



OPINION

Correct An Economic Discrepancy

Talk about the cost of health care is a popular subject these days. In the United States we have the most advanced technology and the best physicians and specialists. But our health care system is the most expensive in the world.

Why this is true or who or what is to blame we cannot say. But we can say that farmers are in need of the proposed tax break on the money they spend for health insurance premiums.

Along with failing crops and falling markets, farmers also face the family's health care as a major concern. Like everyone, farm families find it harder to deal with the rising costs.

But more specifically, it is not fair that urban neighbors who are corporate or government employees receive health insurance tax free, while farmers are taxed on the money they use to pay for health insurance.

It's nothing for a health care policy to cover a farm family to cost \$4,000 per year. Farmers understand the consequences that come from choosing a career where free health insurance is not offered. But they should not be penalized because of this choice.

The urban neighbor is not taxed on the \$4,000 value of his policy that is provided as a company benefit. Farmers should not be required to pay tax for health policies either. The playing field needs to be leveled to treat all people the same regardless if they are provided insurance or purchase it themselves.

Many proposals in Congress deal with the issue of a 100 percent tax deduction for health insurance premiums for farmers and others who buy their own health insurance. The tax laws need to be changed to allow this deduction.

This will correct at least one economic discrepancy between rural and urban neighbors.



NOW IS THE TIME
By John Schwartz
Lancaster County Agricultural Agent

To Consider Using Varying Corn Maturities

Using a variety of corn maturities should lessen weather stress and crop failure potential.

Extreme heat and dry weather during corn pollination will sizzle corn yields. Protection against weather stress may be minimized by increasing the length of time the corn crop will be pollinating.

By planting several hybrids of varying maturity days, growers will extend the time the crop is silking and pollinating. In extremely hot weather, silks will emerge later than the tassel and the pollen may die before it reaches the silks.

When planting different maturing varieties, it is best to plant them in different fields. Research has shown yields are usually higher when each variety is grown separate rather when grown in a mixture.

Remember, this practice will also spread the harvest over a longer period of time.

To Properly Ground Electric Fences

When it comes to electric fence-

ing, you cannot have too many ground rods. Sometimes one will work, but three is better.

Why? When an animal touches the fence, the electricity must travel through the animal into the soil, then through the soil to a ground rod, and finally up the ground rod to the fence charger where the circuit is completed. Only then does the animal feel the shock.

Therefore, the more ground rods, the more electricity gets back to the fence charger. That is why the best ground system consists of three galvanized ground rods at least six feet deep and spaced 10 feet apart. Always use clamps to attach your ground wire to the ground rods.

Remember, your electric fence is only as good as its ground system.

To Study Competitiveness

Dr. David Kohl, professor of agricultural economics at Virginia Tech, has made the following

observations at winter meetings:

- Fixed costs is one of the United States' farmers biggest weakness in global competition.

- A business should require less than 80 cents to generate a dollar's worth of income.

- Invest 25 percent of your margins or excess earnings outside the industry of agriculture.

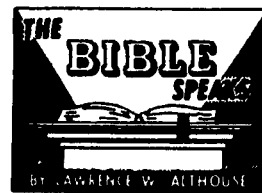
- Medical costs will be the biggest expense threat on the cash flow statement.

- Technology wave will hit agriculture in the mid-1990s.

- Only one out of every four farmers will be able to adapt technology in the future because of financial and labor limitations.

If you want to stay in agriculture, you need to be paying close attention to your financial records, controlling costs, improving productivity, purchasing health insurance, and making the best use of your time. The decisions you make today will determine your competitiveness.

Feather Prof's Footnote: "Chance favors the prepared mind."



Background Scripture: Mark 2:23 through 3:6.

Devotional Reading: Psalms 18:20-30.

There aren't many places in the gospels where Jesus is angry, but Mark tells us clearly of one such instance: "And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart" (3:5). To me, the amazing thing is not that Jesus got angry on this occasion, but that there were so many others when he did not get angry. So we need to pay attention to what it is that makes him angry.

In Mark 3, it is the attitude of the Pharisees toward the commandments. Previously, they were deeply critical of him because he permitted his disciples to pluck and eat grain as they walked through grain fields on the sabbath. That was work and work on the sabbath was a profanation of it. Later, in the synagogue, a similar criticism was leveled against Jesus because he healed a man with a withered hand on the sabbath. The attitude of the Pharisees was simple and clear up to a point: healing was work and therefore a violation of the sabbath.

