



# Off the Sounding Board

By Sheila Miller, Editor

## A case for coalitions

**Coalition.** The term means a temporary alliance or partnership. It's a word that could and should have more meaning to Pennsylvania agriculture in years to come.

As farmers begin to be recognized by industry and other lobbying groups as more than just the weed-chewing, tractor-driving stereotypes of the past who preferred being left alone to getting involved in politics, it is only natural that these hard-working agriculturalists become assets to other big businesses in legislative endeavors.

And, in turn, farmers could expect reciprocity in lobbying support when issues of importance to agriculture come before the General Assembly.

These ideas were discussed last week during the annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Farmers' Union by a panel of speakers representing consumers, the AFL-CIO, and education.

Each organizational spokesperson outlined how they look out for their constituents, and how they would be willing to work with farmers on legislation where similar policies intertwined.

This may seem unusual to some farmers, that consumer groups, steelworker unions, and school systems, would be ready and willing to become allies with agriculture. We all can remember the hurt inflicted on farmers by consumer advocates who lashed out at cholesterol and nitrates, labeling eggs and bacon as dietary villains.

And as one farmer exclaimed at last week's session, farmers and the AFL-CIO would be unlikely partners — what with steel workers' wages driving up the cost of farm equipment, trucks, buildings, and more. But, the union labor leader quickly countered the charges that labor was the culprit for high prices — instead he blamed it on corporations' greed for profits.

Nevertheless, the willingness to work together was expressed by the labor representative. And farmers would be missing

out on a powerful friend if the offer dangles, ignored.

Then there was the representative of the State Education Association who vowed to work with farmers in keeping rural schools up to snuff. This speaker struck a nerve that is still twinging.

If education is willing to work with farmers on keeping schools open, then why is it so hard to arrange for farmers to visit local school children and share the farm story with otherwise "uneducated" youths?

The concern is legitimate, especially in the face of books and curriculums that would attempt to brainwash children into believing farm animals are inhumanely treated and that farmers are "bad guys."

For those who don't feel it's important for farmers to work with education in these matters, take a look at any school child's textbooks, paying particular attention to the way farmers are portrayed. Most pictures of farmers and farm equipment look like they were dug out of USDA's moth-eaten archives, and would be more appropriate in "ancient" history texts. Horse-drawn farm machinery is still used by some farmers in the 1980s, but the majority till the land with the aid of mammoth tractors that come equipped with air conditioning, radios, and control panels that rival the cockpits of jet planes.

Since revised editions of textbooks require large expenditures of money, both on the part of book publishers and school districts, having agribusiness presented to students in its proper perspective is probably not in most school boards' budgets. But the story must be told, and soon, so that an entire generation won't grow up thinking of agriculture as a "dark ages" enterprise.

This might be a coalition of top priority for farmers. Not only would we be gaining support for farm programs and legislation from an entirely new group of sympathizers, but we might be "killing two birds" by achieving a better rapport and understanding with school teachers.

## OUR READERS WRITE

### Flexible agriculture

American farmers have gained the ear of the White House and Congress. Unfortunately, this new attention is the result of a struggling farm economy.

Oversupplies of farm commodities have driven prices so low that it has become nearly impossible for anyone farming a major crop to make a profit.

Through increased productivity and a wealth of rich farmland, American farmers have made agriculture the nation's largest industry. Its total assets equal about 80 percent of the combined capital assets of all manufacturing

corporations in the United States.

Because agriculture is such a vital contributor to the American economy, it follows that the current depressed agriculture economy is having a rippling effect throughout our nation. The many industries that supply agricultural needs, such as chemical companies and equipment manufacturers, are affected. The reduction in demand for these goods and services ultimately leads to higher unemployment.

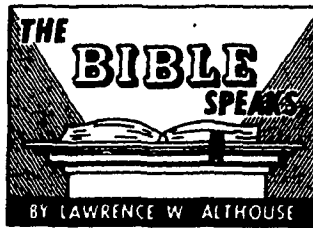
I applaud the new efforts by the President and Agriculture Secretary John Block to bolster

prices by reducing the huge stocks of commodities through a new payment-in-kind program.

However, I don't believe it is wise to use acreage reduction alone as a means of reducing the surplus. I'm afraid such a singular approach would allow our competitors to expand production and capture our markets.

Therefore, I believe that Congress must address the problem through a combination of acreage controls, efforts to move the surpluses through alternative marketing strategies, and farm credit.

Legislation that I intend to introduce during the 98th Congress (Turn to Page A12)



### THE BOND February 13, 1983

Background Scripture:  
Luke 22; 1-23.

