



OPINION

Join RCMA Now

We hear a lot about tight milk supplies right now. And, of course, that's amazing when you consider that only a short time ago all we had to report was over-supply and huge surpluses. At that time, almost everyone would have had us believe the dairy farmer would never again see the light at the end of the tunnel. Now milk plant managers express concern about possible milk shortages. What a difference a few months can make.

The drought, the herd buyout and milk promotion efforts are given as reasons for the quick turnaround. In addition, let's face it, some dairymen who didn't get in the buyout went out of business anyway. Nevertheless, every reason that is given for the change in milk supplies goes back to hardships and/or sacrifices made by dairymen. If the dairy farm family didn't give up their way of life by going out of business, they certainly sacrificed the dollars that were removed from milk checks for advertising and promotion of dairy products. And the disheartening fact remains that with all these sacrifices, the odds are still stacked against the dairy farmer when he comes to receive full benefit from the turned-around market conditions.

First of all, the federal marketing order prices are set by the Butter/Powder Class II market even though use of Class I beverage milk is about constant all year. In addition, the dairy plant's business is often weighted on the side of Class II. The market for manufactured dairy products has been developed. The excess that isn't eaten by consumers in normal market channels is purchased by commodity credit. And the manufacturing plants have overhead and labor forces geared up for this market. They need a constant supply of milk to keep their plants running even at the expense of beverage milk.

So right now we see tight Class I supplies of milk with the support price scheduled to drop in January. This ought not to be.

Historically, dairymen were not organized to ask for a fair higher price for Class I milk when market conditions warranted that increase over the federal order support price. Now they are. The Regional Cooperative Marketing Agency (RCMA) has already won the support of 45 to 50 milk marketing cooperatives. These groups have pledged all of their members to RCMA. Many of the independent producers in eastern Pennsylvania have joined the cooperative. Pennsylvania's independent dairymen are now being signed up so that every milk dealer in the northeast will be asked to pay a price above the federal order for Class I milk as asked for by RCMA.

Some people think with the operation of RCMA, dairymen may at times add up to a dollar or more per hundredweight to their milk checks. Others think that if dairymen can just keep the price up where it is now, the cooperative is worth joining. While the possible added income is fantastic, we think it's just as important for dairymen to get in a position to say what price he wants for his milk, rather than accept what someone else says he may have.

We know some of us farmers are not comfortable when we must put a price on what we want to sell. We have so long been required by the nature of our business to pay retail prices for our inputs and to receive wholesale prices for our production. Psychologically it's hard for us to orient our thinking to a competitive marketing situation where costs determine the final price to the end user. But when you get right down to the bottom line, it's really not too much to ask for a few extra dollars to be returned from a favorable beverage milk market that has been at least in part created by the advertising and promotion money taken out of our milk checks in the first place.

So that's why we think you should join RCMA. And we think you should join right now.



NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin
Lancaster County Agriculture Agent

To Review Your Will

With the provisions of the Economic Recovery Tax Act back in 1981, major new benefits are available in the estate planning area. The new laws prompt three major actions. First, you should thoroughly review your wills; second, examine how you own property; and third, check for application of the new tax laws to determine savings.

Everyone should have their will thoroughly reviewed if it hasn't been done since September 1981. One major point of the review should be to determine ways of

applying the new unlimited federal estate tax marital deduction.

Any amount of property can now be transferred tax-free to a spouse at death. However, this option should be considered carefully. Medium and large estates may pay more tax if the entire estate is passed to the surviving spouse.

Consult your attorney about making necessary changes.

To Prepare For Slippery Conditions

Slippery roads, walks and steps will be a common hazard in the next few months. Many people use salt too freely in cutting the ice; it may get the job done but also may injure nearby turf or shrubbery. I'd suggest the use of sand or sawdust. These materials will make the surface safe without possible injury to vegetation.

In areas without any vegetation, salt will give good results. Along our main highways there is some evidence that the constant use of salt is inflicting injury to nearby trees and shrubs. Don't let this happen to your favorite tree, shrub or the turf lining your walk.

To Take Inventory

An area of our operation that is very important at this time of year is inventory. With the close of the year most of our farmers close out their records for the year. This

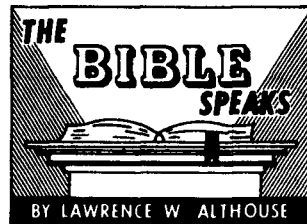
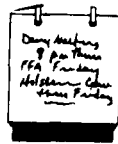
means that if you are going to have a Farm Analysis made, you should take inventory of all your supplies.

You'll need this to do any kind of farm analysis, because the amount of grains, hay and other supplies that are in storage will vary from year to year, and unless this is taken into consideration, you cannot have an accurate analysis of your year's operation. So, as accurately as possible, record the amount of hay, grains, feed, seeds, and fertilizer that are on hand. This is the first step in an accurate farm analysis.

