

Pessimism Prevails

(Continued from Page 1)

minds about whether or not we want to start one again."

Three men with experience in other fairs also addressed the group. They were: Wayne Kelley, Penn State farm management specialist; Lee Henney, administrator of the Pennsylvania State Fair Fund; and Stanley Musselman, agricultural loan officer for Lancaster's National Central Bank.

All three speakers described the job of starting a fair as a long, hard job. Kelley said it would take at least five years for a fair to go from an idea to a finished reality.

Henney, whose office distributes funds to most fairs in the state, said any new fair would get no financial aid until the fourth year of its existence. The state has a three-year probationary period before a fair becomes eligible for reimbursement of premium money.

"Fairs are big business," Henney told the group. "But I'm interested in agriculture and agri-business. I'm not interested in midways or big name entertainment. They may bring in money, but I don't care if you have them or not."

In response to questions from the audience, Henney said that the state would not pay more than \$33,600 to any one fair in premium money. The state reimburses fairs for half the total premiums, but otherwise makes no contributions except to the state-subsidized Pennsylvania Farm Show held each January in Harrisburg. Henney also said that all premium money comes from a percentage of bets placed at harness racing tracks throughout the Commonwealth.

Last year, Henney's office disbursed some \$1.5 million to 105 Pennsylvania fairs. Of that money, \$45,600 came to Lancaster County. The Ephrata Fair led with some \$10,500 in state premium money, followed by Solanco with \$9,600, West Lampeter with \$9,000, Manheim with \$8,700 and New Holland with \$7,800.

In response to another question, Henney told the group that community fair funds would not be at all endangered if a county fair were started. "We have a limit on the amount of money that can go to one fair, \$33,600, but no limit on the amount that can go to a particular county. You could have all five fairs you have plus a county fair and none of the community fairs would suffer."

Wayne Kelley told the group that there weren't nearly enough people at the meeting to even begin working on a county fair. "It takes a minimum of 250 dedicated people to get a fair off the ground," he said.

The banker in the group, Stanley Musselman, painted a grim picture of the financial outlook. "I don't know what it would cost to get a fair started," he said. "I've heard a million dollars, I've heard two million and even three million. To get that kind of money you'd need a definite plan, solid income projections and some pretty hefty backers."

One method Musselman suggested for raising funds was to sell \$10,000 bonds which would be non-interest bearing, non-negotiable and non-transferable. "In effect," he said, "you'd be giving the people who bought the bonds a piece of paper to frame. It's like a donation, but maybe a little easier to monwealth."

get because you're not actually asking for a donation."

Representatives of four of the community fairs represented expressed the feeling that they wouldn't oppose a county fair as long as it didn't interfere with the existence of their own organizations.

The exception was the Manheim Community Fair, represented at the meeting by Mark Nestleroth, who heads up the group. "We're a county of unique interest," Nestleroth told the group. "We're the garden spot of the world. With the right kind of advertising and publicity, we could put on a show for our agriculture that would draw the people who need to know more about the importance of farming."

