

Farm Commentary

by Dick Wanner

Rail Situation Becoming Bleaker

"There are going to be widespread rail abandonments in the Northeast. I feel it in my bones," we were told this week by Donald Parke, executive vice-president of PennAg Industries, an organization composed mostly of Pennsylvania feed and fertilizer dealers, and headquartered in Ephrata. On Tuesday of this week, Parke was a participant in a rail study conference organized by Adams County Agent Thomas Piper. Piper organized the meeting to probe the potential problems of rail abandonment in and around Adams County.

At the meeting, Parke talked about the problem of abandonments from the viewpoint of the shipper. "The railroads are talking about shutting down miles and miles of branch lines," Parke said. "These are the very lines that are most important to the farmers and the feed dealers in Pennsylvania. These are the lines that bring in the bulk feed ingredients and the fertilizers. Take these lines away, and you increase the costs to the dealers and to the

farmers. There's no way that trucks can compete with the cost of hauling materials like bulk soy by train."

One impact of a loss of rail service could be that some mills will no longer be able to afford the ingredients for custom mixing. "Some mills do mix up special formulations using the grain from their farmer customers. That kind of service just won't be available, though, if the mills can't buy the bulk soy to go with the grains."

Parke said he has proposed a complete turnaround in the approach to the nation's rail problems. And it includes keeping a lot of the branch lines open. "It's just not necessary to shut down branch lines," he commented. "We're going to have economic turmoil for years along abandoned lines. It's not worth it, because the branch lines contribute very little to the deficits which the railroads are running up."

"But I must admit, I'm not very hopeful. I think we're going to see abandonments."

The Accusing Finger

Our telephone interview with Gerald Charles, publicity chairman for the Perry County NFO affiliate, started off a bit chilly on Friday morning, but seemed to warm up a bit toward the end.

"If you're going to call us militants, I don't want to talk to you," Charles said. "If you're not going to call us militants, then I'll talk."

Charles, a dairyman from Liverpool, had taken umbrage at a remark by this writer in a recent issue of Lancaster Farming which alluded to calves being slaughtered by "militant NFO members in the Midwest." We had made reference in that story to a photo which appeared some weeks ago in national media, showing a farmer, cigar clenched between his teeth, a pistol in his hand, blowing the brains out of a Holstein calf. The photo caption said the gun-welder was an NFO member.

"That was not an NFO member," Charles said. "Our president, Oren Lee Staley, did not authorize those actions, he does not approve of them, and neither do we NFO members here in Perry and Dauphin Counties approve of shooting calves. We just want to make a better living, and we think we can do that with the help of

the NFO, which is strictly a bargaining agent for farm products."

It is not the purpose of this newspaper or this writer to speak either for or against any farm organization. Lancaster Farming's bias is for the farmer and for the land. We support those people and organizations who work for farmers and farming. We applaud efforts to bring the farmer's story before the general public.

But we cannot condone acts of violence aimed at shocking the public into awareness of farm problems. Shooting calves in a field, over an open trench, is a violent act. It debases agriculture. Our recent comments on that action were sincere.

At the same time, we would not want to damage any group which did not actively participate in those acts of violence. Certainly, the local NFO members have never to our knowledge engaged in militant actions like those that have characterized some Midwestern farm groups. Nor would we want to wrongfully blame the national NFO organization for acts it did not condone.

Of Golf Courses and Hunger

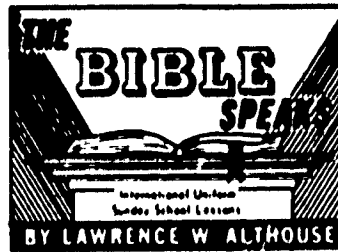
"Cruel and misleading" is how Ed Wheeler, president of The Fertilizer Institute, labels suggestions that non-farm use of fertilizer in the U.S. diverts substantial supplies from agriculture of underdeveloped countries. Wheeler says such suggestions have raised expectations far beyond abilities to provide financing or delivery to emerging nations.

Robert Steiner, a fertilizer coordinator for the UN Food and Agriculture Organizations, says it is unrealistic to talk about fertilizer being taken from golf courses in America to supply farmers in developing nations. "What are

needed are funds from wealthier countries to secure fertilizer deliveries and to help pay shipping charges"

"Quite simply, the emerging nations are broke," notes Wheeler. "Their treasuries are bare, caused primarily by the unreasonable prices they are forced to pay for oil. High oil prices in turn have greatly contributed to high fertilizer prices."

About 3.5 per cent of U.S. fertilizer consumption goes into non-farm use. Besides lawn and golf courses these uses include vegetable gardens, public park and playground maintenance, highway shoulder construction and airport runway de-icing.



ON BEING "CHOSEN"

Lesson for February 9, 1975

Background Scripture: 2 Corinthians 8; Ephesians 4:11-16; Titus 3:8-14; James 2:14-17; 1 Peter 2:9.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 1:10-17.

"Congratulations, you have been chosen. . . .!"

Those are exciting words, for everyone wants to be chosen, to win recognition, to be singled out for some honor or privilege. We like the honor and we also covet the privileges that come to those who are "chosen." If someone regards us as "special," we usually receive "special" treatment too.

This is the way the people of Israel sometimes felt about being God's chosen people. "Singled-out by God as 'special,'" they gloried in their status and their expectations of the advantages that status would bring them.

