



Off the Sounding Board

By Sheila Miller, Editor

"Of, for, and by farmers?"

When U.S. Secretary of Agriculture John Block came out with his recent soil and water conservation survey and invited farmers throughout the nation to voice their opinions and concerns about how the federal government was running the erosion control program, there was much speculation by Pennsylvania's farm community about how the Keystone state would fare in the race with other agricultural states for funding.

Well, the wait-and-see period is over. Last week, even before the official results of USDA's public survey on the program could be tabulated entirely, the secretary made it unquestionably clear just where the whole East Coast rates as far as his administration is concerned.

Last Wednesday, Block announced that USDA would be providing \$9 million during Fiscal 1982 in "targeted" agricultural conservation program funds to 15 states. Guess who wasn't invited to participate?

Not only was Pennsylvania and its critical erosion problems overlooked by Block as he took aim at his allocation "targets," but so were the neighboring states of Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, and New York — all important agricultural states in the Northeast and all with important conservation problems.

The key word in Block's announcement is "targeted." Those eight letters pointed the direction the USDA chief was heading as he outlined his "preferred program" items in the recent public survey that has turned out to be a sham.

This public opinion poll was carried out by USDA's Soil Conservation Service as directed under the Resource Conservation Act and was only completed late in January. According to a Pennsylvania SCS spokesperson, the final tally of the national survey has not been completed to date, but that isn't stopping Block from eagerly implementing his ideals.

Without waiting to see if American farmers agree with his thinking, Block is making sure that his preferred program "targets an increased proportion of USDA conservation program funds and personnel to critical areas where soil erosion or other resource problems threaten the productive capacity of soil and water resources" — to quote the USDA questionnaire.

Block's March 10 announcement also explained how his new concept of targeting "will allow federal, state and local governments and farmers themselves to attack the most critical problems."

Not surprisingly, this, too, was addressed in the questionnaire. It spelled out Block's preferred program would call for

strengthening the existing partnership between landowners, local and state governments and the federal government, and would set the stage for matching block grants to states and reduced federal conservation program funds.

The concept kowtows to Reagan's new federalism policies and attempts to wean the state and local conservation agencies off the federal funding nurse bottle that has assisted the soil and water conservation efforts since the days of the Dust Bowl.

Not only is Block jumping the gun in targeting the cost share funds through the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service to 15 pet states in the Midwest, South, and West (Tennessee, Washington and Block's home state Iowa are targeted to receive more than \$900,000 each), he also is targeting SCS's staff and funding to these states to provide additional technical assistance.

Now it may seem that we're making a strong case about these \$9 million in targeted funds when the total national budget for 1982 agriculture conservation amounts to \$190 million of which the eastern states will get a share. But, the point is, this may be an omen of things to come. And why did Block waste millions of dollars on a phony survey if he wasn't planning to abide by the farmers' wishes anyway?

Even though the final results of the questionnaire aren't available to confirm our suspicions, if the rest of the nation felt about block grants and target areas the way Pennsylvania's farm organizations did, there's no way Block could be carrying out the farmers' "preferred" program.

Carl Kaufman, the former state director of ASCS in Pennsylvania and now the state executive director of the Pennsylvania Farmers Union, shares these sentiments.

"It doesn't matter how the farmers answered the survey," he stated. "The secretary will do what he wants."

Kaufman, who was in charge of the first RCA survey done in 1980 during the Carter Administration, said the public told USDA back then that they wanted to see the conservation program maintained as it was with adequate funds. "Block's preferred program came in about seventh on the list," he recalled.

With Block's "do-as-I-please attitude," it's apparent the conservation survey was a democratic facade designed to make farmers believe USDA really cared what they thought. As it turns out, Block's preferred program is in no way "of, by and for the farmers" but rather "of, by and for the feds."

HAY HAWS

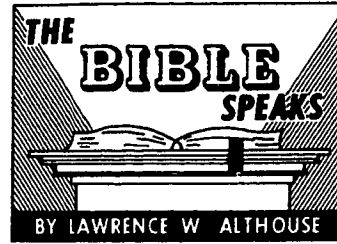


GEORGE
"Looks like we've finally found a job Hooper can handle."

Farm Calendar

- Saturday, March 20**
S.E. Pa. Extension Part-time Farmer Conference, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Penn State Berks Campus.
Md. Angus Assn. annual meeting, 9:30 a.m., Bullock's Restaurant, Westminster, Md.
Adams County 6th annual Beef Ball & Parade of Bulls, 6 p.m., Atland's Ranch, east of Abbotstown.
Pa. Ayrshire Breeders Assn. annual meeting, Embers, Carlisle.
Bradford County Holstein Tour at William Brown's farm, Rome, 11 a.m.
- Monday, March 22**
PFA Harrisburg legislative tour.
Lancaster County 4-H Woolies Club, 7 p.m., Farm and Home Center.

