



OPINION

Sacrifices On The Altar Of Political Expediency

Amid a lot of talk about urban development running over America's farmland, a new study by Reason Public Policy Institute (RPPI) reveals that farmland loss rates often have more to do with governmental policies than urban sprawl.

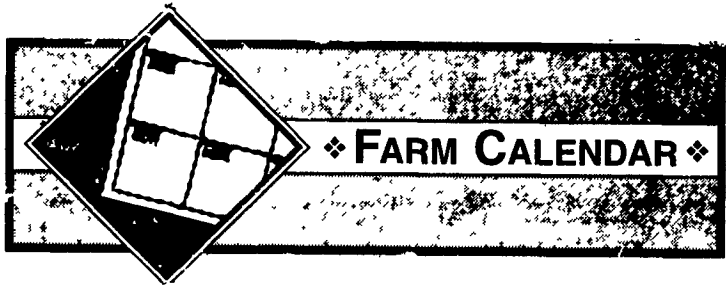
Many governmental policies make farmland preservation more problematic and economic survival on the farm more difficult. While much farmland has been developed especially in places like Southeast Pennsylvania, other lost farmland has been converted to other "quality of life" uses such as parks, recreational land, pastureland, and forests. Nationally, according to RPPI, of the total decline in cropland between 1949 and 1992, less than 25% can be attributed to urbanization. The remaining 75% were lost due to changes in farming population and income.

RPPI argues that a number of poorly designed governmental policies actually fuel the inefficient conversion of farmland. Some of these policies include:

- Estate taxes which can prevent farming families from keeping their land after the death of a parent;
- business-specific subsidies and tax-incentive programs which distort market prices; and
- one-size-fits-all zoning rules that discourages flexible development and increases the pressure to develop outward, often at the expense of farmland.

Locally, Lancaster County has become a model for preserving open space and farmland without the intrusive restrictions on property rights. The creation of private land trusts and conservation easements encourages the orderly transfer of land from one generation to the next.

But we still believe the real salvation of farmland can come only if and when farming is profitable to the operator of the farm. Until this profitability is evident on the average farm, all other remedies are simply sacrifices on the altar of political expediency.



Saturday, January 29

Sunday, January 30
4-H Day With the Lady Lions, Bryce Jordan Center, University Park, 2 p.m.

Monday, January 31
N.Y. State Farmers' Direct Marketing Conference, Four Points Hotel, Rochester, N.Y., thru Feb. 2.

Tioga County Dairy Day, Tioga Fairgrounds, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

Turfgrass Management For Professionals, Berks County Ag Center, Leesport, also Feb. 2, 3, and 4.

Beef Evaluation Meeting, Bernville Grange, 5:30 p.m. meal, 6:45 p.m. program.

Tuesday, February 1
Dairy Houses, Equipment Systems Conference, Radisson Penn Harris Hotel and Convention Center, Camp Hill, thru Feb. 3.

Decisions 2000-Agricultural Marketing Seminar, Days Inn, Allentown.

Crop Meeting Series, Planter Setup and Maintenance, George V. Seiple And Son, Easton, 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Lancaster County Cattle Feeder's Day, Lancaster Farm and Home Center, Lancaster, 8:30 a.m.-3:10 p.m.

Issues In Poultry Production For the New Millennium, East Hanover Township Municipal Building, Shellsville, 10:30

a.m.-1:30 p.m., also Gratz Fire Hall, Gratz, 6 p.m.-9 p.m. Managing Market Risk, Clarion County Extension Office, Shipperville, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Beaver County Crops Day, Big Knob Grange, 9:30 a.m.-3:15 p.m.

Wednesday, February 2
Ag Small Business Institute, Penn State Fruit Research and Extension Center, Biglerville, 6:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m., also Feb. 9, 16, and 23. Lebanon County Soybean School, Lebanon Valley Ag Center, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

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Editor,

I am tired of hearing the same one-sided stories over and over again relating to the dairy business.

