

Bergland

(Continued from Page A1)

Master Farmer Huntsberger asked Bergland how he plans to help this group survive the squeeze.

"Money problems are found in all sizes of farms," the Secretary noted, "especially with young people getting started and established farmers who lost their crops last year."

Some \$2 billion in economic aid, carrying 13 percent interest, has been approved to finance those "with no other place to go."

Again and again, America's agriculture head hammered home the unhappy state of farm economics: "There is no quick fix."

He urged farmers to "borrow carefully. Spend less and save more."

Members of FUEL, York County's pioneer cooperative for on-farm fuel production, sought tips from Bergland on government help for grain alcohol distilleries.

He indicated that both research and credit assistance are available with Farmers Home Administration setting aside \$111 million for grain fuel production.

Bergland warned, however, that only large capacity plants, with the ability to extract a variety of by-products, are economical at this stage of development.

"The pigs have come home to roost," was his summation of the depressed state of the pork and poultry industries, both burdened with oversupply and depressed prices.

Part of the pork problem, Bergland admitted, is tax policy that encouraged off-farm business capital to build large hog houses, taking generous investment credit benefits against the cost.

Although farmers will be expected to ride out the plunge until pork prices reach their own market level, USDA is purchasing some quantities for use in the school lunch program.

Speaking to the government's concern about severe soil losses from erosion, Bergland warned that 30 million acres had gone from grass to grain during the mid-1970s. While no clear policies have been drawn up to return this marginal land to sod, one solution might be "conservation easements that would put it back into grass on a business-like arrangement."

Following the question and answer session with York farmers, Bergland demonstrated his cow-milking ability and took a brief tour of the Beshore farm.

E Wayne and son Jed Beshore are partners in the 50-cow registered Holstein farm. Barely a year ago the Beshores were also visited by a deluge of TV cameras and officials as one of the closest dairy operations to the stricken Three Mile Island nuclear plant.

All questions on TMI were neatly sidestepped by Bergland.

About 250 farmers turned out at Pen-Col to question the Secretary as he fielded questions from a wagon-bed stage.

"The Russians are a pain in the neck," Bergland



"I'm the one who took it out," Bergland replied to the query of grain grower Geary Huntsberger on the reinstatement of the government's lime program. Those conservation funds are instead being directed at stopping soil losses with terracing and waterways programs.

replied to questions concerning the effect of the grain embargo at his next stop, the Wolf operation at Millville in Columbia County.

"We'll do business with them only as long as they don't endanger us." Insisting the embargo had not really hurt American grain sales, Bergland said grain is being shipped out at such rates that "we're having trouble loading the boats fast enough."

Several young farmers from the Danville area, angry at taking a beating from low prices and high costs, presented the Secretary with a letter of recommendations for agricultural policy changes.

Their key concerns were the lack of an effective

energy policy, increased interest rates, cheap grain policies, and the widening cost spread between farm and retail prices.

Bergland promised to study their letter upon his return to Washington.

One trend Bergland approved is the slight backwards slide in land prices. He admitted it was not a welcome view from the standpoint of all farmers but is part of the "hard line" stance being taken by the Carter Administration to help cool inflation.

Farmers at the two Thursday dairy visits received Bergland's comments with polite applause, nodding agreement with some policy statements but murmuring among themselves over others.

Many questioned later agreed there were no easy answers to the hard economic problems and that "no one man, not even the Secretary of Agriculture, can solve any issue by himself."

"There's nothing any one individual can do," sighed one Columbia County farmer. "It's just too big. Everyone needs to cut back, but no one does."

Just across the hill from where Bergland was meeting with York County farmers, another part of the campaigning was going on.

Ted Mondale, 22 year old son of Vice President Walter Mondale, spent several hours visiting with voters and the civics classes at rural Red Land Senior High School.



Tapping talents he learned as a boy on the Minnesota family farm, Bob Bergland perched on a milking stool before Beshore Lindy Louise, a VG 87 Harrisburg Gay Ideal daughter with four year records to 26,000 pounds milk and 900 of fat.

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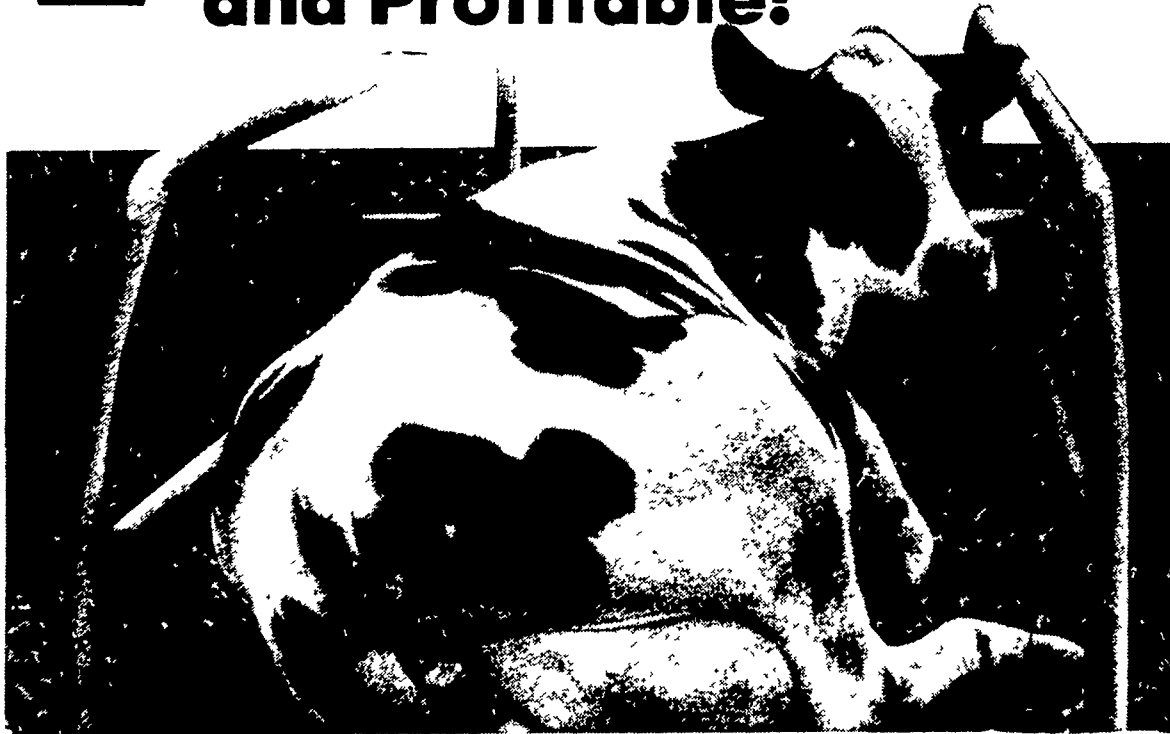


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