

National Grange In Harrisburg Adopts Policy, Elects Officers

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ties where production-support agribusiness exists.

"But that does not mean that we should abandon our efforts to locate such industries in farm-dependent rural counties. Labor is mobile, and counties with large farms and high farm income do not have a large pool of unemployed or under-employed workers.

"Therefore, ag-related industries that are located in these counties can attract labor from adjacent and nearby counties.

"Effective strategies for improving the economies of our rural counties must be based on a true assessment of economic strengths and weaknesses, including the labor pool, transportation, health care, and building and maintaining educational facilities."

Gov. Ridge Welcomes

In some opening remarks to the Grange, state Gov. Tom Ridge talked about what he sees as important to the growth of rural America and Pennsylvania.

He commended the Grange for being an organization of people who share a common interest in rural America despite diverse geographies, backgrounds and interests.

A desire to work together and projecting a unified voice are also the strengths of Grange members, he said.

Ridge told the group of Grangers that he is proud that the Pennsylvania State Grange is part of the National Grange's unified voice, "... a voice heard in state houses across the country and in

Washington D.C. — a single voice that shares a vision for rural America's future."

Talking specifically about Pennsylvania, Ridge said that Pennsylvania has the largest rural population of any state in the nation and that, "It is in our best interest to keep these rural communities viable in the ever-expanding, ever-competitive world."

According to Ridge, agriculture is "intimately linked to the vitality of our agricultural industry" and thus, what is good for agriculture is good for rural Pennsylvania.

Ridge quoted an excerpt from Ralph Waldo Emerson:

"The first farmer was the first man, and all his historic nobility rests on possession and use of

land.

"The glory of the farmer is that, in the division of labors, it is his part to create. All trade rests at last on his primitive activity."

Ridge followed that with, "Although primitive in history, agriculture has grown far beyond its humble beginnings. And yet, in agri-business's growth, so too have grown the number of challenges that confront our farmers and our rural communities."

He talked about the great changes to agriculture in practices and available technology, global competition, the lack of the public's agricultural education, and the financial incentives tempting those with land best suited for farming to sell to others seeking greater and faster returns through

accommodating urban sprawl.

He said that now, more than ever before, America must "recommit ourselves to strengthen our rural communities."

Toward that purpose, Ridge said, "We must therefore seek new economic and technological opportunities to make it possible for our young people to stay on our farms and in our small towns.

"We must improve our educational opportunities to assure future generations have the basic skills they need to secure their personal success on the farm and in their home communities."

"And perhaps most of all ... we must work to get government out of the way."

Ridge said that the breaking up of the former state Department of

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