

Nat'l Grange adopts transportation, energy, labor resolutions

SPOKANE, Wash. — During the last day of deliberation at its annual convention on Monday, the National Grange adopted resolutions insuring a farm to market transportation system including highways, railroads and waterways.

The Grange is urging both House of Congress to agree on an interstate cost estimate to enable the Department of Transportation to apportion new interstate funds to the states.

In another area, the preliminary information from the federal government indicates a radical change in formula for calculating fair shares for highway vehicle taxes. The Grange believes the incremental system of calculating and attributing costs to different weight classes of vehicles is fair. The proposed new system would transfer increased tax burdens to small independent truckers. The Grange wants to retain the incremental system.

In rail transportation, agriculture is faced with abandonment of many branch lines by certain railroads who are crying "unprofitable operations". These lines appear unprofitable because they have been separated from the original land grants given to the railroads as an inducement for construction and operation. The land grants are, for the most part, still valuable and profitable. The Grange believes the railroads should retain their original obligation to continue the operation of these branch lines.

Grange policy also favors continued rebate of federal and state fuel taxes on fuels used in non-highway agricultural production. The Grange also supports continued enforcement of the 55 mph speed limit. The farm leaders also recommend federal legislation that would require the states to permit at least 80,000 lbs. gross vehicle weight, 60 ft. length for tractor-semi trailers and 65 ft. length for twin trailers and other combinations in truck service. Maximum weights would continue to be determined by states in

compliance with the federal "bridge" formula.

The National Grange also voted to support further construction and operation of nuclear power plants until a better energy alternative is developed. Grange delegates also continue to support for hydro power development at all possible locations. They urged all governmental agencies to facilitate the greatest development possible at every feasible site, including off-stream storage and low-head bulb turbines where adaptable.

In the search for alternative sources of fuel, the Grange encourages legislation to promote incentives for private industry to pursue commercial production of alcohol for gasohol or as a fuel in its pure form.

The Grange expressed concern for an adequate fuel supply when seasonal demands are upon the agricultural industry. In as much as the law provides for emergency distribution of gasohol and diesel fuel for agricultural production and marketing has expired, the delegates to this convention passed a resolution calling for the re-authorization for 1 year of the Emergency Petroleum Allocation Act.

"Cleaner air, rather than clear air, should be our objectives," the Grange said in its proposal for amendments to the Clean Air Act.

They said that it is unrealistic to strive for and impossible to achieve totally clean air. The National Grange is urging Congress to pursue a course that will best protect agricultural interests, relieve automotive passenger and freight users and carriers of costly and unnecessary restrictions and protect the physical and economic health of industry and the general public.

As to clean water, the Grange recommends that adequate state and federal funds be provided for any soil or water conservation program required by the Clean Water Act amendments of 1977. They said there is a more definition of navigable waters that needs to be established by

Congress in order to clarify the responsibility of the Corps of Engineers under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

The farm leaders said it is time to untie the hands of the farmers who may wish to develop wetlands into productive farms. The National Grange is urging Congress to delegate to the states the responsibility of dredge and fill permit authority currently administered by the U.S. Corps of Engineers. The Grange will ask President Reagan to immediately rescind executive orders 11968 and 11990 to fully restore the provision of technical assistance by the Soil Conservation Service to farmers desiring to increase productive agricultural acreage.

The National Grange is dedicated to the effort to achieve soil and water conservation. In the face of announced changes the Grange will monitor the development of new USDA conservation programs to assure that states and counties continue to receive a fair portion of cost-share assistance and that no block grant funds be spent for state administrative costs.

In labor matters, the Grange supports the rights of individuals

to organize into collective bargaining associations and encourages two-way discussion and a binding arbitration clause in labor contracts. Grange delegates from 37 states meeting here this week support the President in upholding the law that government employees are prohibited from striking and will oppose any bill that would allow them to strike.

There is support in the Grange for the President in his call for legislation to revise and toughen the federal criminal code. The Grange is concerned that the rights of a victim of a crime are often ignored, while the rights of the criminal are protected. The Grange believes there should be provision for the criminal to repay for the victim's loss. As to prisoner care, the Grange supports adequate detention facilities that are clean and sufficiently modern to allow for the basic needs of inmates and maximum safety for prison employees, but opposes any expenditures for prisoner luxuries.

The Grange is calling for a change of our judicial process by encouraging a thorough review to determine how best to reduce the enormous cost of lengthy court trials and appeals. While the

Grange oppose attempts to legislate gun control, they support the enforcement of existing rules and regulations pertaining to the ownership, purchase or registration of firearms.

The Grange opposes the establishment of a commission to draft a "farm worker bill of rights". There is need for legislation to prevent dock strikes which interrupt the flow of grain, soybeans and other farm commodities to overseas customers.

Delegates at the 115th annual convention of the National Grange called for the repeal of the Davis-Bacon Act of 1931. In an effort to enhance the employment opportunities of inexperienced youth, the National Grange recommends that 16-19 year olds be paid at 75% of the federal minimum wage.

The Grange calls for legislation to adjust immigration laws and regulations to limit the quota of refugees and provide for the deportation of criminals and undesirables.

Thousands of Grange members were in the audience when Brad and Sylvia Crumpler of Colbert, WA, Dale Clark of Sterling, CT, and Laurie Purcell of Washington,

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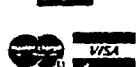
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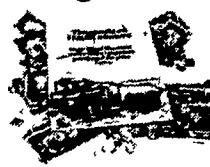
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