



# Off the Sounding Board

By Sheila Miller, Editor

## Unexpected mail

Bills, bills, bills.

It seems like the mail people these days take special pleasure in dampening our holiday spirits by bringing scores of envelopes demanding money for goods and services delivered. I don't know why bills are always such a shock to the nervous system when they finally appear in the mailbox since their arrival is inevitable.

But even the bills had to take a back seat in startle-ability to the piece of mail that squeezed its way into mailboxes this week. The dastardly 1040 form wrapped its multitude of pages around other personal mail — as if to display its importance and to make sure it wouldn't be overlooked.

Taxes! Who wants to think about filing income tax forms when Christmas hasn't even been celebrated, and Father Time hasn't rung out the old year yet? But there it was — that 1040 form — just a "subtle" reminder of Uncle Sam's request for his financial share of our "fortunes."

But our national relative will be in for a surprise this year when he starts counting his benefits from farmers across the nation. If he was expecting a financial boost from the farm sector, Uncle Sam is sure to be disappointed. Let's face it — farmers just haven't had the best of years.

The only thing that's helping farmers show a gain of 1 to 2 percent in gross farm income this year is a slightly "bullish" livestock market and government payments for grain programs — something akin to "robbing John (Block) to pay Sam."

But, before Uncle Sam starts counting his "chickens," he'll have to realize that these meager gains in income will rapidly be offset by farmers' increased expenses. Hence, USDA figures put farmers' net incomes near the middle of the \$17 to \$21 billion range.

It's no secret why most farmers' incomes are in a slump in 1982 — bumper crops of corn and wheat have kept grain prices in a tailspin since spring planting and may finish up the year at a level about 10 percent below 1981, on the average. Economists with USDA show

figures of crop cash receipts for farmers falling by 3 to 4 percent this year — to a level of about \$72 billion.

Helping to keep farmers' heads from sliding under this year's economic quicksand though is the 2 percent gain in livestock receipts, bringing about \$70 billion in to offset the grain losses. Hog receipts alone rose about 12 percent, and cattle are up by roughly one percent.

But it wasn't as good a year for poultry farmers who watched their cash receipts drop 4 percent this year. And in the dairy business, even though more milk is flowing into the market, reduced prices for wholesale milk are keeping cash receipts at about the same level as 1981.

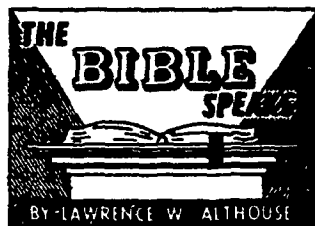
Unlike the past three years when the cost of operating a farm climbed an average of 11 percent, lower grain and fuel prices and reduced interest rates have helped to hold farm expenses from going into orbit. In fact, expenses for the average farmer in 1982 are expected to rise just 3 percent — the smallest increase since 1968.

If Uncle Sam gets the feeling that his farmers are not as healthy as they once were, after he takes a look at their 1982 1040 forms, he wouldn't be wrong. An economic thermometer would show income dropping, debts rising, and farmland values eroding.

Checking his farmers' financial "blood pressures," Uncle Sam will find that net cash income is down from last year by about a half billion dollars. Farmers' net cash flow, the money they have available for spending on the farm business and home, will also drop by as much as 2 percent this year. So, it's an easy prediction to make during the last month of 1982 that farmers' net farm incomes are on their way to a third straight year of decline.

No, it hasn't been a great year economically for farmers — which may raise some eyebrows in the ranks of the Internal Revenue Service.

It looks like Uncle Sam will be forced to go on a strict diet and tighten up his belt, too. Just like his dedicated All-American farmers did in 1982.



WAS JESUS RELIGIOUS?  
December 5, 1982

Background Scripture: Luke 1:1-4; 5:29-32; 8:19-21; 9:18-22.

Devotional Reading: 2 Timothy 4:1-8.

"Was Jesus religious?" may seem a strange question. The key, of course, is what you mean by "religious."

The scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees did not think that Jesus was religious, because in his ministry and his teachings he did not stick to what they regarded as religious concerns. For the scribes and Pharisees, religion had to do with keeping the rules so that a person might keep himself morally pure. For the Sadducees and priests, being religious meant keeping faithful to the rituals of the Temple.

### TAX COLLECTORS AND SINNERS

But although Jesus respected the law and the Temple, he got involved with a lot of things that went quite beyond these limits of religion. For one thing, he allowed himself to get involved with unreligious people, sinners and tax collectors. In the view of his critics, a religious person would not do such a thing and would keep himself free from contact with their impurity. Not once but many times, he was criticized for this. "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" they

demanding when they found him in Levi's house sharing a table with these people.

Jesus' response was, as they saw it, a very unreligious one: "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Their understanding of religion was to keep one's self pure. Concern for others, particularly those who were obviously sinners, was not part of their religious practice and lifestyle. Perhaps if Jesus had stuck to religion (as they interpreted it), he would have been more acceptable to them.

