

PAFC sponsors "Couple's Conference"

BY SALLY BAIR
Staff Correspondent

CHAMBERSBURG — Thirty-three young farm couples were given a close glimpse of the farmer cooperatives of which they are members when they met this week in Chambersburg for a conference sponsored by the Pennsylvania Association of Farmer Cooperatives.

From across the state these young people came and learned, and had the opportunity to voice their concerns about cooperatives to management personnel.

Involvement became the key phrase for the meetings, with the young farmer couples being urged to become more familiar with and more involved in their cooperatives.

Norman Hershey, Gordonville, who with his wife Kathy was one of four leader couples who helped plan the conference, said, "Cooperatives do make a difference. The mere presence of the cooperative movement has an effect. A cooperative is only a

whole lot of 'yous.'" Hershey said that policy for cooperatives comes from the grassroots through the directors. As a young farmer gets involved, he states, he will gain new ideas and new thinking.

One of the highlights of the conference was the opportunity to ask questions of cooperative personnel. Concerns raised include financing, a lack of cooperation among milk marketing cooperatives, the few numbers of young farmers on boards of directors and why cooperative products sometimes cost more than other similar products.

Dr. James Honan, general manager, Inter-State Milk Producers Cooperative, discussed some differences between farmer cooperatives, pointing out that some cooperatives plan better than others. He noted that even the best plans must be flexible to meet changing situations.

He said some cooperatives may be more emotionally oriented than business oriented, and while emotions should not enter into

decisions, they can. "Keep emotions at home," he recommended.

Honan advised that dairy farmers stop the argument about whether generic or brand name advertising is best and maintain both advertising programs in the interest of promoting consumption of milk. He said a big concern for the future is going to be the ability to maintain an agreed-upon advertising program. Surplus production, he said, is a problem of both the farmers and his cooperative.

Honan expressed concerns for imports and imitations, and pointed out that now 30 to 40 percent of all mozzarella cheese used for pizza is imitation.

Wives were encouraged in their active participation with their husbands in the farming enterprise. Jane Benner, who farms with her husband Kenneth on a Perry County dairy farm, said a husband who considers his wife as smart as he is has an excellent chance of having his wife there

by his side to help as needed. "She'll be a wife who has faith in her husband."

She encouraged husbands to have their wives help make decisions from the biggest to the smallest. "I appreciate my husband's healthy attitude toward my participation," she stated.

She encouraged young couples who want to start in the dairy industry to get experience at the expense of someone else before going on their own, and to spend two to three years working away from home. "Prove your integrity and prove you can meet your financial obligations. When you go to shop for credit, talk to someone who can talk your own language. Get a realistic management plan," she suggested.

"Young people can get started, but it will take determination, enthusiasm and dedication to the farm and to the livestock. There will be sacrifice. Start at the bottom and slowly but surely work your way to better things."

She urged the young couples to share the joys of accomplishment and face the crises together. "We can still be successful farmers, but it will take longer for us to become financially sound," she stated.

Jane urged a positive attitude "which will go a long way in making us successful no matter what our chosen profession."

Speaking to the women attending the conference, Franklin County's Janice Burkholder, explained the detailed record keeping for both farm and household expenses which she contributes to the partnership of her husband Stan and his father. Her system includes establishing a monthly budget for a better understanding of the financial situation.

Eileen Green, who with her husband Gary participated as a leader couple, explained that she helps in the poultry operation and also works part time in the bank. She, too, does all the bookwork for the partnership of her husband and his brother, which includes a dairy operation.

Basic to the conference was the chance to learn just how cooperative businesses operate, and Hal Doran, Penn State/PAFC and Donald Robinson, young farmer instructor with the Eastern Lancaster County School District, held a short course on cooperative education.

Doran explained that cooperatives were born out of the economic strife of the depression years and the years of war time shortages, and original members could see the benefits clearly. "They felt it was theirs and they built it," he pointed out.

Newer members not only don't remember the historical necessity of cooperatives, but fail to realize that the cooperative is theirs - run by them, for them and for their benefit, Robinson noted.

Doran said the principles have not changed, with the basic requirements being that the cooperatives do 50 percent or more of their business with their members and that they refund their net margin in proportion to patronage. He said 80 percent of farmers in the United States belong to at least one cooperative, with most belonging to several.

Robinson said that cooperative principles include being democratically controlled, providing service at cost, providing a limited return on in-

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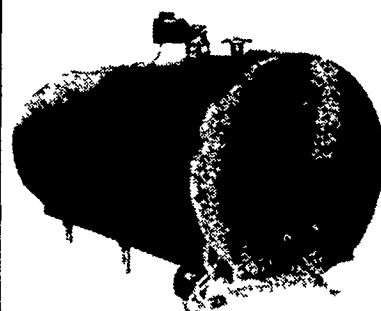
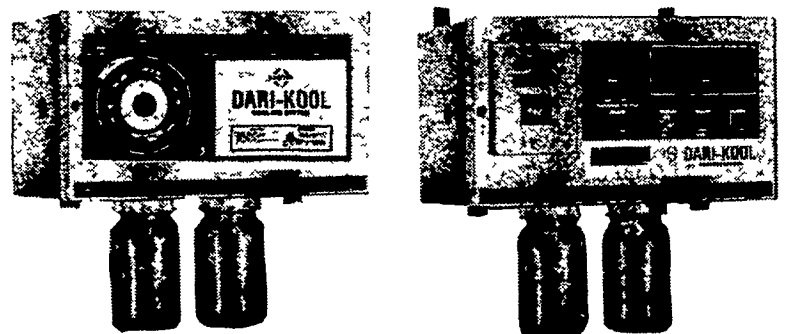
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