

Hog producer co-op

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employ a general manager to run the operation, Gruber stressed. He also stressed these points about the proposed purchase:

- The purchase would be made only on the condition that the plant is operated with a non-union labor force at a non-union pay scale.
- But to compensate for the lower

pay scale, a profit sharing system would be initiated to include employees and farmers who invest in the common stock.

-Common stock purchases were set at \$1,000 to give both large and small operators a chance to participate and have an equal voting

say in the operation of the plant.

-In addition to the common stock limited to all types of hog producers - breeders, feeder pigs and finishers - preferred stock would be opened to the public, but without any say in the operation.

-Farmer stockholders would employ the general manager who would in turn employ other department heads and employees to conduct the day-to-day operation. But the general manager would always be answerable to the farmers.

-It would be expected that none of the present top management of A. and B. would be retained.

-Initial operation would be limited to kill and cut, selling carcasses to customers and the remainder as cuts. If feasible, curing and processing could be added later.

-Beginning capacity would be about 1,000 to 1,500 head a day, with gradual expansion to 2,500 to 3,500 head a day in a year to a year and a half.

-Contacts with former "good" customers have shown that about 70 to 80 percent of previous business could be recaptured within six months.

-Twenty to 25 percent of former employees have expressed an interest in returning. But the labor force would be trimmed in numbers and be paid at the lower non-union scale with eventual profit sharing.

-It would probably take two to 3 years to show a profit.

Gruber described the A. and B. plant as basically sound.

But some refurbishing would be needed, particularly in the coolers, boilers and related steam lines.

But Gruber listed these main advantages to retaining the A. and B. plant:

-Acquisition and refurbishing costs would be about 10 percent of what would be needed to build a new plant.

-The existing plant is serviced by excellent water and sewage facilities - problems that are being faced by other packers elsewhere.

-With a new plant, the problem of zoning and location would arise. A. and B. has been located in Allentown a long time and is accepted by both the city and neighboring residents. The city wants it back in operation to provide jobs.

-If acquisition is made soon, inspection regulations would not be drastically changed. But the longer the plant remains closed, the more inspection requirements will be changed.

Hog producers who pledged \$1,000 on Tuesday night compared the amount to the extra funds they have been paying in auction commissions and trucking fees since the plant was closed.

Some farmers said these costs have ranged up to \$3.00 a head for them and thus it doesn't take long to have \$1,000 sunk into such costs.

"I'm primarily concerned about the industry and its remaining competitive for hog producers," Gruber said.

"We're getting close to being a hog surplus state in Pennsylvania.

"We need this competition. "But first we need interest among you producers."

Interested hog producers can contact Gruber at R2 New Tripoli or the PACMA Office of PFA at Camp Hill.

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