

Fertilizer blenders balk at superfund tax

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The requirement that fertilizer producers pay a \$60-million tax as part of the Administration's "superfund" legislation is as logical as including the "Tinker Toy or widget industries", according to a fertilizer industry spokesman here Wednesday before the House Subcommittee on Transportation and Commerce.

Ed Wheeler, president, The Fertilizer Institute, said that Environmental Protection Agency proposals to tax the entire chemical industry unjustly penalize the fertilizer segment.

"No abandoned waste sites have been found to contain fertilizer products or waste," he said, yet the annual "superfund" tax on fertilizer plants would be at least \$60 million, and could reach \$100 million per year, one-fourth the total \$400-million chemical industry contribution.

EPA proposals would set a tax or fee on chemical producers for use in paying either the cost of cleaning-up inactive disposal sites, or of accidental hazardous chemical spills.

In addition to the inequity of taxation of fertilizer production, such assessment would reflect in higher food costs for U.S. consumers, he said, as well as many of the world's "poorest of the poor" who rely on American agricultural exports.

Wheeler posed a myriad of questions to the subcommittee, noting, for instance, that EPA has produced little factual evidence on number and content of abandoned chemical sites.

First, he pointed out, "EPA rushed to the media", and state there could be up to 50,000 such "orphan" sites. After the Institute requested a list of such sites, under the Freedom of Information Act, EPA identified only 151.

"Not a single site contained any products or wastes produced by the fertilizer industry," Wheeler said.

"Never was so much proposed to be extracted from so many to be blithely thrown at an evasive target by so few", Wheeler said, in referring to the proposed \$400 million fund.

"We believe there is a problem...but we have no more idea as to its extent than do the members of this subcommittee, let alone the EPA," he added and urged them to conduct a thorough analysis of the root problem as the first order of business, then to determine probable costs, as well as how states might participate.

"We believe both state and federal funds should be used to remove offending chemicals from waste sites," rather than penalize persons or corporations for situations which they did not create, he said.

In essence, he emphasized, the innocent are being punished for the faults of others with few facts to support such action.

Conservation group elects new officers

HARRISBURG—Robert Jones of Bath, Northampton County, was elected president of the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation District Directors. The elections were held at the Joint Annual Conference of the State Conservation Commission and the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation

Districts, held in Greensburg on October 1-3.

Jones served as the group's vice president last year. He follows William Lange, Clarks Summit, as president.

George Wolfe, Lebanon County, is the new first vice president. Alex Smith, Greensburg, Westmoreland County, completed his term as secretary and was elected second vice president.

New Association secretary is Richard Morgan, Northumberland County. He follows Roby Grose, Punxsutawney, Indiana County, in that position.

Wendell Pepson, Uniontown, Fayette County, once again will serve as treasurer.

Amos Funk, Millersville, Lancaster County, was re-elected as Pennsylvania's council representative to the National Association of Conservation Districts.

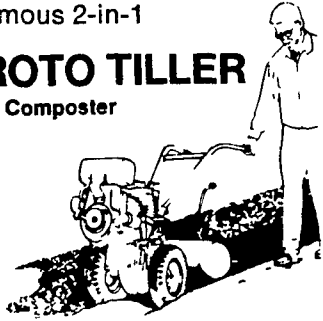
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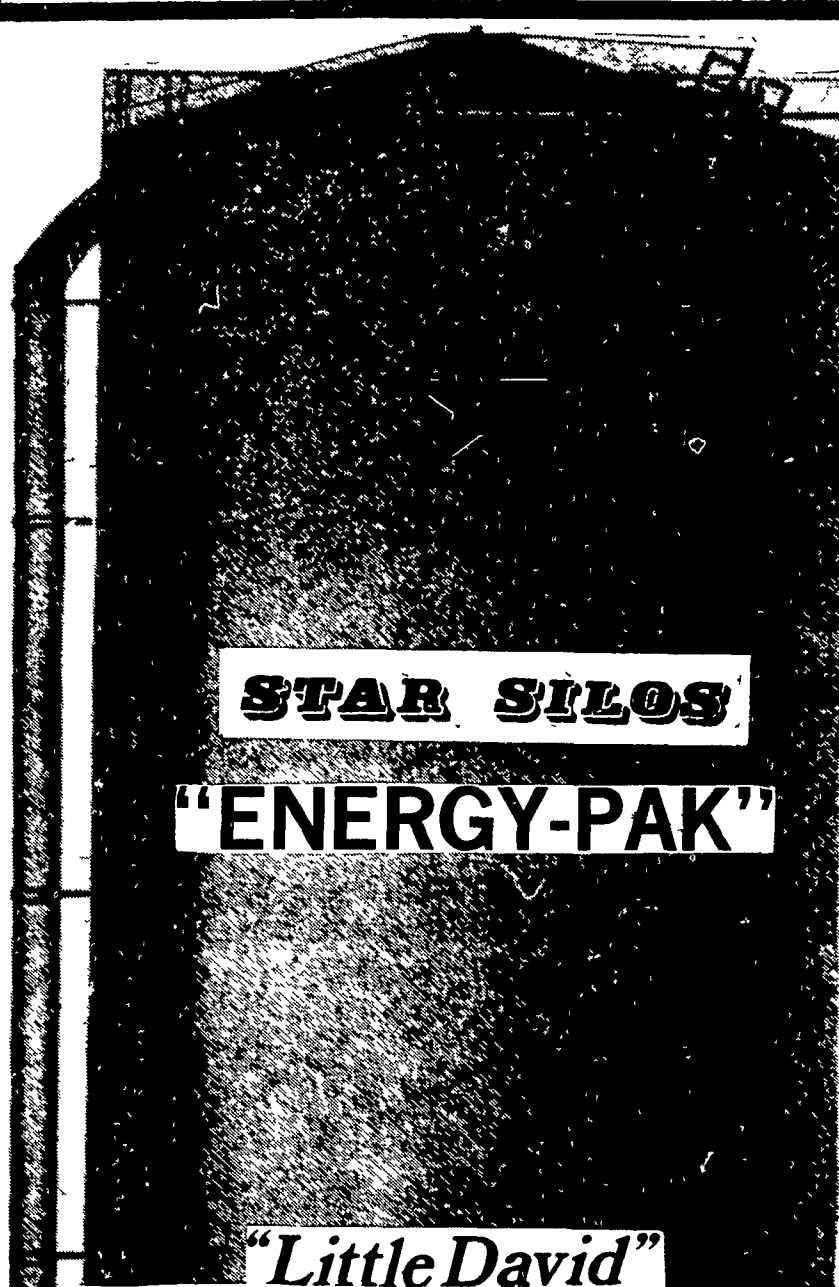
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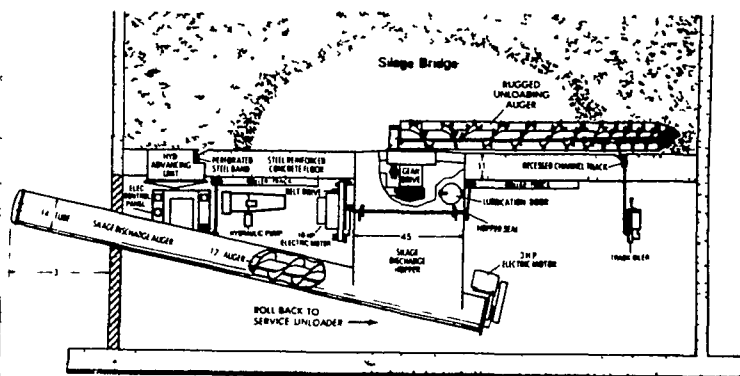
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