

The Egg Consumer

People often view a situation according to how it affects them. They say it depends on whose ox is getting gored.

A recent poultry meeting at the Farm and Home Center illustrated the point.

A speaker noted she, as a housewife, has been quite concerned about the high cost of eggs in recent months and asked a grocer, "Do the chickens get more money now?"

The grocer was stumped. Grocers tend to know a great deal about how to price eggs, but very little about the chickens which produce them.

But a Lancaster County egg producer wasn't at a loss on the question: Do chickens get more money now?

"The chickens get more than I do," he muttered.

Eggs Convenient

Anyway, it was noted, eggs are still one of the housewife's best protein buys, on a cost per unit basis.

Eggs were also reported to be very "conveniently packaged" in their natural shells, a point which housewives should keep in mind when deciding what should go into the family food budget.

In a time when increasing numbers of women are working or engaging in activities outside the home, it's only reasonable to

expect they'll have less time to spend in the kitchen. So, a greater need for both efficient kitchens and foods.

Convenience foods such as freeze dried products have a bright future. It's a hopeful sign for egg producers that eggs should rank in the convenience food category.

Egg Marketing

But poultrymen must recognize the need to keep the housewife aware of just how convenient the egg is. The woman of the house is constantly bombarded with new products, new packages, new gimmicks. She must be reminded occasionally that some of the best and most convenient products are those which she has used the longest.

In today's consumer-oriented economy, the farmer must make sure his message gets to the consumer.

One of the themes which run through speeches and talks to county farmers is that the farmer must learn more about marketing his product. It doesn't do much good to raise a superior product if it can't be made to hold its own in the market place.

Eggs are convenient

Sounds good, doesn't it? Egg producers ought to say it often.

And add, for a clincher, that they're priced low in relation to competing products.

How Many Eggs?

Egg producers should note the USDA's recommendation last week against a large egg production increase in 1970.

There's no way, of course, that the USDA can enforce the recommendation and it's really up to the individual farmer to determine if he's going to boost his egg production.

But the producer who goes against the USDA's recommendation should be aware that he's going against the finding and recommendation of officials who study the egg market.

Newspaper Backs USDA

A recent edition of Poultry and Egg Production newspaper strongly backed the USDA recommendation. Its editorial, in part, went as follows.

"Conversations with industry men in the past several months have indicated much optimism for the year ahead. This optimism is justified, if restraint in chick placements is forthcoming. But to produce to the limit is sheer folly.

"Some people operate on the theory that if the doctor's prescription calls for one teaspoon of medicine, a double dose is twice as good. This same inane reasoning seems to be in force with egg producers who act as if a 10 per cent increase is twice as good as a 5 per cent boost in the laying flock.

"Every time the egg industry goes through a depressed period and then appears to be coming out of it slowly and again begins to garner profits, we hear statements that the industry is beginning to achieve maturity. The larger and fewer operators are going to provide the stability that the many small ones never could achieve.

"Somehow this maturity does not appear to be very evident."

Egg Prices Down

Egg prices literally shot through the

roof for a period last year and they're still good, though on the way down.

It's no secret that many Lancaster County egg producers have really cleaned up financially during the high egg price period. Some of them, however, thought the good times were long overdue.

As one egg man stated at a poultry meeting at the Farm and Home Center, "The producers got tired of subsidizing the consumer."

\$20 Million-plus

Eggs and layers, more than a \$20 million a year business in Lancaster County even in 1968, certainly increased its stature in county agriculture in 1969.

Even in 1968, eggs and layers were second only to the dairy business in terms of agricultural production value in the county. In 1968, eggs and layers accounted for about one-sixth of the \$124,000,000 county agricultural products income.

These are some of the facts which make the USDA recommendation and how county egg producers react to it is vitally important.

Supply Volatile

One factor making egg prices so volatile is the rapidity with which the supply of layers can be increased or decreased. This isn't true, for instance, with beef cattle.

If one farmer increases egg production, he may have made a wise move. But if every other farmer made similar increases, they may all be wrong because they glut the market.

The real enforcer in the matter of production ultimately is the consumer and the price he's willing to pay for eggs. That's influenced strongly by how many eggs there are, however.

Will 1969 Repeat?

One thing the egg producer and farmers in general will have to guard against in 1970 is the natural tendency of many of us to become overly optimistic after a good year.

Because egg prices were high in 1969 doesn't mean they will be in 1970.

What will the economy do to poultry prices in 1970? Wouldn't it be worth a fortune to know for sure?

But we don't know, so we leave it to you farm managers to do as you've always done—make your own decision.

We leave it to you to determine that the USDA will be as wrong on eggs in 1970 as Moore was on beef in 1969, or to decide that maybe the USDA is giving a word to the wise.



