

ONTARIO CONFERENCE ON AGRICULTURE 1981

Growing With Agriculture in the 80's.

The Hon. Lorne C. Henderson welcomed over 600 Agriculture and Agribusiness leaders from all parts of Ontario to talk, discuss and challenge one another about the business of farming. From material handed out in giant size binders, it was evident there were many issues.

As Mr. Henderson said in his opening remarks "the issues and challenges should be viewed as opportunities, that way our deliberations can lead to action. Actions that will ensure Agriculture goes forward, building on the strengths of the past with the best ideas for seizing the opportunities of the future."

The objectives of the Conference are to bring together Agriculture, Business and Consumers. • To explore the production operations. • To explore the marketing operations and • To recognize the strengths and opportunities in the economy.

SYNDICATES

The official definition of a syndicate "an association of persons officially authorized to undertake some duty."

The delegates were divided into groups to talk about prospects for Agriculture and Farmers' Opportunities; Marketing; Farm machinery; Farm Credit and Interest; Environmental concerns; and other areas which might have interested the syndicates.

The results of group decisions were presented to the delegates and the findings will be tabulated and presented at a later date.

ENERGY

Energy costs and tightening of conservation methods were a concern to many speakers as well as providing a forum for discussion in the syndicates.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FARM ORGANIZATIONS

In this session two of the speakers were, Mrs. Keith Hiepleh, President of FWIO, and Ralph Barrie, President of OFA.

Mrs. Hiepleh assured the audience that women do contribute worthwhile ideas and are becoming more involved in decision-making and in assuming leadership roles. There is a need to continue to stress the importance of preserving prime agricultural land for food production. The Women's Institute, through resolutions have voiced concerns over increased foreign and absentee ownership of farm land.

She compared the lifestyle of farm women in Canada to those in developing countries, especially in Kenya, where she saw the women performing the back-breaking drudgery of carrying the daily water supply from the river, miles back to their homes. Women's Institute members are supplying dollars to provide a clean and safe water supply from drilled wells to be stored in central concrete storage tanks.

A closer relationship with urban dwellers is a must and there is a need to listen and try to understand each other's needs.

Also representing FWIO were, Mrs. Harold Blasing, Neustadt; Mrs. Harold Collins, Renfrew; Mrs. E. Depencier, Thamesville and Mrs. Russell Campbell, Iona Station.

Mr. Barry, Lanark County Farmer said general farm organizations are lobbies. "Our job is to add a voice in government decision-making."

Because farmers are "production specialists", they are not expert in marketing, developing new products, to mention only two, so the farmer needs the government to act as the research and marketing arm for the Agricultural Community.

One of the main jobs in the farm organizations should be to funnel information from the farm community to the ear of government.

Another concern is how to raise the price at the farm gate, yet not create hostility among the consuming public. Marketing Boards have increased the price of food only because they have helped farmers to raise prices in the market-place.

The Director of the Agriculture and Food Branch, Ontario House, London England, Peter Harrop felt the market for Ontario farm products will probably expand by about 50 Million dollars per year by the end of the decade.

One of the worrisome losses this year was the white bean market in England. The companies waited too long, hoping prices would fall and the Ontario crop was sold elsewhere.