Who speaks for agriculture?

CHICAGO — S Glenn Ellenberger, a retired county extension director of Lehigh County, Penn, said: "How in the world do you get people in agriculture to speak with one tongue?"

"We have a lot of independence in agriculture There are many different organizations cropping up-and sometimes they don't even talk with each other," the panelist said, who had been in extension for 34 years and lives in Allentown He added. "It has to be farmers telling their own story The rest of us in agriculture are just paid people doing our jobs. You people out in the field somhow have to get together to tell non-farm people your story."

Women on the farm represent a significant resource in speaking out for agriculture.

That's the thinking of Elaine Stuhr, one of the farmer-panelists from Bradshaw, Neb, who participated in the most recent International Harvester's Farm Forum panels on the topic of "Who Should Speak for Agriculture?"

"I think we have more leadership from women in rural areas these days," Stuhr said, who farms with her husband 600 acres of corn, milo, and wheat

"In our local area, we are starting on the ground level becoming informed, getting involved politically and running for local offices," said the editor of the national Women Involved In Farm Economics (WIFE) newsletter and a national steering committee member.

"More women should become involved After all, they are usually partners in the farming operation and often have more time than their husbands to do letter-writing, telephoning and speaking out," she added

Allan Aves, of Kırkland, Ili, who was president of the American Soybeam Association and the DeKalb County Farm Bureau," agreed "Women can do an awful lot of good They should be on more boards of directors They are a real untapped resources "

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Aves, another of the nine panelists to participate, pointed to the difficulty that commodity organizations have in speaking out for agriculture "There is no way they can go out and demand high soybean prices and still represent the poultry producer who wants lower priced soybeans So we need the commodity organizations to stock up for the individual groups," said Aves, who farms 1,750 acres with one son

While agriculture's strength lies in its diversity, farmers and their organizations nonetheless need to speak with more of a unified voice to influence urban America, other panelists stressed

"I think it's right that our organizations disagree," said David D Diehl, a panelist from Dansville, Mich, who farms 4,700 acres in partnership with his two sons and son-in-law. "But I think we could have a common interest," he added. "I'm encouraged because in the last few years, some of the organizatons that don't agree in many ways are starting to get together. Really, we're all after one thing-and that's a decent living from agriculture," said Diehl a member of Farm Bureau and a network of the Michigan Department of Agriculture

Tommy Kersey, who farms 7,200 acres in a family operation with his father and two brothers in Unadilla, Ga, said "Eventually, we're going to have to find a way to come together "

"Everyone else has Farmers have to realize they are not competing against each other. We have to find a way to speak out about the things we agree on and a way to reach agreement on the things we differ about," the state leader in the American Agriculture Movement added. However, getting farm organizations to work together has

special problems.

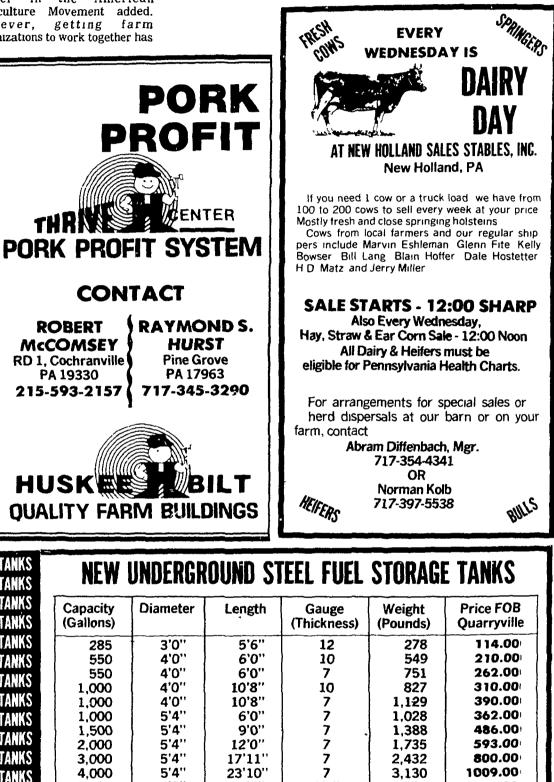
"We need to solicit help from agrelated businesses," said Gene Smallidge, of Hastings, Minn "Even though farmers are only three per cent of the population, we could have one of the most effective lobbies in the country if we could get sympathetic assistance from all these who livelihood depends on agriculture," added the panelist, who farms 580 acres and custom-farms 300 acres

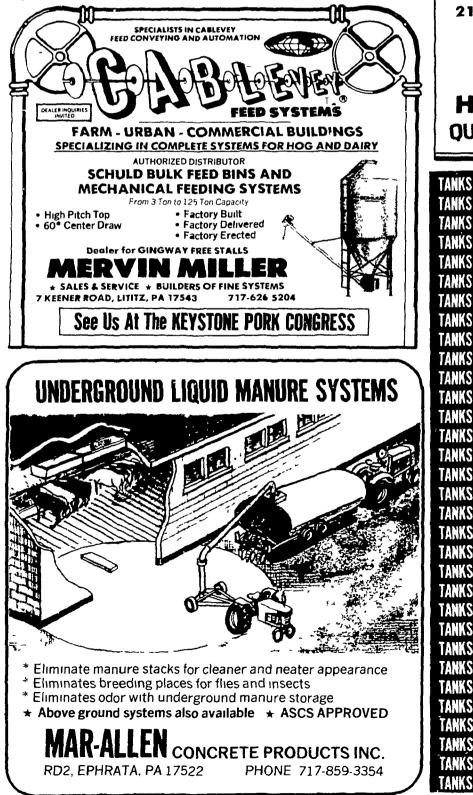
Regarding the role of the educational institution in speaking out for agriculture, Dean H O Kunkel of the College of Agriculture, Texas A & M Universty, College Station, commented What a university needs to do is speak about agriculture-in every way possible. We in the colleges cannot take advocacy positions--although many times we would very much like to do so. Farmers and the people in agriculture are going to have to do the speaking."

Today, farm organizations seem to be taking a more active role in speaking out for agriculture, said Teresa Shafer, of Grimes, la "For a while, everybody just sat back and took whatever came their way. But over the last two years the farm organizations seem to have regained some of their vitality.

"People have started to realize that nothing is going to happen unless they work for it," said the panelist, who farms 925 acres with her husband's family, as well as helps operate a large cattle herd and hog operation. Active in the Cowbelles and Farm Bureau, she

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