

USDA praised

[Continued from Page 1] rest of the economy, with the exception of the banking industry," he told Lancaster Farming. A dairyman with 80 Guernseys and Holsteins, Mummert commented that USDA policies of the last eight years "were to the best interest of all." He brushed aside any notion that the programs of former USDA Secretary Earl Butz favored so called 'big farmers.' "What is a big farmer?" Mummert challenged, adding that the definition varies from region to region and person to person. On the subject of farm imports, the Franklin County dairyman expressed a belief in high tariffs to discourage foreign competition. A former

committeeman of the American Farm Bureau Federation, he said he favors legislation which keys in on health standards abroad and beef import loopholes. Paul McPherson of York County might possibly qualify as a "big farmer" - at least back here in the East. Farming a total of approximately 1000 acres, he has a more sizable enterprise going than most of his neighbors. But he, too, scoffs at suggestions that USDA programs of the past several years were carried out with the big boys in mind. "What is a 'big farmer'?" the grain and fruit farmer asked "USDA should not have to protect the part-time small farmer - the fellow

who has a job in town from eight to five and then tries to raise a crop on the side on a field or two. "In McPherson's opinion, such 'small farmers' are competing with full-time farmers who are in an entirely different investment category. "People who use the 'big farm' syndrome have never defined small and big farms," the York Countian continued to explain. "They're playing on the emotions of everyone who lives in Middle America and wants more - that's all of us. Turning his attention to large, industry owned corporate farms, McPherson said "they aren't that big of a success. The really well managed ones don't do too badly, but most can't take the bad years," he pointed out. According to McPherson, some farmers can't

take the bad years either - but they generally survive, while corporations don't. As an example of how some large corporation owned farms fail to make the grade under the free competitive system, McPherson cited a U.S. tire manufacturing concern which owned a ranch in Colorado and eventually ended up with the biggest bankruptcy sale ever heard of, in the area. Some reasons given by McPherson for such developments are that the 'family farmer' is a more dedicated individual, harder working, and more interested in the overall condition of his operation. Also, as manager of his own business, the 'family farmer' knows his business from one end to the other, while a huge industry-owned operation has to rely on the services of perhaps scores of people to

put the total picture together. McPherson has a degree in agricultural economics and 14 years of experience as a farmer. He considers the economics of scale to be "not that great" to make a significant enough of a difference in the application of USDA programs to 'large' and 'small' farms. Furthermore, he adds that agricultural trends (to 'bigness') are irreversible. "What benefits the big farm will also benefit the small farm," he said. McPherson has a few other reasons for defending USDA policies of the past few years. Noting that a change in programs could take place if a Democrat gets to the White House next year, McPherson commented that he would not like to see a return to the days of supply management such as was common during previous Democratic administrations. "That was the low point for agriculture," he exclaimed, "not only didn't we make any money, we had to take government payments just to survive." The York Countian also believes that the present leadership in Washington is more likely to restrain the growth of social programs, regulatory agencies, and large-scale spending. As a fruit grower, McPherson explained, he is very much interested in having USDA offer the kind of leadership and programs which would make regulations easier to live with.

satisfied with USDA programs were expressed by Craig Mitterling from Port Treverton, Snyder County. He rents 80 acres from his father, keeps some beef cattle, and raises 12 acres of vegetables. "I feel that the programs are very much in favor of the farmer," he told Lancaster Farming, "the family farm needs the free enterprise system in order to continue to be the backbone of American agriculture." Keeping the government and unions out of agriculture are the primary reason Centre County's Elwood Way gave for being satisfied with USDA. Claiming that Democratic presidential candidate Jimmy Carter "has sold out to the unions," Way expressed some concern over how that might reflect in farm programs under a new administration. John Hetherington, a tomato and vegetable grower from the Ringtown area of Schuylkill County, has a 90 acre farm. His reasons for endorsing USDA programs include: free enterprise for the farmer, few government controls, and increased farm income. "You can't ask the government to give you money, you've got to earn it, he concluded. But not everyone would agree with the comments made by these farmers. Forney Longenecker, for example, would like to see a turn-around in USDA policies. A family farmer from the Lititz area, he's

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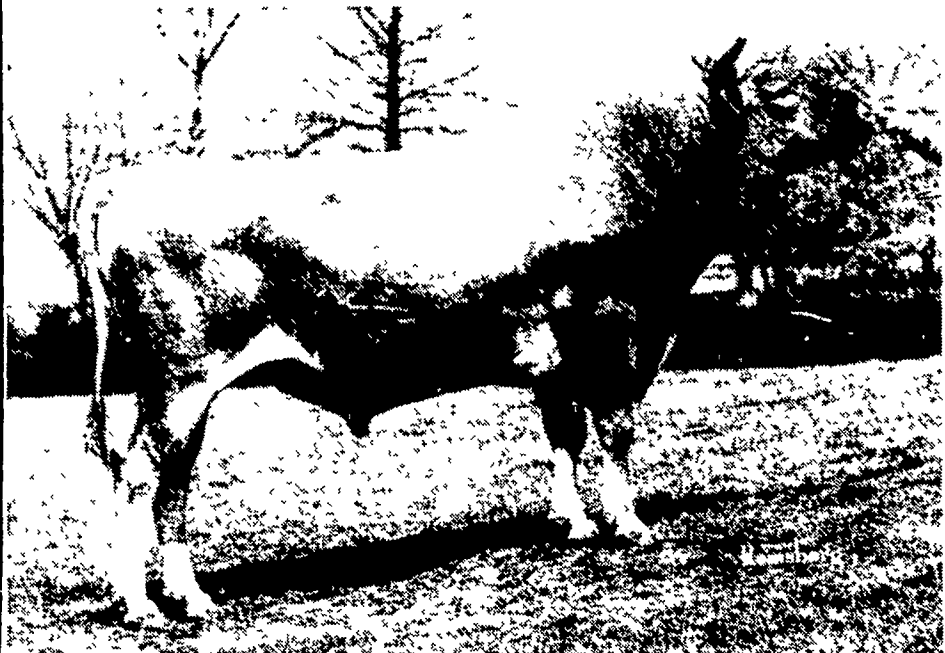


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