



Off the Sounding Board

By Sheila Miller, Editor

Sweet smells of spring

Robins, crocuses, greening wheat and barley fields, and oh, that fresh country air. All of these are sensory signs of a most welcome spring season.

It seems like just in the passing of one short week, the winter cloud that has hung over our farms for what seems an eternity finally has broken apart to let spring shine in.

And, like everyone else, farmers have fallen victim to the season's "fever." Welcoming the chance to escape the confines of house and barn, itching to be the first to drill oats, farmers are revving the engines of waiting tractors and heading for the fields.

Plows that were given a six-month rest have been hooked again behind tractors and horses and are sinking their teeth into the waking soil, rolling and slicing the fertile ground as multitudes of seagulls hover above.

The ritual, of course, could not be complete without the offering of natural fertilizer to the land. Storage pits flush out their slurry, dry packs are bucket-loaded into waiting spreaders, and gutter cleaners rhythmically push the day's droppings — all part of the springtime ceremony of preparing the land for a productive season.

This shuttling of manure from barn to field heralds the coming of spring not only for farmers but for their nonfarm neighbors. And, it doesn't take "seeing" for them to believe spring has sprung in the country. Anyone with functioning olfactory nerves will be able to sniff out what's happening in the neighborhood.

Because not everyone agrees that the smell of manure can be termed "fresh country air," farmers have come under fire over the years — literally, for those who've been shot at by irate neighbors — and have had to listen to neighborhood complaints, mostly from nouveau-country residents.

Law suits and local ordinances have been the weapons these half-acre inhabitants have used to fight farmers in an attempt to shut off "nuisance" odors, dusts, and sprays that go hand-in-hand with the business of farming.

To try to help farmers protect themselves from these kinds of annoyances, Lancaster County's Rep Noah Wenger introduced a piece of legislation last September called the Right to Farm Bill. Passed from the House to the Senate in December, this bill provides the language "to protect and encourage the development and improvement of agricultural land for the production of food and other agricultural products."

House Bill 1823 limits the circumstances

under which normal agricultural operations could be considered subject to nuisance suits and ordinances.

For example, if a farmer is carrying out normal farming operations, such as hauling manure, spraying herbicides or insecticides, or just working the soil and raising a little dust, and if these operations are not adversely affecting public health or safety, he or she is protected from aggravating lawsuits brought by nonfarm neighbors who just don't like the smell or have strong feelings against chemical agriculture. And, agriculture will be exempt from local nuisance ordinances as long as the farming operations comply with other federal, state or local laws, such as the Clean Streams Law, if this bill becomes law.

What if a farmer wants to expand or change a present operation, i.e. if a dairy producer wants to add on 50 more cows or switch to a farrow-to-finish hog operation?

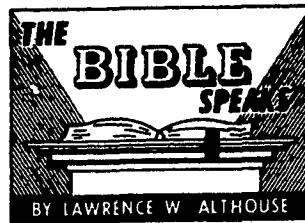
According to H.B. 1823, this expansion or enterprise change would be protected from nuisance suits after one year of operation as long as normal farming operations are in practice.

Why are we taking so much time refreshing your memory about this piece of legislation? Because it desperately needs the vocal support of all the farmers it's designed to help.

Just this week the Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee unanimously reported H.B. 1823, as amended, out of committee and sent it on its way to the Senate floor. Getting this bill out of committee was a small victory in itself since it has been held up there for months as members of the Association of Township Supervisors lobbied against the legislation. And, their fight is not over yet — they're gearing up to have the bill amended on the floor.

We feel this legislation is too important to be lost now. Even though farmers are entering their busiest season and hardly have time to break for lunch, there's time to pick up the telephone or a pencil and paper and get in touch with the people that count — the legislators.

These folks who cast the votes deciding the fate of farmers and others will be home for the next week during Easter recess. Who knows, maybe they'd enjoy a trip to the country for a taste of clean living and a whiff of fresh air. Your concern could be cultivating a better appreciation and understanding between farmers and legislators.



MANY REBUKED HIM!
April 4, 1982

Background Scripture:
Mark 7:31-37; 10:46-52
Devotional Reading:
1 Corinthians 10:1-13.

Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, angered the crowd. They had come to hear Jesus of Nazareth and he had the effrontery to call to the Nazarene: "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me." How could they hear Jesus if this beggar was to keep up his wailing? Mark tells us that "many rebuked him, telling him to be silent" (10:48). Don't bother the Master with your personal problems; we want to hear him preach to the crowd! The blindness of the Bartimaeus was considered by the crowds to be a matter of relatively little importance. Jesus was there to talk about religion, not to become involved with individual problems.

Sometimes, it seems to me, that is the impression given by many of Christ's followers today. We may get so preoccupied with handling the crowds that we have neither time nor energy left for the needs and hurts of people who make up those crowds. As a pastor, I enjoyed preaching to the crowd that sat silently in front of me every Sunday morning. Yet, as I came to know each one of those people, I realized that behind those usually impassive faces there was fear, disappointment, depression, and pain. The circumstances might vary, but in each life there was pain.

Above the Clamor

I came to realize that Christ was

probably much more concerned with those individuals and their pain than our building program, our board and committee meetings, our arguments over Sunday school curriculum or our budget. I'm not saying these things are unimportant, but that the needs in individual lives ought to have an even higher priority. We would like to rebuke these individuals and tell them to be silent so that we can get on with the work of the church.

