

'Block Vote' Bill

(Continued from Page D2)

farmers.

House Bill 767 seeks to amend the Pennsylvania Agricultural Commodities Marketing Act of 1968, which sanctioned cooperative bloc voting.

Our organization polled every state represented by the National Farmers Union and discovered that Pennsylvania was the only state issuing carte blanche voting rights to cooperatives in commodity referendums. The accepted practice of cooperatives in other states is to let the individual producer decide if a mandatory advertising program is suitable for their commodity.

If HB 767 is enacted, it will restore the co-op member's right to control the result of a referendum by voting for, against or deciding not to vote.

By allowing cooperatives to bloc vote for its membership, the co-op automatically assumes that all "no-show" votes are in agreement with that cooperative board's decision. The last referendum that relied heavily on cooperative bloc voting was the 1973 milk referendum. Of the number of cooperatives casting bloc votes, only eight of the thirty five agreed with the majority of individual producers who cast ballots.

For example, one cooperative cast its bloc votes in favor of the referendum, but 90 percent of the votes cast by individual producers disagreed with the co-op's decision. Farmers Union members feel a cooperative is remiss to assume that all no show votes are

in agreement with the opinion of the board, especially, when the voting members do disagree at such a substantial rate.

When the referendum vote concerns a mandatory promotion program, shouldn't the ultimate decision be in the hands of each producer and not the co-op board? We have yet to see a cooperative agreement stating that the co-op board shall cast the votes of all members who fail to vote.

If the political parties in this country were given permission to bloc vote for its registered members who failed to vote, the electorate would be up in arms. Think of the havoc bloc voting would cause to our representative form of government.

The same havoc is occurring in rural Pennsylvania. Farmers want to have sole control of their vote in referendums, even if it means exercising their right not to vote.

To clarify a question earlier submitted by a member of this committee, an elected official in the General Assembly does not bloc vote for his constituents. His vote on legislation is a representative form of voting. If his decisions do not coincide with the wishes of his constituents, they have the power to vote him out of office.

In a cooperative structure, members elect delegates who then vote for cooperative board members. The cooperative board member, who decides which way a bloc vote is submitted, is not at the mercy of his members. His seat on the board was chosen by delegates.

So in reality, he is one step removed from the democratic process.

In response to other portions of HB 767, we feel that a three year review of the marketing order is time enough for producers to determine whether they are investing their dollars wisely. Under current law, if a program does not meet the expectations of the producer, he must continue to subsidize it for a five year period. We feel a three year review is an adequate time frame in which to determine the effectiveness of a marketing order.

HB 767 also increases the votes needed for passage of a referendum from a simple majority and 50 percent of production, to a two-thirds majority without regard to production.

By eliminating the production clause, the individual producer stands to gain on two points. First, it would simplify the process of conducting check-offs. Tabulating production in addition to total votes is a complicated and costly formula. Secondly, by taking production into account, the vote of a farmer who produces an abundant supply of that commodity has a stronger vote than the small family farmer with less production. So a man with a million dollars has a stronger voice than a man with a thousand dollars.

By eliminating production considerations and increasing the votes needed for passage of a referendum, administrative costs for tabulation will also be reduced. Under the basic principles of a democracy, the concept of "one man-one vote", with each vote carrying the same weight, is the cornerstone of a free society. The farmers of Pennsylvania,

however, do not have this same basic freedom in commodity referendum votes.

Many of the cooperatives testifying have said that House Bill 767 will inhibit them from adequately representing their membership in commodity referendums. What they fail to mention is that bloc voting contradicts the main principles that guide cooperatives.

The Rochdale Principles, which date back to 1844, are the basic rules that most member-owned cooperatives follow. The Rochdale Principles clearly state that the co-op is democratically controlled, with each member having an equal vote. There is no consideration for production or monetary status, and each member controls his own vote.

Current law is a direct defiance to these set of guidelines that cooperatives have followed for over a century. House Bill 767 will change all that.

In closing, may I say that the Pennsylvania Farmers Union is

not attempting to be anti-cooperative. In fact, the Farmers Union has a long and illustrious history of forming farmer-owned cooperatives. National Farmers Union has organized more cooperatives in the last 79 years than all other organizations combined.

Our main concern is that each farmer in this state has an equal vote, equal representation and full control of their own vote. Producers in Pennsylvania are responsible enough to make their own decisions, especially when it comes to mandatory advertising. If advertising is a good thing in the eyes of the producer, the vote will reflect it under the proposals of House Bill 767.

But under current law, the mandate of an advertising program is controlled by the wishes of a cooperative board, and not the individual farmer. For these reasons, the Pennsylvania Farmers Union is in full support of House Bill 767.

Luzerne agent presents paper at nat'l meeting

NANTICOKE — E.V. Chadwick, Luzerne County Extension director, has been selected to present a Search for Excellence paper Monday at the annual meeting of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents at Cornell University. Chadwick's paper on ad-

ministrative management was judged a state and northeastern United States regional winner.

He is one of 21 county Extension agents from throughout the United States named to take part in the national association's professional improvement program.

PAUL B.

Zimmerman

INC.

