

# On Preserving Farm Land

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Clifford M. Hardin made the following comments before the Environmental Seminar, Department of Agriculture, in January:

"America contains 1.9 billion acres of land in the contiguous 48 states alone. There is sufficient land, if people use it wisely, to meet the Nation's foreseeable needs for food, new towns, industry, transport, forestry, wildlife, recreation, and aesthetic enjoyment — all elements of a more satisfying total environment.

"A crucial question is, of course, will we use our land wisely?"

"Unfortunately, in many instances we are not. For example, urbanization has been reaching out, chaotically and almost randomly in many cases, swallowing half a million acres of cropland each year. The Council on Environmental Quality describes the misuse of land as the most out-of-hand and irreversible of environmental problems.

"Currently, more than a fifth of all the farms in the 48 contiguous States are within Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas, where the most intensive urbanization is taking place. These farms account for more than one-fourth of the value of all agricultural products sold.

"We must decide what is in the best public interest with respect to these farms. If they should be retained, we need to do some careful planning, reevaluate tax and zoning arrangements, and determine the best ways to blend the rural and urban environments."

Hardin's comments reflect growing con-

cern at the national, state and local levels about trends toward urbanization of some of the country's best farmland.

In the past, towns and cities tended to grow best in the better-farming areas, since towns tended to be shopping and business centers for the surrounding farming community. When there were relatively few people and more than enough land for as far into the future as anyone cared to look, the steady urbanization of prime farm land concerned few persons.

But now, as giant cities stretching for hundreds of miles are beginning to become reality in many parts of the nation, both urban and rural residents are becoming concerned. Farmers are concerned that urbanization will force them off the farm and urbanites see that they have a real interest in preserving their food supply. Urbanites also want some open countryside for an occasional change of scenery.

The form that this concern about preserving the land will take in coming years will be vitally important to farmers.

Proposals so far include: changing the real estate structure to tax land on use instead of market value (tax farm land as farm land and not as a potential industrial or residential site) and to set aside farm zones where residential and commercial building would be prohibited.

These are the types of ideas being discussed by both urban and rural leaders at the national, state and local levels as a means of making it possible for urban and rural areas to prosper side by side.

# On Controlling Plant Numbers

In a recent newsletter to Garden Spot Young Farmers, Don Robinson, vo-ag teacher, underlined the importance of making certain that the correct number of seed is applied.

The item quotes an agribusinessman as saying that farmers who use great care in selecting the proper seed, lime, fertilizer and weed control measures often get much lower yields than expected simply because their plant population was 2,000 to 5,000 plants per acre lower than they had thought.

The agribusinessman states, "The bad part about it is that 8 out of 10 growers do not have the foggiest idea of their population and assume what they set out to plant is automatically there at harvest."

The biggest cause of poor populations were listed as follows: not planting 15 per cent more seed than plants wanted in harvest to allow for loss to pests, birds and poor cultivation; assuming without checking that the instruction book directions will give the right plant population; assuming that a bushel of seed will plant a certain amount of ground; calibrating the planter on the hard asphalt road and planting in soft soil; planting at speeds of 5 to 8 miles per hour; using the same plate for five different varieties of corn.

All these points might appear to be minor. But they all represent some of the little things that make the difference between an average and a good corn crop.

The article points out how important accurate planting rates can be. Missing by 1,000 seeds can cost the farmer \$10 per acre. Some simple arithmetic shows what loss of 2,000 to 5,000 plants per acre can cost the farmer.

On the other hand, farmers should be

very careful this year about not getting too many plants per acre.

One of the warnings to local farmers in connection with last year's yellow blight and Southern blight was that the blights thrived in thickly populated corn fields. This stems in part from the fact that sunlight cannot readily get into thickly populated stands, which they remain moist a relatively large proportion of the time; the blight thrives in moist conditions. Another factor may be that corn in thickly populated stands has to compete harder for survival and the stress makes the plant more susceptible to the blight.

Whatever the reasons, the point has been strongly made that exceptionally thick stands of corn are more prone to the blight and farmers who are concerned about the blight in 1971 should keep this in mind. Planting too much seed may be as costly as not planting enough.

Also, today's farmer must be constantly aware that the profitable crop is the high yielding crop.

This is true because of the high and growing basic costs of production. No matter how much corn the farmer grows on a piece of ground, he's likely to have a certain minimum cost that includes fertilizer, seed, equipment, land, taxes and so forth.

It takes a minimum production level, which is constantly rising, to reach this break-even point. It's only the production beyond this break-even level that rewards the farmer for his own time and effort.

The point is that it costs very little more to have a highly successful crop than it costs to have a break-even or losing crop.

And the difference between the break-even crop and the good crop is the attention to detail — such things as making sure that fertilizer is applied efficiently, based on soil tests, and that the weeds and insects aren't competing with the crop for survival. And taking the necessary steps before planting time to insure that the proper number of seed gets planted.

