

Grangers celebrate Pa. Grange Week

BY SHEILA MILLER

HERSHEY — More than 150 Grangers from across Pennsylvania converged at the Convention Center here on Tuesday evening to celebrate the proclamation of Pennsylvania Grange Week, April 19-26.

Secretary of Agriculture Penrose Hallowell presented Governor Dick Thornburgh's official proclamation to State Grange Master Charles Wismer. Hallowell remarked, "The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and the Thornburgh

Administration are striving to help farmers work together more than ever before."

On hand for the evening banquet were 19 of the 29 state legislators who are members of the Grange, along with Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Luther Snyder.

Making the most of his attentive audience, State Master Wismer highlighted the Grange's concerns. He commented the Pennsylvania Grange is:

concerned about the agricultural budget which is not felt to be a fair share of the

Governor's budget;

in favor of increased gas taxes to provide adequate funding to repair rural roads and bridges;

in favor of turning Class 6 roads back, on a voluntary basis, to local municipalities;

in favor of the present State Store system;

for a noxious weed bill to provide an easier process to declare certain weeds as noxious, especially multiflora rose;

for welfare reform so needy people are helped and people taking advantage of the system are cut;

in favor of stray voltage research as the number one project for agricultural research funding; and

opposed to the Scenic River Act and its eminent domain provision which limits the development of hydroelectric plants.

Wismer highlighted some of the new programs offered by the Grange this year, including the insurance program and the food program. The food program offers various commodities to members at a reduced price and is run in cooperation with Eastern Milk Producers' Cooperative, Canton.

Speaking to the group on liberty,

generosity, and patriotism was Dieter Krieg, editor of Farmshine.

Prior to the evening's festivities, several afternoon sessions of the legislative and energy committees were held with 30 Grange members in attendance. They heard from state and utility representatives on a number of 'hot' topics.

Gary German of the Department of Environmental Resources spoke to them about the revised state regulations relating to food establishments. These regulations require all food sold to the public to be prepared in a licensed kitchen and not in the home, and ban homecanned foods.

These are not new regulations, having been on the books since 1945 and updated in 1968. However, German, who is chief of the Division of Food Protection, said the current proposed revisions are designed to clarify the outdated and bureaucratic terminology in the regulations, according to Linda Boyer, the Grange public relations officer.

"He opened up a can of worms," she said, citing the Grange's concerns on how these revisions could affect their kitchens, along with those of churches and fairs.

Boyer noted the DER official

explained the regulations don't apply to private functions of the Grange where meals can be cooked outside of licensed kitchen and served to members. However, if the Grange Hall is serving any outside group, a license is required.

German assured the Grange members the new revisions would not affect their food establishments any more than in the past, Boyer said.

Other topics of discussion included: the new food bill, which would put all food inspection under the Department of Agriculture; ag districts; fertilizer law; road and bridge bonding and the SWAP tax; annual versus semi-annual vehicle inspections; and nuclear power plants.

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State Grange Master Charles Wismer accepts the official proclamation signed by Governor Thornburgh declaring Pennsylvania Grange Week. Making the presentation is Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture Penrose Hallowell.



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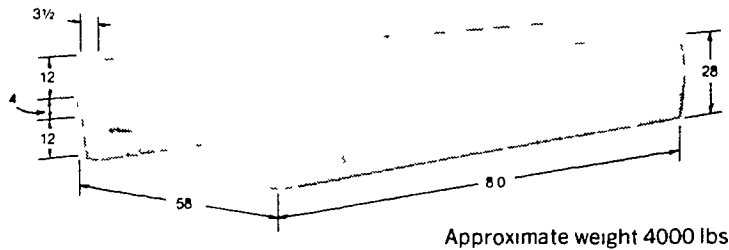
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