

Meat - Another Look

One man's view of the meat inspection donnybrook is explained at length in this week's lead article. Although we can't agree with everything Eric Fairchild said, we felt his views should be made known.

In this matter, it would be understandable if Fairchild were not completely free of bias. He did seem to be a reasonable man, and he did seem to have an exhaustive grasp of the political machinations that have been going on. He did not seem unduly persuaded that his was the only possible viewpoint.

We cannot deny his facts, we cannot verify them. We have presented his view of the facts, and we commend him for presenting them so candidly. We would welcome an equally candid presentation from the USDA.

But we're not holding our breath. If candor were water, you couldn't squeeze enough out of both Washington and Harrisburg to keep a desert lizard alive.

There are really three important points in the meat inspection controversy, and no one has paid much attention to them, except for an occasional flap of lip service. They are, as we see them:

1. What effect will the federal takeover have on small meat operations, and how can any adverse effects be alleviated?

2. What is the best way of insuring that the meat on the average table is a good, wholesome product?

3. How can states and individual citizens protect themselves from the spreading tentacles of federal bureaucracy?

First point. Secretary McHale's people charge that the federal takeover will do irreparable harm to the state of Pennsylvania. They say it will drive out the small butcher, it will limit competition, it will result in higher meat prices, it is exactly what the big packing companies want, it will hurt livestock auction receipts, small farmers' prices for fed beef, and put poorer quality meat on Pennsylvania tables.

One could easily get the feeling from Secretary McHale that the entire Keystone State will just down a stainless steel drain under federal meat inspection.

Reality, however, is something else. Not quite so serious. Interstate meat operations will not be affected at all by the federal takeover, simply because they are already federally inspected.

Most small operators previously state-inspected are already using practices and facilities which are perfectly acceptable under federal regulations. A check with half-a-dozen or so Lancaster County butchers revealed that no one was going to have to spend \$100,000 to get his butcher shop covered with stainless steel. There is only one major gripe, and that is the fee for after hours inspection.

Federal inspectors work an eight-hour day. It is within their power to mandate a small operator's hours for processing. If the inspector quits at three o'clock, the shop has to quite at three, or else pay the inspector \$9.36 an hour overtime.

Without a doubt, this \$9.36 is going to prove a burden to the owner of a two or three-man operation who feels he has to work overtime several days a week. Many owners don't even take \$9.36 an hour from their operations. Something should be done for these people if federal meat inspection stays, and it looks like it will.

We have proposed, both to Washington and Harrisburg, a means of removing this burden from the small operator. We recommend a sliding scale of payments to any federally inspected processor, with fewer than 15 full-time employees, who requires the overtime service of a meat inspector.

For example, if a man had one helper in his shop, the government, either state or federal, would pay the entire \$9.36 per

hour. If he had six helpers, the payment would be reduced to, say, \$5.00 per hour, with the owner paying the other \$4.36. If he had sixteen people, he'd have to pay the entire \$9.36.

This kind of program would give most of the help to the people who need it most. Some very small businessmen are small because they're not very good at running a business. This is the kind of business that soon goes bankrupt. Some businessmen are small simply because they'd rather be small. This is the kind of man who can be regulated out of business.

Government should make a special effort not to regulate away the small businessman. In the meat industry, the USDA will be regulating away the small butcher shop if they treat the small man they same way they treat the giant packing houses.

People in Harrisburg say that our proposal is unconstitutional. People in Washington say it's impractical. We hope somebody takes a closer look.

As to stifling competition, federal meat inspection is going to have no effect at all. Meat prices are determined by supply and demand, not the dictates of Swift and Armour. There's not even the remotest possibility that federal inspection will result in the demise of all but the three or four biggest packers.

And even if that did happen, we'd still have fair meat prices because we'd still have competition. We only have four automobile companies in this country, and yet you can still buy a car for \$2000. As long as there are at least two parties slugging it out in the marketplace, you've got competition.

Second point. People eat meat every day, and hardly anybody dies from it. Indiscriminately, they buy federally inspected meat, state inspected meat and non-inspected meat. The last shouldn't happen, but it does. With respect to the quality of meat that reaches the table, it just doesn't seem to make much difference who inspects the meat.

Third point. The USDA is charged with looking after the welfare of people who grow food and people who eat food. And that includes everybody.

This is their only responsibility. It seems that in this instance, there is a possibility that they are acting not out of concern for ordinary citizens, but out of concern for their institutional survival.

It seems somehow Orwellian that our federal government can simply mandate away a state program. Pennsylvania has, of course, appealed to the courts in this instance. This appeal came, though, only after the takeover was a virtual fait accompli. And it appears that the appeal has failed.

There could have been some means of arbitrating this dispute between the Pennsylvania and the USDA.

Obviously, the USDA isn't the only spreading bureaucracy, nor is it the only agency staffed with too many people more interested in the welfare of the institution than in the welfare of the people the institution was designed to serve.

What's happened in meat could happen in welfare, transportation, communications, and every other function which is subject to state and local regulation.

