

# Farm Forum

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provide greater coverage is available?

Skeptics say that such a plan is risky because it has never been tried before, but in the 1930's Blue Cross and Blue Shield was basically the only health insurance company in the U.S. They negotiated with doctors and hospitals for reasonable fees and offered good coverage for their insureds.

It was only after commercial insurance companies started skimming off the low risk people by offering lower rates that the role of insurance companies began making a profit instead of serving people. A single payer system has worked in the United States before and it can work again.

Even our neighbors to the north have enjoyed the benefits of a single payer system for almost 20 years. Despite current rhetoric, Canadians overwhelmingly support their single payer plan. While we may not want to duplicate every aspect of Canada's system, surely we can take the most successful elements and blend them into a single payer system that is uniquely American.

Our leaders and politicians need to hear the voice of the people they represent. The people are tired of outrageous medical costs, limited accessibility and inadequate or unavailable insurance coverage. It is time for a change.

Robert C. Junk Jr.,  
President  
PA Farmers Union

**Editor:**

On November 22, 1992 Dairy farmers lost a golden chance to correct many of the inequities they were experiencing. This was the day the special Leahy Dairy Bill went down to defeat on a 51-47 vote.

It was my feeling that after many people had a chance to heal their wounds during the winter of 91-92 then we would see an avalanche of efforts being put forth to attack the inadequate prices being paid to area dairy farmers.

Several dairy farmers have told me, during meetings they have attended involving different organizations there is no chance of having any dairy legislation passed during 1992.

Some of the excuses rendered at these meetings seem to center around such things as -- 1. It's an election year. 2. Prices are higher than last year. 3. No one in Washington wants to do anything. 4. Dairy farmers aren't hurting that much.

After evaluating these excuses, officials of Pro Ag made two trips to Washington D.C. in an attempt to determine what was really

going on, and you know, I wasn't really surprised as to what I heard.

1. Senator Leahy's staff tells me they are receiving very little pressure to do anything on dairy.

2. Senator Wofford and Senator Specter's staff told me the same as Senator Leahy's people did.

3. Two Pennsylvania state organizations had recently made trips to Washington. These trips are usually made to give their members a chance to meet with members of Congress and relate some of their key concerns to the Congressmen.

I asked the staff of the two Pennsylvania Senators the same question. How much concern was exhibited by these organizations regarding dairy. The answer was negatory.

Over and over again dairy farmers are accused of being apathetic towards their own problems. Some people say dairy farmers won't agree on anything. I'm wondering if the finger isn't being pointed in the wrong direction.

I've been on over 800 dairy farms during the last year, and believe me, these dairy farmers want some major changes.

If dairy farmers are showing any signs being apathetic, it's only because they feel their case is hopeless.

Recently I signed Mr. and Mrs. Richard Klim of Kingsley, Pa., as members of Pro Ag. During our conversation Rich said, "You know during the 70's and the early 50's, we were able to replace our

equipment on a regular basis, but how much of our equipment is becoming obsolete, and I don't know how we can replace it." Rich continued his conversation by saying, "Don't these people realize that if dairy farmers receive an adequate price for their milk, than the money is spent on the local level, and this plays a major roll in revitalizing our rural economy."

Pro Ag is going to support and work with the American Dairy Farmers Campaign in an effort to help unite more dairy farmers behind a unified effort to correct the dairy crisis. Obviously farmers are going to experience a late spring and all the work will be piling up on us. However we are going to start sponsoring more meetings (as many farmers are requesting) in an attempt to unite dairy farmers.

March's blend price in order #2 has been announced at \$11.88 per cwt. This is an improvement over last years \$10.90. However the \$11.88 doesn't look so good when you realize the price in 1980 was \$12.08; 1981 was \$13.20; and 1982 was \$13.02.

These prices indicate why Rich Klim and many other dairy farmers are frustrated and bewildered.

When 1992 pay prices to dairy farmers are lower than prices paid 1980-81-82, and when reliable figures indicate the average cost

of producing milk today is around \$14.50 per cwt, then Pro Ag needs no further reasons as to why, one more time we're going to start shaking the bushes.

Arden Tewksbury  
Pro Ag

**Editor:**

Why does Maryland and the Northeast need a 30 member task force to study the declining status of the Dairy Industry?? It just doesn't take thirty people to spell "Money."

