

Support continues for Keystone Expo Center

YORK — Two Democratic gubernatorial candidates—Lieutenant Governor Ernest P. Kline and Robert P. Casey—and Republican Candidates Bob Butera, Henry G. Hager and Richard L. Thornburgh have declared their positions on step-by-step development of a new Keystone Exposition Center for the benefit of all the people in the Commonwealth, according to Dr. Norman F. Reber, editor emeritus of Pennsylvania Farmer magazine and chairman of the Keystone Exposition Center Committee, a spearhead action group representing 18 state organizations pushing to put

Pennsylvania in the forefront again through tourism as the exhibit center of the Northeast, a position it has lost from ten years of delay, deterioration and destruction.

The May 16 primary candidates for their respective party tickets gave their views in response to a letter by Chairman Reber in which he cited updated estimates based on a professional state-authorized study done about ten years ago. It revealed a new center would generate a cash flow of an annual \$32,000,000, or a yearly \$13,000,000 more than was actually generated by the old

center, known as the Farm Show Complex, at the time the study was made. Building past and future inflation factors into the latter figure, Dr. Reber estimates the net increase in cash flow from a new center over the present one could readily exceed an annual \$25,000,000. Since the study indicated that 80 per cent of the total cash flow was the result of tourism from out of state, this would mean an annual \$20,000,000 stimulant to the sluggish economy of the Commonwealth and bring into its treasury stepped-up sales and income tax revenue in much greater amounts than would be

required for debt service on phased development of a new center, Reber stated.

In contrast to this bright outlook from a new center, Reber cited the gloomy outlook of the old center, the mountainous maintenance costs on deteriorating and flood-ravaged buildings with shrunken exhibit space due to walls built to meet fire safety regulations. The proposed new \$3-million-dollar supplementary building will only make up for the lost space and do nothing to satisfy the long waiting list of exhibitors and it will also be located in the flood plain, Reber said.

While endorsing the

supplementary building as a temporary measure, the Lieutenant Governor has come out flatly for a new Keystone Exposition Center as an investment in the future of Pennsylvania to bring more jobs, business and revenues into the state. In noting that the present Farm Show Complex has served us well, he stated a modern facility was urgently needed to supply more space to present exhibitors and to take care of a waiting list of over 200 groups who would use a new and expanded center.

"The exposition and convention business is a lucrative market. If Pennsylvania does not make an effort to accommodate groups who want to have their events here, we stand to suffer a substantial economic loss," Kline said. "Cities and states across the country are building new and modern convention and exhibition facilities. Pennsylvania must stay competitive with them," he added. Kline pointed out a new facility on state-owned, flood-free ground near the present complex would be the least expensive to develop in a phased program which would use the old facilities along with the new.

"Both the need and the financial return for the proposed Keystone Exhibition Center have been established. We now need leadership to turn these plans into reality," the Lieutenant Governor said.

In his letter to the chairman, Robert P. Casey, a leading contender for the Democratic nomination, while conceding the importance of a new facility for the state, had this to say:

"I recognize the importance of a facility capable of attracting trade shows and other events to the Commonwealth, but believe that the fiscal realities confronting the Commonwealth dictate, at least in the near term, another course of action."

Bob Butera responded to the chairman's letter this way: "As governor of Pennsylvania, I would encourage the project and would support the plan if it can be shown that it would be self-sustaining. Its acceptance by the general public would also hinge on the ability of the complex to pay for itself."

Butera further stated "the chairman's detailed ex-

planation of the potential impact on the economy of the Harrisburg area and the state was well documented and obviously the result of careful and considerable research."

Henry G. Hager stated flatly that the aging flood-prone complex has not kept pace with the requirements of today's demands.

"Each year," he said, "Pennsylvania loses many potential activities to other states with newer, larger and better equipped facilities. A new Keystone Exposition Center in our capital city would meet the demands and needs now being satisfied elsewhere."

"The time is past due for Pennsylvania to make a far-sighted capital investment in its future. A long-term financing plan is essential if the complex is to be built and operated with public funds. Although a new facility would generate thousands of dollars in additional revenues for the Commonwealth's economy, it should be constructed during a phased development program over a period of years in order to lessen the initial capital outlay and debt funding requirements; it must be to a large degree self-sustaining by helping to defray maintenance and self-liquidating debt costs."

Richard L. Thornburgh enthusiastically endorsed a new Keystone Exposition Center in these words:

"As a candidate for governor, my number one priority for Pennsylvania, is to get our economy on its feet again. This undertaking, as I see it, must involve state government in ways necessary to create a positive climate for jobs.

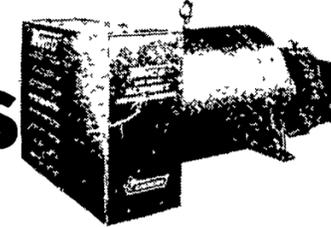
"With this objective in mind, a Keystone Exposition Center seems to make good sense. It would add to our growing tourist industry and provide a good setting for trade shows for a variety of Pennsylvania businesses. I am especially pleased that it would provide a showcase for our agricultural industry."

Only one Democratic contender, Peter Flaherty, and one Republican, Arlen Specter, remain to be heard from in the effort by the KEEC to clarify the positions of the candidates on a new Expo before the May 16 primary.

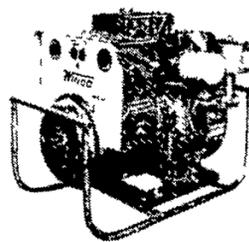


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