

*Berwick Vegetable Cooperative celebrates 25th year*

# More efforts needed to preserve family farm

BERWICK — The cause of the family farm was championed here recently when State Representative William K. Klingaman of Tamaqua addressed the 25th anniversary meeting of the Berwick Vegetable Cooperative. It was held near here on May 20 at the Briar Heights Lodge.

A member of the House Agriculture Committee, the Schuylkill County legislator emphasized the need for programs which would help Pennsylvania farmers. He noted that a number of bills have been introduced and passed, but that there hasn't been enough impact to slow the trend of farmers going out of business.

sylvania agriculture is "deeply concerned with such a trend," Klingaman exclaimed "we tried to attack it with a 'Clean and Green' law, but its original intent got lost in the shuffle."

An estimated 150 members and guests of the BVC listened attentively as the House Ag Committee member explained why: "In order to get the law passed at all, even with its recognized deficiencies, we had to accept so many amendments from so many special interest pressure groups, that it got lost in the shuffle. I think it needs revision so that it truly reflects the original intent: the preservation of agricultural land for

agricultural production of food and fibre."

Klingaman told of newer approaches to the ongoing problem of keeping farmland in production and farmers on the farm.

He said: "Another idea had now been brought forth in House Bill 2145, which provides for 'agricultural districts'. It is very complex and intricate piece of legislation that didn't receive nearly enough consideration and discussion in the Agricultural Committee, which decided to hand it out and let people shoot at it. My own guess - and hope - is that it will be referred to committee for further study and amendment, which I think it surely needs. Its intent is to protect the farmer from eminent domain proceedings and "unreasonable local ordinances". Before I buy that bill, I want to know who is going to decide what is "reasonable". My personal philosophy is to hold to local control of our destiny. I

believe that the local township supervisors know what is best for their neighbors than does some committee or bureaucrat sitting in Harrisburg.

"Here is a case in point. The city of Allentown has a problem of disposing of its sewage sludge, and because of the concentration of heavy industry in the county, the sludge is very often alarmingly high in mineral content. So they're dumping it on one particular farm in Lynn Township. I mean dumping it and piling it - not necessarily plowing it under. I went on a field investigation with the township supervisors, some farmers, and some interested residents of the township. The man investigating for DER suggested that Lynn Township enact an ordinance against dumping sludge in the township. And so the supervisors did just that. Then guess who joined the City of Allentown in a legal action to contest the

legality of the ordinance? DER did. I brought that strange paradox up at a meeting of the Ag Advisory Committee to DER many months ago, and the DER attorney promised to look into it and explain their action - and I'm still waiting. So you see, the supervisors thought it was "reasonable", but DER thought it was unreasonable.

Klingaman pointed out in his speech and in a questioning period following his address that the problems of agriculture are no closer to be solved despite the legislation that is being introduced, debated, and amended in Harrisburg.

What's needed, he said, is for agriculture to become profitable and attractive enough to keep young people on the family farm.

On the subject of diminishing farmland, Klingaman pointed out that last year foreigners bought \$800 million worth of American farmland and this

year their purchases may reach \$1 billion.

"Invasion by big business and big capital and big government into the function of agricultural production is not the answer to our problem. The president of that agribusiness corporation, like his counterpart in the big industrial corporation, doesn't really care about the means. He sees only the end. What counts to him is profitable production spilling off the end of a very impersonal and lifeless assembly line," the legislator stated.

"Ever since the biblical book of Deuteronomy was written so many centuries ago, we have been taught that it is our duty to God as well as to one another to honor the land and to respect the plant and animal life that he put on it," Klingaman continued. "On the whole, humankind was not lived up to that teaching very well, and we're getting further and further away as more

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Berwick Vegetable Cooperative's 25th anniversary cake is being cut by State Representative William Klingaman, Tamaqua, and Edward Hopkins, chairman of the board, right. Looking on are State Representative Ted Stuban, left, and BVC manager Burt Hetherington.

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