We will be told that massive federal programs are more efficient than whole rafts of smaller regional programs. And there's a good deal of truth in that.

But by taking away state and local initiative, you also take away some of the diversity between different states and different localities.

Diversity has its price, that's true. But it has its charm, too, and it has its place.

NOW IS THE TIME . . .

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To Secure Livestock Equipment

The handling of livestock with a minimum of stress and excitement will more than pay for the equipment needed. Loading chutes are almost a necessity if animals are to be handled properly. Cutting gates, sick pens, and head gates are a part of good livestock management. Now would be a good time to construct or purchase some of this equipment, if it is needed. The fall feeding season is approaching when more livestock traffic will take place to and from many farms. Plans for many of these pieces of equipment are available at our Extension Office.

To Plan A Waste Disposal System

The subject of pollution will be with us for many years. All livestock producers should be interested in keeping both air and water pollution to a minimum; especially water pollution must be kept to a minimum. In the case of new construction, a waste disposal system will be needed and have to be approved before a building permit will be issued. Run-off from barnyards and feedlots must be kept from washing directly into public streams. Diversion ditches and settling ponds may be of some help in many places. The important thing is that producers become interested in preventing pollution of all kinds and manage their operations according to the best known disposal methods and sanitation practices. Most non-farm people residing in the rural areas will be less likely to file a complaint if they understand the problem and notice that the farmer is trying to do a good job

some people don't get "anything out of worship" is that they are not putting anything into it. They are seeking peace, but not giving it. They want to find inspiration, but perhaps, like joy, inspiration is a by-product of self-giving. Perhaps it was because he was willing to pray for the peace of others, that the psalmist found so much joy in going up to Jerusalem to worship in the temple.

Maybe the next time we come home from church we ought to ask, not what we got out of it, but what we put into it. The writer of Hebrews puts his finger on this same idea "let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works . . . encouraging one another . . ." (Hebrews 10:24, 25). Actually the church ought to be a kind mutual-stirring society. If we worship, we will focus on encouraging others, inspiring them. If we do, we will probably find that we ourselves have been inspired as well.

The great neglect

A pastor once called on a man who, though still professing to be a Christian, had absented himself from worship in the church for a number of years. "I don't want to offend you, Pastor," he said, "but I feel I can be a Christian just as easily by sitting here by my fire and listening to a church on the radio."

The minister said nothing for a few minutes, staring into the fireplace and its cozy fire. Suddenly he leaned forward and grasping the fire tongs, he lifted a burning coal out of the fire and placed it by itself on the stone sill. In a few minutes the coal stopped glowing and went out. The parishoner watched all this and then said "I get the point; I'll be in church on Sunday."

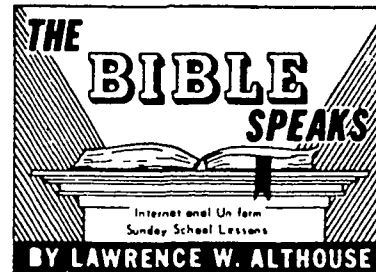
Without each other and our mutual stirring, the fire of faith grows dim and goes out.

To Be Thankful For Research

The merits of agricultural research are being challenged by some farm authorities in this part of the country. I'd like to call attention to the fact that our 1972 corn crop is not being threatened at this time by the serious southern leaf blight as it was just a year ago. The reason being that through research and plant breeding on the part of both the commercial corn breeders and land grant university research workers, the varieties being grown this year are resistant to the disease. This kind of scientific progress is being made every year on many crops throughout the country. The experimentation to locate the best varieties and those that are resistant to many infections has contributed considerably to many of our local farm and garden crops. Don't stop agricultural progress by reducing research work.

To Fertilize Strawberries

Many strawberry growers did not have a chance to harvest all of their 1972 crop, the weather took care of those late berries. In looking forward to next year it is advised to fertilize the plants now in order to encourage the development of fruit buds for the 1973 crop. The use of a 10-10-10 fertilizer at the rate of 1 pound for each 80 square feet of strawberry bed will help get a better crop for next year; also, this fertilizer will help encourage new runner plants. Apply the fertilizer when the plant leaves are dry in order to avoid fertilizer burning.



MUTUAL STIRRING

Lesson for August 6, 1972

Background Scripture Psalms 122, 1 Corinthians 11:23-28, Hebrews 10:23-25
Devotional Reading Psalms 34:1-10

"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'" (Psalms 122:1), says the psalmist.

There are many people today who do not share his gladness. They do not "enjoy" congregational worship. "I don't get anything out of it," they sometimes say.

Actually, many of these people miss the point a good deal of worship has to do with what you give, rather than what you get. The psalmist, for example, prays for the needs of others "For my brethren and companions' sake, I will say, 'Peace be within you!'" (122:8). His focus is not upon "getting" something "For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good" (122:9).

The by-product

In his book, SURPRISED BY JOY, C. S. Lewis tells us that after many years of fruitless searching, he found that joy is a by-product. In seeking something of a less self-centered nature, he was often "surprised by joy." When he sought it, it eluded him. Perhaps one of the reasons



Rev. Althouse