



Off the Sounding Board

By Sheila Miller, Editor

Payment-in-kind pluses

"What do you think of the new grain program proposal?" is a question I've heard asked over and over again during the past week. The announcement from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to try to do something sensible for a change has created quite a surprised stir among farmers.

And although details of the proposed program will remain sketchy until the Commodity Credit Corporation and the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service get through studying it, from what we've gathered, this bureaucratic effort might actually do what it seems designed to accomplish — help farmers.

Dubbed the "payments-in-kind" proposal, this grain program will be dipping into grain reserve bins across the country and the government-stored grains will be touched by John Block's magic wand and transformed into "currency" without any Federal Reserve hocus-pocus.

Actually more akin to the old trading system called barter, USDA's payment-in-kind program will allow farmers to exchange grain in the bin for grain in the field without even planting a seed. This type of grain program is sure to bring a smile to Office of Management and Budget's David Stockman. Since farmers won't be milking the federal treasury, a bartering grain program would have a positive effect of the federal deficit.

As part of an effort to reduce the acreage planted in grain by farmers throughout the U.S., the payment-in-kind program would permit farmers to pull wheat, feed grains, rice and upland cotton out of storage in exchange for their word not to plant as much grain in 1983. They'll have to agree to reduce their acreage by 10 to 30 percent and must sign up for the 20 percent acreage reduction program already established for 1983 in order to be eligible for Block's "bin-barter" program. So we're looking at each farmer planting anywhere from 30 to 100 percent less grain acres in 1983 which brings back memories to some of the old soil bank program of the 1960s.

Giving the grain back to the farmers might seem to some a fool-hardy thing to do, since the government has already paid them to put it into storage. But, in the long run, letting the farmers feed this surplus grain to their livestock, or even selling it on the market for

cash, will save the federal government thousands of dollars next year.

USDA economists have predicted a 3.33 billion bushel corn carryover for next October, which will force 1983 grain prices into an even deeper slump on the economists' charts than what was plotted in 1982. Without any program to reduce next year's crop and carryover, farmers will be reaping their "golden harvest" income by way of increased deficiency payments instead of a profitable market as prices continue tailspinning.

The problem we see with the payment-in-kind plan, though, is the potential disaster it could be creating if the idea bombs. Grain prices wouldn't survive the impact if farmers who take the corn out of storage try to move it on the open market too soon, and in too great a number. The thunder from this kind of grain bin explosion would be felt across the nation, from Chicago to Washington, as grain prices and programs would come tumbling down.

Most of the farm organizations seem to like it. As Keith Eckel, president of the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association, said: "We think the payments-in-kind program will give farmers a much needed incentive to cut back on their grain production so we can once again produce for the market place, not government storage."

But as Pennsylvania Farmers' Union's Carl Kaufman points out, it could also be an administrative nightmare.

"If farmers in Pennsylvania accept grain instead of cash, once they get the warehouse slip for that grain out in Kansas, they'll own it immediately. Then they'll either have to pay to store it, pay to haul it to Pennsylvania, or sell it at a depressed price. There are no warehouses in Pennsylvania," Kaufman says.

We share Kaufman's concern, too, about the impact this type of grain program might have on other agribusinesses if too many farmers retire major cropland acreages and opt for the already harvested grain. Fallow land could mean idle sales for local seed, fertilizer, and machinery dealers.

All in all, though, we feel the payment-in-kind program, if used wisely, certainly has more pluses for farmers than minuses on USDA's scorecard in their attempt to do something for farmers before they're buried under a mountain of grain.

OUR READERS WRITE

Puzzling Reagan policies

Many puzzling and paradoxical inconsistencies are evident in the current United States government.

On the one hand President Reagan travels to South America and unapologetically gives Brazil \$1.2 billion to stave off bankruptcy, while on the other hand he takes the American dairymen by their throats and wrings \$2 billion from them in an unjust levy against

their milk checks. What about the young farmers that will find no recourse except to declare bankruptcy; or, have our government leaders turned so callous and unfeeling for our own (people) that they just don't care?

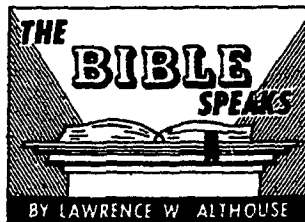
Recently I, contacted the office of congressional Representative Gus Yatron in Reading and was informed that he had voted against

this measure in Congress and has remained opposed to the levy on America's dairymen.

