

## Farm Women

(Continued from Page A1)

Veteran's Day, and 62 years before, on "the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, World War I turned to a new beginning; we hope this is a new beginning for farm women."

Lynn's husband is the fifth generation on the dairy operation of 500 acres, with 600 head of Jersey-Friesian animals, 250 of them in the milking string. They've also just started a beef operation, with Johnson turning much of the dairy work over to a "share farmer" because they believe that "even dairymen should have some leisure time."

The only crop is pasture, with cattle grazed and grass hay harvested, plus silage put up in bunker-type silos. Since weather is fairly mild, building investments are minimal, and overhead costs can be kept low. Milk production can thus be made at highly competitive prices with production from cold-climate countries, making Australian dairy products fierce competitors in the world's markets.

Due to drought conditions, milk production is down and cattle numbers in the state of Victoria have dropped from 65,000 to 22,000. However, overall production figures have not dipped comparably, since production per cow continues to climb.

The Johnson's also have angora goats, which Lynn says is a breed of animal that is rising in value at phenomenal rates. Valuable

breeding bucks are bringing as much as \$48,000.

Wilma Burn is also from the southeastern state of Victoria, on the edge of the vast Western plains area, with volcanic soils known for their wool, cereals and oilseed production. The Burns operate 5,000 acres, with about 2300 of that owned, and raise primarily oats, wheat, rapeseed and barley. A flock of 8,000 Merino sheep, for wool, meat and breeding sales, graze the pasture grasses in this normal 21-inch per year rainfall area.

Two sons and a permanent farm employee comprise the farm's staff, but professional teams for shearing are brought in each year for the wool harvest. The Merino breed is known for its fine wool, which the Burns sell at an auction. Much of the wool is sent overseas for processing into cloth, and some returns to Australia as very expensive fabric due to import tariffs.

Some of the grains are handled through government mandated marketing boards, like the Wheat Board and the Barley Board. Once the grains are harvested, the top graded grain automatically belongs to the Boards, which immediately pay 75 percent of the grain's value.

According to the women, though, farmers may then have to wait up to five years for the final fourth payment on their crop, a frustrating arrangement since they must pay cash for fertilizer

to start the next year's crop. Second grade grains can be sold or used privately by the farmer.

Dorrien Mason is from western Australia, on the edge of the "station" country. "Station" are huge grazing ranches that comprise of as much as few hundred thousand acres of the barren, dry outback land.

"It's the land of sin and flies," noted the droll Mrs. Mason, whose next farm neighbor is nine miles away. However, thirty families do live on the little station settlement where the temperature reaches 110 degrees in the summer and becomes extremely cold in winter.

Now in the midst of the fifth consecutive drought year, the Masons are in the process of selling all but a small breeding nucleus of their 3,000 Merinos. Crops include 2,000 acres of wheat and 500 acres of oats.

"The land in our area has only been opened since 1911 and is still underdeveloped by most standards," she told the American women. A private phone system installed 20 years ago cost \$3750 and is frequently out of order from "the wind and the cockatoos."

Earlier in the convention, Dorrien had caught the AAW's attention and amusement with her comment to one panel that she "could understand the need to limit beef import competition to this country, but don't really know why you're banned the kangaroo hides."

In contrast to the situation in eastern Australia, Dorrien said that women in her area



Evelyn Johnson, right, AAW president, was presented with the "Order of the Kangaroo," by Australian farm woman Lynn Johnson.

were working through a group known as the Rural Women's Organization, specifically on the "probate" or estate taxing issue.

She cited the test case for changing the estate tax program, a situation where the farm passed, through death inheritance, from the grandfather to the son, then to the wife, and then on to the couple's three sons, in just a few years. The sons had to sell the farm and go to work in the city of Perth to help pay the taxes. Through legislative lobbying the women were instrumental in having the laws changed.

During a follow-up audience question-and-answer session, the three also

discussed problems of their country and culture.

