

Chester-Delaware farmers hold spring gathering

GUTHRIESVILLE — Over 80 farm families broke bread together with county commissioners and county legislators at the spring dinner meeting of the Chester-Delaware County Farmers' Association at the Guthriesville Fire Hall, Thursday evening.

Committee reports, a dues increase and a talk by Chester Heim, Deputy Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture filled the evening.

"Government is not a substitute for the market place," Heim told the group. "Farmers and the Farmers' Association must take hold of the marketing of farm products. Government doesn't have the final answer to all problems, no matter what the business. Basic solutions will be made back home in the towns and in the rural areas."

Heim cited the grain embargo as a good example of what government can do to damage farmer's income.

"Inflation," Heim said, "is escalating costs for producing food. The costs exceed the income from producing that food. The balance sheet for agriculture, does not balance

"Farmers last year, had a seventy-seven dollar net loss per week due to inflation. There was a 7.18 percent rise in farm prices last year — but a 12 percent increase in inflation in the same period. Unless people in this country recognize the importance of the agricultural industry, everyone will pay the price in higher food costs. Members of the Farmers' Association must tell the agricultural story to the city consumers.

"To preserve farm land, we must first preserve the farm family," Heim emphasized. "When farming is profitable, farmers will not sell their land for development.

"More good legislation has been passed in the last two years than in a long time," Heim pointed out.

He listed the reduction of inheritance tax and the capital franchise tax exemption for small farms as examples.

He noted that there were 14 other bills applying only to agriculture passed in the state legislature in that period.

"The closer to home we can grow our food, the less energy will be used for transportation of food

from California, Washington and other western states. It is now easier for Chester County Farmers to compete with the western farmers," Heim pointed out.

"This metropolitan area (surrounding Chester County) is a deficit area for food production less than half the milk, eggs and other agricultural products that are eaten here, are produced here. Farmers' Association members need to take advantage of the new communications and data processing technology to market local farm products in the local areas.

"Chester is the second largest agricultural county in Pennsylvania. Over 900,000 people are employed in agriculture in Pennsylvania, making it the second largest industry. Agriculture could well be the most important industry in another year or two. There is a bright future for agriculture if we do the right things.

"If farmers will become more involved with the marketing procedure, there is a bright future for those willing to work at it during the 80's," Heim concluded.

Leon Wilkinson, Landenberg,

Chairman of the Legislative Committee, reported on their trip to Washington and Harrisburg.

In Washington, they asked for 1) repeal of the Davis-Bacon act, 2) a definition of the difference between a farm worker and a migrant worker and 3) asked that the inheritance tax exemption be raised to \$500,000, he said.

At the Harrisburg meeting, the committee requested adoption of a once-a-year inspection of vehicles and consideration of the property tax issue.

Wilkinson emphasized that other tax methods such as a business use and occupancy tax might create more problems than it would cure.

Al Bartels, West Grove, Chairman of the Advisory Council Committee said that six councils are now meeting monthly throughout the county.

He encouraged other farm families to get together to form councils. These councils discuss current farm problems, then suggest possible solutions which lead to policy resolutions and procedures that are voted on at county, state and national meetings.

Tom Wilkinson, Chairman of the

Membership Committee, said that membership was down a few members this year. It is expected that by starting earlier next year that the membership can be increased.

He said Janet Robinson, Nottingham, newsletter editor, had volunteered time and effort to keep track of the membership program.