Thereafter a call was placed to President Reagan at the White House. Although he didn't answer the telephone (he was resting from his South American jaunt), the secretary to whom I spoke exclaimed—"You sound exactly like my husband!"—to which I replied, "Then I must be expressing the mood of America today, but why

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OTIS



BEYOND UNDERSTANDING
December 19, 1982

Background Scripture:
Luke 2.

Devotional Reading:
Proverbs 23:15-25.

Being the parents of the child who was someday to be God's Messiah was not the "snap" we might have expected it to be. First, Mary had to overcome her own natural doubts about Gabriel's message from God. Secondly, Joseph had to adjust to a situation which was mystifying, not to mention socially embarrassing as well.

Furthermore, having been promised this wonderful child sent from God, they must have wondered why such a great honor should be bestowed in the most humble and unprepossessing surroundings. If this was God's "favor," as Gabriel had told them, then what must his "disfavor" be like?

MINE EYES HAVE SEEN

No less troubling must have been the experience with Simeon in Jerusalem. Simeon proclaimed their infant child the "salvation" of God: "a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to thy people Israel." That was a wonderful prophecy but the following words were as troubling as the first had been wonderful: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and the rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is spoken against (and a

sword will pierce through your own soul also)..." It must have seemed impossible for Joseph and Mary to put these two messages together.

When they returned to Nazareth, it must have made them wonder how they could go back to life as usual. With all the wonderful promises and prophecies, it would be understandable for Joseph and Mary to expect something more in the days ahead than the quiet, humble life of Nazareth.

THEY WERE ASTONISHED

Nor did being the parents of God's Messiah mean their life with this boy would be one of harmony and full understanding. When, at age 12 they took him to the Temple for the Passover, Luke tells us that, when Jesus stayed behind in the Temple, "His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the company they went a day's journey..." Like any other parents, there were times when they "did not know" what he was doing and made false suppositions.

When at last they found him in the Temple, Luke tells us "they were astonished" not an unfamiliar experience for any parent. He may have been God's Messiah, but that didn't stop him from doing things that astonished them. Nor was all the astonishment pleasant: "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold your father and I have been looking for you anxiously."

"And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them," but their failure to understand did not keep them from loving Jesus and keeping their faith in God's promises. Nor did their failure to understand him keep Jesus from being "obedient to them."

Even when we fail to understand God's will, like Mary we may nevertheless keep "all these things" in our hearts.

NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

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To Use A Real Tree For Christmas

This is the time of year that most people are considering the type of Christmas tree to buy. And I hear objections to using real trees as being wasteful. So let's take a look at this situation.

Actually, the Christmas tree farmer is raising trees as a crop, and a source of income. This is much the same as the farmer that raises wheat, corn or soybeans to sell or use on the own farm. Christmas trees are raised on land not suited for other crops — not even pastureland. It's mostly rolling land and highly acid.

Also remember that these Christmas tree farmers are putting this land to good use by conserving the soil and providing an excellent water shed. Keep in mind that Christmas tree farmers have a slow return on their capital investment. From the time they plant the tree until it's ready for your living room the wait can be 6 to 10 years on small trees to 10 to 20 years on larger trees.

Another fact to consider is there is nothing like the fresh aroma of a real tree in your home during the Christmas season.

To Care For Calves

Care for calves in winter is important. Calves that are kept in cold housing, such as calf hutches, need to be well-bedded and they need to be kept dry.

To help them generate enough body heat to maintain normal body temperature, County Agent Glenn Shirk emphasizes the need for

feeding more energy. This can be accomplished by feeding calves more milk or milk replacer, or by using a replacer that has a higher fat content. For calves that are consuming dry feed, additional grain and hay may be needed.

Also, provide calves with plenty of fresh air, but protect them from cold drafts.

To Appreciate Farm Labor

Farmers should not neglect opportunities to reduce production costs by carefully using family and non-family labor to maintain productivity at a high level.

There is more to using labor other than just wages paid or family trade-offs to run the farm. The returns received from your help should always be based on their productivity, reminds Arnold G. Lueck, Extension Agricultural Agent.

Attention to keeping the farm "labor force" happy and contented will really return more in production than an increase in wages (which you likely cannot afford now). Put more emphasis on: kindness, praise, respect, concern for the employee's family, some free time, recognition, fair treatment and other non-cash approaches. These will increase production more than any added wages alone.

To Keep a Positive Attitude

This time of the year many of us are wondering what lies ahead for agriculture and the farmer. The press is full of articles about the future and how the American

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