

PFA's sweethearts charm their legislators

By JOANNE SPAHR
HARRISBURG, Pa. - Pennsylvania's legislators got a surprise Valentines Day gift in the form of approximately 150 sweethearts from the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association when that group organized a two-day legislative conference for its female members last Tuesday and Wednesday at the Penn Harris Motor Inn, here. Designed to educate the women on legislative procedure, policy development, and policy implementation, the conference also featured a meeting with legislators on Capitol Hill as well as a dinner with them. For the majority of the women present, the meeting on the Hill and at dinner presented an opportune time to become personally acquainted with their representatives and to discuss key issues.

Marlin Miller, director of Field Services for PFA, pointed out that this conference was the first of its kind, in that just women, alone, have never been encouraged to come to Harrisburg to meet with the individuals in government. "We do have annual state legislative tours in March," he explained, but noted that

this particular conference was set up to encourage more women to become active in policy development.

"We hope these women will go home and get others involved," Miller commented. He also pointed out that it is of great importance to have both the partners in a family farm operation involved and concerned with legislation. Many times home discussions foster ideas that lead to policy development.

"I hate to admit it, but women can do a better job at this," he also remarked. That statement was mirrored by many of the men coordinating this two-day event. Chester Heim, public affairs director for PFA, noted that when the women in the organization get involved in a project, there is usually a high rate of success. The majority of women attending the conference believed that this comes about because of the extra time which they have to devote to their activities.

Miller also noted that this sweethearts legislative conference is not intended to become a yearly event. It is simple part of an ongoing

education program for the members of PFA.

"We're growing at such a rapid pace," he stated, "that we have a definite need for education of the members." As a result, next year the focus of the conference will be on another facet of the organization such as marketing, public relations, etc.

The highlight of Tuesday's schedule of events was a meeting with representatives at the Capitol. Prior to the visitation, a legislative briefing was held and 11 key issues were stressed after which the women boarded a bus and went to the Hill.

Later in the evening approximately 55 or 60 legislators dined with the ladies at the Penn Harris. For this particular event, approximately 190 women were present to meet and greet their representatives.

Kent Shelhamer, newly confirmed Secretary of Agriculture, was the guest speaker for the evening. His topic was an educational one on the roles and responsibilities of the Secretary of Agriculture.

He explained to the group that the Department of Agriculture is comprised of approximately 700 in-



Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture Kent D. Shelhamer speaks with Helen Wivell, vice chairman of the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association women's committee.

dividuals with a secretary, two deputy secretaries, and eight bureau chiefs. The bureau chiefs are heads of several areas.

Of these areas the most controversial, according to the Secretary, is the dog law. "We get more complaints in this area than in any other," Secretary Shelhamer explained.

Other departments governed by the Department of Agriculture are plant industries, markets, animal industries, foods and chemistry wage and rural affairs.

Immediately following Secretary Shelhamer's speech, the conference adjourned for the day.

Wednesday's events included a panel discussion on key PFA legislative issues such as marketing and bargaining, land use planning, and taxes. Following a question and answer period,

the group broke up into workshops to study policy development, implementation, and the legislative process.

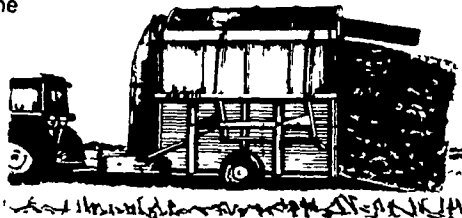
During the afternoon

session, Senator Stapleton, chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, addressed the group.

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