

Answer Farm Questions

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BOTTLE BILL

Question: Many farmers and their organizations advocate a "bottle bill" that would place a deposit charge on beverage containers to motivate consumers to recycle these containers rather than discard them as litter over the countryside. From statistical reports, deposit charges on beverage containers has reduced litter in other states. But in Pennsylvania, some people say, political pressure from special interest groups keep this kind of legislation from passing. Even the proposal to initiate a state referendum on the ballot in November has been stymied in committee. What are your views on the bottle bill concept?

Gov. Casey: I know the litter problem is a separate problem from the recycling problem in many respects. I have to say, though, that particularly in view of the uncertain impact of the bottle bill on the market, I would like to give the new law at least a year to function to see how it works, to see what markets develop, and then keep an open mind on the referendum issue. We're concerned about developing markets for recyclable products and we are going to need at least a year of experience to really make that judgment. Then at that time we can relook at the issue.

We have been very strong on all aspects of environmental policy. It's been one of the keystones of what we have done. In addition, we have, as you know, a very aggressive program through PennDot right now, where we spend \$400,000 in a multi-media campaign urging our citizens to stop littering. And we have the new adopt-a-highway program that has been very successful in recruiting business firms and non-profit groups to help pick up this litter. So, we are very supportive of recycling in small communities, and we are supportive of the anti-litter efforts that are essential to protect the farm population from this proliferation of bottles and cans they must deal with. I would like to come back and visit it again in a year when we have some idea how the markets are working out under the new act.

Atty. Gen. Hafer: I support the bottle bill legislation that calls for a 5 cent deposit on any bottle holding less than a gallon. Discarded glass and aluminum bottles and cans are unsafe for animals and machinery. Leadership must be shown from the top down and the governor should insist on bottle bill legislation.

FFA FOUNDATION

Question: During the recent state budget negotiations, funding for the FFA Foundation became quite controversial. The deletion and eventual restoration of these funds

in the budget seemed to bring into focus the frustration of the farm community that benefits of the FFA program have been increasingly overlooked in the state's educational system. How important is the FFA program in the public school system? Why is it or why is it not important?

Gov. Casey: Well, it is important. And the specific enactment that you are referring to, that was a legislative initiative. The money did finally appear in the budget, through Sam Hays' initiative. We normally do that as part of, in other words, when we start the budget process, all the legislative initiatives for the proceeding year are removed, knowing that they are going to be restored as part of the legislative process. So it wasn't a case of any lack of confidence in that program, or in any way to downgrade the program. It was part of the normal budgetary process, and it was restored through the effort of Representative Hayes.

The broader question is that I know the future farmers program, witnessed and worked with those kids for a long time. We have a group from the Northeast that is very active. It's a good program and I support it. I think what we can do, in addition, is to ask the rural education task force that I announced at the rural conference earlier this year, to examine that process for a better way of doing it. And maybe we can, in the future, include it in the budget as a line item in the ag budget. I don't know how Sam Hayes would feel about it, but I would be open to it.

Atty. Gen. Hafer: The FFA program and vocational agriculture as a whole is critical to the future of Pennsylvania agriculture. Agriculture education must be expanded and advanced to help meet world trends and to provide the support and leadership necessary for our youth. Casey cut funding for the FFA Foundation and vocational agriculture in his budget. But the Republicans put the funding back in at more appropriate levels. As Governor, I would exert that leadership through funding to the FFA Foundation and through insuring full time staff representation in the education department for a vocational education specialist.

SALMONELLA

Question: The poultry industry in Pennsylvania lives in fear of a disease called Salmonella Enteritidis or "SE." Many people in the industry think the federal task force rules on SE tracebacks are too severe. Despite that, Pennsylvania, which controls interstate shipments of shell eggs, follows the federal rules. These rules put some producers in a position where they may not be able to survive. What is your opinion on the SE crisis and what can be done to make sure the consumer is protected without devastating the poultry industry that constitutes a major positive economic force in the state and provides us with one of nature's most nutritious foods at a very reasonable price?

Gov. Casey: As you know, Secretary Boyd Wolff and Secretary Mark Richards are working closely together on this issue. I certainly recognize that there are many links in the food distribution chain. And it's unfair to isolate the farmer as one link, the only person, to concentrate on for the problem. I don't agree with that. More importantly, the PDA and the agricultural community had a dialogue on this whole issue. They supported legislation that requires food establishments to be required to refrigerate eggs, for example. In addition, the PDA is funding four research projects on salmonella right now. We have a full-time person in avian health working on this problem. It's important to highlight the need to educate institutional food operators and the public so that safe food handling practices are followed. This is very important to the prevention of SE. We encourage all of these efforts and want to intensify them, because I know it's really a threat, a terrible threat to the entire poultry industry.

Atty. Gen. Hafer: The Pennsylvania poultry industry has supported efforts to get legislation which would mandate refrigeration of eggs at 55 degrees to limit growth of SE bacteria. But the Casey Administration will not budge from its 45 degree requirement, a requirement many poultry operations cannot possibly meet. My solution would be threefold: first I support legislation similar to that under consideration that takes steps to insure maximum cleanliness at all stages of egg production and packaging. I believe food wholesalers and retailers must be educated and mandated to do a better job of storing and handling eggs to prevent the growth of SE bacteria. And consumers must be taught how to properly handle, store and prepare eggs and egg products.

