

Farm anti-trust

(Continued from Page 1)

quality and choice have diminished while food prices have increased eight to 15 per cent a year."

"If the big money interests have their way, still more farmers will be driven from their land or forced to become the next generation of sharecroppers," Abourezk said. "The most blatant example is the recently revealed plan by Merrill Lynch and Continental Illinois Bank to buy up \$50 million worth of prime farm land in the Midwest and South. The Family Farm Anti-trust Act would make such land grab schemes illegal."

The American Agricultural Marketing Association has estimated that by the end of this decade 50 per cent of the American food supply will be under corporate control and nearly 75 per cent by 1985, Abourezk said.

"When four companies control more than 50 per cent of a market, an oligopoly exists. Much of our \$150 billion-a-year industry is already under such oligopolistic control. For example: Kellogg's, General Mills, General Foods, and Quaker Oats manufacture 91 per cent of the breakfast cereal; 90 per cent of the soups are made by Campbells; 60 to 70 per cent of the dairy products by Borden, National

Dairy, and Carnation; and 65 per cent of the nation's baby food by Gerber.

"Most of all, many of these large corporations are involved directly in production, as well as processing and distribution. In most cases, this vertical integration is accomplished through contracts with farmers - the corporation does not become a farmer, it merely rents them. The Family Farm Anti-trust Act would put a stop to this sort of corporate domination," Abourezk said.

Abourezk added that his anti-trust bill would also benefit consumers by helping to restore competition to the food industry. "Competition is needed to lower prices and balance out the market in favor of the producer and consumer. Corporate control inhibits healthy market competition. Aside from economic costs, it also burdens our country with added social costs caused by the forced migration of rural and family farmers to cities and towns," said Abourezk.

"Only four per cent of the nation's population remain on farms today and corporations already exert far more control than should ever have been allowed. If we wait any longer to counteract this trend, the battle will be lost," Abourezk said.

My Thoughts

And welcome to them

By JOANNE SPAHR

When I was introduced to the members of my table at the Pennsylvania Pork Producers banquet last Saturday night, the person doing the introducing was an obvious reader of my column. She said, "This is Joanne Spahr, she writes about cats." Enough. No more Siamese cat stories. This week I have another kind of cat story to tell, though - a fat cat story. You know who I mean - the type of people who do almost anything for the good of themselves, even at the expense of others.

What brought this to mind was an item I read in the National Farmers Union's Washington Newsletter. In that publication it was revealed that John (Jack) Knebel, who served as Secretary of Agriculture for a short time after Earl Butz left office, has turned up as a member of the Chicago law firm of Baker & McKenzie, the firm who is the legal counsel for Continental Illinois National Bank and Trust Company, the promoters of the "Ag Land Trust" plan. The NFU newsletter got its information from the New York Times.

In the Times article it was not indicated whether Knebel would represent the Bank, but it did quote him as being for the investment plan. In fact, he is on record as saying, "This is going to help preserve the family farm."

Wonder if he discussed the issue with a farmer or a farm organization representative lately? I'm sure he has, and all I have to say is, "Way to stick with us, Jack."

It's gotten to the point that the saying, "All for one, and one for all," doesn't even hold true. Instead, it should be, "One for one, and one for all" - all the land that is.

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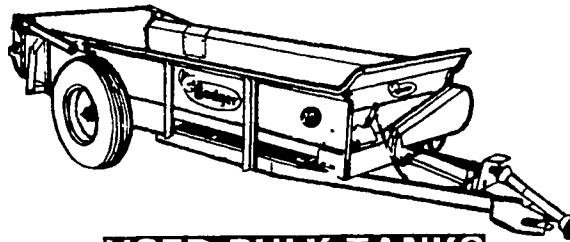
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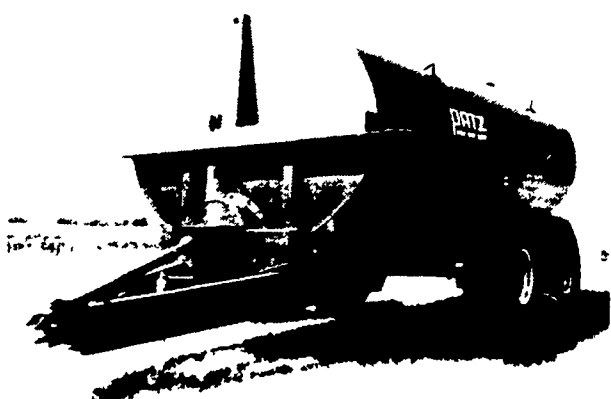
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Correction

In an article last week on the Pennsylvania Poultry Federation's fund raising banquet to be held on March 31 at the Host Farm in Lancaster, an error was made in the phone number to call for reservations. That number should be 717 652-7530.



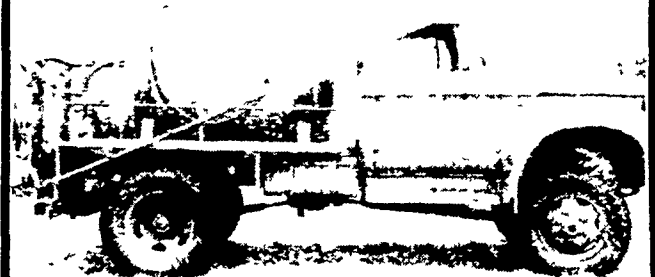
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