

## New Cattle Price Record—Finally

All that flap which was stirred when slaughter cattle prices finally reached a new record high after 20 years was almost enough to make the farmer feel guilty about finally being able to make a reasonable rate of return on his investment.

But we suggest that cattle producers think the thing through before they hang their heads in remorse.

Recall the lean years, the many times when prices were below costs. How many other segments of the U.S. economy pay for the privilege of producing?

Recall how dramatically nearly all production costs have risen in the past 20 years. Fortunately, one of the biggest costs, feed, has remained relatively stable. But machinery and labor costs are up sharply.

It seems that nearly everybody today expects to earn more this year than last, more next year than this. Farmers who keep up with the national news are certainly aware that workers in industry after industry expect and get large annual wage increases.

But the same laborer-consumer who gets large annual increases apparently expects the farmer to be willing to tighten his belt, accept smaller profit margins and increase his efficiency in order to hang in there.

In the past, the farmer has done just that—tightened his belt. One result nationally has been increasingly larger farm units; it takes larger farms with more capital investment to make enough profit to survive when profit margins are continually tightened.

It's another way of saying: the constant price-cost squeeze on the farmer which has made it possible for the consumer to spend less and less of his income on food has had its impact—in the form of larger farm production units and fewer farmers.

The impact of the price-cost squeeze has

not been nearly as severe in Southeastern Pennsylvania as it has been elsewhere, but the national trends are evident here also. A combination of favorable climate, ready markets, knowledgeable and industrious farmers have made it possible for the local farm community to prosper in the face of the price-cost squeeze with a minimum of change and problems.

Looking ahead, we can see the day when belt tightening won't be enough. While the farm community has been fantastic at coming up with new machinery and techniques to continually lower cost of production, there certainly must be a limit. There must come a time when the consumer is willing to let the farmer have his fair share.

We suggest that if the consumer does not willingly let the farmer share in the national prosperity, the consumer eventually will be forced to let the farmer have his share.

As we see it, the consumer can continue to force the farmer to deal with the agony of the price-cost squeeze; more farmers can be forced to consolidate and expand in order to keep up.

But with the national farm population continually shrinking, how much more can it shrink? Before farmers recognize the necessity of action to get a fair break?

Farmers have never asked for more than a fair break. But the dock strike during the past year illustrated what farmers face; dock workers sought their high annual wage increase and were willing to tie up a huge share of the farm export market in order to get it; in this case, farmers were asked to take it two ways—through lower farm prices because lower export volumes contributed to market gluts and through payment of the higher wage costs of the dock workers.

So the cattle producer finally got a 20-year record high price for his product? So who else had to wait 20 years?

## Oh, That Sudden Stop!

Local egg producers have been getting much advice lately on how to stop cracks and breaks.

One favorite quip of Kermit Birth, Penn State Extension poultry specialist, is: "It's not how fast the egg travels, it's the sudden stop which breaks it."

Which leads us to Operation Eggdrop, a ninth grade science project by students at Lincoln Junior High School. On March 9, the students will drop eggs from a

helicopter hovering from 800 to 1,200 feet above the school.

The goal: to package the eggs so they don't scramble on impact.

Or, as Birth would put it: Don't let them stop too fast.

One thing for sure. If ninth graders can stop eggs from breaking after a fall of 800 to 1,200 feet, farmers ought to be able to figure out how to stop them from breaking after a roll of only a few inches or a few feet. Ain't so?

## On Attending Meetings

The local farm community is now in the midst of its banquet and meeting season.

In the summer the farmer generally has twice as many jobs to do as he has time in which to do them; it's a matter of working at the most important jobs until time runs out.

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But in the winter the pressures aren't quite as severe and the farmer has some time "to take stock," to review what happened during the past year and to plan ahead for the coming year.

If this "quiet" time is used wisely, it could be the best spent time of the year. It's increasingly true for farmers as it is for everyone else: it's not how hard you work, it's how well you work. Making the right decisions at the right time is increasingly critical.

Attending banquets and educational meetings, we suggest, is a sound way to spend some of the slack time in the winter. Ideas and inspiration are to be found in abundance at these meetings.

We predict that the numbers and quality of meetings for farmers will grow. And farmers who recognize the value of these meetings and take advantage of them will be in a better position to adjust to the ever changing farm scene.

We suggest that every farm family should consider keeping a meeting calendar.

