



# Farm Philosophy By Newton Bair

## The Burden Of The World?

A poem by Edwin Markham "The Man with the Hoe," depicts the farmer as a peasant who is never properly recognized or rewarded for his struggle to produce enough food for his family, as well as the rest of the world.

Bowed by the weight of centuries  
he stands,  
Leaning on his hoe,  
gazing at the ground;  
The emptiness of ages in his face,  
And on his back the burden  
of the world!

Those words have a familiar ring to those of us who sometimes feel the pressure of work, the uncertainty of heavy debt, or the pain

of a thousand aches to which flesh is heir. Sometimes we wonder just what is happening in a world that, at one and the same time, is full of starving people, while the abundance of food at home depresses prices below the cost of producing it.

Is there a real shortage of food in the World?

There is much conflicting evidence for this, depending on where you stand, and whether you are the one with an empty stomach. The resources that are presently available seem to be sufficient to feed everybody. Everyone that is, except those

living in poverty. The key word is poverty.

Poverty gives rise to several related phenomena. Hunger, disease and an exploding population go hand in hand, and together produce a vicious cycle that perpetuates itself.

Third World countries (the developing countries), even though they may have 85 percent of the population on the land, are at best only able to supply about 85 percent of their own food. A recent study forecasts that, due to population growth in those countries, by the turn of the century, just 13 years from now, they will be able to produce less than 75 percent of their food. Furthermore, poverty will prevent them from buying it.

How far can they go on an empty stomach?

The real burden of feeding the world has always been on the backs of those who work the soil. In most of the world they are still considered "peasants," the lowest end of the human hierarchy. Very rarely does an "educated" person stoop to this level. He sits at a desk, and wonders how he can get more production out of the dumb peasant.

A peasant is always a peasant, looked down on and despised by all, even when he sweats to stuff their bellies with food. This is the attitude that keeps the poor nations

poor.

Thank God that we have risen above that in the USDA and Western Europe. Our farmers are educated well above average, and are highly regarded as essential to the welfare of the Nation. They are business managers, scientists, technicians and thinkers, but can also do the hard work required to do a job. As a result, we produce more food than we need, or the World can buy.

Should we share our bounty with the rest of the World?

Christian ethic as well as human reality says that we must. It will be a long, hard process though. We have numerous obstacles to overcome. The hardest ones will be (1) high population growth, (2) bad government policies, (3) lack of transportation and com-

munication, (4) religious and ethnic taboos, (5) drought, and poor land use policies. There are many other obstacles too, and much difference of opinion about their importance and the order in which they must be tackled. But humanity has reached the point where we must recognize that we are One World, with similar needs and goals.

Only by sharing what we have, including our knowledge and techniques, can we all become richer. It is a basic paradox, just like sharing a kiss, or love, or laughter. No matter how much we possess, our only gain is by sharing it with others. The burden is still on our backs, but we have a lot to share, and as we share it the burden should get lighter.

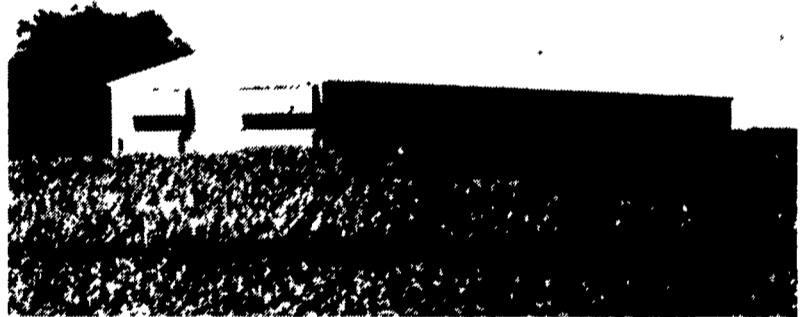
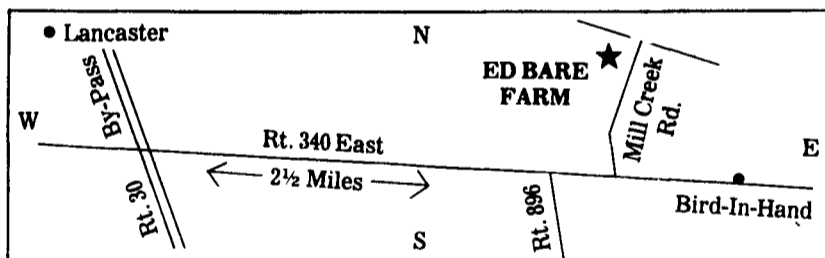
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