

Vo-ag program in transition in Lanc. Co. school district



Jesse Erway

By JOANNE SPAHR
MANHEIM, Pa.—If agreement is reached, beginning this Monday, the Manheim Central school district will again have a vocational agriculture program. At that time Jesse Erway, vocational agriculture teacher with the district for 13½ years, will go back to work as a supervisor of the Summer agriculture program, if he agrees to a supplemental Summer contract passed by the school board on July 21.

Technically, for about three weeks, beginning on July 1, the program was dead in the school district because of a reduction of 55 days in the contract of Erway, 312 Fairview Drive, Lititz. This reduction in contract and subsequent salary for Erway was a measure by the school board to cut rising school costs by eliminating all Summer programs. According to school superintendent David McKalips, the Summer vocational agriculture

course was only one of four such programs curtailed. However, according to standards established by the vocational department of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, 185 working days is not ample time for the vo ag teacher to provide a quality education for a program such as is run at Manheim Central. That program consists of production ag, ag mechanics, and adult education classes.

During a five hour hearing

held on July 19 in the high school auditorium, James Fink, senior program specialist in agriculture education for the Pennsylvania Department of Education, testified that for Manheim Central's program, 230 days is the standard and 220 days the minimum amount one vocational agriculture teacher is required to be on the job. He also affirmed that if the school district did not comply with the specifications set down, he would not approve a vocational agriculture program for the school district.

The ramifications of such a move would have been widespread. For the vo-ag students, it would have signaled the end of FFA and the beginning of an academic agriculture class without the 'hands on' program it now has. The move would have also affected the Young Farmer group at the school. These two groups depend heavily on state vocational reimbursement monies to operate, and without an approved program, those reimbursements would end. For the all day, or in-school ag student, the reimbursements comes to \$35 per student plus 80 per cent of their traveling expenses. This amount is added onto state education money which subsidizes the school district at the rate of 22 students per teaching unit, or reimburses the school district every time a teacher has 22 students on his work load.

For the Young Farmers, the reimbursement money comes to \$5.20 per teacher

per hour, plus 80 per cent of the Young Farmer organization's traveling time. Three dollars and 20 cents of the \$5.20 sum is state vocational money and \$2 is federal money.

After lengthy discussion at Tuesday's hearing, clarification was reached to the fact that Erway is required to work 220 hours, minimum, for the school district to receive these reimbursements.

With this point clarified, when the school board met in regular session on July 21, they voted to award Erway a supplemental contract as supervisor of the Summer agriculture program. This contract will run from July 25 to August 26, bringing the program to 220 days this year, which will assure reimbursement as well as the continuance of the vocational agriculture course for the year.

In a recommendation passed by the board members, it was stated that "the board intends to continue a viable vocational agriculture program including Summer programs, and if possible, an FFA chapter, as long as sufficient enrollment and demand continue. Therefore, the board urges that they work with the Pennsylvania Department of Education to continue the program at a reduced cost to the taxpayer in the district, if possible."

According to Dr. Richard Hoffman, president of the school board, the district will now seek viable alternatives to keeping the vocational program with less than 240 days on the vo ag teachers' contracts.

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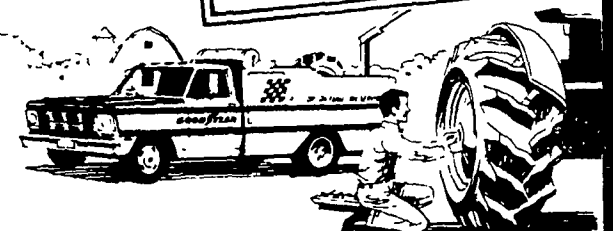
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