NOW IS THE TIME . . .

By Max Smith
Lancaster County Agent

To Plan For Quality Forage

The harvesting of top quality hay or silage doesn't just happen. It has to be planned along with good management. There is a vast difference between average hay and excellent quality hay. The latter kind of forage is needed to obtain maximum production with peak efficiency. Freedom from weeds, stage of maturity, and low harvesting losses will determine the value of the crop. Producers are urged to make every effort to get top quality hay or silage this summer.

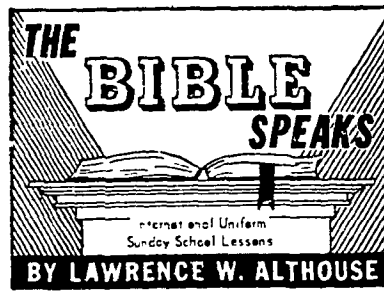
To Keep Accurate Records

This is "old hat" to many farmers but still very essential to successful farming today. I not

only refer to financial records but especially to the use of all kinds of pesticides. The place of chemicals in food and feed production is getting considerable attention. All producers should keep accurate records of all applications. Record blanks are available at our Extension Office.

To Shear Sheep

Many good shepherds will get their sheep out of the fleece during March and early April. This might seem early to the average person, but the ewe flock will produce more milk and be better mothers without their current crop of wool. The fleece should be dry when sheared and stored in a clean, dry place until sold.



NO CHEAPER RATE!

Lesson for March 8, 1970

Background Scripture: Mark 8:34-38; Luke 14:25-33; 1 Kings 22:1-36; Malachi 10:16-39; Acts 6 through 7; Devotional Reading: Jeremiah 20:7-12.

Singer Sarah Vaughn's little niece was having prayer explained to her. Prayers, she was told, are like telegrams to God. The little girl thought that over and then asked: "Oh, is that why we send them at night — to get the cheaper rate?"



Rev. Althouse

Out of the mouths of babes and infants come some of the most profound thoughts to challenge the mind of man. Why the little girl said that, I do not know, but perhaps she had already learned that a great deal of adult attention seems directed toward getting the cheaper rate, regardless of the commodity. Everyone wants a bargain, something marked down from its original price, a discount, a deal — even in religion!

An Easter without Lent

Just as a Christmas without an Advent is quite meaningless, so is an Easter without a Lent. The resurrection, great and glorious news that it is, cannot be either understood or experienced apart from the passion and cross of our Lord. An Easter without the Passion of Christ is a bargain-basement religion that is really no bargain. It is a tragic attempt to get the cheaper rate.

Last spring immediately after Easter, I saw a sign in a store window: "POST-EASTER SALE . . . CROSSES AND BUNNIES ONE-HALF OFF." The "crosses and bunnies," of course, were chocolate, but I couldn't help feeling there was a fair amount of unceremonious irony in that poster. While Easter is a time of great excitement and joy, the post-Easter season seems to be a time of marked-down Christian discipleship. The pain and agony of the

cross are quickly forgotten.

Jesus himself made it clear that there could be no cut-rate discipleship: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." And that's the way it was for his disciples. Peter, tradition tells us, was crucified head-down on a cross in Rome. Andrew was also crucified. Bartholomew was crucified and beheaded. Thomas was martyred in India. James the Less was stoned and clubbed to death. Jude and Simon met violent deaths, and even James, the brother of Jesus, there was nothing marked-down about their discipleship.

"Cheap" grace

Nor for us. The cost of discipleship for us is still a cross; if not of wood and nails, it is still a cross of some kind. There is no point in trying to seek a cheaper rate, for there is none. It does not necessarily mean that each of us must die for our faith — though it might — but that we must be willing to live or die for it, whichever is required. Sometimes it is more difficult to live for something than to die for something.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German pastor who was put to death for his active resistance against Hitler and the Nazis. He has written a book which has become a modern classic. It is entitled, *The Cost of Discipleship*. In it he calls "cheap grace" the "deadly enemy of the Church." By "cheap grace" he means the bargain-counter approach to Christianity that assumes that because Christ has paid the price for us, the love of God costs us nothing. It pictures the Church as a benevolent welfare organization that has too much grace on hand and must give it away indiscriminately, and God as a senile philanthropist whose gift of grace costs him nothing.

Without A Cross

"Cheap grace," says Bonhoeffer, "is grace without discipleship, grace without a cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate." We can congratulate the woman who by careful shopping is able to feed her family well for less money, but the family that tries to get the cheaper rate in its religion is doomed to disappointment. There is no "cheap grace." All grace is expensive. It cost Christ a cross to win a crown. It demands no less of us.

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