

U.S. Agriculturalists Can Overcome Increasing Obstacles

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Centre Co. Correspondents
STATE COLLEGE (Centre Co.)— Soaring energy prices, trade barriers, and adverse publicity can be overcome by U.S. agriculturalists, according to speakers at the recent Penn Ag Industries convention held at Toftrees Resort in State College.

Among the speakers, John Block, former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture and now president of the American Wholesale Grocers Association, said elimination of trade barriers is essential to the expansion of U.S. agricultural trade.

Getting the European Economic Community to reduce farm subsidies would not only open up more markets for the U.S., but also would discourage developing countries from adopting the same policy in the future, he said.

Block said he feels these subsidies, which are the subject of the current GATT negotiations, perpetuate inefficient food production systems in addition to establishing unfair competition in world food markets.

Potential ag product market expansion exists in Japan, which still refuses U.S. rice; the U.S.S.R., which needs fertilizer, chemicals, and food processing equipment; and Cuba, which is losing Soviet financial support.

Also, Block predicts that a U.S.-Mexico free trade agreement, like the one the U.S. has with Canada, will be signed within the next three years. He and many other ag policy advisors are pushing for favored nation status for the Soviet Union, which would make it easier for them to buy U.S. goods.

"The threat of war (with Iraq) can have a bigger impact on U.S. agriculture than the 1990 Farm Bill," Block said. Because Iraq was a good trade partner and oil provider, Block said the U.S. should and will "make a deal" with Saddam Hussein rather than go to war.

Further on the subject, Block



said he feels this crisis has had a positive effect in joining Soviet and U.S. power to prevent future aggression.

On the food safety issue, Block said there will always be a "no-growth element" in society which opposes new technology because of unfounded fears, but the public's desire to maintain large supplies of cheap food will outweigh these fears to allow new technological products to be marketed.

"Chemical opponents want to put the worm back in my apple," said Dr. Earl Butz, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture from 1971 to 1976 and dean emeritus of agriculture at Purdue University.

Illustrating the point that without using chemicals commercially-sold apples would be smaller, wormier and less tasty, he said agriculturalists need to educate consumers that the benefits of using new technology are far greater than any risks involved.

A person would have to eat 10 bushels of alar-treated apples a day to risk getting cancer, he said, yet misinformed consumer advocates almost ruined the U.S. apple industry with the alar scare.

"The biggest danger to U.S. agriculture is that we quit taking risks," warned Butz. He said con-

sumers must understand that paying only 12 percent of their income for food, including prepared and fast foods, allows them to buy many luxuries.

Butz said efficient food production and free trade are essential for world peace. "We can't build a peaceful world with hungry people," he said.

Farmers are often accused of contributing to the "greenhouse effect" (global warming) as well as producing unsafe food. But University of Virginia climatologist Dr. Pat Michaels explained how Congressional testimony about the impact of human activity on the climate had been distorted in the media to blame carbon dioxide and other emissions for the 1988 drought.

"The earth is not headed toward an apocalypse from global warming," Michaels said. He showed how an increase in low-level clouds above have heavily populated areas counteract the effect of heat coming through the damaged ozone layer in the atmosphere.

"Daily high temperatures (in the northern hemisphere) are now at the lowest average in this decade, and ultraviolet radiation has gone down," Michaels said. These facts, in addition to an increase in the precipitation average, flatly contradict the greenhouse effect theory, he said. This theory predicts disastrous warming of an average of 16 degrees Celsius in the northern hemisphere by the year 2040 with severe drought.

In discussing potential U.S. agricultural markets in former communist countries and the Soviet Union, three speakers depicted backward systems which will progress very slowly.

Former ambassador to the U.S.S.R., Arthur Hartman said the Soviet Union is grappling with going from arbitrary government price setting to market-related pricing. He largely blamed poor pricing for the current shortage of domestic consumer goods.

In a recent trip to the Soviet

Union, Hartman said he observed a severe shortage of bread in spite of a bumper wheat crop. Part of the problem is poor transportation and food processing systems. He said the government may have to revert to more centralization for a while to restore economic order before continuing toward free enterprise.

