



Off the Sounding Board

By Sheila Miller, Editor

Paid on delivery

Recently, American farmers have seen various members of the USDA and the Reagan Administration frantically waving the 'export' flag in front of their noses — a 'golden carrot' dangled to entice them into following current policies and foreign diplomatic decisions unthinkingly.

But, like the horse who's taken a nibble of that carrot only to have it yanked away, American farmers aren't biting. Memories of the 1980 grain embargo are too fresh in their minds for them to be gullible to all the export-salvation rhetoric.

USDA optimistically forecasts foreign sales of agricultural exports will reach 180 million metric tons in 1982—an increase of nearly 10 percent or 17 million tons from 1981 which would boost the value of sales to \$45.5 billion, up 4 percent from last year's sales. But this increase in volume is offset by the fact that the real value of our farm products has diminished on the world market due to lower commodity prices — blamed on the American farmers' ability to produce bumper crops year after year rather than the Administration's failure to demand the needed higher prices so that cash returns correlate more closely with production costs.

Despite the cheaper prices being asked for U.S. farm goods, the chances of foreign countries cashing in on the bargains are not that promising. One reason is the inflated value of the U.S. dollar coupled with economic and social turmoil in European countries. Previous importers are watching their purchase power slip because of high interest rates and the dramatic rise since last January in the foreign exchange value of the U.S. dollar. Last December, some importing nations were still paying more for U.S. farm goods than they were a year earlier, despite the lower U.S. prices.

One of our chief markets for U.S. farm products, the U.S.S.R., has been stymied from buying our grain despite last year's embargo lift — even in the face of their 50-million-ton reduced 1981 harvest—their lowest grain harvest since 1975. To fill their need for 43 million tons of grain, the Soviets are looking to other nations. The U.S. has only offered to sell them 23 million tons of wheat and corn in the sixth year of the grain trade agreement, and so far they've only brought about 11 million tons

of U.S. grain and 500,000 tons of U.S. soybeans worth about \$2 billion.

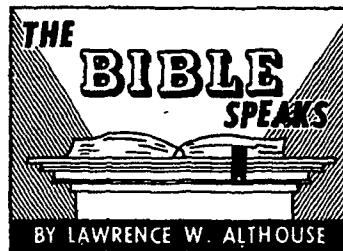
But the Soviets haven't held their breath waiting for U.S. negotiations to put more grain on the market. They've gone shopping on the world market and have found reliable suppliers elsewhere. So the chances of U.S. farmers finding a 23 million ton buyer in the Soviets is slim. An additional \$1 billion income for grain exports as a result of this U.S.S.R. buy seems about as elusive as that dangling carrot.

And, because of the trouble in Poland, the U.S. leaders, in all their wisdom, have called a halt to further grain talks with the Soviet which had been scheduled for early this year. These talks were called off last December at the same time the U.S. knowingly allowed the Maritime Treaty with the U.S.S.R. to run out. Now, in order for Soviet ships to enter U.S. waters to pick up future grain purchases, they need to get special approval — U.S. leaders are playing a hard-nosed game and denying their requests.

Japan remains our top market, buying an estimated \$6.4 billion in U.S. farm products in 1982. But this represents a drop in import value of about \$300 million from last year's sales to Japan. Why? Some say because of the lower value of farm commodities. Others blame it on Japan's tough import restrictions, with Japanese negotiators very carefully keeping the deficit balance in their country's favor.

Here at home, the value of farm products is expected to rise only 1 to 4 percent. Food that in 1981 averaged a retail cost of one dollar will now cost \$1.07 in 1982. But of that additional 7 cents, only one penny will go to farmers as higher gross returns. Facing growing surpluses and bumper crops, U.S. farmers won't find a favorable forecast in weathering this nation's economic slump and demand for cheap food through internal markets.

Perhaps as a skillful diversionary tactic, our political leaders are encouraging U.S. farmers to look abroad for the source of all their marketing problems when in fact much of the climate for the dipping farm economy is being created by factors here. It's time the American farmers tell these elected officials they'll be 'paid' with votes only when they deliver a program and policy that show a fair return to the farm.



THE RIGHT MOUNTAIN
February 7, 1982

Background Scripture:

John 4: 7-26.

Devotional Reading:

Psalms 96: 1-9.

Of course the Samaritan woman by Jacob's well at Sychar didn't realize to whom she was speaking. Nevertheless, we can hardly escape the feeling that she missed the opportunity of a lifetime. Confronted by the man whom she was later to recognize as God's Messiah, instead of asking a truly profound and troubling question, she contented herself with a question that was trite and insignificant: "our fathers worshipped on this mountain (Mt. Gerezim); and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship" (John 4: 20).

Who Is Right?

It was not a unique issue: for centuries the Jews and the Samaritans had carried on this dispute. The right place to worship, said the Samaritans, is Mt. Gerezim. Certainly not, retorted the Jews, God's Holy City is Jerusalem and only Jerusalem. In a sense the dispute could be likened to two small children protesting, "My mountain is better than your mountain!" Recognizing that Jesus was possibly a prophet, the woman was curious to see how he would settle this ancient dispute.