Devotional Reading:  
1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

A widow sits and stares at the four walls of her one-room apartment, just as she has for the past 10 months since her husband died. Friends have been "kind" to her and tried to be supportive, but no matter how well-intentioned these efforts have been, she feels all alone and she aches in loneliness.

**WHEN THE HOUR CAME**  
A middle aged father cries alone in his bedroom mourning the loss of his "little girl," a young woman still not out of her teens. Extremely close ever since his wife, the girl's mother, walked out of their life when the daughter was only five years old, he feels utterly "crushed" by her announcement that she is quitting college and going off to live with a young man whom the father is certain will ruin her life.

These are only two examples of the wounds we experience in life. The situations may vary widely, but the results are the same: feelings of unreplaceable loss, of unquenchable grief, unresolved bitterness, unbearable loneliness, and unremitting pain. There may seem to be no possible cure to heal these wounds. With no one to really

understand what we are feeling and to share it was us, we may begin to despair of life itself.

It is this mood which seems to hang over the Upper Room when, as Luke puts it, "the hour came" and Jesus "sat at table and the apostles with him." At that table, along with Jesus and the 12, there was fear, distrust, dismay, and betrayal. Jesus probably knew that his very hours were numbered, that Judas had betrayed him, and that the other eleven apostles would scatter like frightened sheep before the night was over. As in the lives of so many of us, Jesus, too, experienced the coming of a fateful "hour" that would test his soul.

### UNTIL IT IS FULFILLED

Yet, somber and fearful as was that Upper Room gathering, there was also a light to shine in that darkness. And the light that Jesus offered them (and us) is more than enough to dispel any darkness that falls upon us. For even in the darkest hours, just as Jesus offered an unbreakable fellowship to his disciples, so he offers us that same oneness with him, that same communion that assures us that, no matter what the circumstances may be, we are one with him and he with us. Thus we need never face the wounds of life alone. The bond between Christ and ourselves will enable us to meet and conquer any of life's most painful blows.

"Holy Communion" is not just something that happens in church when we share the Lord's Supper. It is a fact of life with Christ and the ritual is only a reminder to open our lives and let Christ share them. The bread and the cup speak to us of his sacrificial self-giving which, in one way or another, is sufficient to meet all our deficiencies. The bond that links us to Christ will bear any load—if we want it to.

## NOW IS THE TIME

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### To Evaluate Manure Plant Food

Our agronomists have told farmers for 40 years that a ton of dairy manure is equivalent to 100 pounds of a 5-3-5 fertilizer, but recent research indicates little, if any, nitrogen is available to the crop when manure is spread daily and left exposed to the elements.

Current data have confirmed that a ton of stored dairy manure is equivalent to 100 pounds of 5-3-5 fertilizer. The nutrients in fresh manure are equal to those of inorganic fertilizers for crop production, but more slowly available. In the year of application, about one-half of the nitrogen in manure is available. Studies show that corn fertilized with fresh manure applied and plowed down in the spring produced the most corn silage. Yields were lowest when the manure was applied in the fall, left exposed on the soil surface all winter and plowed down in the spring. It's important to manage manure application just as you manage other areas of your operation.

### To Train and Prune Trees

General pruning of apple trees should be in full swing at this time of year, especially if you have a lot of pruning to do. I'd like to remind growers and homeowners not to over-prune young trees or those which haven't yet started to bear fruit. There is a tendency to either prune the small trees too heavily, or simply to leave them alone. A middle-of-the-road course is best.

The training of young trees should involve just enough cutting to maintain a healthy central leader and to develop the desired number of well-spaced scaffold branches. Branches that are either

poorly spaced, or ones making very narrow-angled crotchets should be removed.

Keep in mind, when you start pruning early - start with your hardier trees, the apple and pear with plums and sour cherries next, and leave your peach till near the end; they're quite tender.

### To Check Poultry Waterers

Hens without water can cost you money. In one experiment, birds deprived of water for only 24 hours required 24 days to return to normal egg production. In most experiments, after a period of only 36 hours without water, birds never returned to normal. A flock without water for 36 hours or more may molt, then go through a prolonged period of restricted production. This is especially so in older flocks. If water is restricted for 48 to 60 hours, severe mortality can result from dehydration.

As you walk through your house each day, check the waterers to make sure none are dry or a line is plugged. I am aware of a case where the water line was restricted, by a faulty valve, in the middle row of cages for nearly 3 days. Mortality was high and production was seriously affected in that row.

A few minutes a day checking waterers can well mean saving a lot of dollars — don't wait until molted feathers are under the cage.

### To Dress For The Chill Index

Winter is not over as some people would like to think — it's only the middle of February. And when you're outside on a cold windy day and it "feels" colder

(Turn to Page A12)

