

Block breezes through confirmation hearings

WASHINGTON, D.C. — For John Block, the road to confirmation as the latest U.S. Secretary of Agriculture was smoothed by a diverse group of farm interests who testified on his behalf.

Block received final approval for the post Thursday on a unanimous vote of the full Senate.

Groups as liberal as the American Agriculture Movement and groups with special interests like the National Corn Growers Association were unanimous in their support of Block.

An Illinois hog and grain farmer, Block was nominated last month by President Ronald W. Reagan to serve in the nation's top farm post.

Those testifying said Block has the necessary balance of experience and technical know-how.

"John Block has proven himself as a progressive pork producer and a successful farmer," said Bill Buller, president of the National Pork Producers Council.

Buller said Block fits Reagan's description and promise to agriculture.

"He's a hands-on farmer with administrative and organizational experience," Buller said.

The American Agriculture Movement lavished praise on the new USDA leader in his testimony before members of the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee.

AAM Chairman Marvin Meek told the senators he

talked to about 20,000 farmers in 35 separate meetings and had not found a single farmer opposed to Block.

The National Farmers Union also submitted what was termed a laudatory statement. NFU President George Stone said Block has the qualifications and attitude to be an effective Secretary of Agriculture if the White House gives him the decision-making power.

Illinois Farmers Union President Harold Dodd, who gave the testimony, spoke highly of the man who was involved with Farmers Union activities in Illinois.

A recurring theme in the various statements offered was the grain embargo imposed by the previous administration to show American disapproval of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

Block termed the Carter Administration's partial embargo on grain shipments to Russia a mistake.

But Block's strong support of exports is not the total answer, warned AAM's Meek.

Farmers have had tremendous increases in exports the last 20 years, yet prices hit depression levels last year, Meek testified.

Pork producers said they were concerned about promised budget cutbacks from the Reagan administration.

In their testimony they urged Block to establish priorities for research



John R. Block

"We believe John Block has the wisdom to arrange proper priorities, the ability to motivate leadership, and the toughness to endure the pressures and stress brought on by narrow special interest groups who would encourage him to compromise the principles of those priorities," the Pork Council testified.

It all added up to a big vote of confidence in Reagan's agriculture nominee, but the organizations were quick to establish the idea that they expect action once Block is at work.

Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina, Chairman of the Committee, said, "I am most impressed with the way Jack Block has presented himself to this Committee. He has the makings for one of the nation's greatest Secretaries of Agriculture."

Senator Walter Huddleston of Kentucky,

minority leader on the Committee, said, "I congratulate President-elect Reagan on attracting Mr. Block to serve in government." He said he was impressed with answers Block had given the Committee and said he felt he

would make an outstanding Secretary of Agriculture.

Other Senators on the Committee also spoke highly of Block during the meeting Monday that lasted approximately 30 minutes.

The Senate Ag Committee Monday cleared Block for

the confirmation vote by the full Senate.

Following that vote, Block's next task is to establish himself in Washington and provide the leadership which earned him his position in the new cabinet.—CH

Receive achievement awards



Steve Pierson, left, of Norristown was the recipient of the Al Patterson Award, presented annually for outstanding achievement, at the Montgomery County 4-H Sheep Program Achievement Night held in Lansdale. Leader Warren Landis of Souderton, center, also presented the Good Housekeeping Award to Greg Myers of Ambler, based on his work at the 4-H Fair. The winners are members of Green Pasture 4-H Sheep Club.

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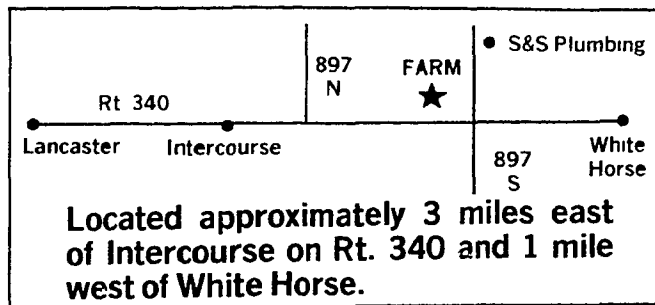
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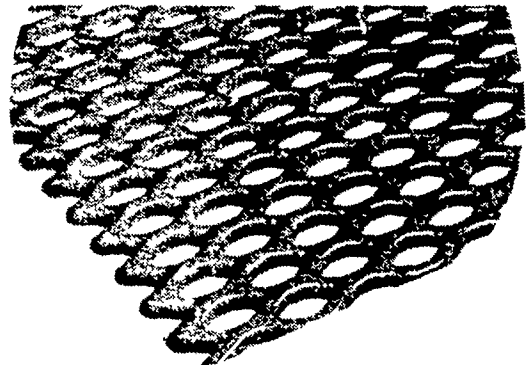


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