

Fertilizer, conservation, fuel tax highlight Grange legislative meeting

HARRISBURG — When the State Grange legislative and agricultural committees met Tuesday in Harrisburg, fertilizer law, conservation, and the proposed fuel tax change were among the prime topics of consideration.

Agriculture Secretary Penrose Hallowell told Grangers that the state Fertilizer Advisory Committee is scheduled to meet April 25. The Committee, to large extent, is made up of fertilizer dealers.

Hallowell said the group will examine the effect of the current Fertilizer Law. He said the law is one of the strictest in the state. But, he added, the Department will enforce the law and if changes are needed, they will have to come from the legislature.

He said a couple of companies are upset with the provisions of the law. One firm owes upwards of \$60,000 in fines and they are going to court to fight the fines.

These firms say the Department's methods of sampling are not accurate.

"There is no justification to me that their claims are based in fact," Hallowell said.

He said if the Grangers were to tour some of the plants in question they could see how mistakes could happen.

The biggest problem is with bulk blended fertilizer, he said. In general, he said, ammoniated fertilizer comes accurately labeled. Liquids, too, give little trouble.

Problems generally come with blends which often are made with a front end loader and simple scales.

He said the Department

will continue to check wherever possible.

Hallowell also urged farmers to vaccinate heifers for Brucellosis. He said about 80 percent of all heifers in the state now are vaccinated.

Pennsylvania currently has eight herds quarantined because of Brucellosis.

He said the ag budget for 1980, the third presented, was for the same dollars as last year. But, of course, this represents a cutback in actual funds available.

He told Grangers a noxious weed law is in the legislature. He said it will establish guidelines for identifying noxious weeds.

Hallowell said his new Chief of Market Services would be John Scott, former master of both the Pennsylvania and the National Granges.

Soil Conservation Service's Bruce Holbrook said his organization is attempting to develop a state conservation plan.

That plan for the State Conservation Committee will outline objectives for the next five years.

At present, a conservation evaluation is being distributed to local groups asking input and evaluation of the conservation situation in four areas: soil, land, water, and people.

He said questions on preservation of agricultural land bring almost as many different ideas as there are responses. But, he noted, all segments seem to agree there is a problem.

He said the plan is only a schedule of efforts and ideas for the next five year's work. He said SCS is seeking no new laws in this area.

Among problems raised by

the Grange committee members was protection of on-farm water supplies from deep wells, contamination, and gas drillers.

Concern was voiced about proper strip mine regulations and recovery programs.

The suggestion was raised that the state, through Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, and the state farms, should lead the way in conservation rather than being a contributor to many of the conservation problems suffered around the state.

Holbrook said SCS hopes to have a document ready by summertime to clarify its goals.

Tom Usidek of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation outlined the proposed new gas tax regulations.

He said PennDOT has lost \$60 million in revenue

because of reduced fuel consumption. He also said the highway use has increased and along with it, the wear and tear on road surfaces.

He said PennDOT is promoting a program which would apply a flat five cent per gallon tax on retail fuel sales. Added to that would be a six percent tax.

As the price of fuel went up 25 cents a gallon, one-half cent would be taken off the flat rate. Eventually, at about \$2.50 per gallon retail cost for fuel, there would be only the six percent charge and no flat rate.

Most important to farmers, the tax would be applied only at the retail level. Farm fuel tanks are considered wholesale level.

As a result, farmers would not have to pay the tax in the first place as they do today, so there would be no paperwork for the refund.

Usidek based his appeal on the idea that the change represents "more than a tax hike for PennDOT... we're talking about the vitality of Pennsylvania."

He said without the tax changes there would be road and bridge weight limits imposed, and speed limits on interstate highways could drop to 45 or 35 mph to make them safe.

Also hit are the truckers. The tax package includes increased license fees for both inter-state and intra-state travel.

PennDOT still wants to return roads to the local

municipalities. Usidek said the state would give the roads back in tip-top condition.

The state also will bargain with individual municipalities which feel they need more or less money to maintain a road or which wants to accept a road in poor condition and fix it itself.

Usidek said the average increase in cost under the new proposal would be about \$15 to a typical motorist who drives 15,000 miles a year in a vehicle averaging 15 mpg.

By raising mpg from 15 to 17, the motorist could save that \$15 a year, he added.

The Grangers also met with several state legislators at their dinner Tuesday night.

Earlier in the day they toured the manure generating facility at Mason-Dixon Farms near Gettysburg.—CH

Club congress held in Delaware County

Fifty-five 4-H members, leaders, and parents participated in the first annual Delaware County 4-H Club Congress recently, according to Keith Bryan, President of 4-H Teen Council.

They represented 11 clubs from throughout the county. The purpose of the meeting was to teach proper parliamentary procedure so that 4-H clubs in the county can become better organized

and accomplish more. Improving the club business meeting, including recreation in the meeting, and using member demonstrations as a teaching tool were also stressed at the club congress.

Jimmy Short, Havertown, gave a demonstration on pyramids and a slide set, "The 4-H Meeting - A Teaching Tool" was presented by Jackie Brown.

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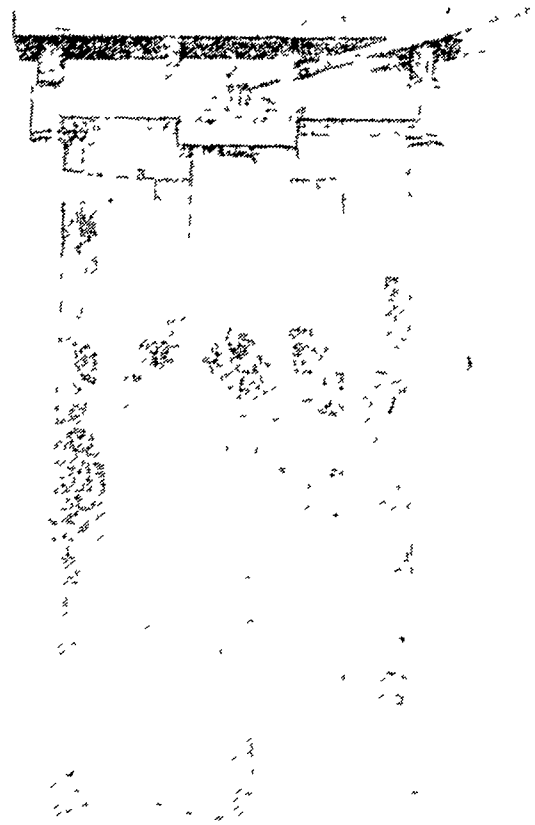
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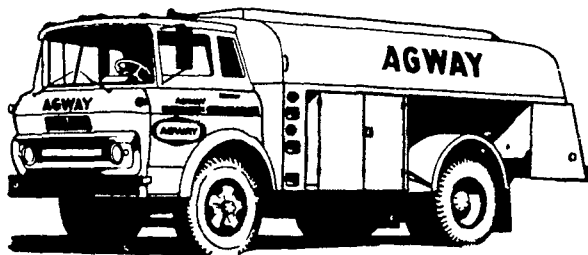
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