

EDITORIAL COMMENTS By DIETER KRIEG, EDITOR



Reactor is cool ... now the people

Because newsmen from around the world have made such a big case out of the accident that occurred ten days ago on Three Mile Island, agriculture in southeastern Pennsylvania may end up being the biggest loser of all.

While the nuclear mishap might well be considered dangerous, much of the country ended up being poisoned not by radiation, but rather by the heavy coverage given by news reporters and broadcasters. And because of that, many consumers will be shying away from farm products which were produced in the Keystone State.

That would be unfortunate, although not surprising.

There is no denying that the Three Mile Island incident was and is newsworthy, and it will undoubtedly be rated as the top story of the year, but if journalists were ever guilty of overdoing it, this had to be it. Day after day the big headlines appeared. And along with it came the unwarranted reports - even rumors - and downright ridiculous statements.

Suddenly everybody became an expert on nuclear energy and the facts became twisted and confusing. The rumors flew and alarm grew steadily.

As a matter of fact, more than 10 times as much radiation dropped on

our Garden Spot in October of 1976 when fallout from a Chinese bomb blast circled the globe. But back then, news reporters and politicians hardly even noticed. Life went on as normal, and few people - if anybody - were really concerned.

In contrast, radiation from Three Mile Island was oftentimes barely detectable, if present at all. But panic struck a lot of people and decisions are still being made which won't do Pennsylvania's farmers a bit of good.

True, the Three Mile Island situation could have been more serious than it was. Maybe the anticipation of a disaster is what caused the stories to be so heavily laden with negative thinking.

As the stories and rumors spread, people got the idea into their heads that our soils and farm products are contaminated. Some orders for sales have already been cancelled and a few merchants are known to be telling their customers that their milk or vegetables didn't come from Pennsylvania.

Ironically, the problem isn't in the immediate area, it's in neighboring states.

In the minds of at least some of the public, our farm products are unfit for human consumption. In truth, they're as good as they ever were.

There has been no scientific evidence to indicate that anything was con-

taminated - lest it be the tarnishing as a result of too much negative and alarming publicity.

I know of at least one picture that appeared in newspapers which was totally ridiculous, and yet somewhat indicative of the type of reporting that was going on. A couple of Holstein steers were feeding on a lot somewhere, and the caption asked whether or not the milk from those cows might be contaminated with radiation. I'm sure that was just one of many mistakes the reporters and photographers made.

After all, how much do city reporters know about farming?

And yes, how much do they know of nuclear physics?

Judging by the number of reports that were being written, our journalists know more about farming and nuclear energy than you and I combined. They may have meant well, but I'd say they overreacted. And they were responsible for a segment of our population overreacting as well.

Some of our politicians didn't help matters either. Seeing the opportunity to bale tons of political hay, they acted as though they were the all-knowing and all-guarding fathers of our country. Through their actions and words, some folks have inadvertently magnified a matter of concern into a story bordering on hopelessness. This made our

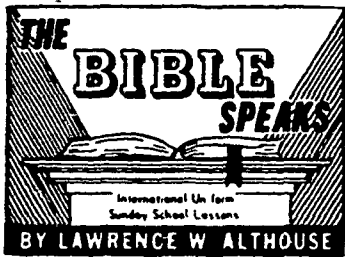
situation here at home even more vulnerable.

I certainly share the concern that many farmers have for their families and property. And I can understand why thousands of families wanted to leave the area for a few days. And I can see the reason for apprehension and fear among those who live and work close to the nuclear electric plant. There is no denying that the entire situation shouldn't have been taken lightly.

But there was no reason for the national news media and politicians to stretch the situation so far out of proportion that it left an indelible mark on Pennsylvania agriculture.

Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Penrose Hallowell has been saying ever since he took office that he wants to promote Pennsylvania's farm products.

Well, I'm afraid he and you and I are going to have a real job to do in that regard. After all the alarming publicity that's come out of the Three Mile Island thing, we had better not neglect our public relations duties to help bring things back to normal. People in our own area don't appear to be too worried about our farm products, but evidence is already showing up in other states that our products won't be as easily sold as before.