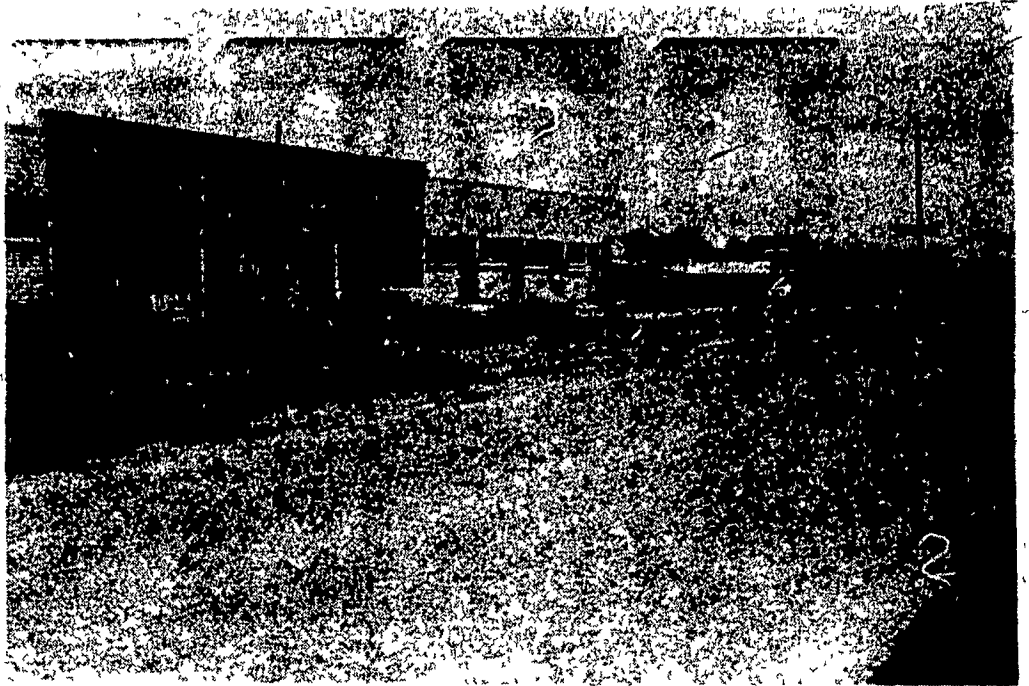
Kenn Rutt, president of the Solanco fair board, responded by saying that the community fairs have been getting excellent newspaper coverage, and added that he felt a lot of the participants in local fairs wouldn't bother going to a county fair.

One of the most vocal detractors of a county fair was Dr. Louis Williams, a New Holland dentist who heads up that town's fair committee. "I'm not opposed to a county fair," he said, "but I hate to see us work five years for something, only to see it break down after the first year of operation."

Williams also said that he feared a county fair would have less participation than is now the case with the five community fairs.

Nestleroth disagreed, saying that with a county fair there would be more exhibits to show more farm products. He added that he felt a county fair would be in the best interests of the county's farm community.

While there were many at the meeting who doubted the need and the workability of a county fair, there seemed to be little outright opposition. There was general agreement, though, that a county fair, if it comes about, should consist of



Lancaster Farming Photo

Could a county agricultural fair be held here? William McCoy, president of the Lancaster Livestock Exchange, thinks there's a good possibility it

could. It remains to be seen whether or not his idea will meet with the approval of other exchange members and backers of a county fair.

educational agriculture and home economics exhibits and contests. Midways, gambling, horse racing, alcohol and side shows all were to be kept out of the show, the group felt.

At the meeting's close, Max Smith told everybody to think about a county fair over the summer. In September, he said, he'd send a ballot to all the farm organizations and fair groups. The ballot would seek opinions of the various land, capital and management requirements for a fair. Smith said he'd also be looking for a yes or no vote in the balloting. "If we get a 51 percent yes vote, I'm going to drop the project," he said. "For something like this, we need at least a 75 percent favorable vote, or there's no use in going ahead."

After the results of the survey are tabulated, Smith said, he'd call another meeting sometime in October.

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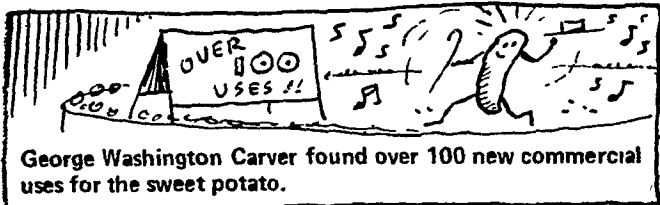
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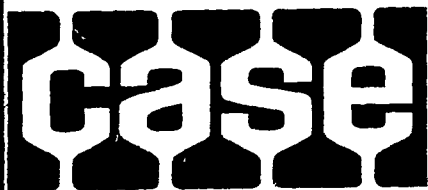
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