



Off the Sounding Board

By Sheila Miller, Editor

It's census time again

As things begin to slow down on the farm, and night's early shadow seems to trigger a biological instinct for long, lazy evenings indoors, many farmers find themselves nervously wondering what to do between supper and bedtime.

Of course, falling asleep in front of the television or behind the newspaper is one excuse for not helping with the dishes or the bookkeeping. But eventually our consciences begin to pang and we guiltily shuffle through all the bills, paid and unpaid, that have been ignored for the past several weeks.

The suffering from seasonal lethargy, an often undiagnosed malady commonly affecting farmers during the latter days of November and December, seems only to be assuaged by weekend excursions to mountainous terrain in search of the wary white-tail deer.

No matter where we "plug in" for revitalization, the nearing winter months ultimately lull our minds and bodies into a form of hibernation — a time for recharging our minds and bodies with needed rest and a more leisurely pace.

To provide "entertainment" during those long winter vigils in front of the fireplace, Uncle Sam has not forgotten his farmers and will be sending out challenging forms for fill-in-the-blank exercises during the month of January. (And you thought there was nothing to look forward to in 1983!)

Although it's hard to believe, it's time again for the farm census. Beginning Jan. 1, 1983 and ending Feb. 15, the federal government will be asking farmers to help them keep track of things like the number of farms, the types of crops grown, and the income received by farmers for their labors.

Declining farm income and high interest rates are two reasons why we farmers should take the time to fill out and return our census forms.

This data from the agriculture census ultimately will be important to the nation's policymakers, farm supply and marketing firms, as well as we farmers. It serves as the only source of uniform comprehensive data on agricultural production, inventories, sales, expenditures, and other characteristics provided on a consistent county-by-county basis.

People who use this information are diverse. The statistics prove invaluable to farm organizations, farmer cooperatives, land grant universities, and private businesses serving agriculture.

This is the 22 census being conducted in this nation since the paperwork ritual began back in 1840. From that year until 1920, an agriculture census was taken every 10 years. Then from 1920 until 1978, the interval between censuses dropped to five years. And for reasons at the Washington level, this census has been stepped up one entire year to coincide with censuses being taken in other economic areas.

Besides being one year early, this year's census will prove to be something new and different, and hopefully easier for farmers to complete.

According to the Census Bureau, most farmers will receive a four-page form in the mail. They estimate 20 percent will receive a five-page version. They report the forms were redesigned to "reduce the burden on respondents through greater ease in reporting."

The Bureau also announced that for the first time it will be using forms in a mail census that will seek information on a regional basis. "This will permit farmers to provide data about crops grown in their particular area without being asked about crops not found in their area."

What will be asked in the census? Questions concerning the amount of farm acreage owned, who the owner is, the land use, the acreage in production, the sales of crops, the type of livestock owned and their worth, and other questions on management and operations.

Those farmers who are lucky enough to receive one additional page to complete will be asked about the value of their land and buildings, certain production expenses, farm equipment, farm labor, fertilizer and pesticide use, interest expenses, farm energy and storage capacity.

After all the questionnaires are returned and the data tabulated, a county-by-county summary will be published for each state. The Bureau expects to publish the preliminary county data during a six-month period next fall. The release of final data is scheduled to begin by mid-1984.

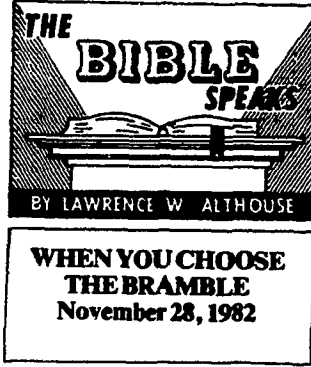
If you're wondering whether or not you should be filling out a farm census this January when snowdrifts imprison you within the confines of a cozy kitchen, just remember that all farm operations (those with \$1,000 or more in sales of agricultural products) are required by law to complete the census.

Most farmers worry about what happens to all their personal information once it is sent to the Bureau. Who will have access to our files and discover all our "windfall profits?"

The Bureau assures farmers that individual information is "confidential by law and published only in statistical totals. Under Title 13, U.S. Code, Census Bureau employees are subject to severe penalties if they release data on individual operations. The privacy of individual records is also protected from disclosure through the Freedom of Information Act."

Taken as a whole, the farm census is a tool that can be used by cooperatives to build marketing facilities to help farmers cut costs; farm organizations can create and revise policies based on the new information; farm suppliers can use the information to determine future product demands in fertilizer, seed, equipment and the like. And the list of beneficiaries of this contributed information goes on and on.

So, when you find the census forms in your mailbox sometime after Jan. 1, take the time to fill them out as accurately as you can. For a few hours spent around the kitchen table, farmers across the nation will be reaping the benefits of factual information on the agricultural situation for the next five years.



Background Scripture:
Judges 8:22 through 9:57
Devotional Reading:
Isaiah 12:1-6

The late Theologian Reinhold Niebuhr observed that World War I had been "made inevitable not by bad people who plotted against the peace of the world but by good people who had given over their consciences into the keeping of their various political groups."

