

Bush To Spotlight Agriculture

HONOLULU, HI — Agricultural issues will get attention in Washington early this year -- both in the budget-setting exercise and in foreign relations, according to two speakers at the 60th annual meeting of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives.

Farm programs will get budget attention, said syndicated newspaper columnist Jack Germond, because agriculture and medicare will be the two prime targets for cuts as Congress and the Bush Administration seek to reduce the budget deficit.

And agricultural exports will draw attention because the President can be expected to fulfill his campaign promise to put agriculture first on the agenda of the summit meeting of leaders of the big seven industrial nations in June, according to Craig Fuller, who was Bush's vice presidential chief of staff and co-director of his transition committee.

Germond predicted a "game of chicken" between Congress and the White House over spending reductions that would see which side comes up with a plan to

reduce the fiscal 1990 deficit to a \$100 billion congressional target. He foresees a package freezing defense spending to inflationary increases, cuts in programs such as agricultural price supports and medicare, and new revenue without an increase in basic income tax rates.

Fuller offered the view that a spending reduction designed by the Administration would be only "weeks away" and that the final package agreed with Congress would avoid a tax increase, as Bush pledged during the presidential campaign. "But my guess is that they will go right to the brink of sequestration before agreeing," he added. Sequestration is a term in the Gramm Rudman-Hollings deficit reduction law to describe automatic spending reductions, if Congress and the President do not agree on how to cut the deficit to \$100 billion.

"That would play havoc with defense and every other segment of government, including agriculture," Fuller said. "It's something nobody wants."

Germond predicted "a great

deal of attention to foreign policy initiatives," and Fuller said economic policy, including agricultural trade, would be an important factor in many early talks Bush will hold with heads of other governments.

Both agreed Bush had selected a cabinet different from former President Ronald Reagan's. Germond called its members "pragmatists" who are "good at getting things done." Fuller characterized it as "the strongest cabinet any President has assembled in modern history."

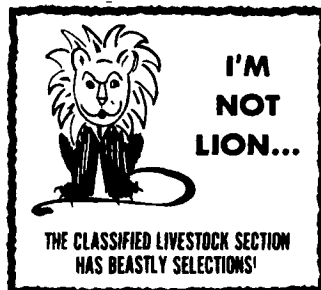
Fuller, who plans to return to public relations after eight years in

government, said he expects Bush to utilize the cabinet more than his predecessors. "I don't believe the White House staff will bring the issues inside that 18-acre compound (the White House) and let the cabinet feel left out," he said. "Members of the cabinet know each other and have personal relationships with the President." This cabinet has more firepower than we've seen in recent times, he added.

Germond and Fuller both had praise for Secretary of Agriculture-designate Clayton K. Yeutter.


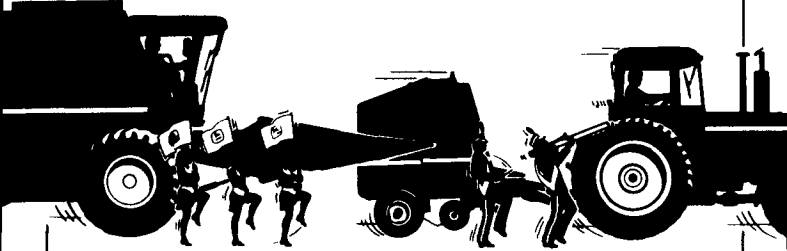
"Yeutter has a solid reputation

as an effective player," Germond said, with a better understanding of international trade (from his service as U.S. Trade Representative) than most recent secretaries. "Bush will consult Yeutter on all issues with an agricultural component."



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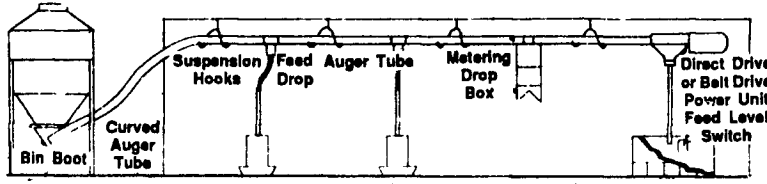
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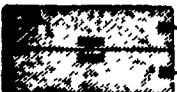
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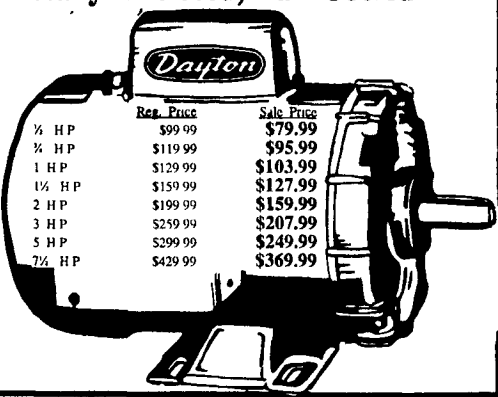
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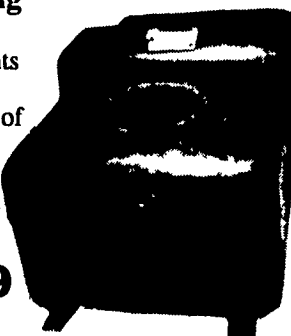
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