

Scranton See Ag. As Roots of Society

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with the kids. Of course, we do not campaign on Sundays. That is a family day. And although that rule may get broken a time or two between now and November elections, Sundays have been very sternly kept private through my political career. I read to the kids, at night and we have a wonderful family life. I don't think could maintain the demands of public life without the support of my family.

Q. Let's go a little further into our introduction in your relationship to agriculture. I know you have been chairman of the Governor's energy council and that has given you some contact with agriculture. Would you relate some of your experiences with agriculture?

A. Actually my contact with agriculture comes from a lot of different areas. One is the government's energy council where we have worked with a lot of farmers to develop interesting new techniques to generate energy from methane gas and manure. I also work with farmers on the Chesapeake Bay program, which is very important both from the farmer's standpoint and from the environment standpoint. As you likely know, I have been one of the lead people in this administration in regard to that effort. Beyond that I am vice-chairman of the economic development committee of the cabinet. And since agriculture is the number one

industry in this state, I have had a real interest in ag issues. Some of these issues include preservation of farm land. The real opportunity I see of increasing markets not only within the state but also regionally and abroad. Everything from direct marketing to international marketing has been important to me.

Q. Much has been reported about the national farm crises. How do we deal with the economic crises in our own state? And how important do you really think agriculture is to the welfare of Pennsylvania?

A. Well we are luckier than many states in that we have a small farm system and diversified ag base. But still we are being hit hard. But I guess really the point I want to make is that as someone who is interested in government and society, agriculture is the great civilizing force in history. Agriculture makes our society what it is. And if you neglect agriculture and its affect on culture, you really are neglecting the roots of society. It's not only a business, but it's the roots of our culture.

Q. Let's expand a bit on the ag preservation issue. The farmers now really have a conflict within themselves. Deep inside they want to keep the land in agriculture. But economically they feel the need to keep their option open to sell their land to a developer if that opportunity arises. What can we do about this?

A. That's right. I think the whole

issue of ag preservation is very complex. There is not one solution. It comes from a variety of angles. It comes from the sensitivity of the state as well as the counties as far as what is prime agricultural land. We need to look at agricultural land as a natural resource if nothing else. Lancaster county is the most productive non-irrigated farm land in the world. To lose that wholesale to development would be a real tragedy. Secondly, we need to consider the ability of a farm child to inherit a farm without the burdensome tax implications. This is very critical. To discourage farming from being passed on to the next generation or to make it so expensive so that it is not possible to do so is not only an economic tragedy but also a social tragedy as well. There clearly must be an economic substance for the preservation of farm land. That's why marketing in my view must be a very important effort undertaken by the state. I think also the state has a role to play in making agriculture as cost-efficient as possible. We need to reduce the cost to the farmer for inputs. Whether fertilizer or gas or any other cost he has there is a lot we can do. When you talk about preserving ag opportunities, you are talking about preserving markets, protecting fertile land and reducing the cost of inputs. All these things must be attacked at once. And state government without interfering and without dictating clearly has a supportive

role to play in all of these.


Q. Along those lines it seems like marketing and biotechnology that

we are hearing about often are counter-balancing each other or
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