SANCTITY OF LAW

Now, before you go jumping all over the Pharisees, let's acknowledge that there is a certain logic in their position. God wants the sabbath day kept holy and Jesus had the other six days of the week in which to perform his healing. We need to preserve the sanctity of the law of life breaks down into anarchy — people doing whatever they want, when they want because it suits them.

What angers Jesus in this instance, is not that the Pharisees are being reasonable, but that they

are being reasonable enough. Two thousand years later and we still tend to make the same mistake — concentrating on the rules, without considering the purpose behind all this.

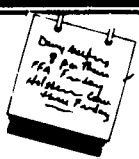
Yes, God gave the people of Israel the sabbath. But the purpose was not to please or satisfy God, but to benefit his children: "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the withered hand. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees, saying: "Is it lawful on the sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" (3:4).

SANCTITY OF LIFE

It is amazing to me that so many people still don't understand the reason for rules and regulations. They are made for our benefit — our highest benefit, that is — not to satisfy God. When God says "thou shalt not," his purpose is not to require our obedience, but to get us to behave in a way that is best for our own ultimate wellbeing — keeping in mind that our personal wellbeing is intricately interwoven with the wellbeing of everyone else. When he commands, "thou shalt not commit adultery," it is not because he simply has a rule against it, but he has a rule against it because adultery tends to break down the normal fiber of life and that ultimately affects everyone. When he tells us not to cover, it is not because our covetousness annoys him, but because we are the ones who are most injured by it. So, if it is bad for humanity, there is a commandment against it. If it is not harmful to us, then there is no legitimate commandment against it. The sanctity of law is important only when law preserves the sanctity of life.

I'm not saying that we always have to understand when God calls us to obey him, but usually, if we are wondering whether God commands it or not, we can determine the answer by asking: this thing we are to do or not to do, is it good for all of us, or not good?

Farm Calendar



Saturday, March 7

Regional Christmas Tree Seminar and Trade Show, Rustic Lodge, Indiana, 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Fourth Toastmasters' Meeting, Farm and Home Center, 8:30 a.m.

AQHA Horse Clinic, Penn State University.

Sunday, March 8

Philadelphia Flower Show, Philadelphia Civic Center, thru March 15.

Maple Magic, Greenville.

Maple Sugaring Festival, Hashawha Environmental Center, Westminster, Md., 12 p.m.-5 p.m.

Monday, March 9

Poultry Management and Health Seminar, Kreider's Dairy Farm Restaurant, Manheim, noon.

Adams Co. Farmers Assn., Mt. Joy Church Parish House, 6:30 p.m.

Cumberland County 4-H Dairy Club Banquet, Penn Township Fire Hall, Huntsdale, 7 p.m.

Octorara Young Farmers Assn. awards dinner, West Fallowfield Christian School, 6:45 p.m.

Special 4-CORE CREDIT Meeting, County Administration Building, Chambersburg, 7

p.m.-9:15 p.m.

Farmland Preservation Meeting, Lehigh County Ag Center, Allentown, 7:30 p.m.

"Grazing to Reduce Costs," Adams County Extension Office, 10 a.m.-Noon. (Turn to Page A31)

Farm Forum

Editor,

I applaud your Feb. 29, 1992 Lancaster Farming Opinion. Agriculture does need to be a vital part of Pa.'s public school curriculums. But I'm afraid that the State Board of Education will most likely lend a deaf ear to the farming communities legitimate concerns. I traveled to Harrisburg on Feb. 27th for the meeting concerning proposed changes in chapters 3, 5 and 6 of the new state regulations. Many concerned citizens, parents and grandparents made the trip from all parts of the state, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Erie to name a few. Probably well over 200 of us showed up but only a small room which seated 80 people was provided. Even though a larger room which could have

accommodated us was available the meeting site was not moved. A PA system was set up in the hallway for the overflow to listen in on the proceedings. It was obvious by the board members attitudes and lack of willingness to answer questions of legitimate concerns that they had all ready decided and the meeting was a mere formality. The proposed "learning outcomes" of the regulations will not only leave PA's children woefully ignorant as to the importance of agriculture to our state and nation but also of our history, language, sciences, and literature and culture. Academics are being replaced by values clarification, psychological manipulation and "politically correct" attitudes and

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