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CHRIST AND THE MADMEN March 21, 1982

Background Scripture:
Mark 4:35 through 5:20
Devotional Reading:
Galatians 3:23-29.

The man was, according to Mark, a "demoniac"—a "man with an unclean spirit." In other words, he was a man possessed by some entity other than himself, an entity that was evil and made him mentally ill, just as other "unclean spirits" made people physically ill.

If you've ever worked closely with the mentally ill, you will know that, although the term "demoniac" may seem archaic in this day and age, it is an apt description for those with serious disturbances. Their behaviour easily may be described as "demonic," as it under the control of something not themselves.

What Do You Want, Jesus?
The picture of the demoniac is dramatic. The man is ostracized from society, living among the tombs (particularly avoided by Jews) where no one was likely to disturb him. They had tried to chain him, but his strength was also "demonic." It seemed too, that the man was more destructive to himself than others: "always crying out and bruising himself with stones."

The demons—whatever they were—seemed fully in control. Yet, as soon as Jesus came near,

they felt threatened: "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God. I adjure you by God, do not torment me." Illness, whether mental, spiritual or physical or all three, recognized in Jesus a mortal enemy. There was not room enough for them and Christ.

Another indication that the demons were not Jesus' "little helpers" in disguise is the way in which he disposed of them. For the Jew, there was no more despised, hated animal in creation than the pig. Religiously, all swine were "unclean," able to separate a man from his God. So there could have been no more terrible finale than for the evil spirits to be sent headlong into a herd of swine.

Begging Jesus to Depart

Jesus' healing of the man was more than making him mentally whole. The man's dis-ease was social as well. He was a man ostracized from all human fellowship. They had tried to chain him. When they saw him cured, sitting next to Jesus, "they were afraid." In fact, "they began to beg Jesus to depart from the neighborhood."

The fact is, there are many times when we'd like to ask Jesus to depart from our neighborhood. We may complain about the "demoniacs" among us, but often we are even more disturbed when he begins to bring healing into our midst. We are afraid of wholeness because it changes people. The sickness in that neighborhood went considerably beyond the madness of the demoniac. And in ours, too.

Jesus healed a madman and the madman, restored to his right mind, began to heal the neighborhood: "And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and all men marveled."

NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

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To Check Ventilation Systems
We are into the season of the year that ventilation is very important. The fans in the poultry houses and dairy barns have been working hard through the winter months. They have accumulated dust on the louvers and screens and developed loose belts, so they are less efficient — in other words they are not moving as much air as they are rated.

This is a good time to go through your building and clean the fan blades, the louvers and screens. Tighten the fan belts, and be sure to check the inlet screens. Many times, in our poultry houses, we're not getting air circulation because the air cannot get into the building. Clean these inlet screens so they are not restricting air.

Also, be sure to check the thermostats to make certain they are working properly. A thermostat stuck in the "on" position could cause chilling and even freezing to poultry and livestock. This could upset production, especially on poultry and dairy farms.

Poor ventilation can cause health problems in poultry houses and "off" flavored milk in dairy barns.

This is good time to take care of some of these inside jobs.

To Top-Dress Pastures
Areas that are in permanent pasture will respond well to additional fertilizer. On many farms this area cannot be used for crops, but this does not mean that it cannot be productive. On straight grass pastures, the application of a

10-10-10 fertilizer will make a big difference. In pastures with considerable clover, a 0-20-20 fertilizer will increase grazing capacity. Some livestock farmers will treat only part of an area early in the spring to produce grazing several weeks earlier than the balance of the field. Just because a tract of land is permanent pasture is no reason that it cannot be productive.

To Control Wild Garlic

We may like onions in our hamburgers and in other foods, but very few of us like onion-flavored milk. This can easily happen on dairy farms where wild garlic plants are allowed to grow. Many pastures are infested with wild garlic. One of the very best times to start control measures on this weed is early in the spring when the young plants are 4 to 8 inches high. An application of 2,4-D low-volatile ester will knock them down. When this is applied around the middle to latter part of March, little damage is done to any legumes in the area. If garlic plants are allowed to mature each year, the pasture area will become so contaminated that dairy cows can not utilize the grass.

To Practice Safety Around Liquid Manure Pits

Many manure pits will be emptied at this time of year for field application. This by-product of the livestock and dairy business is very useful as fertilizer. However, the pit can be a safety hazard because of poisonous and explosive