

What New Rail Rates Mean

Local farmers should note the recent nine per cent interim rail freight rate increase granted by the ICC.

Such freight increases ultimately can be expected to reach the farmer in the form of increased costs for feed and supplies which he buys. Therefore, the freight rate increase represents an overall increase in farming costs.

Fortunately, since most farmers in this area grow all or part of their own feed, the impact of the freight increase probably will not be as adverse as in many other more specialized farm areas.

But overall, this area still may suffer severely in the long run because of the freight increase. This is because of the regional difference in the freight rate. While the increase was nine per cent in the East and West, it was only seven per cent in the South.

The South already enjoyed a substantial rate advantage over the Northeast.

With this new lower percentage increase on an already lower rate, this difference will be magnified.

The lower freight rates in the South are one very important reason why broiler and egg production has increased in the South at such an overwhelming rate in recent years. Feed costs represent the majority of the cost of production of both broilers and eggs and any significant savings achieved by one region in feed costs, such as are made possible by the South through lower freight rates, gives it a tremendous competitive advantage.

The additional savings in the South on shipping costs of equipment and supplies increases the advantage over the Northeast.

So, not only do the higher freight rates represent higher operating costs for farmers in this area, they also give our competitors, particularly in the Southeast, a better competitive position in the national farm economy.

As Farm Labor Costs Rise

Various farm publications have begun to carry items indicating that the widely publicized unionization of grape employes in California will set a pattern for the nation.

George Meany, AFL-CIO president, in a widely carried article in the leading national newspapers, has made it official. The Chicago Daily News on August 6 quoted Meany as saying that the AFL-CIO is now aiming at organizing all farm workers in the nation.

Specifically, the Daily News quoted Meany as follows:

'We Will Spread'

"Now we will spend as much as we can possibly afford to spread our activities.

"For 50 years, agriculture has been exempted from labor legislation because of the powerful farm interests, such as the big ranches in Texas.

"One big job in the future is to secure for the farm worker the same status as the industrial worker.

"At present we can't bring unfair labor charges against a farm employer or get a union election because they're not covered by the National Labor Relations Board.

"But we're going to force the employers to give the farm workers decent wages and decent living conditions."

Meanwhile, the Chicago Tribune reported that Meany plans to start the new efforts in Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan and Indiana.

What does this mean for the local farmer and what should he do about it?

The Family Farm

Farm labor unionization will have little or no direct impact on most Southeastern Pennsylvania farm operations because they are family enterprises using little or no outside labor. These family enterprises have always been highly self-sufficient and can be expected to want neither the rewards nor the problems of unionization.

On those farms which do use outside labor, unionization will tend to increase the cost of that labor in the form of higher wages and more costly fringe benefits. This can be expected even if there is little local interest in unionization.

At the same time, however, because labor will be more expensive, the larger farms can be expected to turn to more highly automated systems in an effort to reduce their unskilled labor needs.

The overall result should be to accelerate the already fast-moving trend of American agriculture toward a highly capitalized structure in which big investments in modern buildings and machinery are asked to take the place of labor. As labor becomes more expensive and harder to get, machinery becomes more attractive and economical.

Efficient Labor Use

All this doesn't mean there won't be a place for the family farm using large amounts of labor. It does mean the labor will have to be used wisely and efficiently. It indicates each person will have to do more work, either through more know-how or better equipment, in order to remain competitive.

Actually, as the cost of farm labor in general rises, the individual farmer should be able to get a higher return for his work. The family farm should be strengthened.

Also, it should be kept in mind that the trend toward unionization is a speeding up of something that has been happening all along.

Rising Labor Cost

Farmers already are well aware that labor is both increasingly scarce and expensive. Industry and government have been steadily increasing the competitive pressure for farm labor. The cost of that labor will almost certainly continue to rise, even without unionization.

Thus, for those farms which now use labor or need it in the future, the union movement is one more warning that labor is going to cost more in the future.

To be forewarned is to be forearmed. Now is the time to begin to solve the future labor problems — to change the farm operation to meet future conditions, to turn to mechanization, to change crops, to increase the level of skill and production of the employe.

Those farmers who allow themselves to move in the years ahead into a situation in which they need more labor without being able to afford to pay more for it — both in terms of increased wages and benefits — are putting themselves in a potentially very unfavorable position.

