



Off the Sounding Board

By Sheila Miller, Editor

Pesticide propaganda

Last week, a Berks County dairy farmer confessed to me that he didn't know if things could get much worse.

As if the news of the milk referendum's defeat wasn't depressing enough, this farmer was gazing through rain-streaked windows at acres of mowed alfalfa just waiting for a sunny day to cure it down enough for baling. The valuable legume forage had already passed the woody stage by the time the farmer had cut it. And by the time the windrows are tossed and retossed in futile attempts to "shake and bake" the moisture out, about all that will be left for TDN testing will be stems — the leaves will be mulching the field. Instead of a nutritive feed for his cattle, about all this hay will provide is chewing exercise.

This farmer is in the same boat as most of his Pennsylvania neighbors who shared almost 10 inches of rain since mid-May. Although most people recognize the benefits this rainfall has had on recharging water supplies, the month's accumulation, which equalled the normal rainfall for three months, also created many problems.

As some farmers wondered whether their next excursion away from the barn might be in an ark, others faced the grim realization that their soggy fields were no longer conducive to normal crop management practices — specifically, spraying newly planted corn fields with proper insecticides and herbicides. Undeclared, these fields soon became the victims of cutworms and quackgrass — some to the point of annihilation.

These farmers now are not only realizing the additional costs of replanting acres of corn, they also are realizing their reliance on "chemical warfare" when it comes to controlling insect and weed pests in our highly intensive agricultural industry.

The public, too, is aware of the farmer's use of chemical insecticides and pesticides, but their viewpoint is not necessarily sympathetic. Much of what these folks know about agricultural chemicals was taught by environmentalists and the popular press. As a prime example of the quality of that kind of education, recall the demonstrations that resulted last year when USDA announced it would be spraying the California medfly infested areas with malathion.

Another source of education is the television. Two weeks ago on a popular situation comedy called House Calls, actors posing as doctors and nurses linked cases of food poisoning in a Chinese restaurant to illegal pesticide applications by vegetable growers in a nearby valley. These pesticides, they said, had contaminated all the ducks in the area to the point where anybody who ate them would get sick.

The sad part about this particular show is that the message the television writers were trying to convey wasn't "Don't eat duck" but rather the incompetence of various county and state health agencies who tried to solve a widespread problem by closing one solitary restaurant. Unfortunately, when the final credits rolled across the screen, the

scapegoats of the story turned out to be the farmers who "poisoned" the ducks.

Now really, isn't it highly unlikely that one incident of spraying chemical insecticides would accumulate in the body of water fowl so rapidly as to cause food poisoning the following day? Of course, 30 minutes of television time leaves a lot up to the writer's and audience's imaginations to fill in the details.

Next week, farmers have a chance to clear up some of the misconceptions about insecticides left in the minds of television viewers, some who may be members of the Senate Agriculture Committee. On Monday and Tuesday, hearings on legislation to extend and amend the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, will take place in Room 324 of the Russell Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C.

Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), who chairs the Senate Ag Committee, said "the hearings are being conducted to examine a full range of issues that have come up in connection with FIFRA." Under FIFRA, the Environmental Protection Agency administers a national pesticide program that regulates the manufacture and use of pesticides in the United States. Generally a pesticide must be registered by EPA before it may be sold or shipped, and cannot be used legally in a manner inconsistent with its labeling.

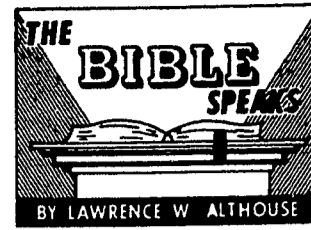
"Our central concern is that the farmers have the agricultural chemicals — the pesticides, the herbicides, and other necessary products — they need to produce their crops. We have to make sure that consumers have the food they need at reasonable prices with full assurances of health and safety," Helms said.

"It appears to me that the development of effective new pesticides in the future may suffer if FIFRA is not amended to more equitably balance the need for disclosing health and safety data with the need to protect the enormous investment by pesticide producers in generating the massive amounts of data required to be submitted to EPA to register a pesticide."

Similar legislation on the House side met with controversy from certain environmental groups who contend it is the right of any person aggrieved by another's use of pesticides to file suit in federal court. This amendment was defeated in the ag committee by only two votes, and it expected the debate will continue when the legislation is considered on the House floor.

