

Farmer subsidizes consumer, says Shelhamer

By JOYCE BUPP
Staff correspondent
YORK - Stressing the theme "Consumer Education," the York Area Chamber of Commerce and the Agriculture Extension Service headlined their 15th annual agribusiness seminar with Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture Kent D. Shelhamer. Avalong Dairy Restaurant

hosted the meeting of 100 area farm and business people.

"The American farmer is subsidizing the American food consumer," insisted Secretary Shelhamer. "But ask any man on the street and he'll tell you it's tough."

Noting that gadgets are a sign of an affluent country, and that the United States has more of those than any

other nation, Shelhamer emphasized that the first thing a financially troubled consumer will cut back on buying is actual food, not soda, toilet tissue, or panty hose.

Offering statistics stating that the average farmer is only receiving a 3.5 per cent return on his investment with no return on labor, or making \$2.86 per hour with

no return on his investment, the Secretary questioned how many of the bankers present would loan money at those rates.

"It would be a shock for people to walk in and find the grocery shelves bare," Shelhamer warned, as he reminded his listeners that even though food prices rose six per cent last year, those increases did not find their way back into the farmer's pocketbook.

"Food production is in the position today that energy was in back during the 60's," he added. "Remember those special electric rates for building all-electric homes? While we're in an energy crunch now, we'll cut back and get along."

Shelhamer warned that solving the potential food crisis, though, may be much more difficult. By 2050, only an estimated 40 per cent of today's productive land may be available for food growing. Also, yield rates in some crops seem to have been reached.

The current farm strike prompted some comments from the Secretary.

"Who would have thought that farmers, as independent production-minded individuals, would have to go on strike?" questioned Shelhamer.

Comparing striking farmers to concurrently striking coal miners, he noted that the mine workers are participating in the work stoppage for reasons of larger pay checks, greater benefits, and better working conditions.

"I do not advocate strikers; but the farmer is no less deserving than his coal miner brother when he



Kent D. Shelhamer

some of the best farmer-consumer regulatory laws in the country.

Livestock indemnity payments, for instance, are not necessarily made to put the farmer back in business, but to insure a steady food supply for consumers. The Summerdale state laboratory conducts over one million tests annually to insure safe and healthful food for the public. And, Shelhamer believes that Pennsylvania has the strongest bakery law in the world.

Speakers for the afternoon session were E. Clinton Stokes, director of the Food and Agriculture Committee for the National Chamber of Commerce, and Rodney E. Leonard, executive director of the Community Nutrition Institute in Washington.

Chairman of the committee arranging the program is H. Richard Zook, Federal Land Bank Association of York.

strikes for additional benefits," he continued.

Everything done by the state's Department of Agriculture to help the farmer is ultimately designed to benefit the consumer, is the Secretary's outlook on the department which he oversees. Practically everything that people do is in some way affected by rules and regulations; and Shelhamer feels that Pennsylvania has

Broilers down

HARRISBURG - Pennsylvania broiler placements were down slightly during the week ending January 21 according to the Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service. Placements of broiler chicks were 1,799,000.

The placements were one per cent below the corresponding week in 1977 and three per cent below the previous week. Average placements during the past

ten weeks were seven per cent above placements a year ago.

In the 21 poultry states, placements of broiler chicks were 68,139,000. The placements were about the same as the previous week, but six per cent above the same week in 1977.

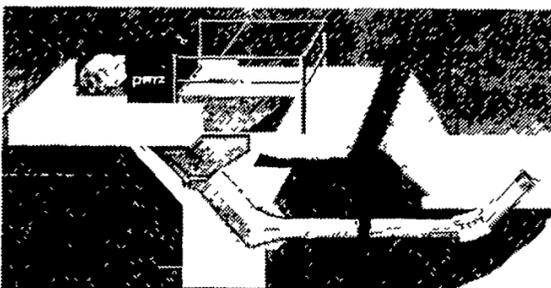
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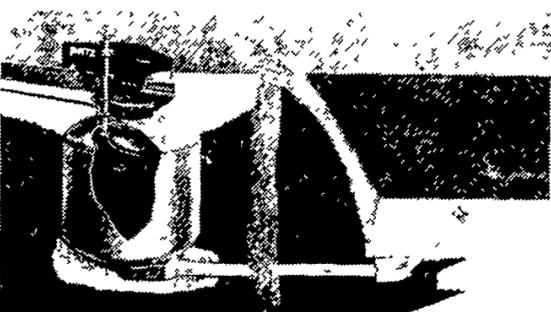
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