

Eminent domain bill moves to joint committee

HARRISBURG — SB 985 and SB 986 Wednesday were referred to a senate-house conference committee.

The two bills would allow private property taken by eminent domain to be turned back to the original property owner if the condemning agency had not used the land within a limited period of time.

The bills are being promoted by Senator Edwin G. Holl, Lansdale; and Representative Roosevelt Polite, Hatfield.

The Senate voted to non-concur with the two bills

because the legislation as written applies only to the Howard Knapp family of Montgomery County.

The Knapp land was condemned over 10 years ago by the North Penn School District. The district now wants to sell the land to a shopping center, and incidentally stands to reap huge profits in the bargain.

State Grange Master Charles Wismer, who has been shepherding the legislation through the Capital, said the move to non-concur was a good sign for the two bills.

The constitutionality of the

measures has been questioned since they would apply to only the Knapp family.

In the conference committee, the bills can be reworked to apply to anyone who is in a similar situation.

Both the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh school districts have objected to SB 985 and SB 986 because they have sizable holdings within their respective cities. They don't like the impact of the bills since they might have to offer the land back to its original owners at its original price.

The conference committee

is expected to rewrite the legislation so it applies only to Class II school districts. Most farmers are not too concerned about city schools since there is no sizable body of farmland in the city, anyway.

"We want to make sure this bill will win the day for the Knapps," Wismer said.

At present the bill would need to have an 11 year life to assure the Knapps of getting their property returned.

Present law eliminates return of land after three years.

Pennsylvania Farmers' Association also supports legislative action to lengthen the time period.

Wismer pointed out that the bill could move with an 11 year period written in to protect the Knapps and then be amended later to a shorter period.

Action on the two bills could be swift. The school district, unable to sell its land until the question is decided, wants a prompt resolution of the problem.

The Knapps and their supporters, too, want speedy action.

The Senate had acted on the legislation within a day or two of the time it was received. Once the committee reaches accord, it should move swiftly.

Another bill which is moving is HB 2406, the Scenic Rivers Act. This bill would include provisions for a pastoral district—one

which would define farmland as a natural use of rural land.

HB 2406 also would restrict eminent domain provisions for Scenic Rivers.

The bill has been reported out of the House Conservation Committee by unanimous vote. Observers say it should move within the next two weeks.

This week the Senate did not move on the milk security fund legislation, SB 1287. Since PFA held its legislative tour this week, the Senate seemed reluctant to take any action.

PFA has demanded a two cent contribution rate as required by its policy. All of the other involved parties agreed to a one cent contribution by dealers.

The conflict within agriculture has confused some non-farm and farm lawmakers, but Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Patrick Stapleton has indicated he will entertain no amendments except technical amendments on the bill as written, including the one cent rate.

Look for action on SB 1287 next week.—CH

PFA farm-city festival held

MOUNT JOY — "Farm life is good, worthwhile and satisfying. Let's hang on to it and not let it disappear."

This combined description and appeal by a Clearfield County farm wife was given at a Farm-City Festival Wednesday attended by Pennsylvania Cabinet members' wives and Ginny Thornburgh, wife of Gov. Dick Thornburgh.

The festival luncheon program, whose purpose is to help foster better understanding between farm and non-farm people, was held at the Lancaster County dairy farm of Elvin and Marion Brenneman, R1 Mount Joy.

The role of the farm wife and appeal for farm life preservation was outlined by Joyce Sankey, Clearfield County, before the combined audience of state government and PFA farm wives.

"The future will not be decided by what we think, know or say," Mrs. Sankey explained, "but by what we do."

She defined farming "as a family working together not only to produce food and fibre, but a way of life."

"It is joy and sorrow, work and play, happiness and despair and the raising of grain, animals, fruits and vegetables. But our best crop is our kids."

She called the family farm the most efficient agricultural operation in the world that is being phased

out of existence. Urging better understanding, she cited the need for continued involvement in affairs and activities affecting the future of the family farm.

Ginny Thornburgh briefly discussed the role of the wife of state governmental leaders, explaining her task was mainly one of learning at the meeting.

"It's really no different than that of any other wife," she said.

"When we were married, we took an important pledge to stand by that person and be as supportive as we can. Each of us made this same commitment.

"The press and public may look into our lives more closely than yours. Sometimes, this may be painful but it is a wonderful growth time."

Similar meetings to encourage better understanding were held at county and state levels in the nationwide program.

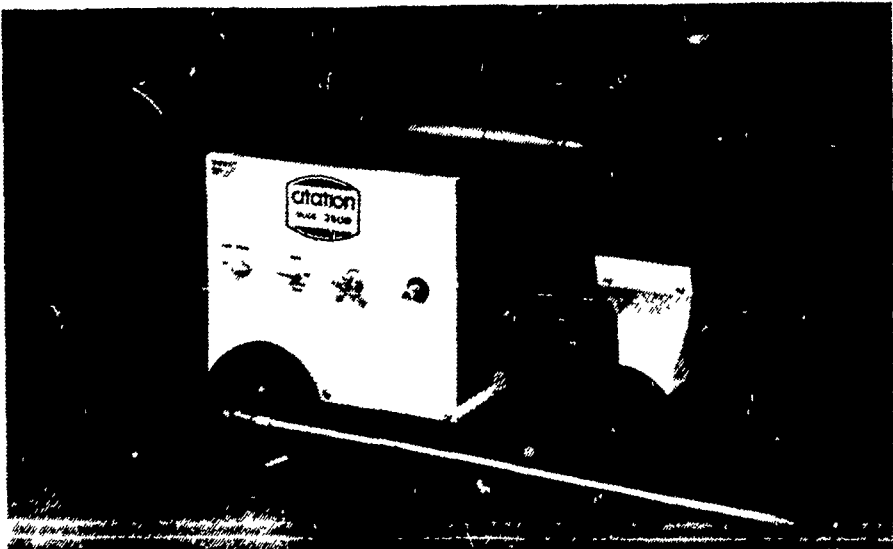
Attending cabinet wives were Irene Baran, wife of the secretary of general services; Isabel Dunn, wife of state police commissioner; Anne Muller, wife of secretary of health; Flo Scott, wife of adjutant general; Beth Bartle, wife of insurance commissioner; Charlotte Scanlon, wife of secretary of education; Elizabeth Biester, wife of attorney general; and Trish Hallowell, wife of secretary of agriculture.

PFA farm wives attending included Nellie Crawford, Juniata County, women's committee chairman; Martha Rhoades, Clarion County, vice chairman; Betty Weaver, Snyder County; Marion Brenneman, Lancaster County; Gloria Christman, Berks County; Frances Fetterolf, Centre County; Helen Jackson, Lawrence County; Cindi Kunz, Crawford County; Frances Lichtenwoler, Lehigh County; Miriam Long, Westmoreland County; Mildred Musselman, Adams County; Dorothy Repogle, Bedford County; Joyce Sankey, Clearfield County; Arlene Summers, Susquehanna County; Jean Tiffany, Bradford County; and LaVern Shafer, Schuylkill County.—DA



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