

Faith And Farming Speaker

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this period of history and where we are going.

I'm an optimist about agriculture. I have a contract that I can't get back in agriculture for four years. And I think 1990 might be just right. It's my opinion that it's going to take most of the '80s to work out the dislocation that happened in the '70s so the '90s can be more like the '50s and '60s and the post war years of agriculture. Let me state that again then I'll build on that theme.

It is my contention that it's going to take most of the '80s to work out the dislocation that happened in agriculture in the '70s so the '90s can be more like the '40s, '50s and '60s in agriculture. Let me go through that '40, '50 and '60 period with you for a little bit.

There were several things that happened in the post war years. I take the wars through the '60s as the post war years in agricultural. One was the technological explosion. I don't have to go through a lot of this for you to see what happened. All of the technology that happened in the Hybrid corn,

Hybrid wheats, all the other Hybrids, the technology that happened in farm equipment that took labor out of farming, that took all the fun out of baling hay where we use to sit behind the baler in the hot Kansas sun. We had an old Case baler. My father was the tier and I was the piker. If you remember those old Case balers and the hay would get tough. He sold that baler because I was losing my religion cussing about piking that wire through there. It's not worth it. We baled hay custom. I had a brother who run a tractor, my father tied and I poked and about two years of that. Ed said, "Hey, you know you're not going to be a Mennonite if we do this much longer." So we sold that baler and went on to something else.

There was a lot of diversification of risk during that time. People tried to diversify what they were doing. They didn't raise just wheat or just corn or just hogs or just cattle. There was a lot of diversification going on. It was a real replacement of labor with machinery on a productive basis. So a lot of good things happened

with technology and replaced. We got more productive when we were raising crops at a better price per bushel. We had real income from farming versus land value. The income from farming was very high during the '50s and '60s. If I had charts here I could show you the income from raising the crop was very high. The inflation on that farm was not very high. So there was real productivity happening. There was real income happening. There was a gradual increase in land value. So people bought land, and it gradual went up. But nothing miraculous. You just made pretty good money farming. Then you made a little money on your land. Then you didn't make a lot of money on either. You begin to build a little equity.

Everybody's been leaving the farms since during the 1930s. It's been happening regularly. The crisis that's been coming upon us now is the way people have to leave the farm. That is by the abruptness of it. The fact that the industrial revolution isn't creating as many jobs as it was then. Then

industrialization created jobs. Technology and Hybrids seeds were creating jobs for farm boys. There were plenty of jobs at Hesston Corporation, John Deere and others, for manufacturing, engineering, and new technological developments. So we were staying in agriculture, but we were moving off the farm to a great extent during that period of time. But it was a more smooth transition.

Service sectors were picking up employment. Dealerships were growing and picking up some of your children or maybe you or other people. Mechanics were much more in demand. Everything was increasing, fertilizer, feed mils. The trauma of moving out of the agricultural things was not serious because you were still staying in the sector of agriculture. Most of the time there was employment being created right there in the rural area. That was the Hesston story and many others. Lots of small factories started up all over the country. Productivity was increasing. Then all these things were going along great. A lot of people say that the '70s were the golden days of agriculture. I'm here to debate that the '70s were really the seeds of the crisis of the '80s. In my opinion the '70s is when the crisis occurred. We didn't recognize it. It didn't catch up with us. But it was occurring. For a lot of things happening around the world, all at once it went together that built an unreal kind of a

market. I read today that one of the farm equipment executives said that there was an unnatural blip in the '70s. It's another way of stating what I'm saying. Everything went together. Everything was perfect.

We had an export market explosion. We had credit availability to a lot of underdeveloped countries. We gave them credit. We sold them the crop. They had the ability to absorb the credit. They took the crop. Some of it got to the people. Some of it didn't. Some of the machinery got to the people. Some of it's on hedge row in Algeria and Africa and other places. But we sold a lot of product. We exported a lot of product. We had the ability to manufacture cheap here. We had high inflation occurring. So in the '70s farm labor was going up. Farm land was going up. Factory labor was going up. Suddenly a lot of farmers woke up and found themselves wealthy. They just couldn't understand that. Now if you study that period of the '70s, particularly the latter half, inflation was covering up some rapidly increasing costs in agriculture. Land values were increasing and that increased the balance sheet. If you did what you were supposed to do during the period of the '70s and you listened to your banker or you listened to the Federal Land Bank or all those kind of people, you went out and borrowed more money. Because if you're a good manager and a good

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