

Shelhamer praises Lancaster County

By DIETER KRIEG
LANCASTER, Pa. - Praising Lancaster County's large and diverse agricultural industry and telling a gathering of more than 200 dairymen he was proud to be their secretary of agriculture, Kent Shelhamer's remarks drew approval from the audience.

In thanking Secretary Shelhamer for his appearance at the Lancaster County Dairy Day on Tuesday, emcee Rohrer Witmer said: "You're talking our language."

While noting how impressed he was with Lancaster County agriculture, the agriculture department chief wasn't in town to just offer praises. He was here to speak about Pennsylvania agriculture and how various

aspects and programs fit together to form the entire picture.

Secretary Shelhamer said he was proud to be the state's new agriculture secretary and proud to offer the services of his department. "We've got a lot of things for you," he said, then listing several bureaus and services which he feels are as good or better as any in the nation. Among Pennsylvania's outstanding ag programs are the level of indemnity payments, which stand higher than any other. "The Bureau of Animal Industries is second to none," Shelhamer affirmed, "and the Diagnostic Laboratory is highly capable of dealing with problem situations."

Shelhamer hit the dairy farmers' interests when he



Kent Shelhamer

told them that when he was a boy he had to drink his milk at every meal and clean up his plate. "That's not so any more and that in itself should be a clue for a greater need in advertising and

promotion," he remarked. The secretary clearly identifies himself with concepts which would increase and improve the farmer's markets. He believes it's an area which has been overlooked in the past and that the producer should have some say about the sale and price of his quality product.

"There'll be some ups and downs in this business, Shelhamer continued, "but you in the dairy business are lucky because your income is more stable than most."

Talk about getting into trouble with budgeting - I've been there," he proclaimed. Explaining, he asked his audience "how would you like to be in the fruit business?" The new ag chief

owns an orchard in Columbia County.

"I'm convinced you'll have to fight in the future for your piece of the land," Shelhamer said. "Those of you with land in Lancaster County are fortunate." He praised the farmers for their dedication and encouraged them to continue in their work.

One-eighth of Pennsylvania's total milk production comes out of Lancaster County, Shelhamer pointed out, stressing the importance of agriculture in the County.

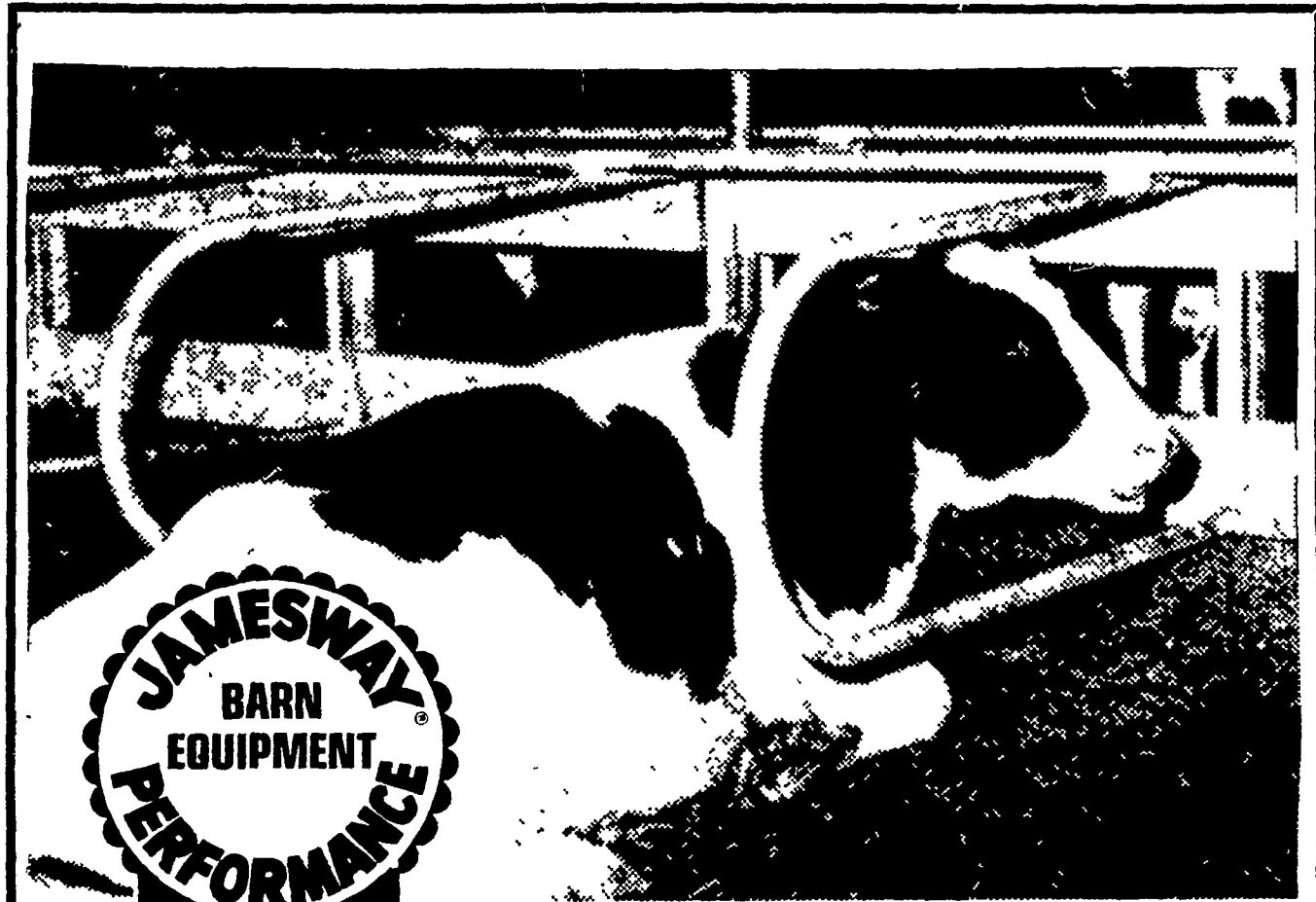
"Lancaster County dairymen daily produce the milk for 1.5 million people. The milk you produce has an annual value of \$80 million," Shelhamer said.