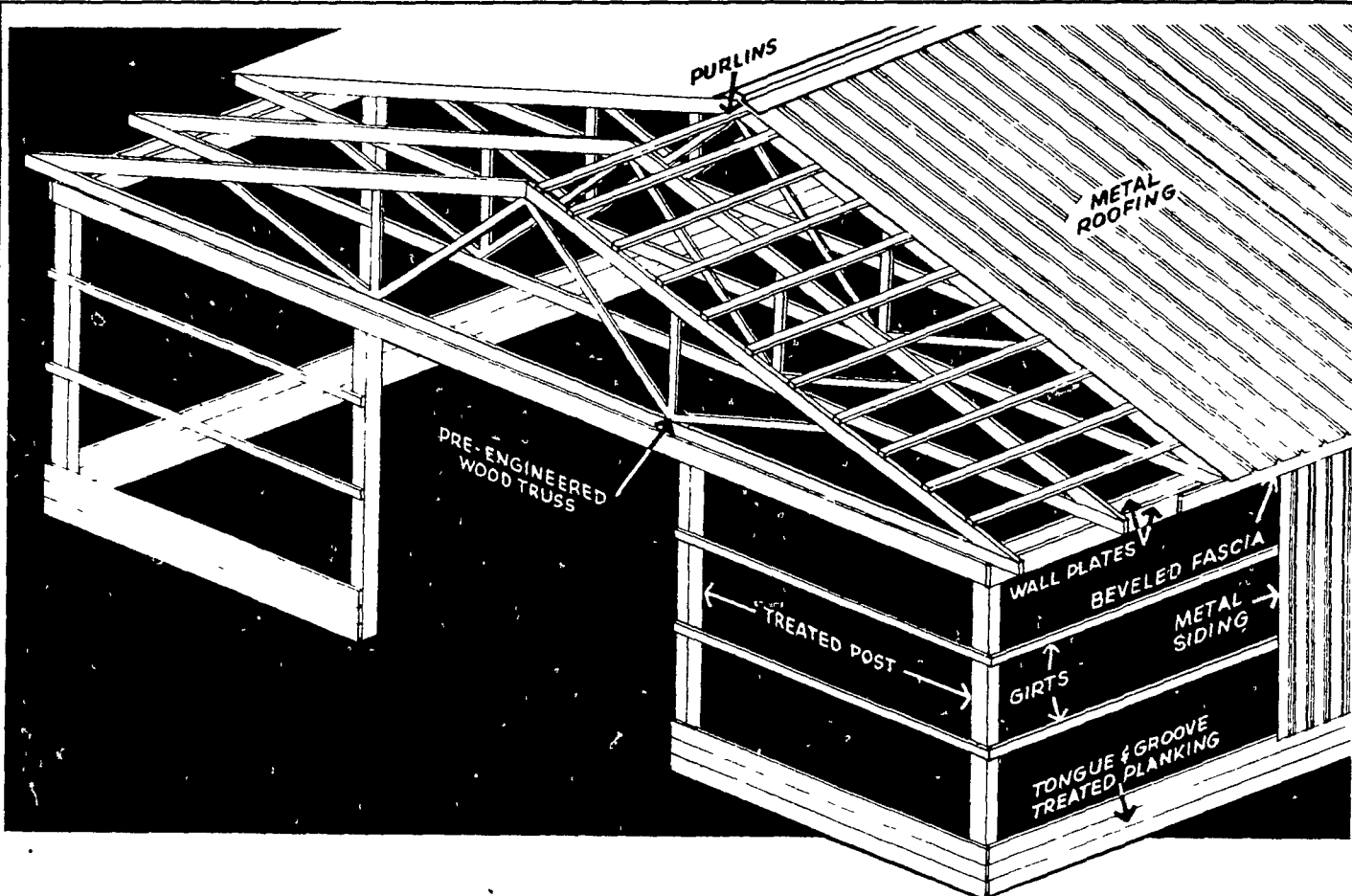
Mitch Edwards, Insurance representative, Oxford, said that, "there has been a 30 percent decrease in workmen's compensation premiums. This has been accomplished by keeping track of actual losses, proving that compensation payments in the agricultural sector were actually lower than projected."

He also told association members that PFA is now carrying federal crop insurance programs.

Members voted to raise 1982 dues to \$50. \$8.75 stays in the county for county programs. The remainder is passed on for state and national activities.

Mary Hawthorne, Coatesville, Co-Chairman of the Farm City program asked members to open their farms for farm-city visitations held in October. Announcements and promotional

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