

Eckel To Step Down

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He is tentatively set to take a seat on the board of directors of an insurance company that PFB sponsors - Nationwide Enterprises. He said he agreed to be nominated to the position, and, if elected, will resign as president and join the board.

It is expected that Eckel be elected to that insurance board, a compensated position, and that Donaldson will be the next president.

In addition, Eckel will resign his seat on the board of the American Farm Bureau Federation, the association of which the PFB is an affiliate.

Donaldson said that since the AFBF board of directors is limited, and he is to start his first term of office, it isn't likely that he will be immediately elected to a seat.

A special April meeting is to convene by the AFBF to nominate a new representative to its board from the Northeast.

Prior to the June board meeting, the president of AFBF is to name the next member of the farm organization's Executive Committee.

Eckel said that much remains to be done by PFB and that he will continue to stay active in support of the organization, if from a different position.

"The Farm Bureau has been my life and will continue to be a major part," he said. "And I'll continue working with PFB as a member."

He said the change is positive for Farm Bureau and that Donaldson will be good for the organization.

"He (Donaldson) is well qualified to be president, having been the members' choice to be vice president. I think members are fortunate to have Donaldson as president," Eckel said.

Donaldson is a fruit producer from Adams County, and has been a long time leader in farm organizations.

A graduate of Gettysburg High School, he attended the University of Maryland, and with his wife Betty and in partnership with sons

Steve and David and daughter Beverly Benner, farms 550 acres planted in apple, peach, and cherry trees and vegetables. The family business also operates a retail farm market from April through December.

He was first elected vice president of the Pa. Farm Bureau in November 1987 and was subsequently re-elected in 1989, 1991, 1993 and 1995.

He has served as president of the Adams County Farmers' Association, and was a director representing Franklin, Cumberland, Fulton and Adams county farmers' associations on PFB state board of directors from 1983 until elected vice president.

He also served as the first president of the PFB marketing cooperative Pennsylvania Commodity Marketing Association (PACMA), following its reorganization in 1979.

On committees, he chaired the PFB Growth Study Committee, which was given the task to develop and recommend in 1988 long-range goals for PFB programs to meet the challenges of the 1990s.

In 1988 he also was elected to a three-year term on the Penn State Board of Trustees and re-elected in 1991 and 1994.

A member of the Adams County Fruit Growers organization and the State Horticultural Association, in the past he also served a board director for the Mt. Orchard Cooperative, was a member of the Knouse Foods Cooperative, and also served as a chairman of the Pennsylvania Apple Marketing Program.

Outside of agriculture, he has served in the past as president of the Fairfield Area School Board, was president of the Fairfield Lions Club, and is currently a board member of the Adams County National Bank, is a member of the Adams County Planning Commission and also the county's Emergency Planning Commission.

A past member of the Orrtanna United Methodist Church, he is also a past Sunday school teacher

and Sunday school superintendent. Donaldson said he didn't expect his taking over leadership to cause any noticeable change in the operations of the organization.

"The challenges will not go away," Donaldson said. "They will continue to be there and I hope to continue to have support from members."

"With the change in leadership, I don't think there's going to be a transition. Hopefully it will keep moving along with little change."

For his part, outgoing president Eckel is to spend more time attending to his family business, while still being involved in agricultural issues.

He is in charge of personnel, finance and vegetable production on the farm. They produce more than 200 tons of pumpkins on 20 acres to supply chain grocery stores in the East and they also raise 500 acres of field corn, 85 acres of sweet corn, and 300 acres of wheat in rotation with the tomatoes.

He, his brother and father were presented the Pennsylvania Master Farmer award in 1982, and Keith was awarded the Jaycees' Outstanding Young Farmer Award in 1983. In other awards, he was the recipient of an honorary county agent award in 1991 from the Pennsylvania Association of County Agriculture Agents.

The purpose of the meeting with representatives from agricultural media was more than to announce the anticipated change in leadership of the PFB. It was also to provide an open forum for the discussion of some of the policies and positions of the organization.

Most recently, the PFB was not in concert with other agricultural organizations in the state as far as the 1995 Farm Bill, which is still to be resolved.

Eckel took the opportunity to say that the main reason passage of the the Farm Bill is pressed by the Farm Bureau is because of the impending planting season and the large amount of acres for which planting decisions need to be made, but can not because of uncertainties of the Farm Bill.

