

# DER Official, Farmers

Lancaster Farming, Saturday, March 29, 1975—17

## Penn-National RED and WHITE SALE

SATURDAY, APRIL 5, 12:30 P.M.

Farm Show Building, Harrisburg, PA

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farmland than from an acre of land undergoing development, but there are a lot more acres in farming. We normally lose 4.5 million tons of topsoil a year in Pennsylvania. In Agnes, we lost 6 million tons in five days."

The biggest reason for saving soil, Schadel pointed out, wasn't because of a government mandate. The biggest reason was the need

for careful soil stewardship, to safeguard the tin layer of topsoil in which all crops grow. "Conservation practices can also save fertilizer, humus and lime," Schadel added, "so conservation doesn't really cost you money. It saves money."

Schadel urged the farmers to get in touch with the Soil Conservation Service office to ask them for a conservation plan. "SCS people will draw up a plan for you

and it won't cost a cent," he said. "Or you can do it yourself if you know what you're doing, or you can pay an engineer \$500 to \$600 to do it for you. I will say, though, that if you have a plan from the SCS, and if you're following it, there's no chance that the DER will ever cite you for violating the Clean Streams Law."

A farmer in the audience asked, "Once we have these plans, who will pay for building all the terraces?" "The farmer would," Schadel replied, "but chances are he wouldn't

even need terraces. SCS doesn't tell you what to put on your farm. They ask you what your farming program is, and then they recommend ways to keep the soil on your fields. Conservation practices usually call for more common sense than money. You might be able to solve whatever erosion problems you have with crop rotations, contour strips or sod waterways. These practices don't cost that much and they're easy to apply. Terraces are actually a last resort."

"Can we go to jail if we don't comply with the law?" another farmer asked.

"There are sanctions built into the program," Schadel replied. "But they're aimed more at urban developers than at farmers."

"What happens if I draw up my own plan and somebody thinks it's not good enough?" was another question from the audience.

"If we get a complaint about the way your conservation practices are working, the local Conservation District people will look at the plan. If they say it's all right, then there's no problem. If they recommend changes in your plan, and if you accept the changes, then there's no problem either. Actually, there's going to be very little pressure at all on farmers. The Clean Streams Law might affect that small minority, less than one percent, who want to do as they please no matter how much it hurts their neighbors."

Schadel said that the DER at present has no plans for any kinds of courses which would teach farmers how to draw up their own conservation plans. He did say that conservation districts throughout the state would be working with local vo-ag teachers to set up seminars for farmers who wanted to learn more about erosion control.

When Schadel had finished, Dr. Robert Herr, head of Garden Spot's vo-ag department, told the group that the services of Robert Andersen, a vo-ag teacher in the district, would be available at no cost for any farmer who wants a conservation plan drawn up. Before coming to Garden Spot, Andersen was employed by the SCS as a soil conservationist in western Pennsylvania.

Henry Hackman, executive assistant with the Lancaster County Conservation District, ended that meeting by telling the farmers that the real issue was not the money spent on conservation, but the stewardship of the soil. "Once erosion has taken away more soil than nature can replace," Hackman said, "we'll be on the rocks. Because that's all that's under the soil."

### Money Management

Printed as a public service by the Lancaster Farming and the Pennsylvania Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

While proposals to make college expenses tax deductible remain in the talk stage, some education costs can be deducted: those paid for courses necessary to maintain or improve skills used in one's job. Be sure the course doesn't prepare you for a promotion or a new position, though; that could eliminate the tax deduction.

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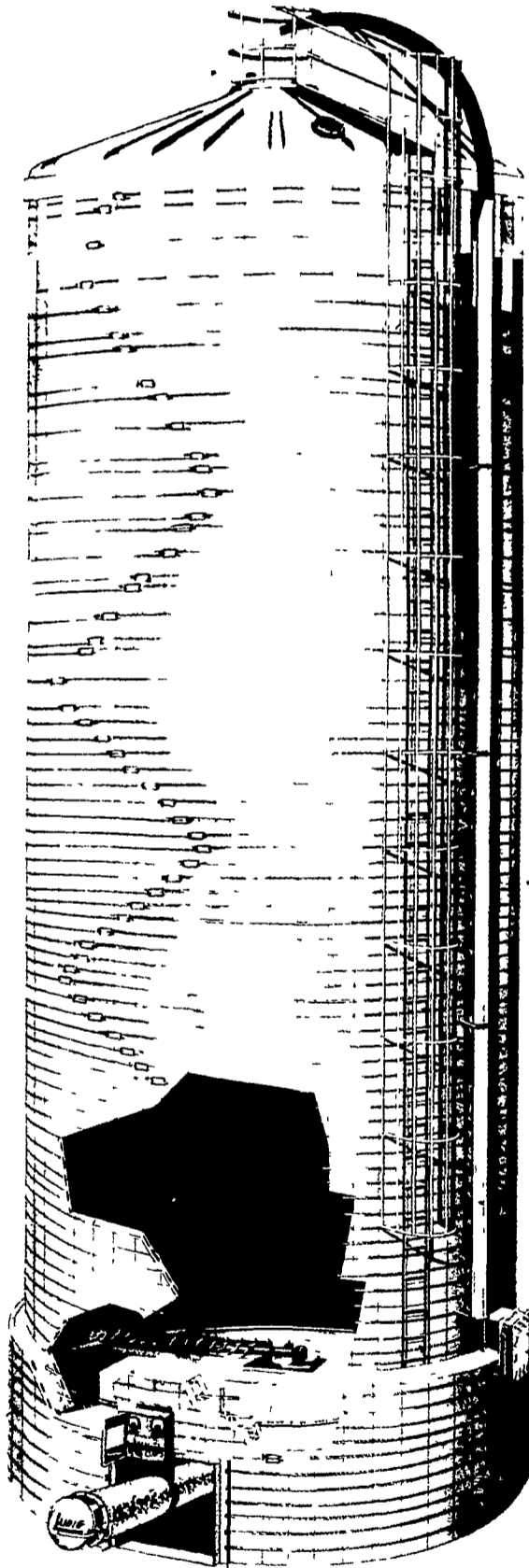
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