### THE CHRIST OF GOD

But Jesus never was satisfied with staying within the bounds of contemporary religion. His "good news" could not be limited to the synagogue or the Temple, to law-abiding Jews, and it went far beyond the laws and rituals which often reflected the ideas of men rather than the will of God. When Jesus came into contact with hungry people, for him that was a religious problem. When people came to him with broken bodies, he demonstrated that God himself shared those same concerns. The poor, the homeless, the oppressed—these were people for whom God was concerned. And the sinners were the people to whom this Messiah was especially sent.

When Jesus asked, "But who do you say that I am?" and Peter replied, "The Christ of God," it was apparent that this Christ did not fit comfortably within the limitations imposed by the religious authorities. Jesus' message and mission was a threat and a challenge to the narrowness of their religion. Like new wine fermenting in an old wine bottle, it broke open their understanding of what God wants from his children.

We still have problems fitting Jesus into our religion.

## NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

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### To tighten farm security

Rural crime is a serious problem in many parts of our country. We need to take every precaution to protect our property from theft and vandalism.

This is more difficult on a farm because of the number of buildings and exposed items. A good place to start is to install automatic lights. Also a good watch dog will signal the arrival of a stranger or something unusual happening.

Another preventive measure is to keep garages and workshops under padlock to make it more difficult for illegal entry. Farm machinery should be stored under cover or near farm buildings at all times. It's also a good idea to engrave all tools and equipment with your drivers license number. Social Security numbers are non-retrievable so your driver's license number is a much quicker identification.

Neighborhood watch is very successful. Notify your neighbor if you see something unusual.

### To observe withdrawal time

The use of drugs and antibiotics are needed in many cases with livestock, poultry and dairy production. However, the misuse of these materials is where trouble can start.

When these items are administered to animals or poultry, the owner should read the label for directions relating to withdrawal period for milk cows, or time between treatment and slaughter for meat animals. It's only good common sense that these regulations should be followed.

To short-cut the period of time is only jeopardizing the product and the entire farming business. Don't

take chances with our valuable food products. Also, keep accurate records of all treatments. In cases where excess tolerances are found, it might save time and money.

### To store firewood outside

We are more energy conscious than we've ever been. This is certainly a good trend. Most homes are equipped with a real energy saver — the fireplace. A lot of people will be using their fireplaces and wood stoves more than ever before, so they'll be using more firewood. Proper storage is important.

When storing your firewood, keep it outside the house — insects may hibernate in the wood piles. If you keep it inside, they'll think it's spring and wake up, come out and be a pest in your home. If this happens, use an ant and roach aerosol for control.

It is a lot easier just to keep the firewood in a cool garage or some outside shelter. The important thing is to keep it dry, even if it means covering it with a plastic tarp. Wet firewood takes a lot of heat just to dry it out.

### To plan work schedules in layer houses

If you are planning to work with your layers, such as applying a miticide to control lice or mites or do any noisy repairs to the feeders, fans or waterers, this work should be done in the afternoon. The reason for this is it's after the hen has laid her egg for the day, and she is less susceptible to injury and damage to the future eggs. Your everyday chores won't upset them because they are accustomed to them, but these unusual conditions can upset their regular cycle.

## Farm Calendar

**Saturday, Dec. 4**  
Lancaster 4-H Horse Banquet, Farm and Home Center, 6:30 p.m.

**Monday, Dec. 6**  
National Farmers Organization annual convention, Louisville, Ky., continues through Thursday.

Berks County Reproductive School, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m., Kutztown Grange Hall, continues tomorrow.

Chester County Farmers Union, 7:30 p.m., Perkins Cake & Steak House, Rt. 41, Avondale.

**Tuesday, Dec. 7**  
Dutch Country Goat Club, 7:30 p.m., meeting room, Coca Cola plant, Manheim Pike, Lancaster.  
ELCO Young Farmers, Schafferstown Fire Hall, 7 p.m.  
Red Rose DHIA Annual Dinner Meeting and Awards Program, 11:30 a.m. Good 'N Plenty Restaurant. Second session scheduled on Wednesday, Dec. 8, same time and place.

**Wednesday, Dec. 8**  
Lancaster County Conservation District, 7:30 p.m., Lancaster Farm & Home Center.  
Bradford Extension Banquet, 7:45 p.m., Troy Vets Club, Troy.

**Thursday, Dec. 9**  
Peninsula Horticultural Society. Vegetable Production Meeting, Wicomico Youth and Civic Center, Salisbury, Md., 9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Golden Harvest Holstein and Garden Spot Sale, Guernsey Barn, Lancaster.

National Agri-Marketing Association, 6 p.m., Revere Tavern, Paradise.

**Friday, Dec. 10**  
Sussex County Crops Meeting, University of Delaware Substation, Georgetown, Del.

### OTIS