A growing welfare system, and burgeoning unemployment payments, called "the dole" in Australia, is burdening the country's economy. Mining, with large deposits of uranium in certain parts of the country, is beginning to replace the importance of agriculture to the point where the women fear it may "overwhelm farming."

Rural transportation is another issue that concerns the Australian women. They are required to use the government rail system, for shipping all wool and grains. Farmers attempting to use other methods can be

heavily fined, and must even get permits to haul on their own trucks. One court case is underway right now challenging the issue.

Hoping to more thoroughly organize Australian farm women, they indicated that while rural women have looked ahead, they have not yet really moved far in the areas of community, family life and rural life that need attention.

The AAW convention also had received contact from the Womens' Farm Union of Britain, a similar organization just now forming in England for legislative and farm issue education of rural women.

# Agri-Women convention convenes in Hershey

HERSHEY — Clutching a giant gift Hershey chocolate bar, American Agri-Women president Evelyn Landis of North Dakota opened the general session Monday to over 200 women from across the nation attending the first AAW convention ever held in the East.

Penn's Agri-Women hosted the national confab of farm women at the Hershey Convention Center Sunday through Friday. It was the first convention also to host international visitors, with three farm women from Australia taking part in the conference. Governor and Mrs. Dick Thornburgh participated in the convention during Wednesday evening's awards banquet.

Focus of the debates and seminars was on education and critical farm issues, following the theme of "Survival-Success in the '80's."

Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture Penrose Hallowell official welcomed the delegates during the Monday luncheon, which featured the state's products, a peach puppet show and introduced the ag department's popular commodity promotional "Agri-animals."

A thought-provoking

motivational film opened the keynote Monday session. Dealing with the intricate interlocking relationship between the nation's complex marketing system and individual freedoms, the film is critical of government usurpation of personal rights for the good of society. Three chilling examples of rights-infringement, based

on actual case histories, set the tone of the presentation.

One documented an Amish farmer, whose team of horses were seized and sold at auction for non-payment of Social Security taxes. A second focused on the condemnation of private property in California for the construction of a museum and the arrest and seizure of one individual resisting the

property taking. A case of Justice Department agents, who burst into a private home searching for drugs, only to be in the wrong house, was the third example.

Calling the present rapid slide of the American democracy toward socialism a "humanitarian guillotine," the film's producers press the theme

that individuals can solve problems better than the government can, while still retaining individual freedoms.

Using fables, the film looked at a theoretical society where humanitarians proclaimed that those with little must be taken care of by those with more through forced sharing.

"The more who ate for free, the fewer there were to till the food," went the fable. "Then, although the food was free, soon there was not so much anymore. And the 'freer' the food, the higher became the taxes."

And the tale concluded, "No one gets it if it ain't there."

A panel of representatives from diverse agriculture organizations and government programs then debated the film, one another, and the audience in a lively, and occasionally heated, discussion.

Marshall Haws, executive of the Chester Conservation District, moderated the give-and-take session. Panelists were: Dr. Hiram Drache, professor of European and economic history at Concordia College; economist H. Louis Moore of Pennsylvania State University; Jan Carson, ag employment specialist with the Pennsylvania Farmers Association; Dieter Krieg, dairy editor and native of Germany; Susan Sechler, USDA, and Reggie Egar, agriculture staffer for 19th Congressman Bill Goodling.

### Other Convention News

- A-33. Peg Rogers, Food Expert
- B-8 Washington-on-the-line
- B-15 Sociologist compared American and Soviet farm women
- C-33 Pediatric patients enjoy puppets
- C-35 Emile Welsh elected officer



Participants in the AAW debate over the government's role in the free market system were panelists, from left: Dr. Hiram Drache, Dieter Krieg, Lou Moore, Jan Carson, Susan Sechler and Reggie Egar, at podium.



Laura Heuser, spokesman for agriculture and a founder of AAW, protests the attitude of officials she accused of "speaking down" to farm women.