

The Future — How it's shaped

BY DICK ANGLESTEIN

It is very encouraging to see more and more farmers getting directly and actively involved in deciding their own future.

The current effort to organize a packer co-op among hog producers is a good example. As swine production continues to expand, it's all too evident that the weak link in the overall hog industry chain is slaughter-packing.

The shutdown of the A and B Plant has been felt in many marketing circles. Its dampening effect on prices has been measured in some places in the dollars instead of cents.

Competition is the lifeblood of any product marketing system. The more involved the greater is the competition. And as everyone knows it takes at least two hands willing to be raised against each other to make a true auction and market. And a third or more only sharpens the competition that benefits the seller.

A packer co-op among hog producers would be a bold, new venture in Pennsylvania. But these are times that demand bold, new approaches in agriculture. Business as usual is not going to help farmers meet the challenges of today and face the greater challenges of tomorrow.

In a number of areas of agriculture, a basic philosophy went askew in those hectic days of expansion back in the 1970's. Too many forgot that any ag operation is primarily in business to provide a product for the consumer. You don't have cows and pigs just to breed and raise bigger and better pigs -- although that is always a secondary goal. First and foremost of all, you must make milk and pork that consumers will buy.

The more that farmers get involved in the entire process of getting their product to the

consumer, they more say they'll have in their industry and in their own future.

Broader-based hog producer involvement in getting their product to the consumer will help in guiding the direction of the future of their industry -- one that appears to be falling more and more in the shadow of the path followed by the poultry industry recently.

It reminds me of the oil filter commercial on TV. Hog producers got to look ahead and not sit back and let others decide their future. They can pay now to make an investment in an attempt to guide that future. Or, they can pay much more dearly later when others decide their future.

Here in Lancaster County, farmers in East Donegal Township are also getting involved in another way. They're stepping to the front and becoming involved in determining new regulations to govern the use of manure on the land to prevent stream and subsurface water pollution.

This is good, too.

These are just two areas in which farmers face some tough decisions to get involved and make some basic changes. But such changes and more are coming to agriculture. If farmers help set the guidelines for such changes, it's going to be much easier for them to adopt and adapt to them.

WHAT REALLY DIED?

What really died on the Bethel Twp., Berks County, farm of Frederick Wright early Wednesday morning?

--Was it more than 4,500 show birds?

--Was it even more than irreplaceable blood lines that are lost forever?

--Was it much, much more than one farm family's fight to survive?

What really died was a vital part of agriculture and a vital part of each farmer.

What really died was another segment of a basic belief in fairness and rights of the individual that has been passed down generation after agricultural generation.

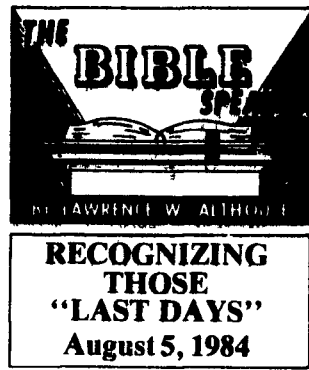
With each such death of belief comes a stronger and stronger opinion in agriculture that farmers are but pawns in a game played by big government and big business.

A lot more died on Wednesday than just the last flock in the AI debacle -- one of the saddest episodes in Pennsylvania agriculture.

Now, it remains to be seen if so much has died in vain.

Will there be a fair and impartial step-by-step review of what has happened over the past year or will it too be characterized by economic expediency?

Every farm family touched by AI -- from the first whose flock was killed to the unique, rare lines of the Wrights that are supposed to be the last -- deserves such a review.



Background Scripture:
2 Kings 16 through 17.
Devotional Reading:
2 Kings 17:34-41.

Norman Cousins' latest book, THE HEALING HEART (W.W. Norton) is a marvelous testimony about the spiritual dimensions of his recovery from a very serious heart attack in December, 1980.

But in an epilogue, Cousins closes the book on an ironic note:

What concerns me is that everyone's health—including that of the next generation—may depend more on the health of society and the healing of the nations than on the conquest of disease.

