

House to Weigh

[Continued from Page 1] on splitoffs would probably discourage farmers from entering into the preferential tax agreement. Under this setup, a farmer who sold any portion of his holdings no

matter how small, would have to pay the tax rollback on his entire farm.

HB 1056 has appeared in a number of forms. Originally, the rollback was set at ten years, with no splitoff provision. In a number of



Reno Thomas

versions since then, the bill has called variously for a three-year or a five-year rollback. In its present form, the bill on the House floor calls for a ten-year rollback and absolutely no splitoff provision.

This will probably be amended on Monday to provide for a five-year rollback and splitoffs of up to ten acres per farm per year. This, in the words of Reno Thomas, a member of the House ag committee, would make the bill more palatable to farmers.

Thomas told Lancaster Farming on Thursday that the bill in its present form wouldn't really help to preserve farmland, because he felt very few farmers would sign up.

Another member of the agriculture committee, Representative Kent Shelhammer, agreed with Thomas, and said that an older farmer looking forward to retirement could have no possible incentive to agree to a pact which could

only penalize him when he did sell his land. "You've got to remember that the average farmer has very little equity other than his land," Shelhammer said. "If a farmer knows that he wants to sell out in the next ten years, he wouldn't be liable to sign up for a program that's going to save him some money now but which will force him to pay it all later, with interest."

"A lot of counties are coming up for reassessment. A farm tax bill might help farmers in those counties stay in business. But if the conditions attached to the preferential tax are too tough, farmers will be inclined to sell out right away instead of waiting. And I think the bill as it now reads could speed up the process of development."

The ten-year rollback and the splitoff prohibition were inserted into the bill at the urging of both the Pennsylvania State Grange and various environmental groups, most notably the Pennsylvania Environmental Council. "I think the ecologists have turned this into a land use bill rather than a farm tax bill," Shelhammer said. "If we want farmers to stay on the land we're going to have to give them some kind of break. But the ecologists aren't concerned about the tax break, they're trying to save open space and they think they can do the whole job with this bill."

"As far as land use planning goes, this bill is only a stop-gap measure. I'm sure in the next few years we'll be looking at other land use legislation. Right now, though, I think we need a

farm tax bill that's going to help farmers without giving a break to land speculators. We're trying to make a good bill to achieve those ends, and if our amendments on Monday are accepted, we'll have that kind of a bill," Shelhammer concluded.

When the 10-year rollback and zero splitoff provisions were put into HB 1056, the Pennsylvania Farmers Association withdrew its earlier support of a more lenient measure. PFA was instrumental in drawing up the amendments which will be proposed on Monday. Chester Heim, PFA's legislative director, said the organization supports the need for a farm tax bill, but they likewise think it's not the whole answer to land use problems. Heim added that PFA is presently working on a resolution to suggest some form of land use study to see what kind of legislation is needed.

Another farm organization, the Penn-

sylvania State Grange, has been following the bill with avid interest. The Grange was instrumental in getting the ten-year rollback clause reinserted into the bill. According to Luther Snyder, state secretary, the Grange would have to oppose anything other than a ten-year rollback because that was the policy adopted by the membership at their annual meeting last year.

Cooking Cross Cut Shanks

Beef cross cut shanks are made by cutting the fore shank perpendicular to the bone. The cross cuts, varying in thickness from 1 to 2½ inches, contain considerable connective tissue as well as a round bone. Because they are a less tender cut, long and slow moist heat cookery is recommended. Cross cuts make a meaty soup. Brown 3 to 4 pounds of cross cuts in lard or drippings. Pour off drippings, add 2 quarts water and seasoning, cover and cook over low heat for 2 hours. Add vegetables such as potatoes, carrots, celery, rutabaga or turnips and simmer, covered about 30 minutes or until the meat and vegetables are tender.

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