

BY CURT HARLER, EDITOR



Lancaster Farming says..

You may be forced to farm 'right'

"Society is starting to realize that we can not continue to tolerate the levels of soil loss we are seeing in many of the nation's most productive agricultural states.

"If land users can't do a better job of keeping those losses within acceptable limits, I think they can expect to have society trying to tell them how they may or may not use the land we have left."

That quote is not from some wild-eyed radical nor from an avowed communist.

But the message is clear: if farmers don't clean up their farming practices, non-farmers or government agencies are going to step in to tell them how to farm 'right.'

When U.S. Soil Conservation Service Administrator Norman Berg made the above statement he had in mind the legions of non-farm people who are presumed to know next to nothing about agriculture but who know enough to realize gullys don't

belong in farmers' fields, and mud should be kept out of streams.

While most farmers could rightly claim to be doing the best they can, that 'best' may not be good enough.

In Cass County, Iowa, one of the nation's top farming counties, soil losses this spring were placed as high as 150 tons per acre on some farms.

One of America's most precious natural resources is its top soil, but much of it — both in Iowa and here in Pennsylvania — is simply washing away.

Whatever a farmer's efforts, whatever assistance is given to save soil, the pressures from inside and outside the farm community are going to build on those who take any but the most strict line on conservation.

The state Ag Department this week held hearings on measures to require an approved management plan as a prerequisite to receiving a

Clean and Green tax assessment. See page A-30.

Eventually farmers will find themselves unable to participate in any government program at all if their farms are not up to snuff. While getting out of government programs isn't a bad idea, it could be uncomfortable should it be forced.

A farmer may be declared unfit to farm the land, the same way a poor parent can be declared by a court to be unfit to rear a child.

At the heart of the matter is a conflict in two outlooks: farmers, on one side, generally feel they own the land and can do with it what they please — maybe even if it destroys forever the land's value for farming. Development or poor management would do just that.

The second group sees the farmer as steward over a God-given resource, with the privilege to use the property, but without the authority to ruin it.

Farmers will point to their land deeds, the years of time spent improving the land, the money invested in the property.

The others will argue that it is impossible to own anything that can't be taken wherever you go. A shirt can be packed along, a barn dismantled and moved. But land is permanent, part of the national treasure lode. As such it needs the efforts of all to assure its safety.

The idea of forced conservation and strong sanctions against sloppy land owners may sound socialistic. But hurling a label at those who support mandatory conservation won't make them go away any more than booing an all-star player will make him drop the ball.

Their conservation goals probably would profit us all. Farmers need to substitute a different method of reaching those goals unless they want to find themselves forced to 'farm right.'

THE BIBLE SPEAKS
BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE
THE TWO-POINT SERMON
December 14, 1980

Devotional Reading:
Isaiah 7:10-15.

John the Baptist had only a two-point sermon, but his rather uncomplicated message made a tremendous impact upon the people of Judea. His reputation spread far and wide and great crowds went out into the Judean wilderness to hear this strange man who regarded himself as simply God's messenger. So great was his popularity that even the Pharisees and Saducees of Jerusalem went to hear him. Some even came forward to be baptized by him.

What could this man of the wilderness possibly say that would attract such great

throngs? Did he have some new approach to religion? Was there something unique about his religious lifestyle or message? No, John the Baptist was not unique as a desert prophet. There had been many others before him, some even setting precedents for his aesthetic style and demeanor. Nor was his message unique or new. Both his sermon points were drawn from familiar themes in the scriptures.

Prepare His Way!

Like prophets before him, John the Baptist called his listeners to repent. That was his first sermon point: change from your sinful

ways and return to God! And the second point was clearly tied to the first: "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (3:2). Actually, this was the most important thing John had to say. Everything else he preached was predicated on his assurance that the kingdom of heaven was "at hand." Thus, John the Baptist saw himself as God's messenger to prepare his people for his coming and he linked himself with Isaiah's prophecy:

The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. (Isaiah 40:3).

So it was a message of hope, yet at the same time it was hardly a popular theme and the great response of the people to this message must be regarded as an indication of their great spiritual hunger. Nobody likes to be told to repent, whether for the kingdom of heaven or anything else. The term "repent" is not popular in most religious circles today for most of us do not like to think of ourselves as sinners — perhaps a bit "mistaken" or "misguided," but not sinful.

Bear Fruit Befitting Repentance

To be sure we regularly go

through the ritual of repentance — "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" — but there is often something vital lacking in that ritual. The Baptist realized that his people also went through their sterile rituals, so what he asked of them was not words of repentance, but changed lives: "Bear fruit the befits repentance, and do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'" (3:9). That was the only way they could be truly prepared for Christ and his kingdom. And it is still the only way today.



