



Off the Sounding Board

By Sheila Miller, Editor

Ag Day, right medicine for 'farm'acists

Feel like doing a little celebrating this week? Now if you say American farmers have nothing to celebrate — which is understandable considering the predictions for '82 grain, livestock and milk prices — you'll be surprised to learn you're wrong."

Next Thursday, March 18, has been declared National Ag Day — a time for farmers, legislators, and other U.S. citizens to pay homage to the industry that feeds us all.

But don't expect a hooplah if this year's Ag Day is anything like the first one celebrated last year. Except for a few remote festivities, like the naming of an Ag Day Baby in York County, last year's Ag Day was about like any other day of the year. And this year it's a sure bet Ag Day will be upstaged by Afghanistan Day which President Reagan has announced will be marked on March 21.

Even before our nation's attention was turned toward the Middle East, the mood in Washington D.C. was not humming a happy tune for farmers. So, forget your noisemakers and paper hats.

Rather than worrying about how they're going to keep us down on the farm, Congressmen and Cabinet members have their attentions focused on how they are going to come up with the 'magic' plan to cut the federal deficit and get our nation's economy back on its feet. They're so busy arguing over whose ideas are more ridiculous, they are failing to pay attention to the one industry that is essential for our country's economic well-being.

As its theme implies — "Agriculture, it's your heartbeat America" — Ag Day is a celebration of 'farmacists' — those people who fill our nation's prescription for life-sustaining food and exports. By failing to monitor our nation's vital signs through the agriculture, U.S. legislators are creating an economic health hazard. If they continue the same kind of support for the farm community in 1982 as they did in 1981 (remember the Farm Bill?), agriculture's heartbeat will need more than a pacemaker to get it beating again.

Although some Washington politicians feign an awareness of agriculture's importance and recite speeches that announce agriculture is the nation's biggest industry with assets equal to about 88 percent of the capital assets of all U.S. manufacturing corporations, that's where it seems to stop.

Perhaps it's because farmers only represent 5 percent of the nation's voting public, and perhaps it's because farmers don't have the funds to match the lobbying efforts of other industries, but most legislators tend to turn a deaf ear when this nation's agronomic minority at long last cries out for help.

But, politicians are not the only ones who fail to realize the dire straits American farmers are facing. The editor of the Wall Street Journal on Monday scoffed at the House

Agriculture Committee's adopted program that ignored President Reagan's requested 20 percent cutback. He stated that this agricultural program "represents \$2 billion or maybe \$5 billion in aid to wealthy land-downers."

Now, as an editor for one of the nation's most respected economic journals, you would think he could understand farmers aren't getting rich just owning land — they've got to farm it, and that takes money which they haven't been able to recoup from their harvests recently. Most farmers are managing to hang on by living off their equity, and banks are becoming more and more reluctant to extend credit based on acres that don't return liquid assets.

It's about time more of our farming ranks follow the example of over 200 Pennsylvania Farmers' Association members who spent two days this week bending the ears of our state's Washington D.C. legislators. These folks are as accessible as feed salesmen, equipment dealers or bankers. They need to hear our "complaints" about how tough it is to stay in farming these days a lot more than another sympathetic farmer.

So just in case you feel the urge to pick up the telephone or write to your legislator next week and want to embellish your arguments with a few Ag Day facts, here are a few points you might like to share.

- It takes about 22 percent of the nation's labor force to keep the U.S. food and fiber industry rolling — that comes to about 23 million people;

- To get the job of farming done, 3.7 million Americans have to rise and shine each morning — that's as many people who trudge out to work in the transportation, steel, and automobile industries combined;

- One out of every five people employed in private enterprise has a job that's related to American agriculture,

- Today's farmer provides food and fiber for roughly 67 people while during the Roaring '20s one farmer supplied only 10 other people with food — and then there wasn't much selection in either quality or variety.

Along with voicing our concerns, these are just a few of the accomplishments U.S. farmers need to boast about. We need to convince our nonfarm neighbors that it's essential for us to continue in our fields of expertise. Friendships and bonds formed now may help to ensure that future generations of Americans will have a reason to celebrate March 18, Ag Day.

