

Legislative tour

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light" and the bill will "stay dead."

When asked about the budget hearings, Helfrick assured the group that he will "try my darndest to get as much money as I can for agriculture. But, I don't like to make any promises. When it comes to the budget, we have to trade things off and make the best deal we can."

Acknowledging the fact that agriculture is now the number one industry in Pennsylvania, Helfrick stated, "Farmers think they should have some clout now, and I think so too."

Moving over to the House side, ten representatives met with about 50 PFA members in the spacious, elegant House chambers. Hearing the legislators' viewpoints as they sat in the lawmakers' seats Monday afternoon was an unexpected treat for the farmers whose numbers outgrew the previously assigned meeting room.

Leading the session was Lancaster's Noah Wenger. He was joined by fellow Lancaster legislators June Honaman (R-97th), Gibson Armstrong (R-100th), Nicholas Moelmann (R-102nd), Marvin Miller (R-96th), Earl Smith (R-13th), and Richard Brandt (R-98th). Representing Chester County, Samuel Morris (D-155th) and Joseph Pitts (R-158th) took time to meet with the farmers. Even Delaware County's Gerald Spitz (R-162nd) was on hand to hear what the farmers had to say.

Of major concern to the PFA delegates and the legislators were S.B. 1085-1086, the Property Tax bills that would amend the Public School Code of 1949. These are the bills that provide for the controversial Business Use and Oc-

cupancy Tax on commercial, industrial, and agricultural property.

The legislators admitted their concern about the passage of these bills to the assembled farmers. Wenger assured the group that he will try to amend the bills to eliminate the BUOT or vote against them since this tax would be "devastating" to farmers.

House Agriculture and Urban Affairs chairman Joseph Grieco (R-84th) met with farmers in his office in Room 315 of the Capitol Building. Addressing S.B. 1085-1086, he said he looked for the bills to be amended or returned to committee.

"I don't see the bills passing. I don't know of any organization that's for the bill — the School Board's against it, the Chamber is against it, industry's against it, and farmers are against it," he said.

Focusing his attention on H.B. 1483, the water legislation introduced last year to amend Title 32 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statute, Grieco stated the bill is designed to protect rural areas and farmers against the possibility of large industry capturing all the water in an area.

"Water will be the biggest concern over the next 20 years," Grieco predicted. "Eventually, it will come down to whoever digs the deepest well will get all the water."

Although he favors the concept, Grieco said he is against the bill in its present form. When asked if he would like to have H.B. 1483 in the House Ag Committee rather than having to watch it in the House Conservation Committee, Grieco expressed "I'd love to have that bill, but I won't get it. You can be sure, though, that all the ag

members will keep an open mind on water."

Forecasting the future of Noah Wenger's H.B. 2167 which would permit cooperative dividend ceilings to float at two points under the average treasury bill rate for the twelve months preceding the dividend declaration date, Grieco said emphatically, "It will pass. Eight percent was just not enough money." The bill was reported to the House floor for consideration after passing unanimously out of the ag committee last week.

When asked how his State Beverage Bill was coming, Grieco laughed and said H.B. 1351 is still in the Senate ag committee. Introduced last April, this bill would designate milk as the official beverage of Pennsylvania.

"For some reason, this bill has been opposed in the Senate ag committee. One Senator is trying to amend the bill to designate soft drink as the official drink and another is threatening to propose beer," Grieco chuckled. Despite these childish setbacks, the jovial legislator expressed optimism that the bill might become law before June Dairy Month since the jokester senator has agreed to withdraw his amendment and has said he will not oppose the bill, or even vote on it.

As the afternoon of lobbying for agriculture drew to a close, the farmers invited their legislators to share an evening meal with them at the Penn Harris.

In what was described as a "good, but not a record" turnout, the PFA guests and members listened as President Keith Eckel boasted agriculture's number one status as an industry in the state and reminded the legislators that Pennsylvania is the leading farm state in the Northeast. He reiterated PFA's opposition to a proposed Business Use and Oc-

cupancy tax and the need for farmland preservation laws.

