

Grange plans egg trip to Washington

HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania State Grange Master Charles Wismer, Jr. today announced the Pennsylvania State Grange is sponsoring a bus trip to Washington, D.C. in order to "personally convey the plight of the Pennsylvania poultry farmer to our Congressional Delegation, and stress the serious need for immediate and comprehensive legislation to save the family poultry farmer from extinction."

The bus trip will take place on Nov. 2, from Gettysburg in Adams County (the 2nd top egg producing county in the state) to Washington, D.C. where the meeting with state Congressional Delegates is scheduled from 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. including a luncheon at 12:15 p.m. in room B-340 of the Rayburn Office Building.

Several representatives of Pennsylvania's independent egg producers have previously met in September with state officials to present their "blueprint for survival" in a depressed egg market. Producers from Adams, Lancaster, York and Cumberland Counties-major egg producing counties in the state-cited profit losses due to foreign and domestic corporate investors, high feed prices brought on by the Payment-In-Kind program and the drought, and high utility rates.

In Washington on Nov. 2, specific solutions will be urged by egg producers, including: an immediate stop to foreign and cor-

porate investment groups and others using this as a tax shelter in agriculture; the addition of eggs and poultry to the Packers and Stockyards Act, which will provide payment protections for poultry growers; support for the inclusion of eggs in the 1937 Farm Commodities Agreement Act; creation of a national poultry supply/management program; the release of government surplus grain for feed; and the lowering of interest rates for loans to family egg producers with under 200,000 birds.

Family egg producers are experiencing their fourth consecutive year of losses, according to Dolly Sterner, a spokesperson for the egg producers and a Grange member. A poultry farmer, she noted that 40 percent of the state's 4,700 independent egg producers went out of business last year. "Producers are losing up to six cents on every dozen of eggs they produce," Sterner said.

Sterner also said that independents are losing their markets in part to large foreign and domestic investors who continue to expand in a surplus egg market. Foreign investors now own up to 25 percent of all laying birds in Pennsylvania compared to 15 percent a year ago. The poultrymen feel that these million-bird operations are expanding to the detriment of the small family farmers, who will eventually be squeezed out of the market. In

Adams County, foreign-owned laying hens far outnumber hens owned by family producers, and foreign competition is the number one contributor to the Adams County poultryman's financial crunch, Sterner asserts.

Wismer said the Grange is working with the State Assembly on controlling further foreign expansion, as well as on introducing legislation requiring prompt payment by processors to Pennsylvania poultry farmers. It

is expected that U.S. Senator Arlen Specter will introduce similar legislation on the latter, this session of Congress.

"Pennsylvania is a state that is traditionally ranked third in the nation in egg production, and it generated a market value in eggs of nearly \$281 million in 1982; therefore, it is vital that we protect the future of Pennsylvania's family egg farmers," Wismer commented.

The Grange expects a group of

about 40 emissaries on the Washington trip including Grange representatives, independent poultry farmers from across the state, and other farm organizations representatives.

"We hope to be duly received and listened to by Senator's Arlen Specter (R) and John Heinz (R), as well as the state's Congressional Representatives, and we expect a good response for our efforts in Washington on November 2nd," Wismer stated.

Farm - City ribbon cutting



Joining Earl Newcomer, president of the Lancaster Farmers Assn., in cutting the ribbon for opening of Farm-City Week observance at Park City shopping mall area, from the left, Ken Brandt, state representative; Congressman Bob Walker; Bob Magel, advertising and promotions director at the mall; and Robert Boyer, Lancaster County Commissioner.

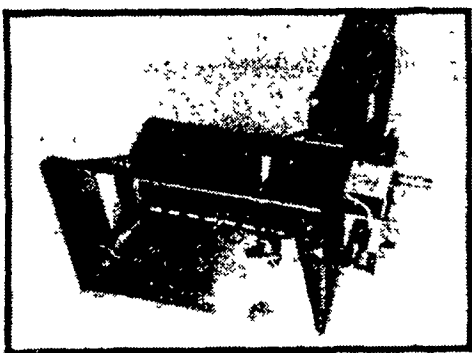
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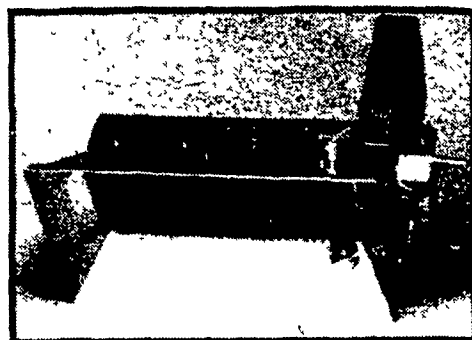
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