## NOW IS THE TIME . . .

By Max Smith  
Lancaster County Agent



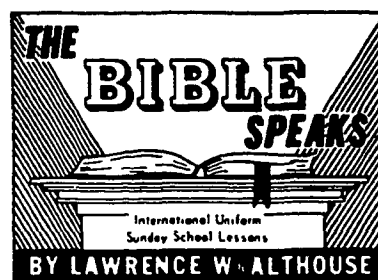
**To Broadcast Legume Seeds**  
Alfalfa and red clover growers who are going to establish their new stand by broadcasting on top of winter wheat are urged to make this seeding as soon as possible and at least by the middle of March; some growers may have already seeded during late February. The early broadcasting will permit the seeds to work into the topsoil during the alternate freezing and thawing of early spring days. Most research and experience will favor the very early seedings when the broadcast method is used. We would favor a straight seeding of alfalfa later in March, if the grower has open ground and can prepare a good seedbed. Certified seeds should be used and they should be well inoculated.

**To Topdress Wheat**  
Many winter wheat growers have learned that a special application of nitrogen fertilizer during the month of March will increase wheat yields. This practice is strongly recommended on soils with considerable sand, shale, or gravel; in these cases the nitrogen may have leached out more severely during the winter months. The amount of nitrogen to apply will vary, depending upon the fertility of the soil and whether or not the wheat is to be seeded down to alfalfa or clover; in the latter cases 25 to 30 pounds of actual nitrogen per acre is recommended. To get a maximum yield of wheat and straw regardless of legume seedings, 50 to 60 pounds

of nitrogen per acre should give good results.

**To Fertilize Pastures**  
Livestock producers who retain some permanent pasture can increase the forage per acre by spring applications of fertilizer; in the case of mixed pastures, including some clovers, a complete fertilizer such as 10-10-10 is suggested. In the case of straight grass pastures only nitrogen is needed, provided previous soil tests show the potash and phosphorus levels to be satisfactory. Some producers will fertilize only parts of their pastures (¼-acre per animal) early in the spring to push that forage ahead of the rest of the field. Old sods that are to be improved should first get a complete soil test, followed by the lime and the fertilizer recommendations. It is accepted that an acre of good corn will produce more feed nutrients than an acre of most pastures; however, some land is suited only for permanent pasture and the farmer should attempt to get as much forage as possible from this land.

**To Delay Field work**  
Weather conditions during the past week favor outside work and the starting of early spring practices; however, it is only early March and the topsoil is very wet and full of moisture. It is suggested that the farmer be patient in getting out into the field for plowing and other work with heavy equipment until the soil dries out; working in wet soil, or driving over it this time of the year with heavy equipment when it is wet, may mean that it will get hard and be of very poor physical conditions for the rest of the summer. Heavy clay soils need special handling early in the spring.



### "MY CHURCH"

Lesson for March 5, 1972

Background Scripture: Isaiah 28:16; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Matthew 16:13-20; Ephesians 2:19-22.  
Devotional Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34.

"It's not our church any more," the man said bitterly, "They've taken it away from us!"

The "us" he referred to were a group of people who for many years had comprised the small rural congregation. The "they"

were the new suburbanites who were beginning to join the little church—no longer rural—in growing numbers.

How do you tell a man like this that it was never his church in the first place? How do you convince him that it also can never be "their" church? There is only one who can properly call it "my church," but we tend to forget about him. For, even if we don't use the possessive pronouns "my" and "our," we may still act as if the church, in fact, belonged to us.

#### Christ the Cornerstone

For example, many of the decisions which we make concerning the church will reflect our interests, not those of Christ. When we have to make important decisions for the church we are often likely to speak of what we

"will accept" or what we "won't stand for." The question of what Christ might desire, if it is considered at all, is often dismissed as impractical, "pie-in-the-sky" idealism.

Then there's the whole question of the church's financial resources. "You're not going to spend my money like that!" we may protest when we see the church doing something to which we object. What we seem to forget is that it cannot be "my money." If the church belongs to Christ then the money we have given is his. To continue to speak of it as "my money" or "our money" is little short of blasphemy.

The writer of the Epistle to the Ephesians wanted there to be no doubt as to whom the Church belonged. To be sure, the Church is like a household, but we are not the owners of the household. We are there by the grace of God. It does not belong to us, but we belong to it. Only in that sense can we call it "my church" or "our church." The foundation of that household consists of the apostles and prophets, "Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together . . ." (Ephesians 2:20, 21).

#### No power prevail against it

At the scene in Caesarea Philippi in Matthew 16. Jesus says of Peter's declaration of faith, ". . . on this rock I will build my church" (v. 18). Jesus, we need to note, does not say to Peter: "you will build your church." There can be no doubt about to whom the church belongs.

Perhaps people might see the Church differently today if they would remember that it is Christ's Church.