

Congressman warns farmers not to depend on natural gas

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Congressman Tom Harkin (D-5th Iowa) has warned farmers not to be lulled into continued reliance on natural gas," by President Carter's exemption of farmers from a proposed tax on industrial use of oil and natural gas.

Harkin, who supports the exemption, said, "Farmers should remember two things. First, the price of natural gas is going up, way up. Secondly, we're eventually going to be facing very limited supplies, if we don't run out altogether. Farmers must look for alternatives," he said.

Harkin said the U.S. Department of Agriculture is launching a search for new ways to make nitrogen

fertilizer without using natural gas. He also said an intensive effort is planned to adapt solar energy technologies to grain drying. "Once successful, these efforts will go a long way in easing farm reliance on natural gas," Harkin said.

"In the meantime, farmers must do all they can, voluntarily, to lessen their reliance on natural gas," Harkin said. "Even though they're exempt from the President's proposed tax, they should still cut back and switch to alternative sources of energy where ever practical. We simply can't depend on natural gas for the long term," Harkin said.

He said he expects the same tax incentives being proposed for residential and

industrial users to install solar energy units to be offered to farm users, as well, by Congress. He urged farmers to use the incentives to apply solar technologies to farming operations, especially grain drying.

Harkin, a member of the U.S. House Agriculture Committee, also serves on the U.S. House Science and Technology Committee, which handles most energy legislation.



LIFE on the farm

by DIETER KRIEG

Hillbilly music can kill you. No fooling, it almost killed our hired man once, who was obsessed with the choking strains of throats and banjos.

Having a radio in the barn is a must on practically every dairy farm, and our place was no exception. A delapidated old AM-FM receiver was mounted to the wall about six feet up from the floor. That kept it out of the cows' reach and also gave us listeners easy access to the knobs.

One thing was wrong, though. Marvin could reach the dials the same as anyone else. That was alright when the rest of us were way out in the field and couldn't hear the stuff Marvin called "music," but at other times it was just too much to take.

So one day it became necessary to move the radio up as high as the ceiling would allow. It had to be out of Marvin's reach. And it was, until Marvin discovered he could make himself a bit taller by standing on an old milk can, straw bale, or wheelbarrow.

Every morning and afternoon, tuning on some good contemporary and popular music was as much a part of the routine as feeding and milking the cows. The milking machines were often pulsing to the rhythm of The Beatles, Simon and Garfunkle, Glenn Campbell, or Herb Alpert, among others.

One afternoon I was minding my own business -- doing the milking --

while simultaneously whistling along to some favorite tune.

Suddenly the music stopped and there was a tumbling sound. Looking towards the radio, I saw Marvin lying in the litter alley and an old milk can rolling towards the gutter.

A bolt of shock surged through my body, as Marvin wasn't making a move. I quickly hurried to get my brother, Ingo, who was feeding heifers at the time, and then attended to the unconscious Marvin.

Fearing serious injury or even death, we didn't know just what to do. A run for the phone was contemplated, but a few stirs from Marvin kept Ingo and me hovering over him. We took him into the milk house and started to talk to him.

"Heh Marv, let us know how you are. Please come to," we pleaded, slapping his face a bit with hands dipped in cold water. Marvin's eyes had opened by that time and he just stared out into nothingness it seemed. But he heard and understood us. Communication was established and we were thankful for it.

Marvin was alright. He was stunned, but he was okay and just in need of a rest.

Although it hurt to make this promise, I offered he could listen to all the hillbilly music he wanted. Thank God he declined the offer. Thank God too that he wasn't hurt by the fall which came about when he climbed on top of a milk can to tune in to the howling and screeching he called music.

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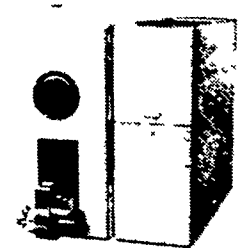
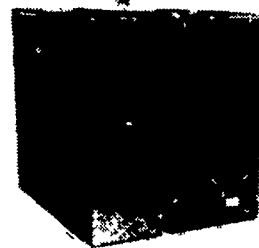
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