

Lawmakers Discuss Their Jobs

PennAg conventioners Thursday afternoon heard from both sides of the aisle of both houses of the Pennsylvania State Legislature.

Without becoming either too political or too controversial, four state legislators gave the PennAg Industries convention a look at how the legislature works, and what it might be working on in the near future.

Sen. Franklin L. Kury (D-Sunbury), recalled when he first came to Harrisburg as a state representative in 1966, "my office was my briefcase. I had no desk, no telephone and I had to use secretaries from a pool. Representatives now have desks and private telephones and they share secretaries with one or two other representatives. Of course, state senators have their own offices."

The other legislators on the panel, Sen. Clarence F. Manbeck (R-Fredericksburg), Reps. Kent S. Shelhamer (D-Berwick) and George W. Gekas (R-Harrisburg), agreed that the legislative process in Pennsylvania has undergone considerable change recently.

Rep. Shelhamer said that the state house is now "More open and subject to the wishes of the people." He pointed to open committee hearings, staff changes and quick printing of bills as examples of this.

The state senate too, has changed, said Sen. Manbeck. "We've restricted lobbyists to the balcony. They used to get onto the senate floor."

Later Manbeck told the PennAg conventioners, who occasionally lobby for agricultural legislation, that lobbyists "have forced the senators to isolate themselves."

"I don't think you mean isolate, Clarence," Sen. Kury quickly added, "but lobbyists must not be allowed to influence senators on the floor."

The panel discussion, which was moderated by PennAg Executive vice president Donald W. Parke, was held on the second day of the three-day convention at Host Corral.

From the shape of the Pennsylvania legislature, the discussion moved to substance—issues before state and local



An insight into the legislative process was presented to PennAg conventioners by four lawmakers on Thursday afternoon during the annual PennAg convention at Lancaster's Host Corral Motel. Seated left to right are:

Sen. Franklin L. Kury, Rep. George W. Gekas, Donald W. Parke, PennAg executive vice-president, Rep. Kent S. Shelhamer and Sen. Clarence F. Manbeck.

governments.

Revenue sharing was the one subject the legislators couldn't agree on. While Rep. Gekas thinks revenue sharing "reestablishes the local government as the bastion of freedom," Rep. Shelhamer said, "there are no free meals."

He elaborated, "revenue sharing is just the federal government giving its deficit spending back to the local governments. This may be the first step in a takeover."

The legislators said they have a new problem this year with another kind of revenue—taxes. Because of the state budget surplus, the legislature is faced with giving Pennsylvanians some kind of tax relief.

Two options are open to the lawmakers, Rep. Gekas said. "We can scale the flat tax down below its current 2.3 per cent, or we can give everyone a straight \$2,000 exemption."

Rep. Shelhamer said that he would prefer a reduction in

business taxes. "If we remove the pain from the flat tax, it will be more difficult for the electorate to accept a graduated income tax."

All four men said the most logical tax would be a "piggy back" Pennsylvania income tax, set at some percentage of an individual's federal income tax.

The state budget, called by Sen. Kury, "the biggest hold we've got on the governor," was also discussed. He said, "right now the legislature is not equipped to evaluate the governor's request for money."

The four lawmakers also seemed especially interested in environmental matters. Two of the four—Kury and Shelhamer live on farms, while Manbeck owns a poultry processing firm. Gekas is a Harrisburg lawyer.

Sen. Kury outlined what he thought were the two most crucial areas: energy and the location of power plants and flood control.

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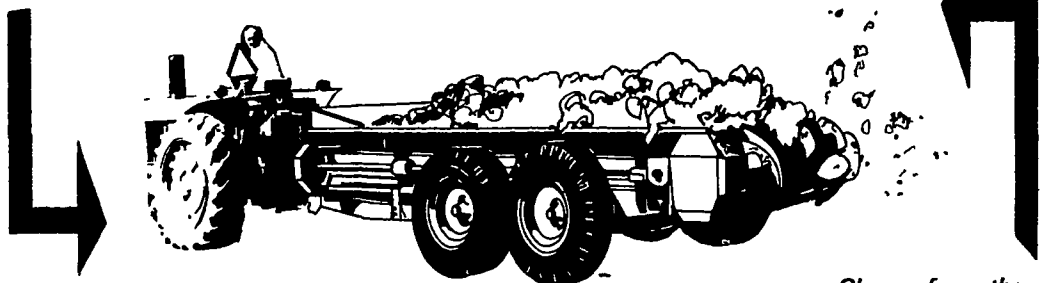
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