A sound pesticide policy in the U.S. is essential, not only for the large-scale agricultural operations but also for the consumers who continue to enjoy the benefits of hard-working farmers' bountiful harvests.

Farmers live with enough natural adversaries — too much rain, too little rain, poor seed germination, birds, elk, and weeds — without having to contend with environmental advocates robbing them of essential chemical "weapons" in the fight to produce their crops.



THE UNLEARNED LESSON
June 20, 1982

Background Scripture:

Mark 1:16-20; 9:2-8 10:35-45,
Luke 9:51-56;
Acts 4:13-21; 12:1-3.

Devotional Reading:

Acts 4:13-21.

Jesus must have been a very patient man. If not, how could he have put up with his disciples who were so slow to grasp the meaning of his messianic mission?

A case in point is the example of James and John, two disciples, who, with Simon Peter, seemed to form an inner circle of Jesus' ascended the Mount of Transfiguration for a most unique mystical experience, there were only three disciples privileged to go with him: Peter, James and John. And on Maundy Thursday it was these same three whom Jesus took with him into the Garden of Gethsemane for a night of soul-searching. In short: they were close enough to Jesus to have known better.

He Rebuked Them

"Known better?" About what?

Well, for one thing, they should have known better what Jesus taught about responding to opposition. When the people of a certain Samaritan village informed Christ's disciples that he would not be welcome there, James and John were irate: "Lord, do you want us to bid fire come down from heaven

and consume them?" Tough talk from the disciples of a man who spoke about and demonstrated so much about love! No wonder, Luke tells us, "he turned and rebuked them" (Luke 9:51-56).

Even more audacious was their request, on another occasion. "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And what they wanted from Jesus was just as shocking: "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." How could they make such a request? Having been at Caesarea Philippi with him when he rebuked Peter for failing to understand Christ's allusion to the crosses that lay before them, James and John should have learned the lesson. But they didn't and Jesus had to explain once again: "...whoever would be great among you must be your servant."

Are You Able?

Jesus, it seems to me, would have been justified if he had lost his patience with James and John, but, instead, he tries to help them: "You do not know what you are asking? Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" Jesus came to minister to the world and following him meant nothing less than that.

James and John responded, saying, "We are able." Nevertheless, when Jesus was crucified a short time later, James and John were among those of whom Matthew wrote: "Then all the disciples forsook him and fled." It was only later, when they themselves were martyred, that it was evident they had at last learned the lesson.

"Whoever would be great among you must be your servant." Among Christ's followers today, I'm afraid, the lesson is basically still unlearned.

NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

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To Deal With Volunteer Corn

There is a great deal of volunteer corn growing in many fields. This is corn that has been left in the field since last fall and is really a weed that will hurt our yields the same as any other weed. The big problem is how to get rid of it. There is no herbicide that can be used without killing all the corn. On tilled or minimum tilled, the cultivator can be used to kill the plants between the rows. On no-till, there is no means of eradication except the hand hoe. The larger the corn becomes the less you'll want to cultivate because of root pruning. We are again back to using the hoe.

All this volunteer corn growing is a reminder that part of our 1981 crop was left in the field.

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To Handle Gasoline and Diesel Fuel With Respect

We use a lot of gasoline and diesel fuels on our farms and when they are not handled properly, they are a source of unwanted fires.

Gasoline should be stored in an underground tank. When it is necessary to store it above ground, then the tank should be located at least 40 feet away from any building. Small amounts can be stored in approved safety cans. Be

(Turn to Page A12)

OUR READERS WRITE

Soundly defeated

The defeat of the referendum to authorize a mandatory deduction from farmer's milk checks last week after one of the most heavily promoted campaigns for passage by such organizations as PFA, the Grange, many farmers' dairy cooperatives and farm magazines points up very clearly that many of the so called leaders of the farmers

do not speak for the members and clients they claim to represent.

This brings up the question: "Just who was so anxious to have this money taken from the farmer's pocket?" What was their motive?

It would seem appropriate that it is time the leadership of these farm organizations should truly

ask their constituents' opinions before embarking on any new policy maneuvers.

It is most gratifying that when the real issue was put before the dairymen they took the initiative and soundly defeated the proposal in the face of such a blitz of propaganda for its passage.

(Turn to Page A12)

HAY HAWS

