

Concerned Farmers Announce Drive to 'Redirect' Pa. Dept. of Ag

An organization representing many of the top farm organizations in Pennsylvania this week held a press conference to dramatize deep concern about programs and policies of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

The group, Concerned Citizens of Agriculture, claimed a membership including leaders from 44 farm and allied organizations. These 44 organizations have a combined leadership of more than 45,000 farm families.

Among members of Concerned Citizens speaking out was J. Arthur Oberholtzer, Manheim, president of the Pennsylvania Farm Equipment Manufacturers Association.

Oberholtzer said Concerned Citizens was formed initially as "a result of things which happened the last day of Farm Show."

Specifically, it was in response to the firing by Ag Secretary James McHale of Horace Mann as Farm Show director.

Oberholtzer said that in meetings which resulted from the Mann firing and other actions, Concerned Citizens was formed with a 32 man steering committee, of which eight formed an executive committee.

The executive committee has been meeting with several key legislators on Capitol Hill and taking other action in an effort to redirect the programs of the

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, he explained.

Oberholtzer said the executive committee has been greatly encouraged by response on Capitol Hill and by large numbers of key officials who have "told us to keep it up and don't stop, and that we're getting something done."

Action so far has included phone calls and a letter to Governor Shapp asking for an audience. Oberholtzer said there "has never been any response from the Governor, so we called a press conference to get information to the public."

In a prepared statement, Charles Mohn, chairman of Concerned Citizens, stated, "Secretary McHale refuses to listen Mr. Shapp has snubbed our phone and written requests for a meeting."

At the press conference, Oberholtzer said his concern as president of the Pennsylvania Farm Equipment Manufacturers Association and the concern of the Association is "for the very future of the Farm Show complex."

While recognizing McHale's right to fire Mann, Oberholtzer said his organization "strongly resents the fact that the advice and counsel of the Farm Show commission was ignored."

He also expressed alarm "with the proposed switch in Farm Show dates from a Monday - Friday show to a Friday - Tuesday show. Will the Com-

mission be ignored by McHale again?"

Oberholtzer also pointed out the outstanding success of this year's Farm Show including large numbers of visitors and revenues. He stated, "Tampering by plundering politicians and tinkering by self-serving Secretaries of Agriculture is something the Farm Show Complex does not need."

He stated that Concerned Citizens "recommends an independent Farm Show commission now, perhaps structured along the lines of the Turnpike Commission. This would protect the commission from whims of future McHales and future administrations as well."

Burton L. Hetherington, manager of Berwick Vegetable Cooperative, director of the Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers' Association and president of the State Council of Farm Organizations, cited concern about the diversion of Act 298 harness racing funds for agricultural research to what he described as the rural health program at Coudersport and the Green Thumb employment program.

Hetherington explained, "We are sympathetic with the needs for improved health services and with the attempt to upgrade the lives of the rural elderly. But we feel such programs should continue in more knowledgeable departments such as Health, and

Labor and Industry. Why the expenditure of agriculture duplication?"

"Our objection today is to the

(Continued On Page 27)



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