According to Dr. Ted Buila, ag educator from the University of Southern Illinois, and Dr. Louis Moore, Penn State ag economist, both Yugoslavia and Poland have returned most of the land to private owners. But farming is still largely at a subsistence level on 25-acre or smaller farms.

Dr. Buila saw a farm woman hand-broadcasting hybrid seed, and Dr. Moore showed fields laid out in strips running the wrong way.

According to the professors, these observations indicate a start in adopting new technology, but the need for education, modern equipment, efficient transportation, and sanitary food handling

hinders progress.

About 40 percent of Yugoslavians work both on farms and in cities, and all women work, Dr. Buila said. He and other U.S. ag educators are helping to modernize agriculture in eastern Europe to fill domestic needs and develop world markets.

Keynote speaker Bernard Kalb predicted constant turmoil in the Middle East for the next century as Arabs seek higher economic and social status in the world. Furthermore, he blamed the U.S. mind set of backing Iraq to block Iranian expansion for the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Because the U.S. ambassador to Iraq told Saddam Hussein the U.S. had "no opinion on Arab-Arab conflicts," Kalb said Hussein thought the U.S. would not respond to the invasion.

In face of high energy prices from continuous Middle East conflicts, Arthur Hartman said he feels the U.S. should come up with an energy policy which decreases dependence on foreign oil and stick to it.

30 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

-Robert Armstrong, Drumore, this week was reelected to his second term as master of Fulton Grange #66. A graduate of Solanco High School in 1958, Armstrong has been active in the program of the grange since he joined the grange from juvenile membership at the age of 14. He held the office of overseer for two years before becoming Master.

David Wissler was returned to the office of Overseer while Marie Murphy succeeded Miss Jeannette McCummings as Lecturer of the grange. J. Stanley Stauffer, Jr., was elected steward to replace Amrose Giffing who became Gatekeeper, the post held by Earle Gilbert, Jr. Clair Murphy, Assistant Stew-

art; Larura B. McSparran, Secretary; Dorothy Black, Ceres, were all returned to office for another year.

Other officers elected were Chaplain, Maurice Gregg; Treasurer, Walter Wood; Pomona, Cathy Gilbert; Pianist, Lila Gredd; Librarian, Susan Fite; Purchasing Agent, Charles McSparran; Flower Committee, Anna Armstrong and Mary Giffing; Finance Committee, Norman Wood; Trustees, Theodore Beck and Russell Hartsoe; Hospitalization secretary, Mary Herr.

-New officers of Colerain Grange 1667 were inducted at the regular meeting of the lodge this week at Krikwood Hall.

-Mrs. June Sangrey, Manheim R2, newly appointed office manager at the Lancaster Poultry Center brings with her experience in the poultry business dating back to the time she as 13 years old.

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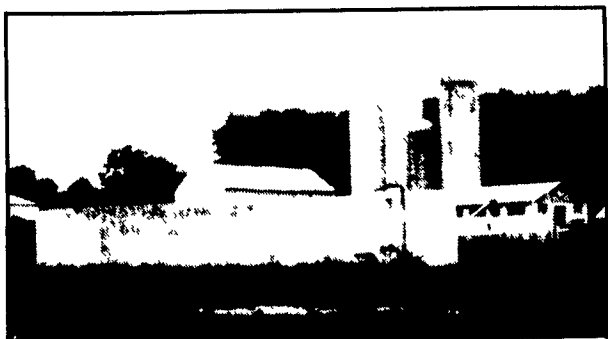
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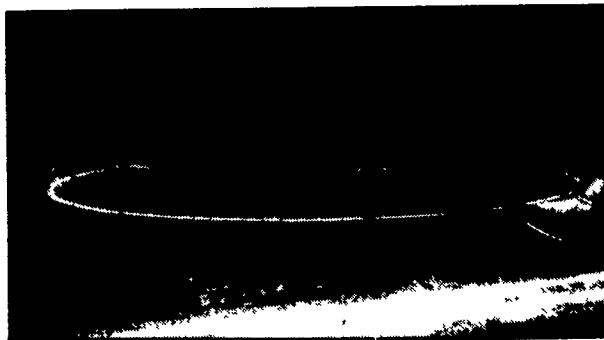
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