

On Being a Farm Wife
(and other hazards)
Joyce Bupp



legislation. These were public hearings, widely covered by the press. Working from the basis of those hearings, legislators developed the dairy proposals recently voted out of the House Agricultural Committee. This is hardly a secretive process.

Yes, the goal of that legislation is to modestly increase the price of raw milk. Dairy producers today are receiving comparatively less for raw milk shipped from their farms than they did a decade ago. Such depressed income levels, compared to the inflation which has steadily increased prices of every input, are creating a severe financial crunch to our nation's dairy farm families.

Your report projected an increase per gallon of milk to consumer of 40 cents. Industry estimates the per gallon increase under the proposed dairy legislation to be about 9 cents. Adjusted for inflation, consumers are already paying less for a gallon of milk today than they were in the 1950s. Raw milk price has traditionally had little effect on the retail price, since the farm price is only about one-third of checkout cost of a gallon of milk.

Meanwhile, the cost of the dairy program to America's taxpayers

has dropped from \$2.5 billion in 1983 to \$4 million in 1995; dairy farmers actually pick up most of the tab through assessments on every pound of milk they sell. But, farm support programs are a form of hunger insurance for the consuming public. Today, there are virtually no stocks of dairy commodities on hand in government storage, should some disaster strike.

Now, about those "additives." The proposed legislation would simply increase the minimum standards of solids-not-fat in milk — the nutritious but NOT FAT things like protein, calcium and minerals — to standards that California consumers have enjoyed for many years. California milk is consistently rated superior in taste tests. And, milk fortified with

higher solids-not-fat is not only better tasting, it's more nutritious. Milk is not manufactured in the back of supermarket dairy shelves. It can only be produced by the minor miracle that is the dairy cow. If you and all consumers are to have ready supplies of milk in your refrigerators, dairy producers must be able to earn a financial return that enables us to maintain our herds and our farms.

Mr. Rather, your dependability, your believability, your credibility has always seemed above reproach. We challenge you to restore our confidence in your reporting with an airing not just the retailers' side, but also the producers' side of this important public issue. Sincerely yours . . . etc.

And sincerely irritated about irresponsible, distorted reporting.

lion farmers — those who sell \$10,000 or more worth of agriculture goods per year — not only feed our nation of billions, but feed billions more around the world.

What a disappointment that a recent CBS news report by you has done the American dairy farmer a serious disservice. That report, aired February 2, charged that dairy farmers had secretly conspired to develop legislation that would cost American consumers some \$2.5 billion dollars and put "additives" in milk.

During the past year, agriculture and food industry representatives testified at Congressional hearings held around the country toward developing new farm

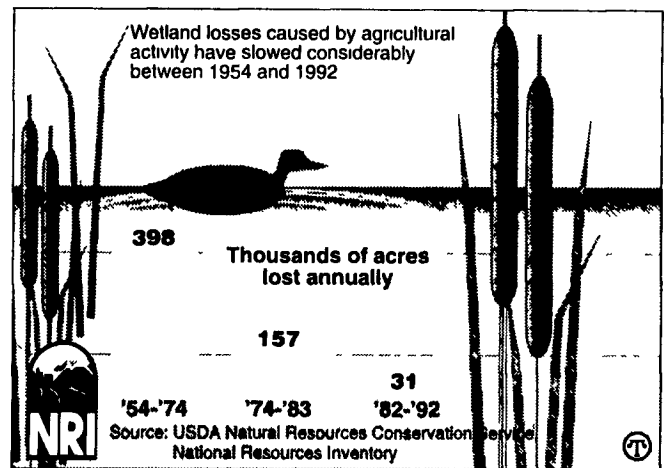
After a recent CBS news broadcast, which infuriated dairy farmers across the country, some of us have felt the need to respond. I'd like to share with you the following letter I wrote to anchorman Dan Rather, who aired the piece on proposed dairy legislation.

(I revised this several times, cleaning up my initial, gut-level-emotion response!)

Have you ever been hungry? Few Americans in positions of leadership and public-opinion setting have likely experienced the pangs of a really empty stomach.

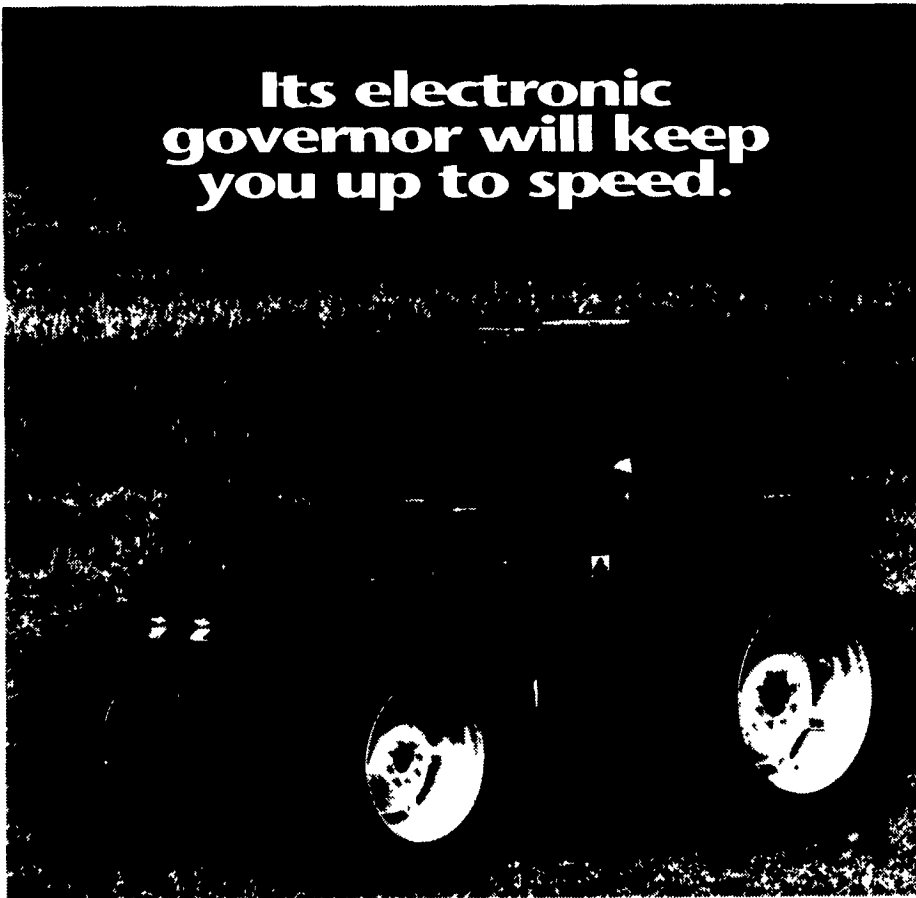
Americans are the best and most inexpensively-fed people on earth. That's because American farmers have consistently grown more efficient. Less than one mil-

Agricultural Wetlands Loss Is Down



(NAPS)—Wetland loss due to agriculture has slowed down dramatically during the last forty years. Although wetland losses due to agriculture continued during the 1980s, they did so at a much slower pace than in previous years. Losses caused by agriculture during the 1982-92 period were about 31,000 acres a year—around one-fifth the annual wetland losses estimated by the Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service for 1974-83, and less than ten percent of the annual losses estimated for 1954-1974. Between 1982-92, wetland losses due to nonagricultural activities outpaced those caused by agriculture.

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