall (D-Ariz.), George Mahon (D-Tex.), Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), John Melcher (D-Mont.), Fred Richmond (D-

N.Y.), and James Santini (D-Nev.).

Barrutia went on to say that the "federal government had better change its approach concerning agriculture. Land use is strictly a local issue, but like many others is important to our future."

He said most senators and representatives respond only to the majority of constituents who "holler about high food prices," but unless Congress recognizes the needs of the five per cent who produce it "Mr. and Mrs. America will be sitting at dinner with knife and fork at an empty table."

Interest in the issue "was about as strong as anything

we've experienced," according to ACA chairman E.L. "Shug" Hatcher, a wheat and beef producer from Lamar, Colo. During the four hours the program was in operation over 500 calls were received from at least 25 states. The heaviest volume of calls came from Nebraska, Idaho, Texas and Kansas.

Many calls, particularly from the Rocky Mountain states, centered on whether the federal government should restrict or eliminate grazing rights on public lands.

McClure who has first hand knowledge of grazing problems in his state where 60 per cent of the land is publically owned said his calls centered around the "serious conflicts" over the use of Federal lands for agriculture versus preserving the areas for non-

farming uses. One Idaho rancher said, "Either the government must begin to look at the problems we face or we'll be forced out of business."

Concern also centered on the government's role in dealing with urbanization and other development, which in the past decade alone claimed over 22 million acres of farm land. Approximately two-thirds of the calls related to land use. Other questions and comments dealt with estate taxes, government regulation and the impact of embargoes on farm prices.

Mahon, chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations, said that from calls he took "farmers still rankle under the impact of the damaging grain embargo last year."

One caller, though, W. Harlan Micklebost, a banker

from the "near total disaster" drought area of Ramona, South Dakota said that there is a place for the government to "step in. Farmers here need financing relief with the delivery charges of emergency feed for their starving cattle." Farmers are forced to pay as much as \$110 a ton for alfalfa hay, more than double last year's price, including a "whopping" \$12 shipping charge for a 90 mile trip from its source.

The farmers aren't asking for free hay, just help with the shipping charges, as the government has done in less critical times, he said.

This is one time the government "should step in where help is clearly needed - otherwise it should stay out of farming operations," Micklebost said.

Other panelists included representatives of the

Departments of Agriculture, Interior and HEW, as well as various planning and public interest groups.

As a non-political and non-legislative organization, ACA operates the monthly toll-free Farm Line, open nationwide, not to advocate any position of its own but to provide a vehicle for discussion of major agricultural issues. The July Farm Line on "Government Regulation" received nearly 400 calls from people across the country, talking directly without any "go-betweens" with experts on the issue.

The Agriculture Council of America, founded in 1973, is made up of individual farmers, farm and commodity organizations and companies that supply the farmers. Its purpose is to improve communications between farmers and urban consumers.

## Vote set for milk order funds

NEW YORK, N.Y. - The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will hold a mail referendum to determine if affected dairy farmers approve of a rate of seven cents per hundredweight for advertising and promotion under the Middle Atlantic federal milk marketing order.

H. L. Forest, dairy official in USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) said the rate of deduction for funding the advertising and promotion program would be increased from five cents a hundredweight to seven cents a hundredweight. He said evidence from a public hearing held last May showed that the increase is needed to offset rising costs of conducting the program.

This is a deduction, Mr. Forest said, on all milk delivered to the Middle Atlantic market each month, before returns are paid out to producers. The money is used for research and

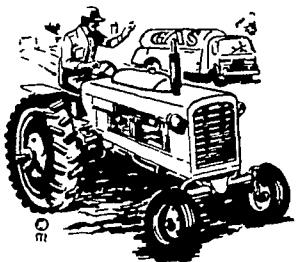
development, advertising (except brand advertising), sales promotion, nutrition education, and other programs to improve the domestic marketing of milk and its products.

The program provides for quarterly refunds to any producers not wanting to participate.

Mr. Forest said farmers who supplied milk to the Middle Atlantic milk marketing area in June 1976 will be eligible to vote. Two-thirds of those voting must approve the amended advertising and promotion provisions.

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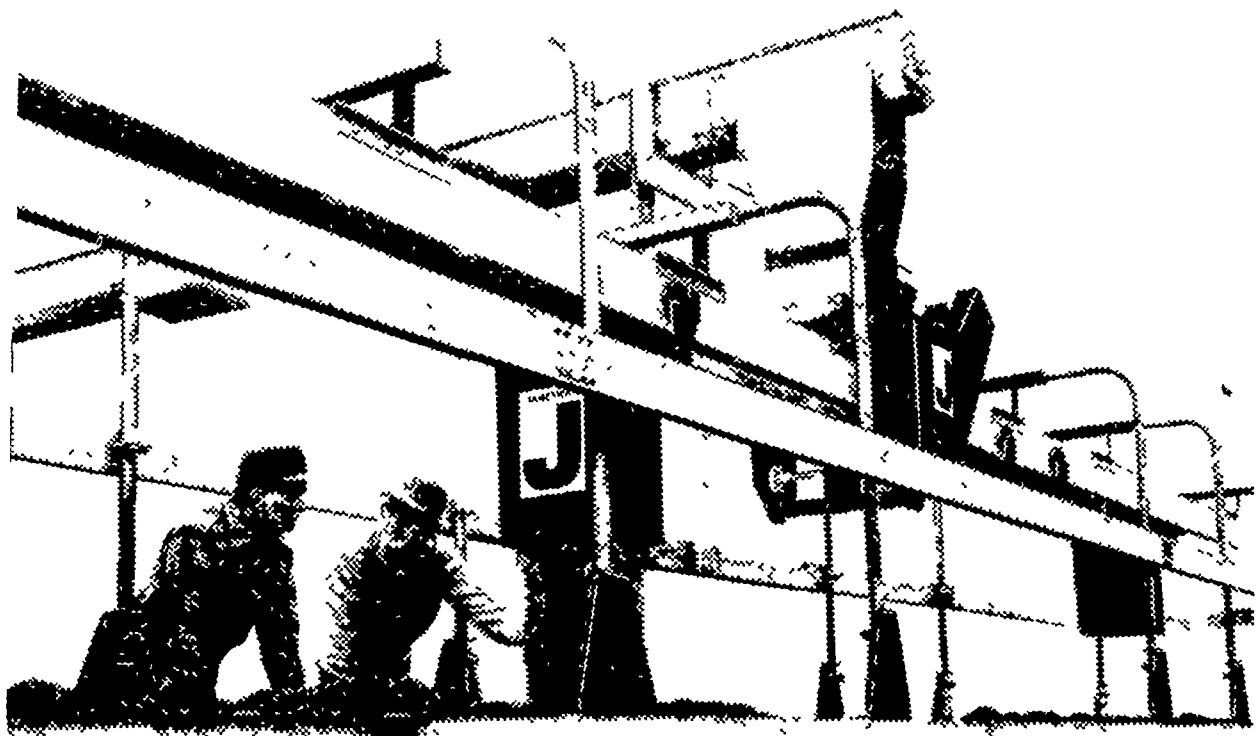
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