Yet, the fact is that Jesus heard Bartimaeus above the clamor of the crowd and answered him, asking: "What do you want me to do for you?" Note that Jesus did not say, "Bartimaeus, I am concerned only for your soul, it is not in my province to heal your body." Nor did he say, "It is not God's will for you to be healed, for he has a plan for you in your blindness." Neither did he say, "Bartimaeus, your blindness is good for you; it will build your character and increase your faith."

Jesus Chose Wholeness

No, what Jesus said to Bartimaeus was: "Go your way; your faith has made you well." The blindness of this beggar was not important to the crowd, but it was important to Jesus. For Jesus wants us to be whole persons; mind, body and spirit. In the Gospels, Jesus never chose illness for his followers and he does not choose it for us now.

The desire to be healed is not the insignificant or inappropriate desire some people seem to indicate. And, if we are not successful in experiencing that wholeness, it does not mean that he has withheld it, or does not will it for us. It means only that for reasons of our finite humanity, His perfect will for us may not be fulfilled in us, just as we may not become as righteous as he calls us to be.

Let us never doubt that Jesus hears our cries and cares about our pain.

Farm Calendar

Saturday, April 3

Penn State Block & Bridle Spring Livestock Judging Contest.

Maryland Polled Hereford Assn. 9th Annual Black-eyed Susan Sale, 7 p.m., Frederick Fairgrounds.

Lehigh County FFA annual banquet, 6:30 p.m., Vo-Tech, Schnecksville.

Monday, April 5

Clarion County Extension meeting on Feeding Dairy Heifers, 8 p.m., Keystone High School.

Bradford County Guernsey Club, noon, E. Canton Church.

Tobacco quota meeting, 9:30 a.m., Eastern Lancaster County Alternative School, Rt. 625, Terre Hill.

Tuesday, April 6

York Holstein Assn. tour to western New York State, returns Wednesday.

Berks County beekeepers, 7:30 p.m., Berks Ag Center.

Bradford 4-H leader dog meeting, 7 p.m., Extension Office, Towanda.

Lancaster County FFA public speaking competition, Manheim Central High School.

Wednesday, April 7

Lancaster County Conservation District meeting, 7:30 p.m., Farm & Home Center.

Backyard fruit growing, 7:30-9:30 p.m., Lancaster Farm & Home Center.

Hunterdon County, N.J. Ag Board (Turn to Page A12)

NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

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To Make Pastures Produce

One of the best ways to improve your permanent pasture is to apply lime and fertilizer, practice rotational grazing and clip them regularly. This is quicker, cheaper and involves less risk than tearing up the old sod and reseeding. Most permanent pastures have sufficient seed of desirable grass species. The only thing they need is a little tender loving care and the opportunity to grow, and to recover from grazing pressures. Thus, fertility and rotational grazing are very beneficial.

The more paddocks you have, the better it is. If your acreage is limited to your size herd, restrict

the amount of time cattle and livestock are permitted to graze. Don't let them trample the grass unnecessarily by allowing them to roam freely over the pasture while not grazing. After a paddock has been grazed, it can be clipped to control weed growth and to keep the grass young and nutritious. This is also a good time to apply fertilizer and necessary herbicides, while allowing the grass to recover prior to being grazed again.

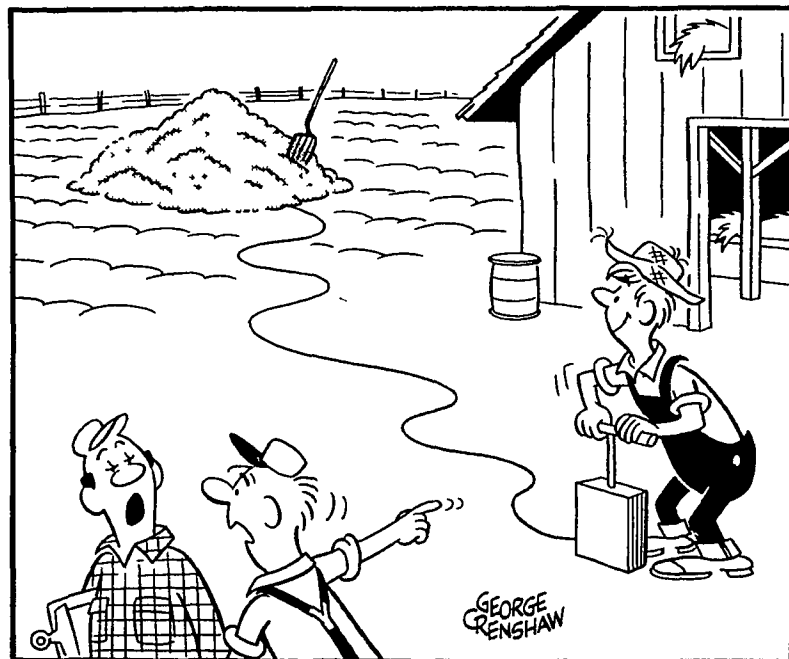
To Plan for Oats Planting

I know some farmers are considering the use of feed oats for planting this spring, but this may not be a good idea. Feed oats may

contain quackgrass, bindweed and other weed seeds. Planting feed oats will generally result in lower yields. You also have the problem that any weed seeds planted will be a problem for years to come. Keep in mind that high quality seed is the smallest part of producing a crop. So, saving a few cents by using inferior or weedy seed doesn't make much sense. On the other hand, home grown seed of varieties proven successful on the farm can be cleaned, traded and planted if the germination is 80 percent or better. You can use the old "Rag Doll" germination method where you place the seed

(Turn to Page A12)

HAY HAWS



"THAT'S RIGHT, I TOLD O'TOOLE TO FERTILIZE THE SOUTH FORTY. WHY?"