I suspect that my old teacher's observation would apply to many of our wars, including those that rage about us today. When we hand over our consciences into the keeping of someone else — duly constituted authorities or not — we give away something which God does not intend for us to share with anyone.

Worthless and Reckless Fellows

Recently, I overheard someone reflect upon a certain nation at war with its neighbor, "I can't understand how such good people can choose and be satisfied with such evil leaders." Perhaps the answer is that, when good people choose bad leaders, the people may not be as good as they think. In other words, if you give your conscience into the keeping of an unconscionable leader, have you not violated it and is that not a serious violation in the sight of God?

This is what happened with the people of Israel when Gideon died.

Gideon had left behind him 70 sons! How significant that, in choosing a successor to this great leader, they chose the very worst of his sons! Some of the answer lies in Abimelech's skill as a politician. He knew how to win over people by appealing to their baser motives. The writer of Judges suggests that the people of Israel chose Abimelech because it was clear that he would not make of them the high moral requirements enforced by Gideon.

So, in the guise of political necessity, Abimelech killed all the sons of Gideon, except Jotham, who escaped. So, despite his act of brutish violence, Abimelech had not silenced the conscience of Gideon and, standing on the top of Mount Gerezim where prophets were known to speak, Jotham tells the marvelous parable of the trees. **Come, Reign Over Us**

The message of the parable is clear enough: when good people decline to serve, we settle on others who are likely to be less good, even evil. "Now therefore," concluded Jotham, "if you acted in good faith and honor when you made Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jerubbal (Gideon) and his house and have done to him as his deeds deserved...then rejoice in Abimelech and let him rejoice in you; but if not, let fire come out from Abimelech and devour the citizens of Shechem and Bethomillo..."

The history of humanity is punctuated with the tragic chronicles of those who have, for one reason or another, made the bramble their king and have lamented the consequences of their choice. The next time you choose a leader, ask yourself if it is the best in you or the worst to which that leader appeals? And remember: when you choose the bramble, what you choose is what you get.

NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

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To Control Cattle Grubs

Cattle grubs can be completely eliminated from dairy heifers and beef cattle by the simple application of a pesticide approved for grub control.

Grub control pesticides may be applied by spray, pour-on, or spot-on treatments, according to Dr. Larry Hutchinson, our Extension Veterinarian at Penn State. They are safe to use and completely effective if applied according to label directions, and before the end of November. After that, migrating grub larvae are found close to the spinal cord where their death can produce problems.

Regular yearling treatment against cattle grub in areas where they are common can completely eradicate these painful parasites in the backs of cattle, and can greatly improve the quality of the hide at slaughter.

To Be Careful

Around Flowing Grain

A major hazard of stored grain is to become covered up and smothered by it. It is very

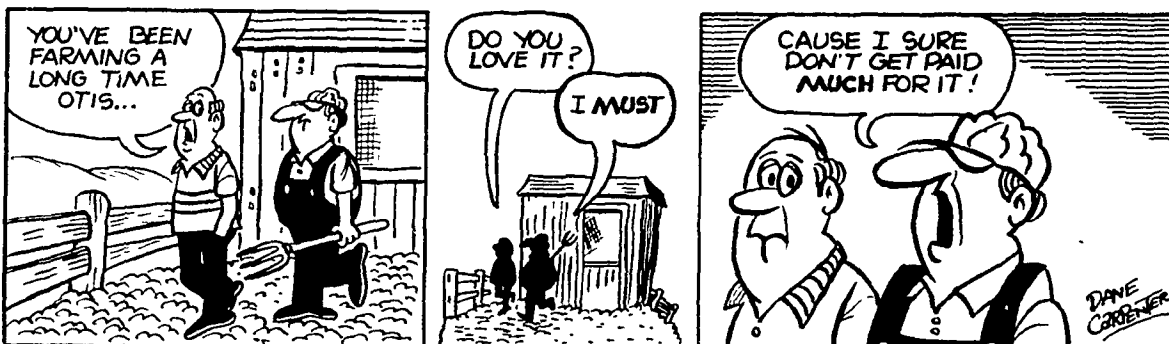
dangerous to be standing in a grain bin when it begins to flow. It takes only a few seconds for an unloading auger to remove enough grain for a person to start sinking into the grain. Never enter a grain bin without first "locking out" all the power sources; also, never enter the bin alone without another person being present. Children should be warned about entering grain bins because of the danger of "bridging" of the grain or the shifting of large areas. All employees should be alerted to the hazards of flowing grain.

To Be Careful When Cleaning Manure Pits

Many manure pits will be emptied at this time of year; it's an opportunity to clean out the pit before cold weather arrives. When this volume of manure is agitated there is greater danger of toxic and explosive gases being released. Every precaution should be taken. If there are animals above the pits, then maximum ventilation should be provided. When the pit is empty,

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OTIS



Saturday, Nov. 27
Fifth Garden State Classic Sale,
Flemington Fairgrounds, N.J.
Friday, Dec. 3
Grain Marketing Workshop,

University of Delaware Sub-
station, Georgetown, Del.
Saturday, Dec. 4
4-H Horse Banquet, Farm & Home
Center, Lancaster, 6:30 p.m.