"Our (PFA) policy calls for a comprehensive land use plan to be established in the Commonwealth," stated Eckel. "This plan would enable state and local governments to purchase development rights from farmers

for them restricting their land to agricultural or open spaces.

"This solution is not painless. It will require the public's support and money. But when you consider the alternatives — fewer acres of cropland, more susceptibility to bad weather, higher food prices — we think it's worth the cost and we believe the public agrees."

Short-term pork outlook offers glimmer of hope

DES MOINES, Ia. — On Monday, members of the National Pork Producers Council predicted the short term outlook for pork is bright.

"The combination of several events happening over the last week are a very positive sign for the pork industry," said John Saunders, NPPC president.

Foremost on the positive side is the recent USDA hog and pig report which showed all hogs and pigs at 90 percent of a year ago. Even more optimistic were the numbers kept for breeding, down 14 percent from last year. Several market analysts indicate these numbers could mean steady hog prices in the mid-\$50 per hundred weight range through the summer.

Also released by USDA was the cold storage report which showed that supplies of pork in cold storage were over 100,000 pounds lower than last year's level. Les Koschke, director of Merchandising for NPPC, said this indicates good movement of pork at the retail level and a stable demand on the part of the consumer.

Another factor that could have impact on the live hog market is the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in Denmark. Officials of the National Pork Producers Council have called for aggressive marketing of U.S. pork to fill the void created by the Danish quarantine. Denmark currently controls 30 percent of the export market with large supplies going to England and Japan.

"Unfortunately as this outbreak is, the export void from Denmark will have to be filled and high quality U.S. pork is a good choice for importing countries," said Saunders.

In letters to nine major packers, Orville Sweet, executive vice president of NPPC, urged more aggressive promotion of U.S. pork and pork products on the world market. Sweet said this is a prime opportunity for the U.S. pork industry to move into markets that previously offered little access.

Export development has received increased attention from NPPC recently as the economy forces the industry to expand and develop new markets for the U.S. pork supply.

During NPPC's recent American Pork Congress convention in Indianapolis, delegates passed a resolution calling for NPPC to conduct a study to determine the feasibility of a more aggressive role in the export of pork and to develop a cooperative relationship with the Foreign Agriculture Service of USDA, while supporting the value added concept by exporting pork rather than grain.

Attention was also given to export expansion during NPPC's Legislative Seminar when pork industry leaders met with Secretary of Agriculture John Block and special trade representatives. During that meeting, Saunders said pork producers were concerned about a 30 percent planned reduction in exports to Japan in 1982 as a result of Japan's use of non-tariff trade barriers.

Saunders said that with 30 percent of the world's pork buyers looking for a new supplier, there is no reason for the industry and government not to adopt an aggressive attitude about the U.S. pork product.

"This situation is certainly the glimmer of hope pork producers have been waiting for," said Saunders.

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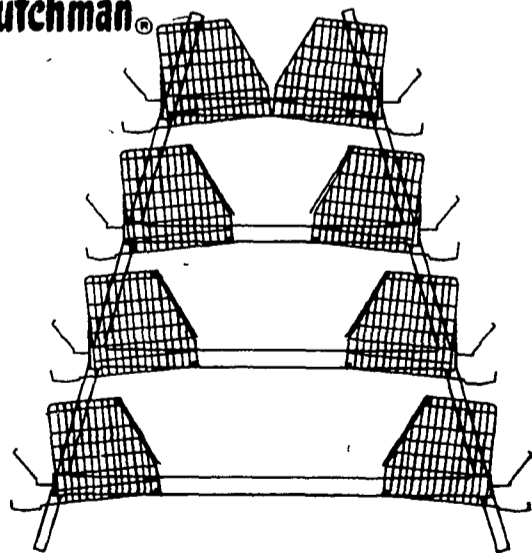
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