



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

PRESS RELEASE

Harrisburg:—Representative George K. Haudenshield, (R-Allegheny) today introduced a House Resolution calling for a study of an administrative decision to discontinue all farming operations by Jan. 1, 1969, at State Mental Hospitals.

The Resolution calling for a study by the Joint State Government Commission follows an earlier announcement by Dr. Thomas Georges, Jr., Secretary of Public Welfare that the farming would be dropped.

Representative Haudenshield said that while he was concerned with costs and patient care aspects of the decision, he was also concerned about consistency in hospital administrative policies.

He said "just because the present Commissioner of Mental Health and Secretary of Public Welfare believe farming should be discontinued, their successors may not feel the same way and may want to resume farming.

"Such a switching about would be costly indeed. To prevent it, we would need a thorough study of all aspects to determine whether or not farming should be a part of the hospitals' operations."

Discussing current cost aspects, he said food produced on the farms provided the State a net savings of nearly a million dollars in the last fiscal year according to a Department of Public Welfare report.

"Without the farms, the money saved on producing food would have to be made up by taxes," he said. "At a time of an acute State financial crisis amid talk of higher taxes to come, it does not make sense to me to casually toss away a million dollars."

Dr. Georges earlier had said he wanted to phase out agricultural operations because the operations "are no longer of any significant therapeutic value in the care and treatment of mentally

disturbed patients."

He said he planned to utilize about 250 of the positions now required for farming in direct support of patient-care activities.

Representative Haudenshield's Resolution said that while the Secretary of Public Welfare may not care to have agricultural responsibilities, "phasing out the farms is not the only solution; it may also be possible to convert some of the positions now in farming operations to direct support of patient care activities and also save the farming operations."

The Resolution calls for a report by the Joint State Government Commission no later than July 1, 1969.

The Resolution also notes "these farms are made up of valuable land, buildings, livestock, farm equipment and trained personnel. The Commonwealth could be dealt a severe blow with the hasty disposition or non-use of these vital and costly items."

Specifically, Representative Haudenshield asked for a study and report on:

1. The value of farming and similar activities in the treatment of the mentally ill;
2. The need for two hundred fifty jobs in direct patient-care activities;
3. The effect of deleting six hundred thirty-five persons employed in farming positions;
4. The consequence of losing a million dollar saving in food purchases at the mental institutions;
5. The disposition of valuable farm land and buildings;
6. The disposition of high-cost low resale value farming equipment;
7. The disposition of pure bred registered cattle and other high quality farm animals;
8. The possibility of improving services to mental patients and also continuing the farming activities so valuable to the Commonwealth; and
9. Such other problems as the study may reveal.