NOW IS THE TIME

By Max Smith, Lancaster County Agricultural Agent
Phone 394 6851

TO CONSIDER LEASING MACHINERY
The cost of machinery is a big item on most of our modern farms. In this part of the state most farmers have sufficient equipment to farm twice their current acreage. Our economists suggest that in many cases it might be

more profitable to lease the machinery than to own it. This can be true more often with machinery that is used only a few times each year (combines and field choppers). Another practice that is regarded as very economical is to hire custom operators to do the work rather than to buy your own equipment for that particular job. This is a popular practice here in southeastern Pennsylvania. Farmers are urged to cut down the big investment and

the severe depreciation that has been experienced.

TO PRACTICE HOLIDAY SAFETY

This is not a new thought but one that bears repeating. With the holiday season approaching there are many extra decorations and events that can present fire hazards. We urge every parent to discuss the need of safety measures that will prevent serious fires and possible human injury. Too many of us get careless with our evergreen decorations and Christmas trees. Candles, fireplaces, and overloading of our electric lines

all are possible fire hazards when not carefully handled. We urge everyone to make an effort to be careful with holiday decorations and do not take chances. If there is a possibility of a fire, then that item should be eliminated.

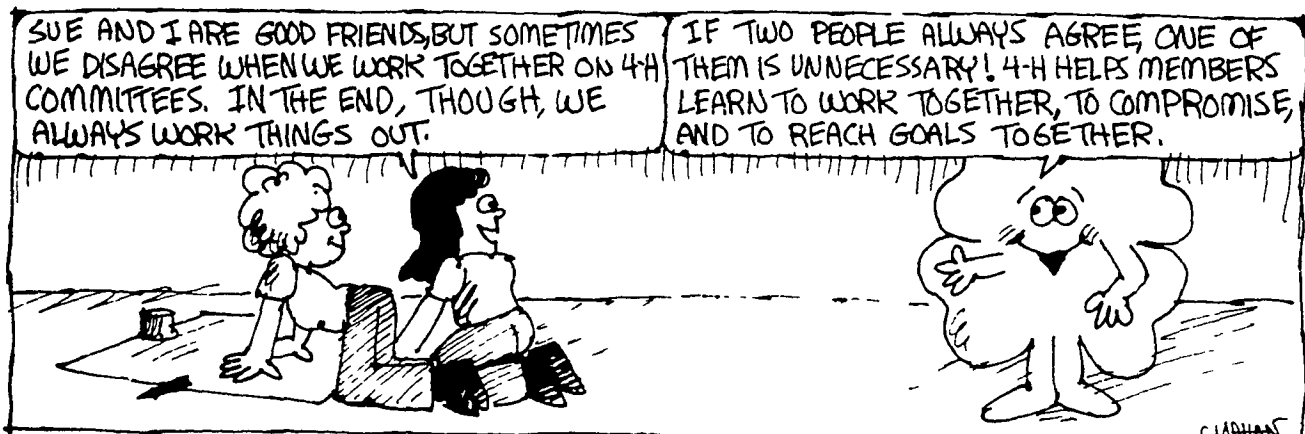
TO GET INFORMED ON SEWAGE SLUDGE

There is considerable interest near sewage disposal plants for the use of the sludge as a fertilizer on crop ground. This material does have good fertilizer potentials but there are some limits. In the first place the land owner should

check with the operator of the sewage plant to learn the content of the sewage. All plants are required to have tests made on their products in order to know how to handle it. There is a growing supply of sludge from most areas and plants are concerned about disposal sources. The land owner should recognize the fertilizer value of the material and also, realize the per acre limits of application. The danger of an excess of heavy metals (copper, zinc, lead, cadmium) on the land is a factor regarding the rate of application. An excess of these heavy metals could make the soil toxic to numerous plants. Farmers should be aware of these limitations.

is not an easy decision, and I'm not about to say which should be done. However, if animals are to be fattened and sold, the feeder should pay some attention to the best market weight and finish to get the highest possible price. When either hogs or cattle are fed too long, they tend to overload the market and get lower prices. This extra weight, and in most cases extra lard and tallow, adds to the surplus of the product and lowers net profits. Feed efficiency goes down when animals are over-finished and over-weight.

CHRIS CLOYER



Farm Calendar

TO MARKET LIVESTOCK WHEN READY
Both cattle and hog producers face higher feed costs and uncertain markets. Some are debating whether to sell their feed grains and take some profit, or to take the risk of marketing the grains through cattle or hogs. This

Today, Dec. 13
AAM Grassroots Convention, Pueblo, Colo. Continues tomorrow.
Harford County MCMP annual meeting, Noroth Harford High School, Pylesville, 7 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 15
New Castle, Del. computer (Turn to Page A12)