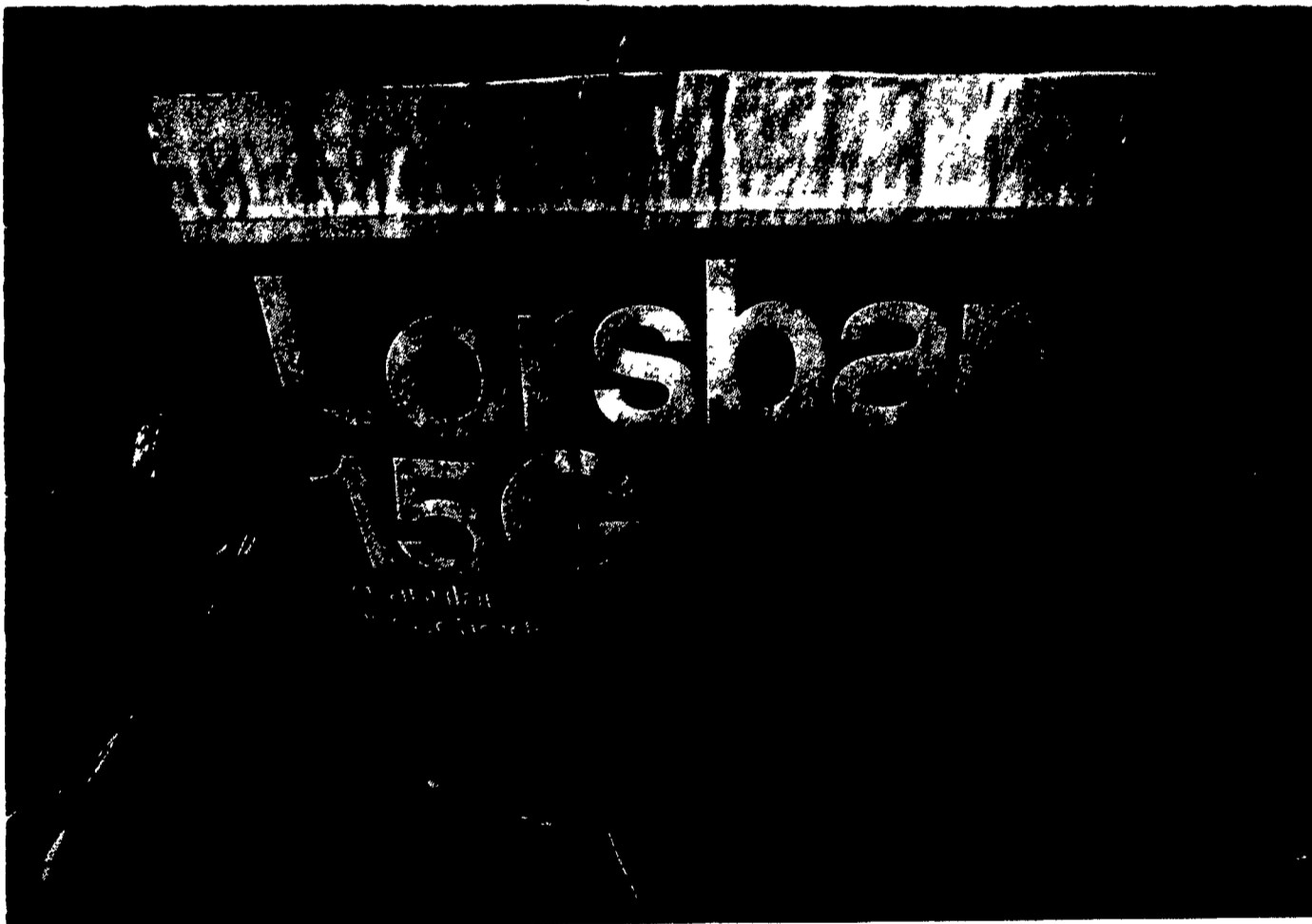
SUMMARY POINTS

Question: As a summary of your feelings about agriculture, if you could talk personally to each of Lancaster Farming's 200,000 readers, what would you tell them?

Gov. Casey: First of all, I would remind them I got the PFA Barn Raiser award, of which I am very proud. I would tell them that we kept every promise we made to the ag community in our 1986 campaign about farmland preservation, the animal health commission, and independence for producer financed and run promotion boards. We have fought side by side with farmers on the tax reform issue.

So that when we look at all the increases in support for agriculture across the board, I think that our interest and the interest of the agricultural community have been identical. We have had a strong relationship, and I would like that to continue.

Atty. Gen. Hafer: The men and women involved in Pennsylvania agriculture are one of our most precious resources. You deserve the respect and support of state government because of the important economic, social and environmental role you play. Agriculture will not be taken for granted in the Hafer administration. Elect me and I'll be a full time farmer's advocate in Harrisburg, consulting regularly with your leadership to make the future of Pennsylvania agriculture a future of growth.



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