THINGS NOT RIGHT

When Cousins speaks of "the health of society," he is referring to the moral and spiritual condition of our society and the "sickness" of war and holocaust that looms over our world. If we fail to solve these challenges, he is saving, all the personal health measures in the world will not matter, for the condition of the patient—our world—is "critical." Only a worldwide response to these challenges, says Cousins, can keep the patient from becoming "terminal."

This is a startling, prophetic voice added to many others with essentially a similar message: we

must change our world NOW, if it is to survive.

As I read these words I couldn't help wondering how many others would read them and pass on without bothering to pay any real attention to them. Yes, of course we know that our world is facing enormous problems, but, with the tremendous advances of technology taking place constantly, we find it difficult to think of our own era as even potentially "the last days."

So it was with the people of Israel in the 8th century B.C. It wasn't that they were not warned about their impending destruction. God had sent them one prophet after another, but, when things are going reasonably well, who listens to a prophet? The people of Israel knew that all was not "right in the world," but they hardly recognized their times as "the last days of Israel" — which they were!

CHANGES THAT DELIVER

They, like we, often misunderstood the purpose of God's prophets. God sent these men, not to pronounce doom on Israel, but to motivate the people to make the changes in their lives that would deliver them from the consequences of the evils in their society; idolatry, human sacrifice and immorality.

That sounds like a description of our society, too. Idolatry is no less with us today than it was then (only its form is different), we have our own contemporary rituals of human sacrifice and immorality flourishes under many guises. Unless we are to eat the bitter fruits of our folly, we must bring about changes NOW, say the prophets. Who knows how long we may have? Is it possible that these could be for our world the "last days" we've always known would come "some day"?

NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

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To Observe Poultry Month

The Lancaster County Commissioners have proclaimed August as Poultry Month. The poultry producers and supportive industry have suffered through the Avian Influenza tragedy, but are showing their true colors and strength in the rapid recovery. The last flock was de-populated last week which totals 403 different farms and nearly 16 million birds. The important fact now is that 233 farms have re-populated with nearly 12 million birds. What remains is the final cleaning and disinfecting of remaining premises, a 30-day waiting period, and the quarantine can be lifted. All concerned poultrymen hope this can be accomplished as soon as possible.

We need to tell our urban and suburban friends that poultry

products in Lancaster County provide nourishment for over 6 million people and it's estimated that nearly 20,000 people are employed in the many different areas of the poultry industry in Lancaster County.

The industry is strong because of the dedicated, well-managed poultry farms along with a highly efficient and supportive allied industry. Three cheers for Poultry month.

To Attend Ag Progress Days

Most farmers do not need much prodding to visit an agricultural show whether it is in the county or halfway across the state.

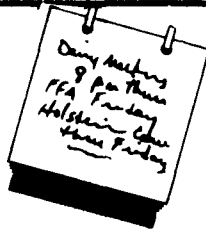
And, since 1976 tens of thousands of persons have jammed Penn State University's Rock Spring Agricultural Research Center, nine miles west of Boalsburg on Route 45, to attend the Annual Ag Progress Days. The dates are August 21-23. Activities will start at 9 a.m. and end at 5 p.m. each day.

This year's show should be one of the biggest and best ever. More than 300 commercial companies will be exhibiting their products for home, farming and country living. Take a day out of your busy schedule (you've earned it) and plan to attend Ag Progress Days. There is no parking or admission charge.

To Communicate With Legislators
How long has it been since you, as a farmer, have been in contact with your Senator, Congressman, or Representative?

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Farm Calendar



Saturday, August 4
Sussex County Farm and Horse Show, Augusta, N.J.; continues through Sunday the 12th.
Clinton County Fair, Mill Hall; continues through Saturday.
Green County Fair, Waynesburg; continues through Saturday.

Sunday, August 5
Union County West End Fair, Laurelton; continues through

Saturday
Monday, August 6
4-H Achievement Days, Penn State; continues through Wednesday.
Great Bedford County Fair, Bedford; continues through Saturday.

Lebanon Area Fair, Lebanon; continues through Saturday.
Wayne County Fair; Honesdale;

continues through Sunday.
Tuesday, August 7
Hunterdon County N.J. Sheep Producers, 8 p.m., Flemington Extension Center, "Quality Wool Production in a Small Flock."

York and state plowing contests and tillage demonstration day,
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Otis