As USDA's Assistant Secretary of Economics William Leshar said recently while addressing the House Ag Subcommittee, "It is important for all of us to remember that few resources are as important to the strength of this country as the farmers who work American soil — our most precious natural resource."

THE BIBLE SPEAKS

BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE

MAKING AN OPENING

March 14, 1982

Background Scripture:
Mark 2:1-12.

Devotional Reading:
2 Corinthians 13:5-10.

Some times the ministry of Jesus to an individual was quite simple. Perhaps it was a sermon, or a teaching session, or even a personal encounter with the Christ. Others came to him for healing, nothing more. But often Jesus ministered to a person on several levels, instead of just one.

An example is the paralytic to whom he ministers in Capernaum, as in Mark 2. This man was a kind of split-level patient: his needs were both physical and spiritual and Jesus ministered to him on both levels. The man had a paralyzed body and a soul laden with guilt. Jesus healed both body and soul and made the paralytic a whole person.

Because of the Crowd

Today the church might be satisfied with ministering to the man's soul. Our healing might go no further than the assurance that "your sins are forgiven." We would likely send the patient to a doctor to take care of the physical problems.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is concerned, however, with people's minds, bodies, and souls. If Jesus found that a person's problem was a diseased body, he ministered to

that need. If he found the problem to be a sick mind, he ministered to that need. If it was a spiritual sickness, he ministered accordingly. But Jesus was concerned with the whole person, not just a part of him or her. He knew that the message of God's healing, saving love applied to every level of human existence.

Still, something else was required in this situation. Something more than Christ's concern for the split-level patient himself. Jesus was preaching to the crowd and the press was so great that the paralytic could never have gotten close to him. Healing would have been denied him because of the crowd. Often this is true in our own lives: we are kept from realizing the wholeness that God wants for each of us, not because his healing love is limited, but because something gets in the way.

They Made An Opening

Thus, what was required above and beyond Christ's healing love was the compassion and efforts of others to bring the paralytic close to Jesus. Ordinary friends would have been discouraged by the size of the crowd surrounding him, but these friends were tenacious in their determination to bring their friend to Jesus. Blocked by crowds from the doors and windows, they made an opening in the roof and lowered the patient. That's what impressed Jesus and made possible the healing that day on both levels of the man's life:

"My son, your sins are forgiven."

"Rise, take up your pallet and go home."

If we would have Christ heal someone's body or soul or both, we need to remember that sometimes what he requires of us is to make an opening.

HAY HAWS



"I'll rise, but I flat-out refuse to shine."

dead bolt locks on all exterior doors and windows. Keep in mind they only work if you use them.

Get to know your neighbors; they can be a great crime deterrent. Agree to watch their place while they're away and they'll gladly do the same for you. It's important to identify your property. Police won't return items unless they're positively identified. Private gas pumps and storage tanks are popular targets for thieves. Be sure to lock these up whenever you aren't around. Exterior lights around your home, garage and barn will also do a lot to ward off burglars.

To Avoid Soil Compaction

One of the real dangers of being in too big a hurry in getting on the soil in the spring with heavy equipment is that we pack this wet soil so hard that poor yields result. With modern machinery, the weight is much more than a team of horses or mules. As a result we have ground that is as hard as concrete and never recovers. It is important to wait until the soil is dried out sufficiently before taking this heavy equipment over the fields. When the soil is worked too wet, it becomes hard and forms clods. This type of soil structure

(Turn to Page A12)

NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

Lancaster County Agriculture Agent
Phone 717-394-6851



To Plan Weed Control Program
Weeds continue to be one of the major factors in reduced crop yields. This is true in the garden as well as in the field. The battle to control weeds is not a new one; years ago cultivation was the only method of weed control. Now, herbicides are widely used for week control. However, we still have too much crop damage from

weeds. One of our Agronomists at Penn State told a group recently that for every pound of weeds produced, the crop yield was reduced by the same weight. Some weeds amount to several tons per acre; this means that much less of the desired crop. Plan now for a better weed control program this year.

To Be Award Of Rural Crime
Crime in the rural area is climbing very rapidly. Thieves are drawn to rural communities because of the attitude that crime is a city problem, so it's safe to leave your door unlocked. As long as this notion persists, rural areas will remain a thieves' paradise. You can make it less so by forcing a burglar to work harder. Install