

Alcohol fuel group forms, sets future meetings

BY JOYCE BUPP
Staff Correspondent

YORK—Some committed and about one hundred curious turned out last Monday at the Extension Office meeting room to witness the York County Farmers' Union's formation of a first in Pennsylvania, a farmer-cooperative for the production of grain alcohol for fueling farm equipment.

Spokesmen for the group painted a realistic picture of the difficulties that loom ahead in getting an alcohol distilling unit off the ground. Admitting that they expect to make plenty of mistakes, and will initially sell a product that isn't priced

competitively, organizers will ask the new cooperative's members to adapt their equipment engines to burn the alcohol and help gather data and experience on the alternate fuel's performance.

Following a brief regular Farmers' Union business meeting and a discussion of the proposed cooperative venture, 15 farmer-investors lined up to sign contract papers for the purchase of stock in FUEL, the Farmers' Union Energy League. Those charter signers then withdrew to hold an initial business session and election of temporary leaders.

George Hoke, Spring

Grove R3, was chosen temporary chairman. The four other directors are Frank Goodlander, Box 178, Lewisberry; Victor Hebel, Stewartstown R2; Albert Bentz, Thomasville R2; and Trond Grenager, Lewisberry R1, who's been serving as a consultant on technicalities of the distilling process.

Dillsburg attorney Marian Furman has been retained as legal counsel for FUEL and has drawn up articles of incorporation for presentation. A total membership of 25 investors has been set by leadership as the minimum before the fuel cooperative will proceed into

the acquisition of a production distillery.

FUEL will operate under the state's cooperative law, the Pennsylvania Cooperative Agriculture Association Act. Only those engaged in some amount of actual farming are eligible for membership, although the board of directors will have the option of selling in limited amounts to non-member patrons.

Voting membership is established with the purchase of at least one share of common stock, in the cost of \$100, plus a non-refundable initial membership fee. Purchase of a share of

common stock constitutes an agreement that the member will purchase an annual quantity of alcohol fuel once the plant is in production, possibly an arbitrary 500 gallons.

Non-farmers who wish to invest in the cooperative distillery plant will be able to purchase shares of preferred stock, at \$50 per share, with no voting privileges.

A maximum eight percent return on the stock may be paid, once the plant is operating at a profit and capital investment levels have been met.

Stressing the immediate need for more "hands on

experience," FUEL leaders proposed to initially distill only quantities of fuel that members themselves can use, sold at cost of production.

"The farmers who want this cooperative are concerned primarily about the availability of fuel, not the dollar return on investment," Leonard Zemaitis, state director of the Pennsylvania Farmers Union had stressed in the opening discussion of the proposed cooperative.

Organizers also view the alcohol production plant as an alternate market for

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York County Farmers Union members committed themselves to the production of alternate fuel by signing on the dotted line as members of the state's first alcohol production cooperative.

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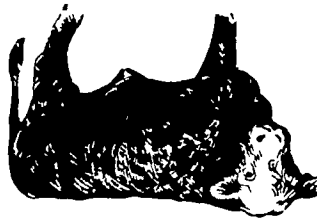
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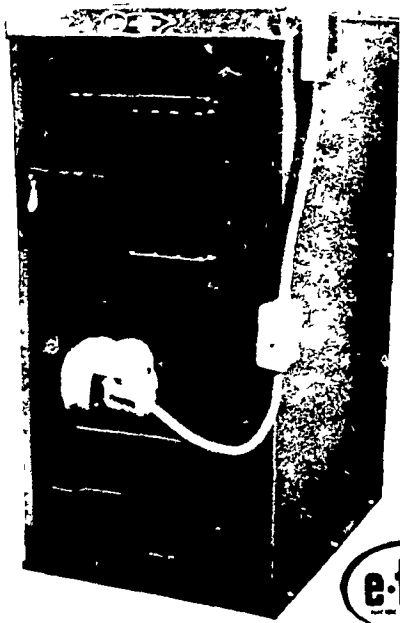
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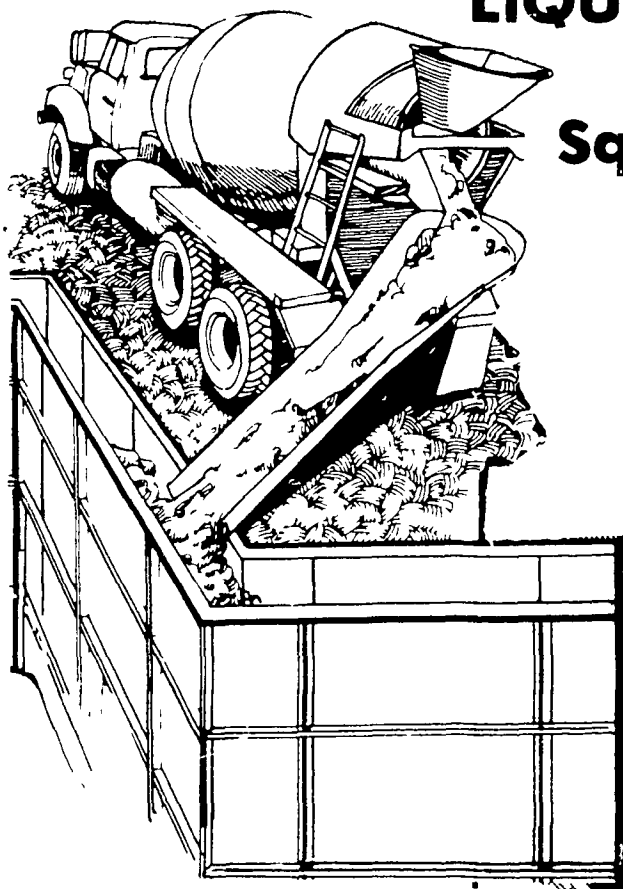
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