For the farmer who is alert and who recognizes and meets his problems early before they overwhelm him, problems become opportunities. Just as the first crop on the market generally brings the best price, so does the first farmer to solve a new problem generally reap rewards.

The growing cost of labor represents an opportunity for those who don't need it. At the same time, we predict some imaginative farmers will find ways to profitably use more labor — even as the cost rises.



NOW IS THE TIME . . .

By Max Smith
Lancaster County Agent

To Observe Silage

Some of the corn crop made into silage last fall might not have been the very best in relation to moisture and fungus disease infection. Much of this was due to the southern corn blight which dried up the plants very quickly. We have not had reports of severe molding of this corn in the silage, and livestock authorities continue to feel that to make it into silage was the best way to harvest the crop. However, as the silage comes out, producers are urged to inspect it closely for mold. Mature cattle are quite resistant to the toxic effects of moldy corn but pregnant cows should not get much of it. Yearling or older young stock and fattening steers seem to handle low quality feeds and silage the best.

To Check Those Batteries

Cold weather is a good test for the battery of car, truck, or tractor. The water level should be kept high and the motor should be used enough to keep

the battery well charged. Engineers inform us that it takes about three miles of average driving to recharge the average battery on a cold morning. Motors that are seldom used during cold weather may need frequent recharging in order to perform their duty. Normal recharging is much slower during cold weather.

To Mulch Strawberries

The strawberry crop of next summer may depend upon how well the plants survive the winter weather. Covering the plants with two to three inches of wheat or barley straw when freezing weather arrives is strongly recommended. This will protect the plants through freezing and thawing. This type of mulch also provides a more constant temperature around the plant roots and brings them through the winter much stronger. One pleasant thought of making this chore much easier is to think of how good the strawberry shortcake will taste next June.

THE BIBLE SPEAKS

International Uniform
Sunday School Lessons

BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE

UNLIMITED HORIZON

Lesson for November 29, 1970

Background Scripture: Matthew 5:10-11; 6:25-34; 7:13, 14; Ephesians 6:10-18.
Devotional Reading: 1 Peter 1:3-9.

One day the wife of Robert Louis Stevenson went to his bedroom where he had been forced to put away his writing materials to stop the flow of lifeblood he was coughing away in a wracking pain. Knowing his indomitable spirit, she said: "I suppose you will tell me that it is a glorious day."



Rev. Althouse

"Yes," he replied, "strange, isn't it, that I was just going to say that." Looking at the sunlight streaming through his window, he added: "I refuse to let a row of medicine bottles be the circumference of my horizon."

Beyond our obstacles

Stevenson possessed a body which would have caused most men to "throw in the towel" in resignation. He had been physically weak and ill throughout his childhood and then passed into youth and adulthood without any better prospects of substantial improvement. Yet he never accepted these infirmities of his body as the circumference of his horizon. His literary works dominated his own era and still are regarded as classics today.

One may also think of Beethoven, who though quite deaf, wrote his finest symphony; of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who wrote many of her best works from a wheelchair; of Paul who performed his ministry through constantly beseged by some "thorn in the flesh"; of former Secretary of State Christian A. Herter or President Franklin D. Roosevelt, both of whom carried on demanding careers as public servants despite severe physical dis-

comfort and pain.

The trouble with examples like these is that you and I tend to think of these people as so special, so extraordinary, that we dismiss their victories over hardship as basically irrelevant to our own lives.

Beyond a wheelchair

Yet this experience of overcoming life's obstacles is not at all limited to exceptional people. Lots of unknown, unsung people refuse to let their obstacles serve as the circumference of their horizons. A number of years ago I called in a home where the mother of the family was a victim of multiple sclerosis. She was confined to a wheelchair and her limbs were terribly twisted. Despite the gentle, but firm determination in her face and the look of one who did not know she was "handicapped", I think I felt sorry for her.

I need not have, however. Some time years later I read an article in a newspaper that told of an award "for outstanding service" which had been given to her. "Outstanding service?" I said to myself. How could this woman serve anyone. Yet, as I read on, I found that this badly crippled and twisted woman goes to a nearby hospital in her wheelchair several days a week and spends hours there with handicapped patients, many of them less handicapped than herself. She sets before them the priceless example of a woman who will not allow a wheelchair to be the circumference of her horizon.

Hannah More once said that "obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off the goal." Certainly there are always frightful things before us in life. The Christian does not ignore them, but looks beyond these to his goal. One must always choose whether he will focus on the obstacle or the goal.

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