



# Off the Sounding Board

By Sheila Miller, Editor

## Blocking block voting

If you normally don't pay any attention to politics, it would be a good idea for you to make an exception with HB 767, the act that caused quite a turnout at Wednesday's hearing of the House Ag Committee.

This piece of legislation, although it appears rather harmless on the outside, could potentially pack a powerful blow to ag commodity co-ops — stripping them of a power they now can wield in making marketing program decisions and giving it totally to individual farmers.

This power struggle has pulled the major dairy cooperatives out into the open, even though Pennsylvania as yet has no marketing referendum affecting milk. The question of whether the proposed milk referendum can pass if co-ops lose the option of voting for their members who elect not to vote was called.

It could mean another defeat for the referendum. But it would be the wishes of the producers who cast their ballots that would determine the final outcome, not the block votes of a few cooperatives.

Fruit co-op representatives and the potato growers co-op also oppose HB 767 and the elimination of block voting. Even though their referendums historically have passed with individual growers voting in favor of the marketing programs, the co-ops nevertheless appear to fear losing power.

The disturbing thing about the co-ops' stands is that they are upset about giving the vote solely to the producer — the one who is most affected by any marketing decisions in the end. Certain co-ops have gone on record stating they don't feel farmers will exercise their right to vote in a referendum — that those who don't vote are indifferent to the issue, not opposed to it.

So, if a farmer who is a co-op member chooses not to vote, the co-op will do it for the farmer. In the face of the co-op's block of votes, what chance does the independent producer have of making any impact with one vote? Farmers who aren't co-op members who opt not to vote don't have their votes given to another independent to cast — it's a once and done decision.

Even those co-op members who might have voted in the referendum may toss out their ballots after they discover their views are opposite those of the block voting 'big-brother'. They see their vote as a futile attempt to fight the establishment.

The co-op's apathy argument may have some ring

of truth to it, however it doesn't justify our lawmakers to take away any individual's rights to vote or not to vote if they so choose. Every producer must be treated equally — one person, one vote, whether a co-op member or not.

What it all seems to boil down to is that co-ops don't trust farmers to make the right decision for themselves. They say they're too busy to understand the details of important referendums and other legislation affecting them. They say they don't care about marketing programs that will help to promote their products as much as the co-ops do — they're apathetic and can't be relied on to vote, even if they're opposed.

Isn't this a twist? Co-ops not trusting their members to make their own decisions, when farmers have trusted co-ops to make the right decisions — sometimes for the second time around after an expensive lesson is paid out of each producer's pocket.

And, if the co-op is operating above the board, it would have to poll its members before casting the block vote anyway. So, let's save some time and energy, and let the farmers do it for themselves in the first place.

As was pointed out by a legislator at the hearing on Wednesday, the argument that the present process of block voting is as representative as our state and federal government where someone else does our voting for us "doesn't hold". Rather than each representative receiving one vote for the people he or she represents, the block voting system would allow other representatives in their party to vote for them in their

absence or if they decided not to vote. This, he said, is not the way it works.

All things considered, we support HB 767 and the sole right to vote on marketing referendums being given back to the farmer, regardless of affiliation.

However, we feel the vote should still be based on volume so that those farmers most affected by a marketing program would not be out-voted by small scale producers whose livelihoods don't depend on farming. As the bill now stands, volume would no longer be a criteria.

The 2/3 vote in favor of a referendum in order for passage is adequate, and reducing the review period to 3 years instead of 5 years seems to be more in tune with our fast-paced world. If farmers don't review their marketing program and the need to adjust to economic conditions more frequently, they may soon find themselves in the same squeeze that American auto manufacturers experienced when they didn't shift to economy cars soon enough to beat the competition.

We are giving farmers the vote of confidence they deserve and earn each day as they continue to survive in a market world of controlled prices where costs can't be passed on to consumers.

Farmers make their own management decisions, some involving hundreds of thousands of dollars, on a daily basis. The individual right to vote or not to vote on a marketing referendum is theirs, and it's time the co-ops and farm organizations listen to the voices of those they say they represent.

## NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

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### TO ATTEND AG PROGRESS DAYS

Most farmers do not need much prodding to visit an agricultural show whether it is in the county or half way across the state.

And, since 1976, tens of thousands of persons have jammed the Pennsylvania State University's Rock Springs Agricultural Research Center, nine miles west of Boalsburg on Route 45, to attend the annual Ag Progress Days. The dates are August 25-27. Activities start at 9 a.m. and end at 5 p.m. — on August 26 they run till 7 p.m.

This year's show should be one of the biggest and best ever. Approximately, 250 commercial companies will be exhibiting their

products for home, farming, and country living. These include buildings, farm machinery, silos, feeds, crop seeds and farm and home supplies.

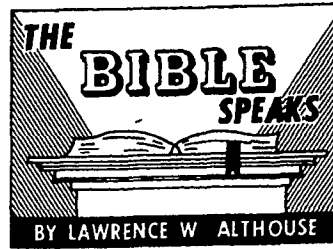
Featured exhibits include energy and resource efficient animal and crop production. Back again will be special exhibits and working demonstrations in the areas of on-farm waste disposal, soil and water conservation and safety.

Plan to attend, it will be worth your time.

