

Hearings cite preservation and parity

HARRISBURG — Farmland preservation, milk parity and an even greater increase in the farm inheritance tax exemption were among the concerns spelled out to U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter in hearings on farm problems in Harrisburg on Monday.

Specter chaired the hearings Monday morning as a member of the Agriculture Subcommittee and its parent Senate Appropriations Committee.

Two Lancaster Countians spoke out in favor of the federal government and the Reagan administration taking a firm policy stand in favor of farmland preservation.

Pro-preservation statements were given by Amos H. Funk, of Millersville, noted preservation leader; and Jesse Wood, of Nottingham, chairman of the Agriculture Committee of the Pennsylvania State Grange.

"I believe it is important that Reagan enunciate a national policy and go on record that it's vital to protect our agricultural land," Funk said.

Funk went on to commend Congress for directing the National Agricultural Land Study. He recommended that the federal government set policy within and

among the 37 agencies which have input on land use throughout the country to help guarantee the preservation of productive farmland.

"There is no best effective method for farmland preservation that will work in all parts of the country," Funk continued.

"But efforts should be concentrated on the local level with farmers having a direct participation in their program."

Funk also favored financial incentive for long-term guarantees by farmers to retain land in productive agriculture.

In addition to farmland preservation, Wood testified on behalf of State Grange interest in adequate money for soil and water conservation practices in any agricultural funding for Agriculture Conservation Programs.

Grange policy favors \$300 million in federal funding for ACP in the upcoming year.

In addition to speaking out for continuation of the REA program, Paul Tetherow, assistant general manager of the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, favored a sound lending program for the Farmers Home Administration.

"We don't want farmers more at the mercy of the huge banking interests," he said.

"They'd just be caught in a tighter squeeze if de-regulation allows the city banks to buy up the smaller rural banks."

"And the inheritance tax exemption should be at least a million dollars for a farm."

But the hike in the exemption from \$175,000 to \$600,000 is a step in the right direction, Specter commented.

Tetherow also called for upgrading of the inland waterway system. He explained that a gallon of diesel moves farm products 75 ton miles by truck, 250 ton miles by railroad and 400 ton miles by barge.

Also testifying was Harold Ely, a dairy farmer, from Montrose and president of the Pennsylvania Association of Farmer Cooperatives.

Specter questioned him quite closely on the effects of the waiver

of the April 1 milk support and the level that parity should be set in the farm bill.

"Seventy-five percent is a must for parity," Ely said.

"And 80 percent would keep young farmers in business who are going to be squeezed out."

Ely explained he has seen some dairy farm sales, mostly by elderly people who have had it.

"The young farmers will be able to hang in for about another year,"

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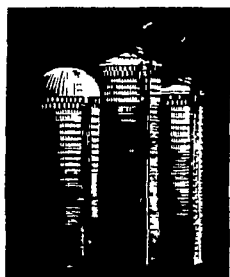
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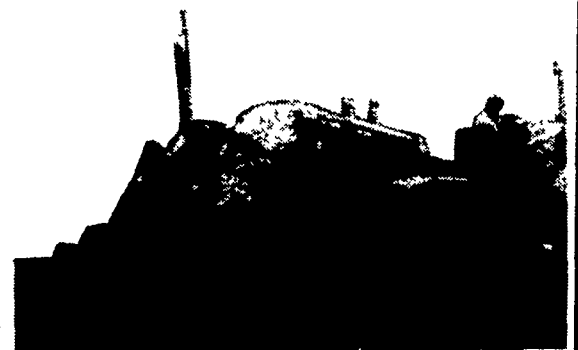
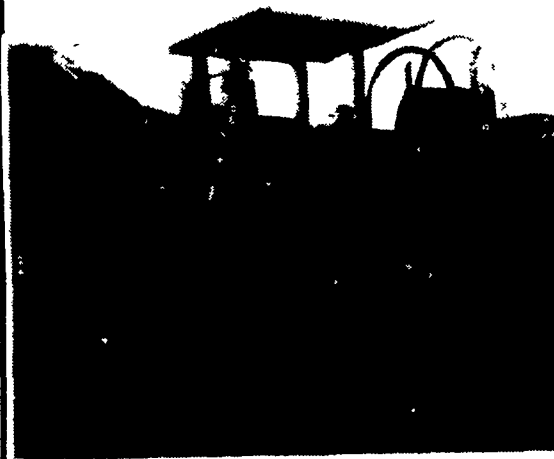
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