

## Family farm conference

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State Grange, and chairman of the event, participants also examined current federal farm programs. The object was to identify weaknesses with the hopes of having such areas improved in the next federal farm bill.

Aside from the representatives of the Grange from 11 Northeastern states, the meetings also drew faculty members from numerous agricultural colleges, The Cooperative Extension Service, officials from departments of agriculture in state government, and representatives of the federal government. Several members of the Pennsylvania State Grange took part.

"We tried to get as many people up there as we could to represent all aspects of agriculture," said Ringler.

According to the Pennsylvania State Grange spokesman, the purpose of the conference was enthusiastically supported by National Grange Master John Scott. He reportedly passed news of it along to USDA Secretary Bob Bergland, who also showed a keen interest for it.

Representing the White House was Lynn Daft, who serves on the domestic policy staff. Ringler described the Carter aide as "very dynamic and forthright." He is optimistic that some good will develop from the proceedings.

"I think there were many seeds sown, it couldn't have helped but been good," the Somerset County potato grower remarked. He noted that federal farm legislation has historically been geared to Midwestern farming. "That's why we're concerned," he added. "The tone of the meeting was very interesting - the consensus was that the government that governs the least governs the best."

Ringler questioned the value of several federal farm programs, such as set-aside payments and crop insurance policies. He claims that such procedures add to the costs of farming and invite outsiders to invest in agriculture because of government guarantees.

One of the primary concerns was the ongoing restructuring that's taking place in American farm ownership. Participants at the meeting noted they were worried about the future of the family farm. Ringler said that 40 per cent of all farmland in the United States is farmed by someone other than the owner.

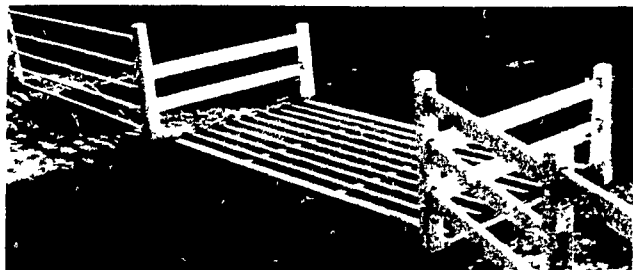


The Northeast Regional Family Farm Conference held in New York State last week was very worthwhile according to Bill Ringler, legislative director for the Pennsylvania State Grange.

"We're interested in saving the family farm not just for its food production values, but because of the social and economic impact they have on communities," Ringler emphasized. "There's an esthetic value involved too. Let's not just look at agricultural production, but the entire structure of society."

In concluding his remarks, Ringler observed that farmers are frequently complaining about the positions they're in, but rarely do anything to present their views. He believes the Northeast Regional Family Farm Conference was a step in the right direction.

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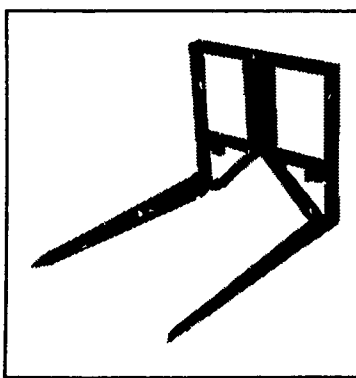
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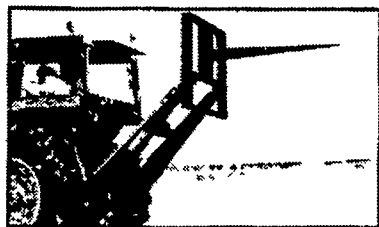
3 Point Base with Forks.

#### 3-POINT BASE WITH FORKS

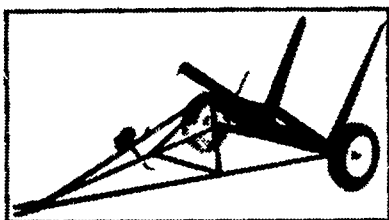
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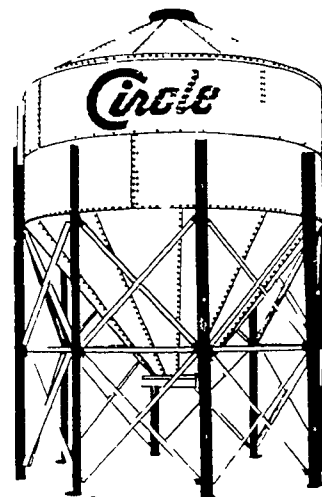


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