The agriculture secretary also observed that cow numbers have gone down considerably, but that daily production has remained fairly steady. "This is certainly a tribute to a lot of factors," he said, naming Penn State University, the Extension Service and the dedication of Pennsylvania

dairymen as primary reasons for significant increases in productivity. There's been an average increase of 30 per cent per animal, according to Shelhamer's report.

The future, as Shelhamer sees it, looks "iffy." The agriculture secretary has on numerous occasions voiced his concern over rising milk production. Similar fears were briefly uncovered here at the Dairy Day meeting. The rise in production is just one reason why Shelhamer believes greater efforts in advertising and promotion are in order.

Nonetheless, the new agriculture secretary believes strongly in Pennsylvania agriculture. He cited one product after another in which Pennsylvania's ag production ranks within the top five states in the country. Milk production was included on the list. "And all of that comes from a so-called industrial state which is noted for its coal and steel," said Shelhamer.



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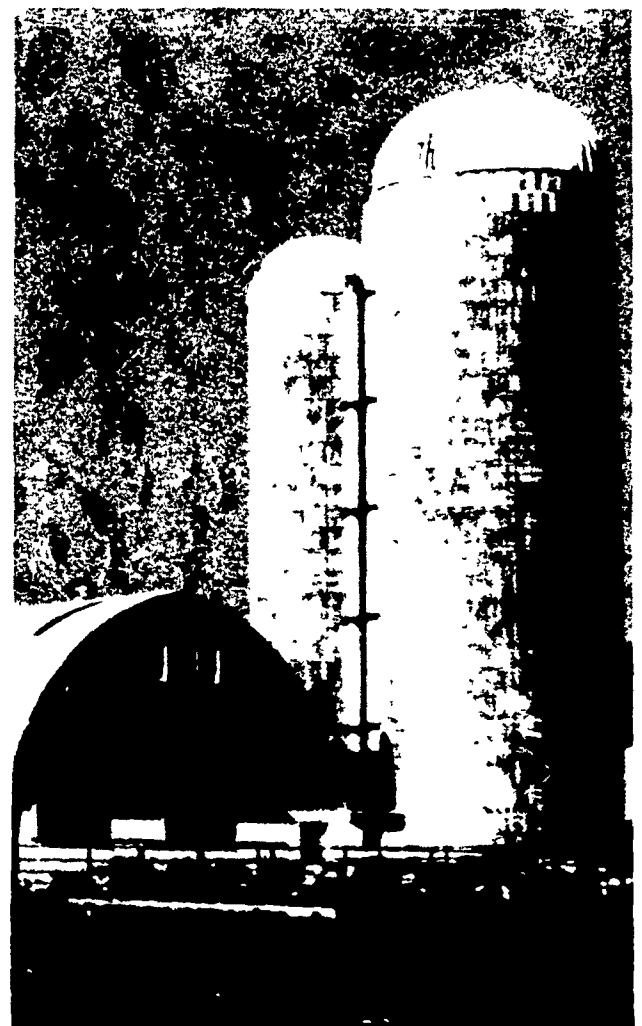
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