

College dean outlines challenges

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CAMP HILL — Dr. James Beatty, dean of Penn State University's College of Agriculture, told a gathering of Pennsylvania-agribusinessmen this week that the well-being of agriculture in the century ahead will depend on available capital, incentives for profitable production, scientific methods, research, and "a solid base of support from all segments of society."

Speaking here at the centennial convention of PennAg Industries Association, a 2½-day affair which drew more than 500 guests, the Dean noted that agricultural changes can take place so rapidly that one could say they take place overnight, relatively speaking. The changing patterns in production, world trade demands, and the effects of technology and politics are examples.

"The role of food production and the role of oil are big factors in the fate of nations in the years ahead," the Dean lectured. He believes that world-wide food shortages could become more predominant in the next decades as the Earth's population grows faster than food supplies and technology.

Beattie is confident, nonetheless, that the challenges of the future can and will be met. One of the major bright spots he sees on the horizon are plants which will be able to produce nitrogen, thereby replenishing the soil naturally with an element which becoming increasingly precious. Acknowledging that legumes are already performing this important feat, Beattie noted that agronomists are trying to modify certain other plants, notably grasses, to do the same thing.

Other genetic improvements in plants and animals show up in the Dean's crystal ball. "The research centers at our 50 Land Grant universities are intact and a proven system of excellence," Beattie proclaimed. He called for continued support of these learning and research institutions, including the Cooperative Extension Service, noting that these segments of agriculture have contributed significantly to agriculture's advances.

Beattie also noted that there much work needs to be done in order to avoid waste and losses during harvests, storage, and distribution. While such losses are comparatively small in the United States and other developed nations, that is not the case in less developed countries. The challenges of the future include waste and loss reduction, he said.

The preservation of food is another area which is being looked at. Efficient transportation and distribution are included on the agenda. Among the most important areas of concern is energy. According to the Dean, agriculture and industry must learn to use less energy and use it more

efficiently. Renewable resources must be looked at more and more if the challenges of the future are to be met.

Unquestionably one of the major areas of concern is land use. Beattie predicts with regret that prime agricultural land will continue to go out of production and that arid acreages will have to be brought into production to make up for it. "The arid lands will have to irrigated, which means our water supplies will be even further depleted," Beattie warned, leaving the definite impression that he felt prime agricultural land should be protected.

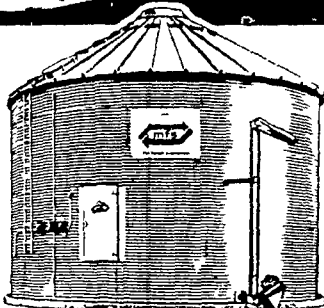
"Agriculture cannot compete economically with industry for land," the Dean lectured.

As an educator, Beattie considers the nation's learning and research institutions as a primary source of the new technology that will be needed to face the challenges of the future. He pointed out the continued need of public support for universities such as Penn State and expressed confidence that farmers and agribusinesses can meet the challenges of the future.



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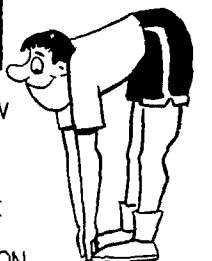
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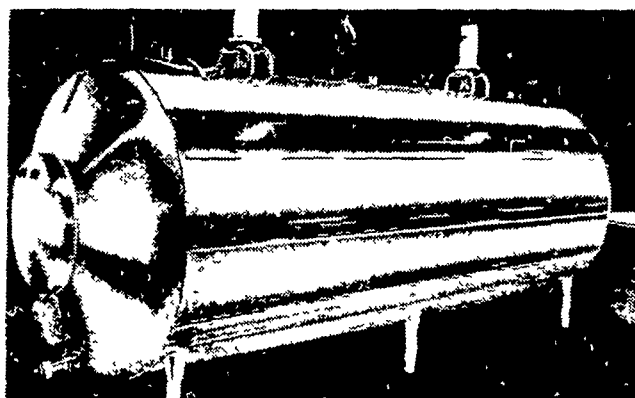
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