

# Fire levels migrant housing

CLARKS SUMMIT — Fire consumed the main housing in the migrant labor camp owned by Keith Eckel, a vegetable and dairy farmer in Lackawanna County on Monday, December 3rd.

The fire is suspected of being a case of arson, according to Eckel, although he says they have no proof. He pointed out that at the time of the fire there was no electricity or gas in the

buildings. Whenever the buildings are to be left vacant, they are careful to disconnect the potential fire hazards, he explained. "I really haven't gotten a dollars and cents value for

the damage caused by the fire," Eckel added. But he estimated the replacement costs to be around \$30,000 to \$40,000. When asked if he suspected the fire to have

been set in connection with the trouble he experienced during the summer of 1978, Eckel was quick to express the fact that he didn't feel there was any relationship.

This past summer was very quiet, he pointed out. And, the people that gave him the hard time before were government or church related, so he didn't suspect them.

The trouble that he referred to was an incident that involved the migrant laborers, Eckel, and a government agency.

In 1978, Eckel called on the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association to request an investigation of the use of federal funds for an agency funded under CETA.

The agency's purpose was to provide supportive services for the seasonal farmworkers. These services, Eckel explained, were already being given by other State agencies. Therefore the migrants had no need of the CETA employees.

"They harassed the migrants," noted the Lackawanna County tomato grower, "until I denied them access."

When the CETA employees decided to hold a demonstration in front of the

Eckel camp, their plan to embarrass the farmer backfired. What happened was the migrants chased the CETA people, along with the news media, away from the camp.

Shortly after the demonstration, as a result of the PFA request, a meeting was held with the U.S. Department of Labor. The CETA agency's funds were withdrawn putting the New Jersey Farm Workers, Inc. out of business.

Instead, they funded the Rural New York Farm Workers Opportunities, Inc. which Eckel stated is much better.

He also noted that the migrants were receiving supportive health services from the Pennsylvania Department of Health, under their Migrant Nursing Program.

They were also getting food stamps from the Public Assistance Office of the City of Scranton.

Eckel restated that the recent fire was not suspected to be an outgrowth of the summer of 1978. He said that there had been several fires set in vacant buildings in the vicinity in the past three weeks. S.M.



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## Feather receives special award

LEBANON — The Lebanon County Conservation District presented a special award to the former County Commissioner, Phillip Feather. The award was given to the District Board representative on Wednesday evening.

Recently defeated in his bid for reelection, Commissioner Feather had served the District as a regular and consistent member for eight years.

While on the board, Feather supported and promoted many environmental projects. The storm water management and floodplain regulations enacted by the County were of special interest to Feather.

He also supported, in behalf of the County Commissioners, the preservation of Stony Valley as a wilderness area and the designation of Stony Creek as a wild and scenic river at a hearing called by the State.

Feather will be replaced on the District Board by Edward Arnold, County Commissioner Elect.

Arnold operates a 320 acre dairy and general farm north of Lebanon, along with his two brothers. They have been cooperators with the District for 14 years, and have just recently installed an animal waste storage facility.

The preservation of prime farmland for future generations is of great interest to Arnold. He expresses a strong desire to work closely with local units of government in a cooperative effort to achieve goals of effective government.

Another District director was appointed by the County Commissioners to serve a four-year term, starting in

January. Ray Sattazahn will fill this position.

Sattazahn and his family own and operate a 359 acre dairy and general farm in the northeast part of Lebanon County.

They have a herd of 105 milking Holsteins, with replacement calves and heifers numbering close to 100. In addition they grow about 175 acres of corn, 100 acres of alfalfa, plus soybeans, oats, and barley.

Sattazahn is also a member of the Executive Committee of the Penn State Cooperative Extension Service, the Lebanon County Holstein Association, and the County Farmer Association. He attends the Host United Church of Christ Church.

Edward Keener was appointed to his second four-year term as a Director. He is employed by the City of Lebanon as the city engineer.

Keener has served the District board as vice-president and as chairman of several committees.

As chairman of the Water Resources Committee, he had a leading role in the development of a storm water management policy.

Also serving on the Conservation District Board are Donald Bollinger, chairman; Ivan Parker, treasurer; George Wolf, representative to the executive council; and Elvin Kreider, director.