To Know Tax Reporting Timetables

Farmers planning to estimate what their tax is going to be for 1986 should file from 1040ES by Jan. 15. If you file your Estimated Return by Jan. 15, you have until April 15 to file a complete tax return on Form 1040 and pay any tax still due or request a refund if they overpaid in making the tax estimate. However, farmers who do not file and pay an estimated tax must file the completed 1040 form by March 2 and pay in full whatever tax is due at that time. Non-farmers have until April 15 to complete their 1040 and pay any tax due. Farmer's Tax Guides are available at the Extension Office to assist in filing your reports.

Farm Calendar



INVISIBLE
CROSSES
December 28, 1986

Thursday, January 1
Annual Family Style Pork and Sauerkraut Dinner, Leola War Memorial Building, noon to 6 p.m.

Friday, January 2
Lebanon County Livestock Roundup, Lebanon Fairgrounds; Show, 10 a.m., Sale, 6 p.m.

Monday, January 5
Hunterdon County Sheep Breeders' Association monthly meeting, Extension Center, 8 p.m.

Tuesday, January 6
Ephrata Area Young Farmer's Officers Banquet Meeting, Ephrata Jr. High School Conference Room, 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, January 7
Hunterdon County Board of Ag monthly meeting, Extension Center, 8 p.m.
Bucks County Federal Income Tax Meeting, Meyers Restaurant, Route 309 Quakertown, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Thursday, January 8
Christmas Tree Pest Management Short Course, Buckhout Lab, Penn State University; continues tomorrow.

York County Commercial Dairy Day, 4-H Center, 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Income Tax Meeting, Lancaster Farm and Home Center, 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Farrowing Short Course, Penn State University, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Regional Tomato Growers

Background Scripture: Mark 8:27-38.

Devotional Reading: John 12:20-26.

Most people like and feel comfortable with approximately 50% of the Gospel. The Christmas part - at least as they think they understand it - is wonderful, of course. And they are also happy to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ.

But the other 50% of the gospel introduces some ideas that they find most unattractive. This really shouldn't surprise us at all that much because Jesus's own disciples had pretty much the same problem. At Caesarea Philippi they must have been elated when, in answer to Jesus's probing, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter, their unofficial spokesman, declared "You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29). If only Mark had tacked on a nice ending and let it go at that!

Mark, however, did not finish there because Jesus did not finish there. Jesus went on to "teach them that the Son of man must

Meeting, Thomson's Dairy Bar (Lackawanna County). Phone: 963-6842 for information.

Friday, January 9
Southcentral Area Income Tax meeting, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Chambersburg Holiday Inn on Wayne Ave., Chambersburg.

suffer many things," (8:31) including that he would be killed and rise again. And the same disciple, Peter, who had just made his ringing confession, "You are the Christ," now turned "and began to rebuke him." Peter - and probably the rest of the disciples - loved the part about their Master being the Christ, but he did not love the second part, the part about suffering.

IF ANY MAN...

Simon Peter was not the last person to be turned-off by the suffering servant role which Jesus forecast. People like the pictures of Christ enthroned in glory, but not those of him on a cross. There is a nagging sense of shame which some people feel when they look at a picture or statue of Jesus on the cross. Jesus anticipated this reaction and he said to Peter and the rest of the disciples, "For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (8:38).

To be the Christ, Jesus is saying, means bearing a cross. That's the first stumbling block for many. **OBSOLETE?**

But, there's another one too. Not only does he have to suffer, says Jesus, but so do any or all of us who want to be his disciples. To be the Christ means to bear a cross and to be a follower of Christ means no less that that either. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mk. 8:34).

That statement is the biggest blow of all, for many people become Christians so that they might escape the very thing Jesus is offering: a cross. In fact, many people believe it is their only insurance against that type of suffering. Instead, Jesus virtually promises it to them if they become his disciples and follow him.

Surely, the cross requirement has become so obsolete for followers of Jesus? Not really! For most of us in the USA and elsewhere where there is freedom of religion in effect, crosses have simply become invisible. Instead of the extreme agony of a crucifixion, our crosses are unseen but no less real. Instead of physical pain, they may inflict only those inner pains or embarrassment, humiliation, or rejection. But there are crosses in the lives of every one of us - every day, if we will see them. And they are no less real crosses because they are invisible.

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FARM FORUM OUR READERS WRITE

Dear Editor:

The lame-duck session and Thornburgh gave us farmers a few "nice" gifts (if that's what they call "nice"). That's the pesticide bill to take away certain pesticides and deprive agriculture and Pennsylvanians of rights to use them and singled out persons who own dogs and cats to have rabies shots given by only veterinarians so that the vets could soak what

they want. The singling out of persons who own dogs and subject them to special dog laws is a deliberate violation of the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which says that "no state shall make or enforce laws to deny any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." The governor and the law makers were informed of that but they

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