

BY CURT HARLER, EDITOR



Lancaster Farming says...

Are farmers better off today?

Having spent several millions of dollars to study the structure of agriculture, the U.S. Government has reached several conclusions that won't surprise anybody.

Nevertheless, those conclusions bear notice.

Keep in mind that progress in agriculture, like anything else in society, should be measured not by the few way out in front but by the general well-being of those who represent the average farmer.

To paraphrase President Reagan's campaign question: Are you, as a farmer, better off today than you were 10 years ago?

The government came up with some answers. It says present tax policies have a significant effect on farm structure. (Surprise!)

In practice, tax policies encourage land purchases by larger farmers and wealthy, nonfarm investors seeking a hedge against inflation and to put off

tax payments.

Technology, the product of past research and education, has had a major impact in that its benefits are realized sooner by larger farmers.

Changes in the ag marketing system have affected farm structure, the study says. Increasingly, the marketing system is oriented to serve the larger producers.

Farm commodity and credit policies have been of greater benefit to larger farmers, the government "discovered."

The study admitted that government policies which explicitly or unintentionally encourage the trend toward larger farms are both inflationary and inefficient.

While none of the above really constitutes news, one conclusion is noteworthy.

"Further gains to be realized for society from the shift to larger farm units are small, if they exist at all,"

the report says.

In face of all the financial realities outlined in the report, then, the USDA turned its back on the economists and sided with the sociologists.

No longer is the person sympathetic to the small family farm to be accused of sentimentalism or wanting to move backwards in time. The U.S. government itself says there is little further benefit to be gained by having farm size increase significantly beyond today's general levels.

That doesn't mean American farms are exempt from economic trends. Only about one-third as many counties derive 20 percent or more of local income from farming as did in 1950. A handful of large farms still account for the lion's share of farm income.

What the government concluded is current programs must be changed

to reverse the trend toward fewer and larger farms.

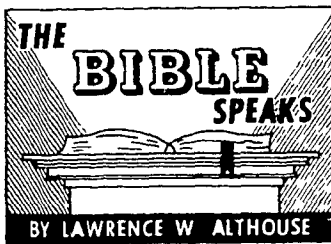
In one of his last acts as Secretary of Agriculture, Robert Bergland last week asked "Are our programs adequate to this task?"

He answered in a single word: "No."

USDA found that even programs designed to protect the farm sector have accelerated trends that push families out of farming, keep new farmers out, and concentrate control of the resources that produce our food into the hands of fewer persons.

The Farm Bill, to be redrawn over the coming months, will say whether the decade and century to come will be better than the one past.

A silent majority deserves no vote. If the family farm is to survive, today is the day to initiate policies which will reverse its continuing downward slide, and give a happier answer to the question posed above.



WHEN GOD DOESN'T WANT OUR HELP

February 1, 1981

Background Scripture: Matthew 13:1-52

Devotional Reading: Zephaniah 3:11-13

A recent convert to Christianity was being interviewed on a tv talk show

"What do you like best about being a Christian?" the show host asked him. It didn't take the new Christian long to say, "Preaching against the sinners and warning people about the Devil." He said it with an innocent zest and pride that indicated there was nothing casual about his answer.

I suppose when it comes right down to sheer fun in religion there is nothing quite so enjoyable as preaching against sinners and warning people about the Devil. It is a rare preacher who hasn't gotten some enjoyment — conscious or unconscious — from preaching a fire and

brimstone sermon. We'd all rather be flaming prophets than soothing healers.

Weeds And Wheat

And to some degree, our passion for socking it to the sinners finds a source of sorts in the teachings of Jesus. Did he not characterize the judgement of God as a separating of the "sheep and goats," the sinners from the saints? Is it not true that in his great parable of judgement (Matthew 13:24-30), Jesus likens it to the harvesting of wheat and the discarding of the weeds? Did he not specify that the weeds were to be bound in bundles to be burned, while the

wheat is to be gathered into God's heavenly "barn" (13:30)? Yes, without a doubt, that's how Jesus put it.