NOT THE LORD'S SUPPER

Lesson for April 8, 1979

Background Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11.

Devotional Reading: Mark 14:17-26.

"When you meet together, it is not the Lord's supper

that you eat"! How those words must have jarred the church at Corinth! They were not any more welcome in Corinth than they would be in your church today.

None of us would likely take kindly the judgement that, whatever we are doing, it is not the Lord's Supper.

Paul was shocked with what went on in Corinth when the church came together for the Lord's Supper. In Corinth, as probably in other places in the early church, it was observed as part of a common meal, known as the Agape or love feast. It

started out as a good idea, for eating together in the ancient world always had a special spiritual significance. The Last Supper of Jesus had also been a common sharing of the Passover Supper.

No Commendation

But something had happened to this good idea. In time, the common meal became really more important than the Lord's Supper. It became an occasion for eating and drinking in excess. It gave rise to selfish displays, some people using it as an opportunity to flaunt their

material well-being: "... do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not."

Today the service of Holy Communion is seldom performed in conjunction with a common meal. Therefore, you may be tempted to conclude that what Paul has to say on this subject in 1 Corinthians 11 has no relevance for us today. Certainly our services of Holy Communion are not conducted like that!

Profaning The Lord

But there is more involved

here than the practices of the Corinthian Christians at the Lord's Supper. First, Paul reminds us of the essence of the Lord's Supper: "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me" (11:24). In the Lord's Supper we must never forget that Christ himself is somehow present. If there is any action or attitude in us that is inharmonious with the Spirit of Christ, it is not the Lord's Supper we are celebrating. "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood

of the Lord. Let a man examine himself and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (11:27,28).

How often do we eat the bread and drink the cup without seriously "examining" ourselves - without looking deeply within ourselves, without evaluating our relationships with those about us? Are not Paul's words just as much a warning to us? "For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgement upon himself" (11:29)?

A service of Holy Communion is not necessarily the Lord's Supper!

NOW IS THE TIME

By Max Smith, Lancaster County Agricultural Agent

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TO PRODUCE MAXIMUM ALFALFA YIELDS

With nearly every species

of livestock the feeding of top quality alfalfa hay or silage is strongly recommended. At dairy meetings we hear how good alfalfa is in the rations and at a recent sheep meeting we learned that good alfalfa hay was the backbone of the ewe feeding program. Alfalfa meal is

often used as a source of protein in other rations. It all sums up the fact that alfalfa is one of our most important forage crops. Every farmer should make a special effort to produce maximum amounts per acre. This takes management along with proper lime, fertilizer, in-

sect, and disease control. Since we are now at the beginning of another cropping season, more attention to alfalfa might benefit many farmers. Don't be satisfied with half a stand, or with doing alfalfa practices in a hap-hazard

manner. The crop is worthy of the best of attention.

TO PROTECT PERMANENT PASTURES

Some permanent pastures have livestock running on them twelve months of the year. When animals are allowed to tramp these pastures early in the spring, they dig up the grass roots and do considerable damage. Some fields look more like a plowed field. This should not be allowed. I'd suggest that animals be kept from these pastures until the grass is tall enough to graze. Also, an application of complete fertilizer, such as 10-10-10, would bring the grass along faster and increase grazing capacity. Give the grass a chance to get started before the flock or herd is admitted to the area.

TO GRAZE CAUTIOUSLY

The winter rye will soon be ready for grazing in this part of the country. Also, if warm Spring rains continue, many stands of well-fertilized pastures will be ready to graze. Most animals are anxious to get on this lush growth and may over-eat the first few days. We suggest that animals be allowed on this fresh grass only after they have been fed other roughages such as hay, straw, or silage. In addition, they should be permitted to graze only for short periods, for the first few days; starting with 30 minutes and allowing longer each day. If the forage is dry at the time of grazing, it will be less likely to cause scouring or

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RURAL ROUTE

By Tom Armstrong