To use today the whole dispute sounds silly. Indeed! Whose mountain is the "right" one? How ridiculous! Yet, at the same time, the question has a contemporary ring to it and, if we substitute the word "church" for "mountain," the question can be as embarrassing to us as it should have been to the Samaritan woman. Oh, we may not state it so plainly as "Which church is the right church?" but we raise it nevertheless. Or, perhaps, we assume we know the answer: "My church is better (or "truer," "more Biblical," "more holy," etc.) than yours."

False Doctrine

Layman Beecher was a famous preacher in New England during the 18th century. It is told that he became very disturbed when a somewhat unorthodox (in his judgement, at least) church was begun in the same neighborhood as his. His judgement against the neighborhood congregation was that it taught "false doctrine." Thus, when one day the church burned to the ground, on the following Sunday in his sermon, Beecher declared that the fire was God's judgement of the church's false doctrine.

Before the week had ended however, Beecher's church burned down too!

We need to let Christ tell us again what he said to the Samaritan woman when she asked her silly "which mountain?" question: "The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the father in spirit and truth" (John 4:23). The true worshipper is the one who doesn't worry about "which mountain?" or argue over "which doctrine?" but knows that "God is spirit" and thus worships him "in spirit and truth" alone.

OUR READERS WRITE

Missing out

Your coverage of the 1982 Farm Show was very good. Pictures of every champion Hereford, Angus, Charolais, Duroc, Cheviot, Belgian, etc. were represented.

Then why didn't you have a representative at the outstanding 53rd F.F.A. Convention at the Forum building on Wednesday? The pictures you printed could have been gotten a month ago.

The 4 candidates for the Star Agribusiness and the Regional

Star Farmer awards could have at least been named.

I was very impressed with the excellent organization of the F.F.A. Convention and feel that credit should have been given to the capable officers of that fine group. Pictures of the local candidates and officers would have been as appropriate as the pictures of each annual class winner. Too bad you missed this fine event.

Mrs. Elizabeth B. Myer
Womelsdorf, Pa.

That volunteer spirit

In this period of inflation and budget slashing, I think it's an appropriate time to reflect on America's volunteer spirit.

America has a great tradition of voluntarism. For example, when an Amish person's barn is

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NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

Lancaster County Agriculture Agent
Phone 717-394-6851



To Transfer Silage

Many temporary silos were used last fall to store the real good corn crop that was harvested. Our agronomy specialists tell us that any silage to be moved from a temporary storage to an upright storage should be done in cold weather. When moved in warm weather (over 40 degrees) there will be more danger of heating and molding. Make the transfer in cold weather and do it as rapidly as possible. No additives or preservatives should be needed in this process. By transferring to the upright silo, you can utilize the mechanical feeding equipment in your upright silo.

To Control Wild Birds

The problem of starlings and other birds in farm buildings and in feedlots is quite common and

one that is very difficult to solve.

Due to the heavy snow cover most of the winter, birds are searching for feed in buildings and feedlots. One suggestion is a special bait for starlings called Starlicide; other people use noise-makers. One farmer puts about a half inch of salt in a shallow pan, then puts a thin coating of lard over the salt — as the bird pecks into the lard it picks-up salt. The excess salt is fatal to the bird. The use of window screen over open ducts, windows and doors is another way to keep them out of buildings. For the open feedlot, control is not easy.

Birds not only consume feed, but are unsanitary and carry lice, mites and disease.

To Correct Drainage Problems

The recent quick thaw provided

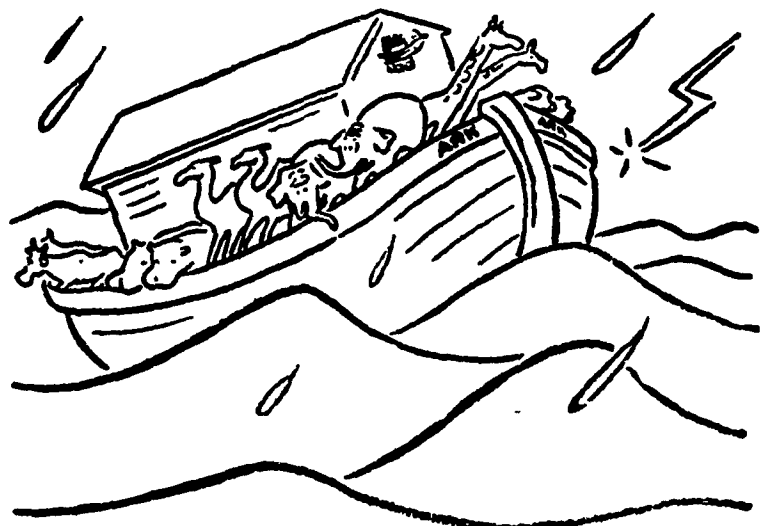
a good chance to observe the water drainage problems around many barns and farmsteads. If surface water drained into farm buildings or into homes, then something should be done about it in the next few months. Surface water should be directed away from buildings by way of terraces or diversion ditches.

Water should not be permitted to flow down against buildings from upgrade. This will weaken the structure and wash soil away from the foundation. Water that seeps into a building from underground is a different problem and more difficult to control.

However, the surface water can be directed around and away from farm buildings. Also, the area around wells should be protected

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HAY HAWS



"Just the same, I'd feel a lot safer if I knew those termites were locked up in a tin box."