### TO EVALUATE CORN ROOTWORM DAMAGE

Adult beetles of the northern corn rootworm are emerging

(Turn to Page A12)



### ARE YOU IN OR OUT?

August 9, 1981

#### Background Scripture:

Deuteronomy 29:1-15.

#### Devotional Reading:

2 Samuel 7:18-22.

A little boy was being guided (dragged?) through the museum of Natural History by his mother. "And next," she assured him, "we are going to see homo sapiens." But, when at last they stopped before the exhibit, the little boy protested, "That's not homo sapiens, that's a man!" It took the patient mother quite some time before she was able to explain that he too was a homo sapiens. It astonished him to realize that, without knowing it, he had been a homo sapiens all along.

#### What You Have Seen

The little boy's experience was not as unique as it may sound. Lots of us discover from time to time along life's road that we are part of something we heretofore didn't know even existed. We are all God's children, even if we don't acknowledge him as Father. All of us bear his divine image, even if we don't acknowledge him as creator.

So it may be with God's covenant people: we may be members of that group without thinking of ourselves in that light. "Covenant people" is not a popular term in

Christianity today. Few of us think ourselves as being part of the covenant people of God, but that doesn't mean we are not—we simply may not recognize that we are.

What makes for a covenant people?

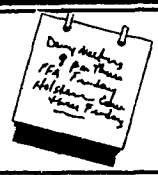
Deuteronomy 29 gives us some clues. For one thing, covenant people are those who have experienced the grace and power of God in their own lives. As Moses put it to the people of Israel in the land of Moab, "You have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt...the great trials which your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders..." (Deuteronomy 29:2,3). If you have seen anything of the power and grace of God in your life, you belong to the covenant people—and if you haven't, you simply haven't opened your eyes and ears to God's presence.)

#### Do the Covenant

Another test, according to Moses' criteria, is whether or not in your life you are doing what God wants you to do. "Therefore be careful to do the words of this covenant," (29:9). We may not be consciously aware of trying to perform our covenant responsibilities, but if we are trying to do God's will in our lives, that is an indication that we are one of his people.

The third test, according to Moses is an awareness that we are part of something beyond ourselves. We may not think of that "something" as God's covenant people, but so long as we are aware that others have come before us, that we are now one with others throughout the universe, and that others will come after us, we are in truth within that great company of God's people bound together by his love and grace.

## Farm Calendar



### Saturday, August 8

- 4-H Dairy Roundup, Dauphin Co., Farm Show Complex.
- Clinton Co. Fair, Castanea, until Saturday.
- Greene Co. Fair, Waynesburg, until Saturday.
- Chester-Delaware 4-H Swine Sale, Vintage Sales Stables, 9 a.m.
- Adams 4-H Roundup, South Mountain Fairgrounds.

### Monday, August 10

- Kutztown Fair, Kutztown, until Saturday.
- Eastern Pa. Championship Holstein Show, Kutztown, 5 p.m.
- Bedford Co. Fair, Bedford, until Saturday.
- Butler Co. Farm Show, Butler, until Saturday.
- Carlisle Fair, Carlisle, until Saturday.

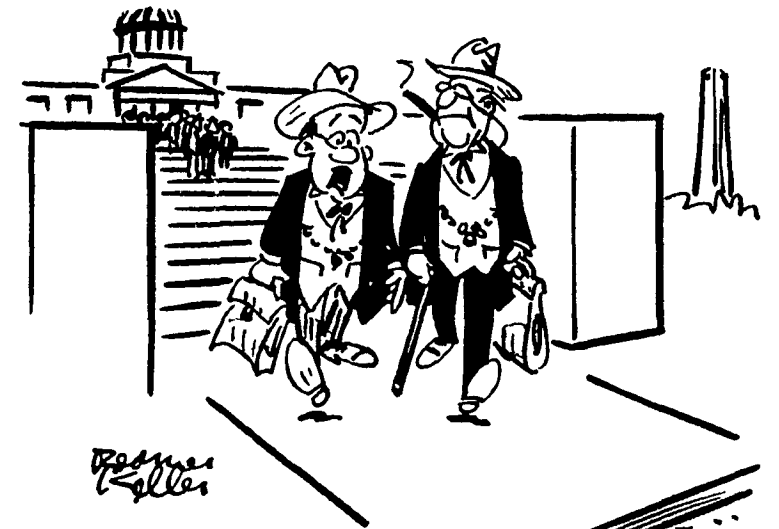
- Lebanon Area Fair, Lebanon, until Saturday.
- Tioga County Fair, Whitneyville, until Sunday.
- Potter Co. Fair, Millport, until Saturday.
- Wayne Co. Fair, Honesdale, until Sunday.
- Warren Co. Fair, Pittsfield, until Saturday.
- State 4-H Achievement Days, Penn State, continues to Wednesday.

### Tuesday, August 11

- Blair County Holstein Club Sale, Morrison's Cove Memorial Park, Dairy Barn, Martinsburg, 7 p.m.
- Venango Co. Fair, Franklin, until Saturday.
- Harrold Fair, Greensburg, until Saturday.

(Turn to Page A12)

## HAY HAWS



"The farmers don't write nasty letters anymore—they just call up and sob!"