

Conservation conference focuses on water legislation

BUTLER — Several speakers at the 34th Annual Conference of the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation District Directors meeting in Butler recently urged support of the \$300 million state water bond issue to be voted on in the November 3 election.

According to George Wolff, president, voters will be asked to approve a loan program to help finance the revitalization and rehabilitation of the state's many community water systems. Wolff pointed to the fact that 198 water supply dams in the state are unsafe according to the Department of Environmental Resources and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers inspectors. Wolff said an approval vote is needed for the public's safety and health.

Other speakers at the conservation meeting who urged support of the bond issue were Secretary of Transportation Thomas Larsen, Representative Harry Bittle, chairman of the House Conservation Committee, and Charles Wismer, master of the Pennsylvania Grange.

Representative Bittle also urged support of the Water Resources Management bill. He stated the bill is not perfect, but through public hearings and other inputs, the bill can meet the water planning, conservation, and management needs by the establishment of the Water Resources Management Code.

Secretary Larsen stated he is

firmly committed to conservation. Larsen discussed the program for rural transportation and the overall transportation funding situation. He thanked conservation district staffs for their assistance on erosion and sediment control on highway projects.

Striking a balance on energy was the theme of a panel consisting of Jack Fraim, Gulf Oil Corporation; Duane Clarke, Montgomery County Conservation District chairman and environmental specialist at Rohm and Haas Company; and Thomas McCloskey, Hooks and McCloskey Environmental Consultants. The consensus was that economics will result in the conservation of energy, that energy can be developed safely, and that there is a need to find other sources.

Other major issues centered around abandoned stripe mine funding and federal funding cuts. Concern was expressed over the fact that the federal government is not releasing the monies paid by the coal mining industry. President Wolff reported over \$600 million is now in federal coffers from a per ton fee paid for coal mined.

Twenty percent of this money is to be released to the Secretary of Agriculture for restoring abandoned coal mined land to a useful purpose, but this has not happened, reports Wolff. The Pennsylvania Association of Conservation District Directors voted

to form a national coalition of the 29 states with abandoned coal mine land to obtain release of the funds.

The Association also voted to oppose the federal spending cuts to conservation agencies. Wolff added that this state has been taking cuts for the past ten years while other parts of the nation are getting more. "If we cut more, the program may become ineffective."

A panel consisting of Charles Wismer, Pennsylvania State Grange; Joan Jessen, Penn-

sylvania League of Women Voters; Christopher Allen, Pennsylvania Farmers Association; and Mary Ann Rimby, Berks Conservation District, questioned Walter Peechatka, director of the DER Bureau of Soil and Water Conservation, about future programs of the Bureau and State Conservation Commission. Peechatka forecasted lean funding for all levels of government and recommended that USDA service the farmer's conservation needs and the state and Districts con-

centrate on urban and other soil erosion areas.

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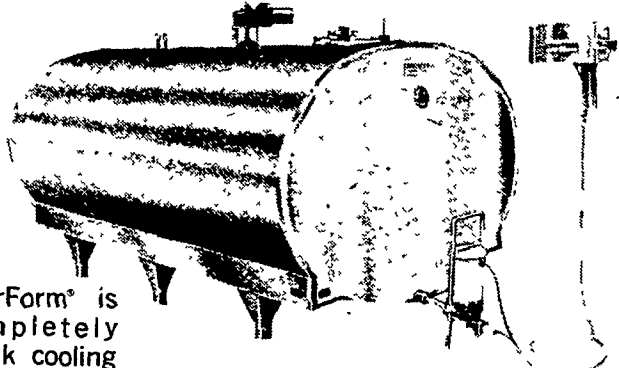
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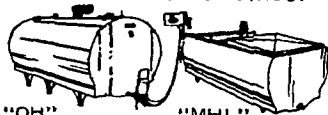
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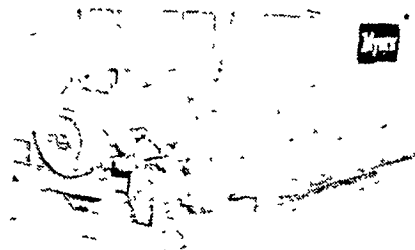
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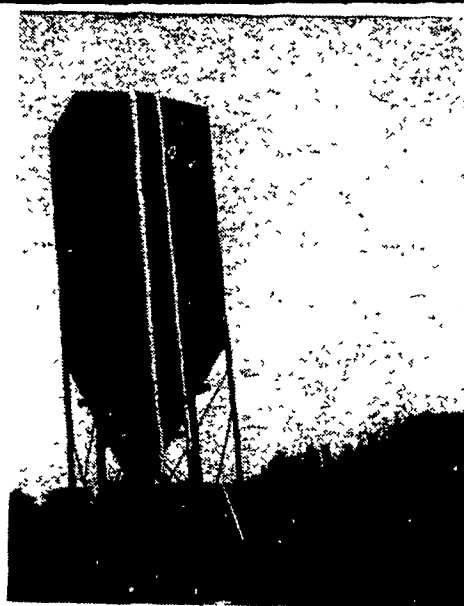


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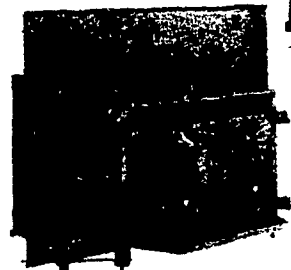
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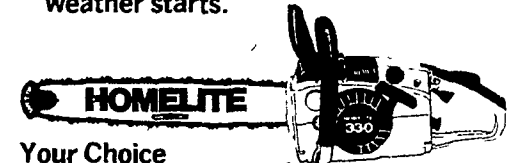
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