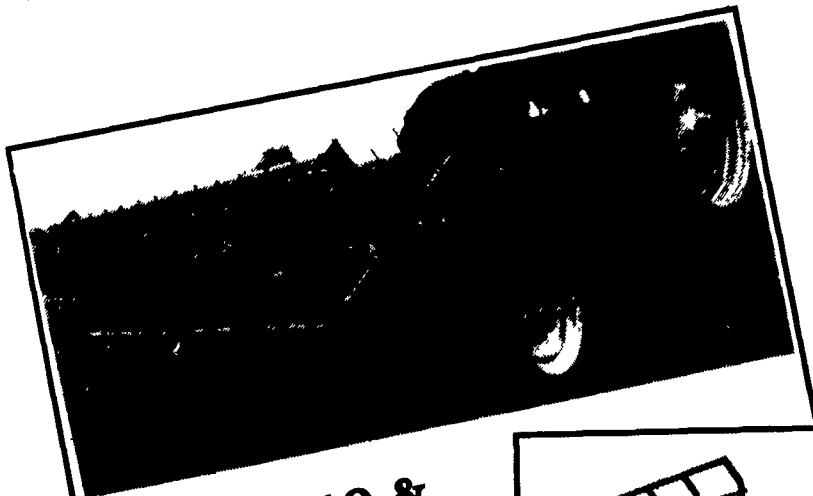
Why should the young take on a "Million Dollar Debt"? A 100 hour work week for a 11:88 Base Price minus 80 cents a cwt. for hauling and stop charges - milk production - co-op dues and government CCC deductions? They might better own a restaurant. Yesterday I paid 80 cents for an 8 oz. glass of milk. 100 lbs. of milk makes 200 servings at 80 cents or 160 dollars per cwt. Think about 20 cwt in a ton or 4000 servings at 80 cents with a price tag of 3,200 dollars per ton. Farmers share is 237.60 dollars minus deducts per ton, just doesn't pay the bills or replace 25 yr. old worn out equipment.

It's far too late for a study task force. You see America's Golden Goose turned silver and retired.

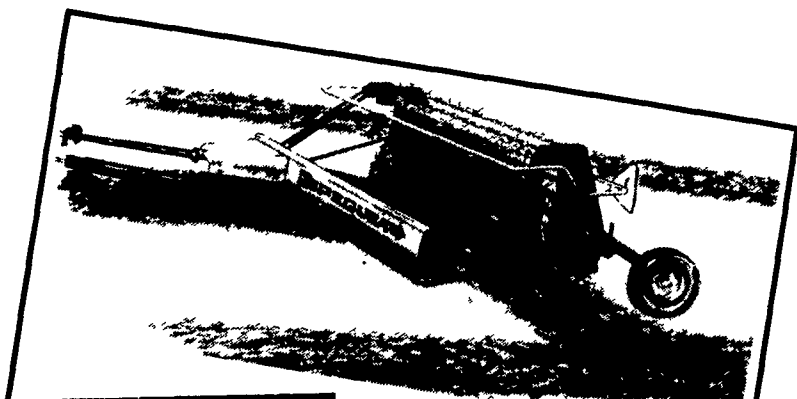
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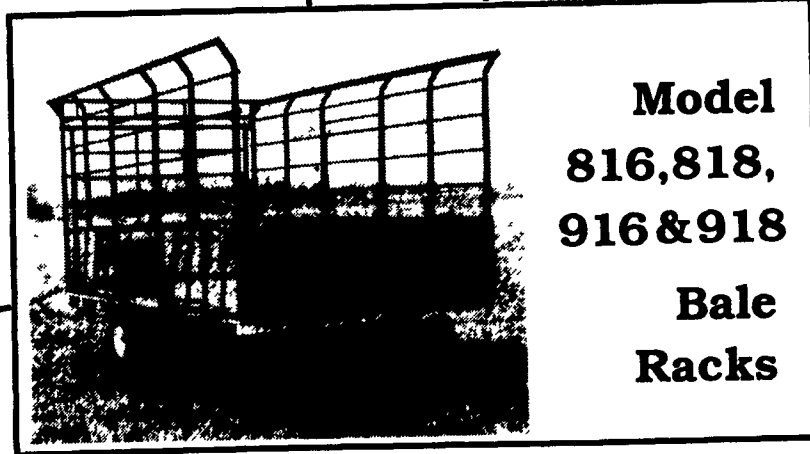
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