It should be noted that there is no precise way to tell a particular farmer how many seed to plant per acre.

The important thing is that the individual farmer determine as precisely as he can the plant population he should have to get maximum production from his own land and his own farm practices — then be very careful at planting time to see that he gets the needed plant population.



## NOW IS THE TIME . . .

By Max Smith  
Lancaster County Age.

### To Market Cattle On Grade

The man who continues to feed finished cattle hoping for a higher market price is, in most cases, the loser. At the present time there could be many head of cattle with enough finish to grade Choice that are being held on feed for a higher market price. At the recent cattle feeding meeting, it was pointed out that only four per cent of today's cattle are fed to the prime grade, and this is all that the market will absorb. To hold finished cattle is to increase the cost of gain and to get a lower return for all inputs.

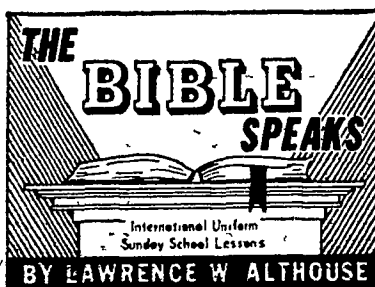
### To Eliminate Rodents

Spring is approaching and rats and mice will be migrating to the fields for the summer. All property owners are urged to eradicate the maximum number of these pests in order to prevent them from multiplying during the season. In some severe cases a thorough fumigation job may be needed by a commercial exterminator. In other cases a clean-up program along with

poison bait stations will reduce the population. To eliminate rats will be one step toward more profitable farming operations.

### To Beware Of Pollution Problems

The words "pollution" and "environment" are words of the times and everyone is aware of the problem and of many of the causes; however, everyone should also be interested in trying to understand these causes and in trying to correct them. I'm sure that most farmers are aware of the pollution of both air and water and will try to reduce the amount of each. Also, other folks should become interested in these problems and try to understand and help with the solution. The spring months are approaching when many tons of livestock waste will be applied to the fields for fertilizer purposes. This is a part of the livestock farming operation and we solicit the understanding of non-farm residents in tolerating these temporary conditions.



**PROFESSION AND PRACTICE**  
Lesson for February 21, 1971

Background Scripture: Matthew 7:21-29, 21:23-32

The famous British strongman, Mr. Sandow of London, was once interviewed in his palatial gymnasium. He told a reporter: "People come to me with a blank check in their hands and say, 'I will pay you any fee you like, if you will produce for me a strong, healthy, young body,' and I say 'Excellent!' — but then it turns out that I am to go into the gymnasium and swing dumbbells and do exercises on the



Rev. Althouse floor, while they go away and eat and drink and smoke too much and keep late hours. Regrettably I tell them, 'It can't be done.'"

### Knowing and doing

Isn't this what many physicians discover? People will come to them, willing to pay any amount of money to be rid of this or that ailment. Yet, when the doctor prescribes a special diet or a list of things they must avoid, they pay their money and go away doing as they please. Some even come back later and demand to know why they are not getting any better!

People often come to Jesus seeking his advice and help, yet, some of them, upon receiving what they asked for, decided they really didn't want it anyway. That's the way it was with the rich young man whose "possessions were great." He wanted to know what to do, but when he knew, he did not do it.

This is often true of people in their relationship with God. We come to him with our problems and he tells us what to do, but, when we find out the truth, we

decide we really don't want to do it. We may pray every day asking him to change our lives and then get up from our knees and go about the day's work resisting all opportunities to change. Then, when nothing happens, we may be incredulous "What! You mean after all this praying and going to church, you're not going to do what I ask?"

### The real "believers"

There is a tremendous gap between profession and practice. It is so much easier to profess our "beliefs" for it seldom costs us much to say words, to make the right gestures. Most of us suffer nothing by professing the Christian faith. In fact, there are many communities where not being a church member is a distinct disadvantage.

Practicing Christianity, on the other hand, is a different matter. Contrary to professing Christian beliefs, practicing them may cost us something. (In fact, one of my maxims is that if my practice of Christianity is costing me nothing or little, there must be something wrong with my Christianity!) This is why the Apostle James challenges us to be, not just "hearers of the word," but "doers."

### Which of the two?

Jesus's words in Matthew 21:28-32 must have angered many of his listeners for he is suggesting that they are not "real believers." They are like the son who says "yes" to his father but doesn't do what he is supposed to do. They profess their obedience, but do not practice it. They know the truth, but they do not do it.

On the other hand, he is saying, the tax collectors, prostitutes, and other disreputable people who are responding to him are like the son who says "no," but then does what he is asked to do. Though they do not seem to be religious, they are the ones who really please God.

Who are the professing sons today? And who are the sons who really practice what God asks of them?

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