SELF LOCKING FEED THRU FENCE



THREE SIZES:

SMALL -
For Calves
Up To 15
Months Old

ADJUSTABLE-
For Heifers & Cows
8 Months And
Older (Pictured)

LARGE -
For Cows
15 Months
And Older

- * All cows can be released at one time or individually
- * When handle is in lock position, cow automatically locks as it enters
- * No more chasing cows

- * Heavy duty construction
- * Stabilizer on bottom of yoke for extra strength
- * Custom built to your specifications
- * You can release all cows or hold cows that need treatment

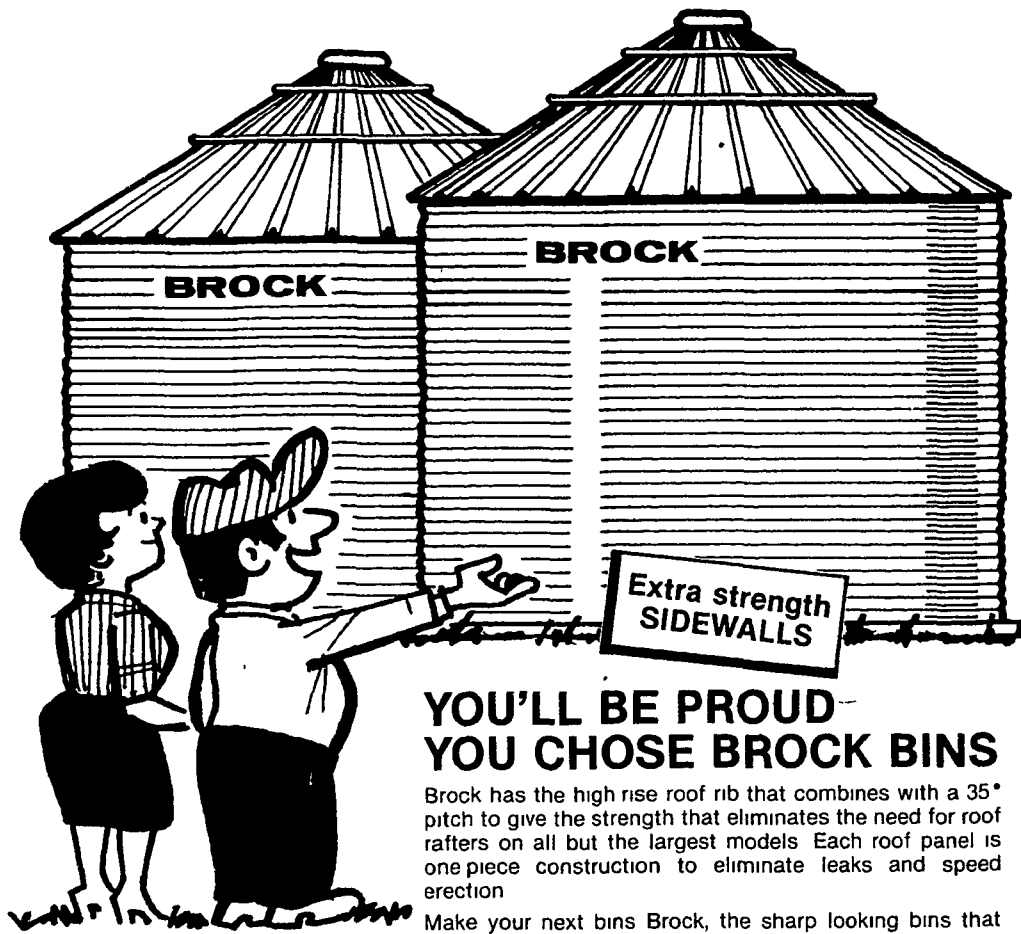
ALSO AVAILABLE

- Standard Free Stalls
- Gates (38" - 48" - 54" high)
- Fencing
- Automatic Head Gates
- Automatic Gate Latches

PAUL B. ZIMMERMAN, INC.

Hardware • Farm Supplies
Custom Manufacturing
Crane Service

Box 128 R D #4, Lititz, PA 17543
Wood Corner Rd
1 Mile West of Ephrata
Phone 717-738-1121



YOU'LL BE PROUD YOU CHOSE BROCK BINS

Brock has the high rise roof rib that combines with a 35° pitch to give the strength that eliminates the need for roof rafters on all but the largest models. Each roof panel is one piece construction to eliminate leaks and speed erection.

Make your next bins Brock, the sharp looking bins that have a maximum of safety, convenience and construction features. The bins that make you proud.

Brock has over 300 dual purpose and commercial bins in 15' through 90' diameters

BROCK®
GRAIN BINS AND FEED BINS

AGRI-EQUIPMENT, INC.

CATTLE - HOG - POULTRY EQUIPMENT

2754 Creek Hill Rd., Leola, PA 17540
PHONE: 717-656-4151

STORE HOURS: Mon.-Fri. 7:30 to 4:30; Sat. 7:30 to 11:30
SERVING PA, N.J. AND N.Y.

See Us At AG PROGRESS DAYS, AUG. 25-27

AGRI-EQUIPMENT INC., OFFERS COMPLETE • SALES • INSTALLATION • SERVICE