"A Chosen Race"

To a degree, they were correct: God has chosen them and set them apart as something "special." Of all the peoples of the world they were set apart. But what the people of Israel overlooked was the purpose behind this "special" status. God had chosen them, not to give them status, but a task! The whole purpose of his selection was that he had something for them to do.

To be sure, being "chosen" by God was still an honor. But much more than the honor was the responsibility it carried with it. The man who wins an election is, in a sense, "honored" by the electorate, but after the victory celebration has died away, the person who has been "chosen" is expected to render public service. In a like manner, winning a place on the basketball team is an honor, but it is also a great responsibility and much is expected of the person who has been "chosen."

This is what the writer of I Peter is saying to the New Testament churches: ". . . you are a chosen race . . . that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness in to his marvelous light." (I Peter 2:9).

They were "chosen" because God had a job for them to do. Being "chosen" means being a service to render for God. With the honor there went a responsibility and they could not be God's "chosen people" unless they were equally willing to work for him. As the old spiritual puts it: ". . . If you can't bear the cross, Then you can't wear the crown."

True Excellence

In writing his second letter to Corinth, Paul reminded the Corinthians that as God's "special" people, they were therefore responsible for responding to the needs of their fellow-Christians in Jerusalem. They had a good reputation for their faith, their knowledge, and their love, but Paul was calling upon them to match this status with generosity towards those in need: ". . . as you excel in



NOW IS THE TIME . . .

Max Smith
County Agr. Agent
Telephone 394-6851

To Borrow With Caution

Credit is a very important item in most farm operations, but there is a limit as to the amount that should be borrowed; this will vary from farm to farm and in many cases, is based upon the management ability of the farmer. Caution is needed because production costs are expected to rise while farm income may not. There will be some farmers who will find themselves greatly over extended, if the increase in most costs continue to exceed advances in farm product prices. Considerable planning on repayment ability in line with adequate cash flow will be necessary, if farmers are to remain in a solid financial position.

To Beware Of Johnsongrass

This aggressive weed needs far more attention than some farmers are willing to give, according to a recent speaker at a forage meeting. It is growing in many parts of Lancaster County and many neighboring areas. It is a tall-growing grass, resembling the appearance of sudan grass or sorghum, and is very difficult to control. Several years ago, some concerns were selling a sorghum grass that was too closely related to Johnsongrass. Farmers who now have patches of Johnsongrass should be making some plans to eradicate the weed in the next few years. If left uncontrolled, it will take over the field and no other crop can survive.

Farm Calendar

Tuesday, February 11

Dairy Meeting 4 for the Ephrata Adult Farmer's program at the Ephrata Area High School at 7:45 p.m.

Annual Dinner meeting of the Lancaster County Agriculture Extension Association at 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, February 12

Direct Marketing for Jug Milk dealers at the Farm and Home Center 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Public NFO meeting at the Band Room Halifax Area High School 8:00 p.m. - Dauphin Co.

everything - in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in your love for us - see that you excel in this gracious work also." (2 Cor. 8:7).

Paul knew that if people really had the faith they claimed to have, they would also have a compassionate heart towards others. James also stressed this idea: "What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works?"

Let the "chosen" people of God rejoice in their election by the Lord. But let them also just as enthusiastically accept the task he puts in their hands.

To Transfer Silage
Dairy and livestock producers who have silage stored in trench or bunker silos, and who plan to transfer the material into an upright silo for automotive feeding, should be making plans to do this work before warm weather arrives. Silage transferred when temperatures are below or near freezing, will have less heating and will be in better condition than if done when temperatures are above 50 degrees. The job should be done as quickly as possible, and there is not any need of applying water or other materials. If any form of synthetic protein (urea or anhydrous ammonia) was not added last fall, it should not be added when the silage is transferred. This same thing is true about ground limestone for cattle feeding. These materials should have been added when the forage was ensiled, and not at the time of the transfer into an upright silo.

To Control Run-off Water

The spring months usually bring rain and in some years extra water because of melting snow. In the case of feedlots and barnyards, it is important that this run-off water be directed to sod-covered land, or to a catch basin. Diversion ditches may have to be made to prevent this water from running into a public stream or out upon a public highway. One way to prevent being reported to the Department of Environmental Resources, is to stop water pollution before it occurs. Planning for proper run-off and waste disposal is very much in order.

Dairy Day in Montgomery Co., Collegeville Inn - 10:00 a.m.

Thursday, February 13
Manheim Young Farmers Hog management meeting at the Manheim High School.

E-Town Young Farmers meeting at the E-Town High School Tax Management program 7:30 p.m.

Farm Estate Planning and Wills meeting at 7:30 p.m., Lancaster Farm and Home Center.

Atlantic Breeder's Co-op meeting at the Quarryville Methodist Church 7:00 p.m.

Friday, February 14
Computer Workshop of cattle breeders, at the Lancaster Farm and Home Center.

Monday, February 17
Swine Management Meeting at the Lancaster Farm and Home Center 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, February 18
Ephrata Adult Farmer's monthly meeting at the Ephrata Area High School ag classroom 7:45 p.m.

Manheim Young Farmer's hog management meeting at the Manheim School.

Crops Day at Lancaster Farm & Home Center 9:00 a.m. - 3 p.m.