

PFU Meets In Minnesota

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Allen Deiter and Robert Junk met with a group of dairy producers in St. Paul, Minnesota to say they favor the two-tier program as the best supply-management option for the dairy industry.

The meeting, held during USDA's two-week comment period on its supply-management analysis, was conducted to seek input from Farmers Union members and get their recommendations for the policy. USDA was directed by the farm bill to analyze such proposals, and is expected to issue a final report to Congress on June 15.

The deadline was moved up after milk prices plummeted last winter.

NFU Assistant Legislative Director Cheryl Cook, said the Minnesota meeting underscored the popularity of two-tier. "But of the 31 flavors of two-tier that were proposed, USDA only analyzed vanilla," she said. "Now they need to examine the variations before the final report is issued."

NFU criticized USDA for giving little consideration to two-tier in its initial report. Pennsylvania Farmers Union (PFU) has been advocating, writing, and calling in favor of the National Farmers Union two-tier proposal.

The NFU proposal would give dairy producers a support price based on cost of production plus a reasonable profit on one level, or tier, of production.

If a farmer chose to produce more than that base, he would be penalized with drastically lower support price on that tier. Almost three-fourths of the 81 proposals submitted to USDA before May 15 were some version of a two-tier system.

Questions raised by Cheryl Cook concerned assumptions were made by the USDA and they are easy to challenge. For instance, the USDA analysts assumed that bovine growth hormones, the controversial milk output enhancers now pending approval by the Food and Drug Administration, would be used by farmers next year.

If that's the case, it would alter the supply-demand equations dramatically. This is a premature assumption that the FDA will approve BGH.

NFU President Leland Swenson said the Minnesota meeting was held "to explain USDA's analysis to producers and to gather input."

PFU President Allen Deiter has been attending all Milk Marketing hearings and dairy meetings to explain the PFU position and two-tier pricing.

He has emphasized the need for USDA to fully examine the proposal by NFU and make sure that dairy producers get the fairest price and reasonable profit.

Other members of Farmers Union and the Farmers Union Milk Producers Association have been testifying and advocating for action for the dairy industry in Pennsylvania.

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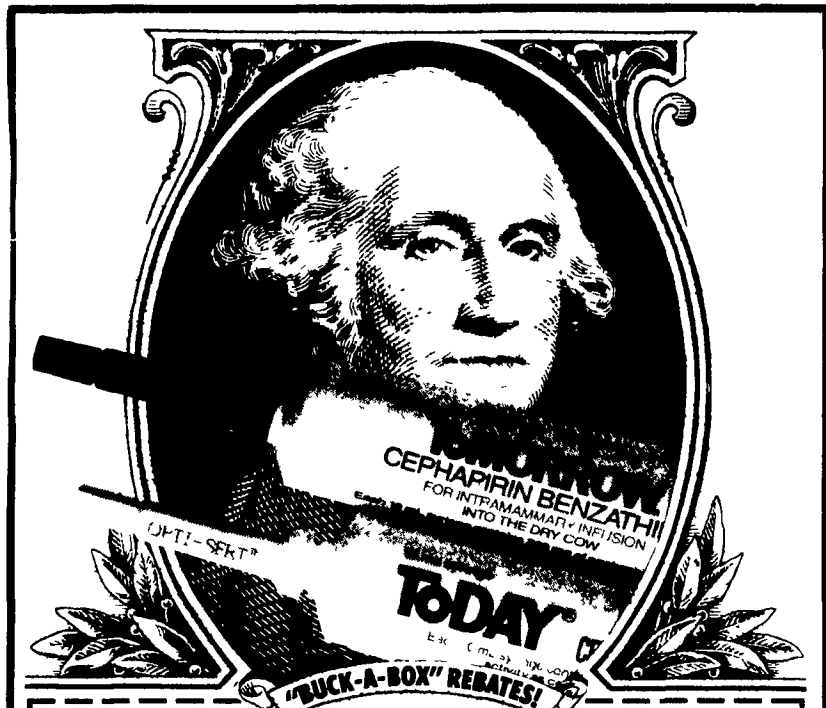
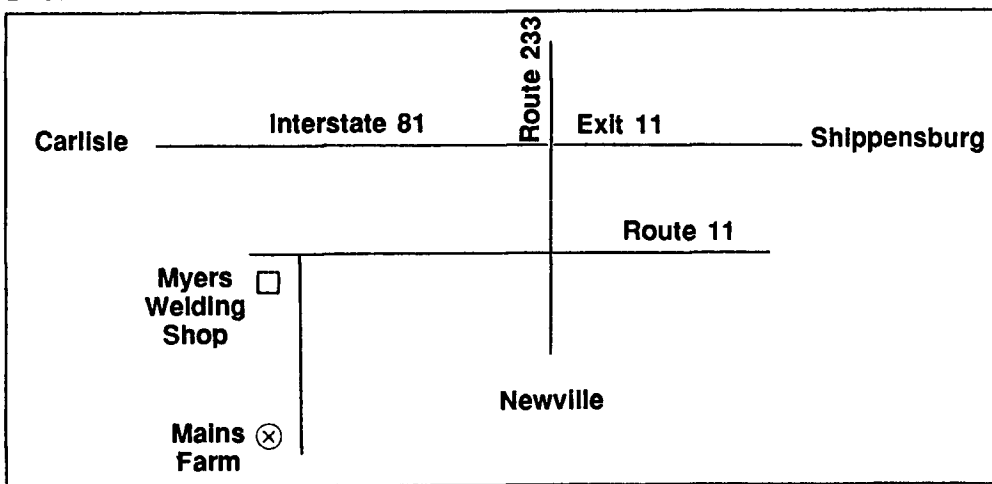
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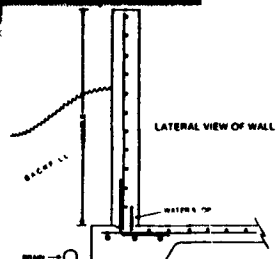
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