

Kay Zeosky, WIFE Spokeswomen Speaks Out

(A letter to the House Subcommittee on Livestock, Dairy and Poultry, Jan. 10, 1990):

My name is Kay Zeosky of New York. I am a dairy farmer and the national dairy chairman for Women Involved In Farm Economics (WIFE).

Our present prices are the result of a huge amount of suffering by many, many farm families. Some struggled with decisions to exit the business through the buy-out, while the rest of us struggled to keep going in the face of huge assessments. Many didn't survive. Every one of these families left with no health insurance, no retirement, and no unemployment. They will never recover their self-esteem. It will take years of hard work for the rest of us to get back

to the place we were before the 1985 Food Security Act. Now every auction is our part of the state involves shuffling 15- to 20-year-old machinery from farm to farm.

In creating this next farm bill: PLEASE LISTEN. We cannot survive under the dairy portion of the 1985 farm bill. Most of our next generation of farmers is gone. They have given up the wait and have followed their peers into jobs with fringe benefits and vacation time that our farms could never be able to provide for them.

PLEASE BE HONEST. If we have six million pounds of butter in reserve, then say so. Don't play games with the figures. Count total solids. If you put more farmers out of business with these contrived

figures, milk will be a food that only the well-to-do can afford. Every one of us needs strong bones and teeth.

PLEASE BE FAIR. Even though enough food should be everyone's birthright, don't continue a farm bill that makes farmers bear the cost of feeding the poor. Tying our support price to these programs is not right. Each farmer releases 78 people to do other work. That is what gave America the highest standard of living in the world. Your only charge is to provide consumers with a plentiful supply of cheap food, but the farmer who provides that food should not be condemned to a lower standard of living than the people who consume it. How many people do you know that put in 70 to 80 hours per

week, have their wives and children helping, and are living on the same income they earned seven years ago?

PLEASE BE SENSIBLE. With almost no dairy reserves on hand, now is the time to prevent the buildup we have experienced in the past. WIFE believes in supply management, but farmers should not be tied to unreasonably low herd averages or penalized for bad luck.

PLEASE BE SMART. Maintain Section 22 of the Agricultural Law. A nation without the ability to feed itself has given up its freedom. If other countries share in our markets, they should be required to pay advertising costs and any other assessments borne by domestic producers in addition to meeting the same inspection standards. Dairy farmers are a very small percentage of the population. We have absolutely no political power. During these past seven years, we

have not even been able to sell out. No one will invest in a non-profitable business. Our farms are our life's work and our only retirement. It is an unusual occupation with no sick leave and very seldom a day off. Without a margin of profit, we can't compete for labor with other businesses.

WIFE recommends legislation requiring that a quota be established for casein; there be a ban on BGH until more long-term research is done; coupons be given to allow recipients to purchase fresh dairy products; there be constant refrigeration of school milk; larger containers of milk be provided for junior and senior high school students; farmers be paid on the basis of non-fat solids; advertisements using pictures of dairy cows contain real dairy products; and imitation dairy products not be displayed in the dairy case and be clearly labeled as non-dairy products.

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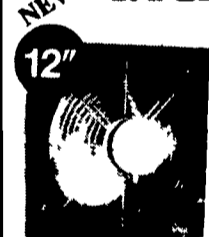
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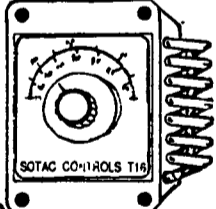
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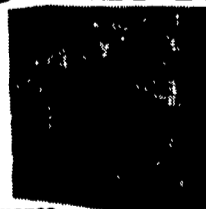
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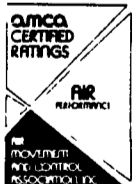
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