

Extension Services: Changes On The Horizon

BY LOU ANN GOOD

LANCASTER — For 24 years, Doris Thomas, Lancaster County Extension Home Economist, has taught others to cook and sew. Now, the government is out to stop her. Why? Government critics declare that people do not need to know how to cook and sew to survive. By teaching cooking and sewing, they maintain, extension services are supporting hobbies that waste taxpayers dollars.

The extension services have long been underfire. In recent years, major magazines have published articles accusing extension services of being one of the biggest rippoffs using tax dollars. They say that in 1914 when the extensions were established, nearly 35 percent of the nation's population were farmers. Today, only 2.2 percent farm.

Advocates of extension services say they have reflected these vocational changes by adapting their educational services to the social and economical needs of society while continuing to provide educational services to the farmer. Their workshops offer a vital source of information for such areas as home, garden and clothing care.

In the late 1960's, more than 1,800 women enrolled in sewing workshops. But today, few sew since more woman are working outside the home, in addition outlet stores are plentiful and Thomas asks, "Who can sew what today's teens are wearing"?

Although the government may mock the extension's efforts of teaching crafts, Thomas maintains their value by saying, "Crafts have provided creative use of leisure time and increased income by stretching families' dollars in providing gifts and necessities. Creativity contributes to good, mental health." She points out that anyone who can provide the essentials of life like shelter, food and clothing has a better outlook on life.

Thomas consoles herself that the pendulum usually swings in the other direction. "Like phonetics," she said, we have a whole generation that grew up not knowing how to sound out words because educators did not believe it necessary. Now they see the value and have made phonetics a part of the school curriculum. Ten to fifteen years down the road, someone will suggest adding cooking and sewing to basic living skills.

In the meantime, extension services across the nation are in a great state of change. Programs are being eliminated. There is a change of emphasis and administration. In recent years, Thomas's role has changed from one of teaching to that of administration.

For example, complaints that home economists were teaching hobbies caused the extension to shift gears. If they asked qualified instructors to teach, they could charge participants a fee and not be accused of spending taxpayers

dollars.

On one hand Thomas is alarmed, on the other, she believes possible good may result. Corres-

pondent courses and video offer an alternative to teaching skills previously taught in workshops. A pilot correspondent course that Thomas

offered received more applicants than she could handle. Still, she questions whether or not the

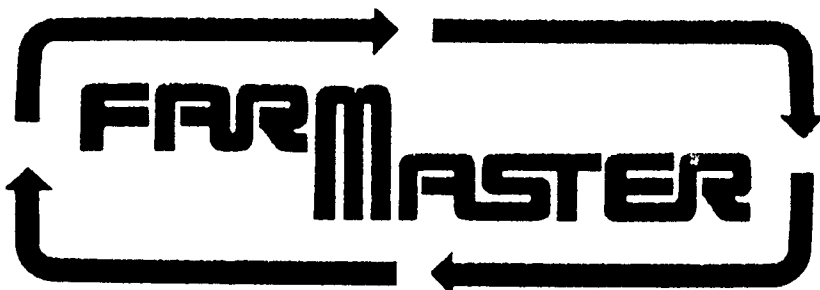
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White Oak Mills Dairy Seminar

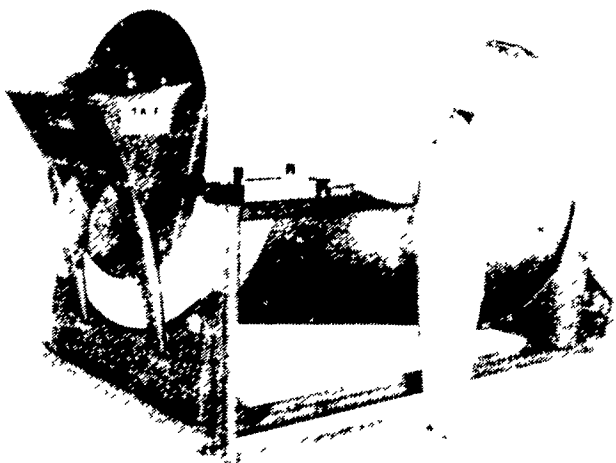


Principals at the White Oak Mills Dairy Seminar held Thursday and Friday are left to right: John Wagner, president; Glenn Stauffer, sales and service; Don Lloyd, director of dairy sales and John Middleton, staff nutritionist.

The seminars gave local farmers in Lancaster, Dauphin, Lebanon, Franklin and Cumberland Counties the opportunity to learn about nutrition, DHIA records and udder health. The meetings were held at the Clearview Diner, Mt. Joy, and the Lighthouse Restaurant on Route 11 south of Route 997.



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