

Pennsylvania Farmers Union Convention

Dechant says White House is responsible for farm programs, and nation is at 'dead center'

By DIETER KRIEG

CAMP HILL — Tony Dechant, president of the National Farmers Union, says "whether we like it or not, farm prices are made in Washington, D.C." At least the issues that are formulated there have an influence on farm pricing, he explains. He made the remark Monday evening during the annual convention of the Pennsylvania Farmers Union.

Dechant, who has served as NFU president since 1966, also proclaimed that the place to talk to get action on farm programs is the White House, not the Department of Agriculture. While characterizing USDA Secretary Robert Bergland as a fine, capable, and knowledgeable man, Dechant argued that he can't do much for farmers because his hands are tied by the White House and the Office of Management and Budget. "That's where it's going to start," the farm organization leader said with reference to agricultural project funding and policy-making.

In talking to the group of some 200 PFU members and their guests, Dechant also lashed out at government

economists, the Yellow Sheet beef pricing system, and the nation's lack of pride and initiative.

Born and raised on a Kansas farm, Dechant proclaimed that the United States has always been at its best when it is on the move. Likening the country's present state to "dead center" on a steam-driven piston engine, the farm leader says the U.S. economy is not progressing. "We have to get off dead center," Dechant pleaded somewhat forcefully. "What's it going to take to get America back to work?" he asked.

Critical of government planning (or the lack of it) Dechant is particularly disappointed that this country does not do anything to protect its farm population. As president of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers, an organization which consists of 60 membership organizations and represents 35 million producers in 45 countries around the world, Dechant says other nations protect their farmers. He points out that world agricultural leaders frequently express amazement that the United States does not follow suit.

"Europe doesn't allow agricultural products in unless



National Farmers Union president Tony Dechant was in Camp Hill this week lashing out at the White House, government economists, inflation, and Yellow Sheet meat pricing. He says the country is not moving and that some other nations around the world are taking advantage of America's idleness.

their own farmers have been taken care of," Dechant explained. In this country, however, he said, imports are let in regardless of the impact they may have on domestic prices paid to farmers. Also, U.S. farm goods are often sold overseas at below the costs of production.

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