

Strength in agriculture seen in farm coops

By JOYCE BUPP
Staff Correspondent
BOZEMAN, Mont. —
"Cooperatives are a nice insurance policy," says Jay Hull, young dairyman from Westminster, Maryland.

Hull, and his wife Ilona, were among 186 young farm couples who examined the farm cooperative system during the 50th National Institute of Cooperative Education (NICE) held July 31 through August 3 at Montana State University. The annual convention, which draws attendance from hundreds of the nations cooperatives, is sponsored by the American Institute of Cooperation. This year's theme was "Cooperatives—People with a Purpose."

Breeders of registered Guernseys, the Hulls represented Maryland Cooperative Milk Producers of Baltimore. In addition to milking their herd of 50 cows, with an average of 11,400 pounds of milk and 545 of fat, the Hulls crop 150 acres in corn, barley and alfalfa.

Although in the career farming business only four years, Jay and Ilona are enthusiastic supporters of the philosophy of strength in agriculture through farm cooperatives.

"Doing business with a cooperative that has 50-year success is a cushion against the sudden loss of a milk market," Hull emphasizes.

He also feels that individual farmers, especially younger ones, have too little time to devote toward public relations tasks. Market bargaining and legislative lobbying are two valuable

jobs also performed by cooperatives in a much more effective way than could be done by individuals.

As members of several farm cooperatives, the Hulls felt that the NICE meeting reinforced their basic concepts on the member-owned system of doing business.

One key outreach program of the Institute is toward the increased involvement of women in all phases of cooperative operation.

"A woman's place is in the meeting room; we need to involve more of them," advocates Ilona Hull, an outspoken opponent of separate "social-type" meetings for wives. "Women can double the efforts and brain-power in cooperatives. They need to promote more and work less in the fields and barns."

Representing the Maryland-Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative were Douglas and Evelyn Perrow of Lynchburg, Virginia.

"The biggest challenge to cooperatives in the future is their very existence and continued growth," warns Perrow. He notes that cooperatives help to act as regulators within the economy, stabilizing prices paid by independent buyers, thus making them suspect by non-cooperative organizations.

Perrow believes that broader commodity marketing should be a trend

of the future. For instance, he would recommend that milk cooperatives expand into the marketing of related products such as yogurt, cheese and ice cream.

"Involved individual members are the strength of a cooperative," says the Virginia dairy farmer who milks 185 cows and crops 600 acres. Each member must be willing to accept some responsibility for public relations and legislative efforts, as well as encourage other farmers to participate in the business of cooperatives.

The Montana NICE was the second convention attended by the Perrows, who credit the confab with boosting their enthusiasm for the cooperative way of doing business.

"It's reassuring to know we have other people fighting for us and with us to keep the cooperative enterprise system," smiles the soft-spoken dairyman.

A third-generation member of Southern States represented that service-supply cooperative at the annual NICE meeting.

Donald and Denise Vaughn, Delta, Pennsylvania, farm in partnership with his father on a 90-Holstein, 600 acre dairy and hay-corn operation.

"Cooperatives are a way of life in our family" insists Donald. "My grandfather, Luther Bahn, was a charter

member of Southern States."

Informed members make for better organizations, says Vaughn, who favors educational mini-sessions for increased member understanding of the day-to-day inner workings of cooperatives.

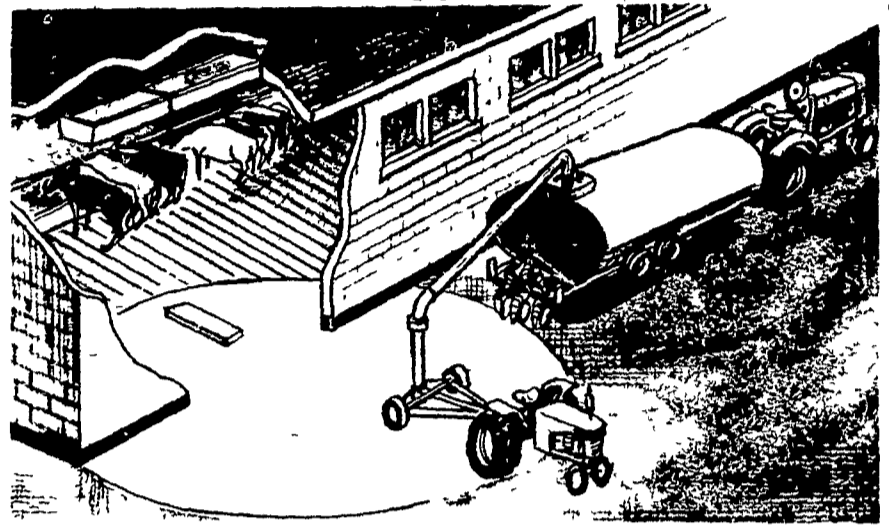
Another awareness measure he recommends is the setting up of regional

young couples advisory boards, both for educations and to increase grass-roots input into administrative decisions.

The Vaughns were impressed both the background on cooperatives that they received at the conference and the concern of the national institute for the welfare of individual member-organizations.

An educational organization for farmer cooperatives, the American Institute of Cooperative was founded in 1925 and is headquartered in Washington, D.C. Members include a broad representation from marketing, supply and service cooperatives, banks and associations of the Farm Credit system and the nation's rural electric systems.

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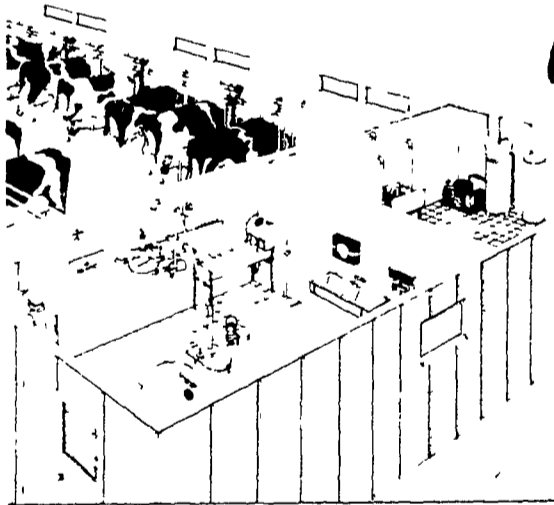
Young Farmers to meet

STEWARTSTOWN -- There will be a special young farmer meeting on Tuesday, August 28, at the Chemagro Demonstration plots at Stewartstown R3, and several field corn demonstration plots near Chemagro plots.

The tour will start just north of Stewartstown on Route 24 at the DeKalb plots. The group will then stop at The Pioneer plots and the tour at the Chemagro plots at Stewartstown. At the last stop the group will observe soybeans planted no-til, drilled and insecticide-herbicide interaction plots. They will also see corn insecticide plots and alfalfa herbicide, insecticide plots and alfalfa herbicide, insecticide, and no-til plots.

The tour will start at 7 p.m.

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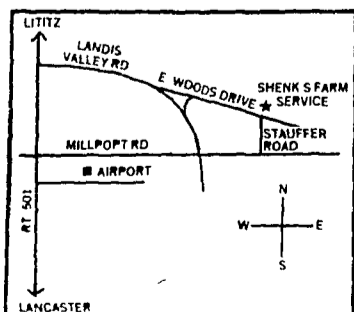
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