

Farmers Union President Tony Dechant says

# There's lots going on that's worse than embargo

CAMP HILL — "It's not a free enterprise world, it's a political world," maintains National Farmers Union President Tony Dechant.

"I'd like to live in the supply and demand world they talk about

"If the fit farmers are the ones who survive then how comes it that we've lost one million farmers and 10 parity percentage points in the 1970s?" he continues.

Dechant is not noted for his love of USDA's current parity levels. And Monday, despite the constant din in farm circles about the

embargo of grain to Russia, Dechant was concerned about other problems.

"There's lots of things going on that are worse than the grain embargo," he says tapping the table for emphasis at each word.

Dechant has served as president of the 78 year old National Farmers Union for the past 14 years. He says intends to step down at the NFU convention in March

The grain embargo just emphasizes the political, not economic, nature of the world market, he says



Tony Dechant is far from pleased with the prices American farmers receive for their products. The President of National Farmers Union said he plans to step down from office in March.

Russia, China, even Japan have government control of the farm economy.

"I won't question the right or judgement of the President on the grain embargo. That is a prerogative of his office, and I'm not privy to the sensitivity of the military problem," Dechant says.

What bothers him is the farmers are being called upon again to bear the burden of foreign policy.

He ticks off the contributions American farmers have made to our foreign policy, not the least of which is the building of exports to balance our trade deficit.

"Will there be a cutback in Pepsi-Cola exports?" he asks.

He points out the government's "quick and sudden" halting of grain exports. The

devastating" the Agriculture Department's predictions for corn.

Originally USDA predicted a 1979 corn crop of 6.8 billion bushels

That was increased to 7.2 billion bushels, which Dechant says he feels is not unreasonable since nobody knows what's in the fields until harvest, anyway

He shuffles some papers as he builds to his point.

At the completion of harvest they increased their production estimate to 7.5 billion bushels

"And in the last few weeks they have jumped it to 7.8 billion bushels," he exclaims

"Not only did they miss the original prediction by one billion bushels but they have increased the figures by 300,000,000 bushels since the beginning of this year," he says.

Dechant says he feels the grain embargo will hurt the Russians.

But he added the Russians probably will be able to make other, more expensive arrangements, especially to obtain grain in the future.

He says if Canada and Australia hold back on their sales the damage to Russia will be worse.

Dechant says he wonders why, when four nations export almost all of the grain shipped in the world, they can not reach some sort of price agreement.

"Three of them speak English," he says, referring to the United States, Canada and Australia. The fourth is Argentina.

Of course, Dechant is ready with an answer

It's the cheap food policy in this country that is hurting all of the grain producers in

exporting countries around the world, he says.

"Farm power, just in my time, has eroded. We've gone from 20 percent of the nation's population to four percent," he says.

Cheap livestock always follows cheap grain, he points out. He says the U.S. loan rate is the floor price for world grain.

NFU has long fought for 90 percent of parity. Although it finally was written into law it has yet to be used.

"I was always taught to start high and bargain down," he says. "But farmers have to start low and try to work up."

He denies Farmers Union is a radical farm organization. He points out NFU works with Grange and Farm Bureau in many areas of common interest.

"But we want floors on prices, and pricing provisions on the international level," he says.

All NFU asks is a farm business predicated on production expenses plus a fair profit, he says.

"I don't know if the old labels apply any more. We are consistent with our policy. Check the record and see who has fought for high prices for the longest," he challenges.

Farmers are going to suffer a 20 percent drop in farm income in 1980, noted.

"We can live without the Russian exports. What is hurting farmers most is the drop in income because of increasing costs.

"Interest, fuel, and inputs are skyrocketing, and the farmer's income is going the other way. That's the real story in farming today," Dechant maintains. — CH

## Montgomery Co.

### 4-H elects officers

NORRISTOWN — The Montgomery County 4-H Cabinet, an advisory board for the county 4-H and youth program, recently announced their officers for 1980, according to Nancy Kadwill, County Agent.

Re-elected chairman was Tom Campbell, an active community leader in the Norristown area.

Fred Haentze of Harleysville was elected vice-chairman. Fred, who is a 4-H sheep club leader, will also be chairman of the Building Committee.

Serving as recording secretary will be Rachael Roblee of Ambler, organizational leader with the Upper Dublin 4-H Community Club.

Corresponding Secretary will be Chris Jones, Schwenksville, of the Perk-Penn Horse Club.

Mary Ann Ribick of Phoenixville, active as a leader in the Hoofprints 4-H

Club, will take on the responsibilities of Treasurer.

Two new members welcomed to the Cabinet included Dave Ketner of Schwenksville and Robert Shusler of Harleysville.

Stan Coolbaugh of Lansdale will continue to be Facilities Director.

Teen Council representative will be Jamie Graybeal of Telford.

Additional members of the Cabinet include George Shenkle and Harry Stewart of Collegeville, Luke and Anna Brandt of Harleysville, James Graybeal and Gloria Ruth of Telford and Paul Werkheiser of Norristown.

The 4-H Cabinet works with the Montgomery County Cooperative Extension Service staff to advise the overall youth program plus maintains and manages the 4-H Center located in Lansdale.

The 4-H Clubs are open to all youth ages 8-19.

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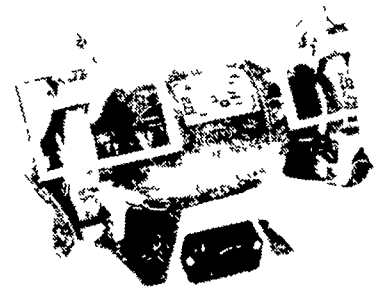
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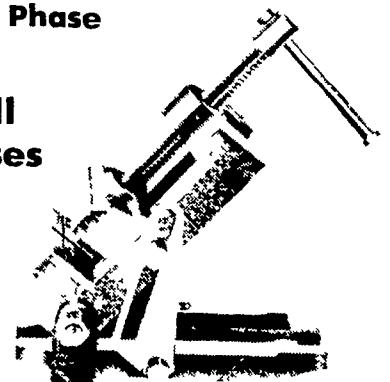
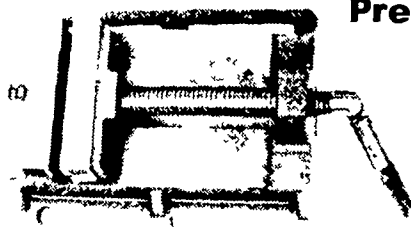
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