

Lyng Visits Columbia County Farmers Via Helicopter

BY HELEN KELCHNER
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U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Richard Lyng, made a brief visit to the Columbia County farm of Richard Kriebel last week to talk with farmers in what was to be a three stop helicopter tour of the 11th Congressional District.

Accompanied by congressional candidate, Marc Holtzman, the two made a stop (first) at Wilkes Barre Farmer's Market, then Kriebels Dairy Farm in Benton with a final stop (which was to be) at the Zeager farm, a meat and vegetable producing operation at R.D. #2, Watontown. However, the helicopter pilot failed to spot the Zeager farm and the party returned to Wilkes Barre without landing.

The Kriebel appearance was attended by neighboring farmers and a bus load of F.F.A. students from Benton School District.

Lyng was asked by a member of the press what was accomplished at the recent G.A.T.T. (General Agreement of Trade and Tariff) talks in Uruguay on behalf of the American farmer.

He explained that two weeks earlier he was in that country as part of a team headed by Ambassador Clayton Yeutter who is also U.S. Trade Representative and Malcome Baldrige, Secretary of Commerce. They joined together with delegates of 74 other countries. The purpose was to hammer out a system for negotiating new rules which would have to do with access to foreign markets and to study export subsidies, especially those heavily supported by certain foreign countries. Also, the need for standardized sanitary rules was discussed. Lyng said, for instance, in the export of meat from the U.S., one country demands one kind of residues while another country demands a different kind. There was consensus that a general harmonization must be reached.

The secretary estimated that it would take at least two years of negotiations for these many countries to reach agreement. It will then take (perhaps) another two years to impliment the new rules. Although the American agricultural community won't see any improvement in this area immediately, the American team returned home feeling good that finally some resolutions were on the table for a long overdue "overhaul" of a chaotic situation. He added that not only the U.S. would benefit from these revisions, but also other world markets.

Frank Jurbala, a dairyman from Rohrsburg asked Lyng why he was so adamant on a milk quota system and wouldn't it have enhanced the buyout?

The secretary said the quota system was studied in Canada and Europe where it is in practice.

They feel it takes the competition out of the milk business. Also, opportunity for improved productivity is lost or greatly reduced.

Lyng cited the peanut and tobacco business where a quota system was established. The cost of production went higher and higher and 'all sorts' of marketing problems resulted.

Richard Kriebel asked what seed program was in place for 1987?

The secretary said the program will be exactly the same as this current year. Although no official announcement has been made due to the extended session of Congress, he hoped it would be out within two weeks for the farmer's planning schedule.

He went on to explain that two questions unanswered in the announcement were "will there be advance deficiency payments and will additional P.I.K. diversion be made". Both these may depend on the final outcome of the Gramm-Rudman bill. Another question was, "How long will it be before exports increase without government involvement?"

For this inquiry, the secretary could have used a crystal ball. He admitted to having no definite answer. However, he did feel that exports would increase and U.S. farmers would be able to compete if they did not have to compete too heavily with treasuries of foreign countries. This is one area being worked out in the G.A.T.T. talks in Uruguay, and, he added, one of the most important.

Lyng went on to say that he did not want to misstate the case of increased exports because the fact that improved productivity throughout many parts of the world have created surpluses. Unless some disaster depletes these surpluses, this factor will also have to be dealt with in export competition. It has become a reality that fewer and fewer producers are required to supply food. Opportunity lies with those who are highly trained.

Dick Kriebel asked if the Farm Credit System and the Farmers Home Credit would ever combine.

Lyng answered that he had no knowledge of such merger, and, in fact, he hoped it would not. As head of the Farm Home Credit, he didn't feel he wanted to be responsible for additional lending power. The Farm Credit System is a private system outside government and the Farmers Home Credit is all government, and, he added, the latter is in deep financial trouble. The problem came about when borrowers failed to repay their loans. Comments from the audience as well as Lyng stressed that Farm Home Credits were established as seed money for farmers to get started and from which they were to wean themselves by a reasonable time table.



Secretary of Agriculture Richard Lyng visited the Columbia County farm of Richard Kriebel last week.

This did not happen in too many cases thereby putting the program in financial trouble.

A final question was asked as the Holtzman aide pushed for keeping to their time schedule. "What makes your trip into the farming community worthwhile?"

Lyng had a ready answer because of a statement Dick Kriebel had made to him as he entered the barn from the helicopter.

"Kriebel told me that 20 years ago he started out with Farmer's Home Administration credit. He has graduated from that support and has gone on to establish a farming operation that included 350 acres with 140 head of dairy cattle."

The secretary said it's this kind of satisfaction that makes such trips worthwhile.

After a short 45 minutes, Lyng made a quick look into the dairy barn and was then whisked off to a waiting helicopter.

For many in the audience, the meeting was far too short. Many questions remain unanswered and those that were answered seemed too hurried for satisfaction of the farming community.

Since Secretary Lyng is a California farmer, one farmer felt he did not understand the Pennsylvania farmer and the diversification going on in the Keystone state.

Schroeder Retires From Ag Engineering At Penn State

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. — Dr. Morris E. Schroeder, professor of agricultural engineering at The Pennsylvania State University and Chairman of the interdisciplinary committee for the Mushroom Testing Demonstration Facility (MTDF), retired June 30 with emeritus rank. He has served the University for 31 years.

His primary research has been related to agricultural systems, engineering and energy conservation in mushroom culture.

In the 1960s he and other Penn State faculty from the departments of plant pathology, agricultural economics and entomology began work on the MTDF for research, demonstration and development in environmental controls for mushrooms. It was the first to use an automatic carbon dioxide control system. The automatic phase II control system developed more recently is now used by more than half of the commercial growers in the country.

Research, publications and workshops by faculty working with the MTDF have brought national and international recognition to Penn State in mushroom research.

Schroeder received his B.S. degree in agricultural engineering from Penn State and his M.S. and Ph.D., both in agricultural engineering from Purdue University. He has served on a number of University committees including the Faculty Senate,

received a National Science Foundation Science Faculty Fellowship, and has participated in international conferences on mushroom culture.

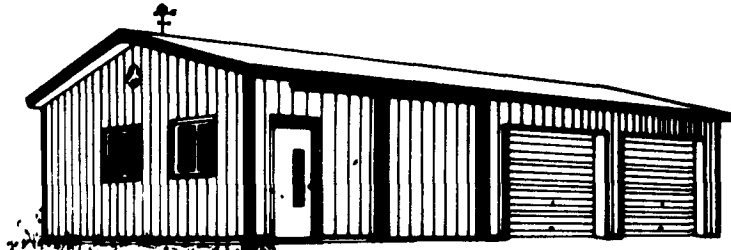
Schroeder is a member of the American Society of Agricultural Engineers, the American Mushroom Institute and the Operations Research Society of America.

He and his wife, Helen, are the parents of four Penn Staters: Gary, who received a B.S. in plant science and an M.S. in plant pathology; Joyce, who received a B.S. in electrical engineering; Glenn, who received a B.S. in industrial engineering, and Lisa, who is a junior in communications.

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