

Bergland interview

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cutback — cool it. Already sow and gilt numbers are coming down and egg hatching is down." However, prices aren't expected to rally much before mid-summer.

"What river is that?" questioned the Secretary, eyeing the broad Susquehanna as it flowed under the blue sky and brilliant sunshine, lapping at trees just yards to the East of Route 11-15 where we were traveling.

"Is it good for fishing?" Fishing is a pastime of the Secretary, who admits that the hectic Washington pressures can sometimes get a big wearing. When that happens, he tries to find time to relax out on the waters of the Chesapeake Bay. A lover of the water, abundant in his home state of Minnesota, Bergland recalled the river that flowed just a short distance from his boyhood home. Occasionally, Bob Bergland, the national administrator, gets a mite homesick for the life of Bob Bergland, the farmer, especially in the Spring planting season, since "there's something about growing things that's good for the soul."

Bergland had told listeners earlier that he'd come to Pennsylvania to talk to dairy farmers on their industry problems. While dairymen are nervous over the Community Nutrition Institute's proposal to allow the reconstitution of milk powder for fluid sales, the Secretary said he hasn't had a chance to study in detail the 8000 comments that have poured into USDA on the proposal.

That proposal would still involve the use of dairy products, he said, since it would be based on non-fat powders. Most of the milk production being dried comes from New York, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and California, and is used in the South.

Bergland suggested that allowing the reconstitution might lead to greater demand in this part of the country, but lower the fluid milk demands in the South.

"Some dairy leaders in the Northeast say that all sounds fine, but that isn't the way it'll work. They also fear it would lead to adulteration. I can only unequivocally state that we have no intention of wrecking programs that would lead to reduce milk production, high prices, or a product the consumer wouldn't want."

Protein pricing of milk is another possibility the Agriculture Department is considering. Since California is pioneering in this program of milk payments, Bergland says he'll wait a while and watch their program to see how it works, before considering any major pricing changes in that direction.

That milk pricing might be part of what the Secretary sees as a change in the food policies of the government, now beginning to revert from a reactive type to one based on the needs of people.

"Once, if there was a surplus of a particular commodity, we'd find ways to get rid of it, such as the rice surpluses used in the Food for Peace program. Now we're more concerned with helping the consumer

stretch his dollar further, based on good nutrition. We're better off not drinking whiskey, not getting fat, and eating a balanced diet," he points out. "Eventually, that philosophy will help farmers."

Included in the changing food policy are some alterations in the school lunch program, especially in the area of defining exactly what's considered a "junk food". Local schools are being encouraged to be more innovative in their feeding programs, with the specific aim of cutting down on massive waste.

Research is also being done on more nutritious snack-type foods, like a tasty raisin-cereal blend that Bergland is impressed with.

Energy costs are close in on farmers from all directions. Wouldn't the development of a viable grain alcohol program help reduce the fuel shortage, boost grain prices and cut back on meat and milk production due to higher feed costs?

"The problems in grain alcohol production are economic," he insists, reluctant to make any predictions on how that industry will develop. Ideally, a bushel of corn has the potential to yield two pounds of vegetable oil, feed for six chickens, four pounds of 60 percent protein supplement for the baking industry and two and one-half gallons of alcohol.

"Only large scale plants have the technology to extract all that; small mills can't do it", is his reason for skepticism of on-farm still efficiency. Research facilities in Peoria, Illinois, are working at the problem, but much of the over-all research is being done by small private experimenters. Many of the developments in alcohol fuels have come from Germany, which has been working in this field since Hitler ran his war machine the last two years on fuel from a variety of commodities.

As a cooperative member, I was curious about how the Secretary felt about the threats being leveled at cooperatives in the last couple of years.

He said he sees cooperatives as an absolute part of the agriculture system but figures that proprietary enterprises are a valuable safeguard against a "take over" by cooperatives.

"Their business practices should be controlled, not their size," he added. "I'm charged with watching them — and I do. I'm regarded as a friend of cooperatives, but I'm not their patsy."

Cooperatives dealing in the grain industry handle only ten percent of the exporting business, as compared to the 80-percent control of five of the giants of the business.

"We'll see that cooperatives are protected," Bergland promised.

Earlier, at the Beshore press conference, I had asked the Secretary about farmland purchases by foreign investors. He indicated he felt the eight million acres of land involved was not enough to get concerned about and that this nation had traditionally not discriminated against

people just because they weren't natives.

"It's not something we want to stop on a federal level. If individual states want to, though, that's fine," is the administration's viewpoint of the situation.

Bergland says most of the foreign land owners are Canadians, with landholders from Great Britain in second place. Then come the Germans, Dutch and French investors, with the only known Arab purchase on land in Georgia. Most of that acreage, he says, is being farmed by American tenants, many of them young farmers using the rented

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Out to touch base with the feelings of the state's dairymen, Bergland took a tour down the tidy rows of Pen-Col's registered Holsteins with Dennis Wolf.

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