Some have speculated that the 1995 Farm Bill will be the last, as national political theory now holds

that the nation's farming community would be better served by allowing the fluctuations of market demand control supply.

The Farm Bill proposals currently in conference committee are being heralded as the "Freedom to Farm," because it would eliminate or reduce government support payments and certain program subsidies over a relatively short time.

In general, the existing government program was designed to ensure adequate supplies of food for the nation — it has been referred to as the nation's cheap food supply program by producers; and the farmer welfare program by self-described taxpayer representatives.

The concept to avoid domestic famine by ensuring adequate supplies of affordable food to every American was to be done through support payments set at minimum levels (below cost of production in many cases) in case government-urged crop plantings, or whatever commodity was being produced, resulted in overabundance and very low prices to farmers.

This was to keep the nation's farmers in business during periods of abundance (oversupply from good weather and bumper crop) so that they would still be there producing those commodities during periods of drought or devastation without the price of the commodities getting too high.

The effect was to allow more producers to exist than would survive given what month-to-month, supply-demand production and price fluctuations would allow, not to mention unfair competition from subsidized agricultural imports.

Market driven commodity prices could be expected to fluctuate much more if producers were totally independent. However, with the advent of contract farming, it is assumed that producer income should not vary as greatly, nor would it be expected that new, independent farming starts in contract heavy commodities would arise and cause oversupply and price drops.

All of that aside, the PFB and the AFBF have urged quick adoption of a Farm Bill in order to at least allow producers to prepare

properly for the growing season. For the Southern states, that time has passed, Eckel said.

But that was not Eckel's main concern in addressing policy issues sought by the PFB.

He told the group of reporters that the PFB is seeking to reinstate full funding for the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine in the 1996-97 state budget. A proposal from Gov. Tom Ridge is to reduce the amount by 27 percent, or \$5.6 million.

Reinstating the full funding has to be a priority Eckel said, because of the importance of the work done by the university for the state's agricultural industry and to keep it competitive.

Eckel said that while former Gov. Robert Casey had attempted to cut funding for the university, it had been replaced after protest from the industry. He said that needs to be done again.

Eckel also said the PFB supports Senate Bill 241, a piece of proposed legislation that would create a citizen referendum on whether or not to make mandatory container deposits a law.

Pennsylvania has been one of a few holdout states in the Northeast to not implement a mandatory container deposit. Other states, such as Maine, New York, Vermont and others have had such laws in place for years to discourage the tossing of empty beverage containers along roadsides and into roadfront property.

For agriculture, the damage from broken bottles, metal and slowly decomposing materials not only causes eyesores, but threatens the safety of man, machinery and animal.

The loss of a \$1,200 heifer because of ingesting glass or metal, or developing serious and life threatening infections because of cuts to legs and feet, the damage to machinery, and the threat to the landowners on their own property because of automobilized trash-tossers is unacceptable to the agricultural community and many other environmental protection organizations.

While a "bottle bill," as previous legislative attempts have been labeled, has not been able to clear

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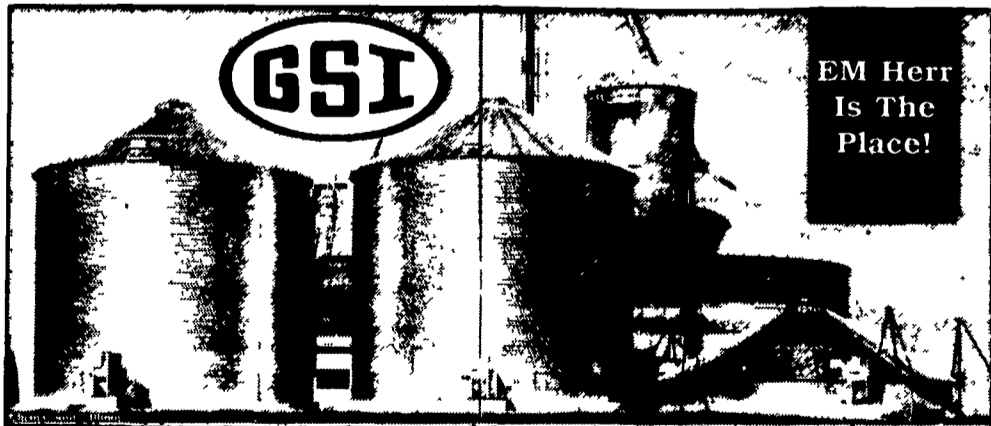
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