But Jesus has more to say about the "weeds and the wheat." In his parable, Jesus tells us that, when it was obvious that the farmer's field was filled with weeds as well as wheat, servants came asking, "Then do you want us to go and gather them?" That question, for all its antiquity, is a very contemporary one. Christians still come to the Lord, asking for his blessing as they go out to pull up the weeds from his field. How we

love to do battle with the "bad guys" for God and humiliate them whenever we can. How sweet it is!

Our Task And His

And so, few of us ever stop to take seriously the rest of Jesus' parable of the weeds and wheat. We stop short of permitting Jesus to say once again, "No; lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest" (13:29,30). Do we hear that? LET THEM BOTH GROW TOGETHER UNTIL THE HARVEST! The reason is simple: we are not wise enough to gather up the weeds without en-

dangering the wheat. For all of our complacent judgements, we really do know enough to distinguish between them.

So Jesus continues, "And at the harvest time I will tell the reapers." It is Christ and Christ alone who is able to separate the wheat from the weeds. If these grow side by side in God's field, it is his concern and his province, not ours. No matter how much we may enjoy judging one another, it is a power that belongs to God alone. Our task is not to worry about the weeds, but to concentrate on being the wheat.



TO PRACTICE SANITATION

Livestock and poultry diseases are around. In this part of the state where the farms are smaller and the buildings are close together, all producers must take a special effort to enforce strict sanitation and security measures. At this time I'm

NOW IS THE TIME

By Max Smith, Lancaster County Agricultural Agent
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thinking of the pseudorabies situation in this county and neighboring areas. We have some problems with the infection in cattle, and some bovines have died recently. In most cases, hogs are the carrier of the virus to cattle. Farmers are urged not to mix hogs and cattle together. Hogs may appear normal and healthy but still can be carriers to cattle. Also, we repeat the caution about reckless discarding of dead animals, especially dead pigs. Most fatalities in swine are with young pigs. If

they are discarded carelessly, stray animals and birds will surely spread the infection to other premises. Livestock producers are urged to be on the alert and manage with the most strict practices. Also, keep all visitors out of buildings unless clean footwear and disinfectants are used liberally. We could have some serious problems down the road.

TO PLANT TREES

Firewood is being used more and more as a source of fuel, this means that more of our trees are going to be cut for this purpose. In some cases we may be running

short on firewood in the future. Some woodlots can stand only so much cutting. Therefore, we suggest that land owners do some tree planting to replace the trees that are being used for firewood. It may take two or more decades for the trees to develop into firewood size, but that will still be good for our environment. Trees such as oak, hickory, black locust, beech, apple, ash, and maple will be good trees for shade and for firewood.

TO USE CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

Why not go to school at home this year by enrolling in one or more of our Penn

State Correspondence courses? These courses by mail are offered in the fields of agriculture, family living, and community development. They are very practical and usually cost from \$4.00 to \$10.00 per course. This provides an opportunity for folks to learn more about a particular subject while working and living a normal life at home. Additional information is available by contacting your local Extension Office, or by writing to Correspondence Course, 307 Agr. Adm. Bldg., University Park, Pa. 16802. We strongly recommend some of these courses to brush up on projects of your interest.

TO BE SELF-SUFFICIENT

Are you prepared to be isolated for several days at a time this winter due to snow or ice storms? Do you have a stand-by generator that can supply sufficient electricity? How about your food, water, and medical supplies? To date we have had very little ice or snow in our weather picture, however, weather has a habit of balancing things over a period of time.

We can still get severe storms or blizzards that may work hardships on some folks. The important thing is to keep a good inventory of the necessities of every day living for use in case of a weather emergency. Many of us depend upon electricity for almost everything. Where this is not available we can have severe problems. I urge all farmers and folks in the rural areas to give this some thought and be prepared for the worst.

Farm Calendar

Today, January 31
Delaware Holstein Assn., 10 a.m., Sleats Bros. Farm & Odessa Fire Hall, Odessa, Del.
York 4-H Baby Beef Banquet, 7 p.m., Grangeville Fire Hall, Hanover.
Garden State Dairy Goat Assn. luncheon, 1 p.m., Ryland Inn, Whitehouse, N.J.

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CHRIS CUSTER