The first is efficiency. Efficiency is good, necessary and evident. The blend price for order 2 in January 1979 was \$11.49 per hundred weight. According to the Consumer Price Index, \$11.49 in January 1979 would



Now Is The Time

By John Schwartz

Lancaster County Agricultural Agent

To Look At Corn Trivia Facts

Today's modern corn farmer can produce a bushel of corn with less than two minutes of labor using tractors and other equipment, reports Robert Anderson, Lancaster County Extension Agronomy Agent. According to the Corn Book published in 1956, early settlers spent 10 to 12 hours to produce each bushel of corn.

In 1904, The Book of Corn, reported one man can easily husk 50 to 55 bushels of corn a day. To put some of these numbers into perspective, in 1998 Lancaster County farmers grew 183,000 acres of corn with an average yield of 133 bushels per acre or about 24.339 million bushels. Using the old methods it would take 268 million hours of labor to produce this corn. If a man works 2,000 hours per year, it would take 134,000 man years to grow and harvest the corn crop. However, with modern technology and equipment, it takes less than 370 man years of work to produce the crop. That is 133,630 man years of labor saved with modern technology.

The number of workers required just to husk the 1998 corn crop between October and end of December using 1904 methods would be 5,642 people. Today it takes about 4 hours to grow and harvest 1 acre of corn according to Penn State Agronomy Guide.

To Consider These Thoughts
Herb Jordan, retired Poultry Scientist, developed the following list of characteristics of successful farmers based on field observations. These farmers: List all tasks to do daily in priority on a pad and then use it. Convert fresh, wet manure to high quality dry manure to replace commercial fertilizer on fields. Hire help selectively. Give verbal, written or skill tests. Hire

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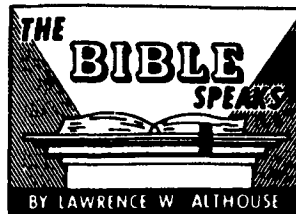
skillful, talented and genuine people who like to work. Build a team of people, animals, tools and machines. Choose reliable vendors, employees, buyers and repairmen. Avoid errors in aesthetics like flies, obnoxious odors, dust, toxic gases and noise. Avoid excessive payments on interest on debt, insurance premiums and taxes. Sort out when buying what you want, need or have to have. Shepherd each farm enterprise to pay its own way.

To Check on Social Security Benefits

At least once every three years you should check on your benefits estimate from Social Security, according to Dr. Robert Thee, Multi-County Extension

Financial Management Agent. To do this, get a Request for Earnings and Benefit Estimate Statement form from the Social Security Administration. When you receive your estimate, look it over to see if their record of your earnings matches yours. If not, now is the time to get it corrected rather than after you retire. With millions of accounts, mistakes can happen. One person reported his earnings were credited to his twin brother. Because he found out about it early, it was easily corrected.

Feather Prof.'s Footnote: "What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."



BEWARE OF THE EVIL EYE!

January 30, 2000

Background Scripture: Matthew 19:16 through 20:16.
Devotional Reading: Matthew 20:20-28.

The parable of the laborers in the vineyard is one of those gospel passages that has perplexed some and agitated others. Some people have seized upon it to claim that it sanctions an employer doing whatever he wants with his property. They find it comforting for him to be saying: "Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?" It is easy to see why this should become the favorite Bible verse for some people.

Others are equally incensed because it purportedly undercuts the premise of equal pay for equal work. Women and ethnic workers already feel that they are victims of wage discrimination and are shocked that Jesus would tell a story that appears to justify the entrepreneur's right to pay anyone what he or she wishes.

The problem, however, is not with the parable but with the interpretation that people have placed upon it. When I was a boy I loved to put together picture puzzles, but sometimes I tried to force pieces into spaces where they did not quite fit. People do that with the Bible, too, forcing interpretations where they just don't fit

A Heavenly Household

Jesus was not talking about an earthly householder, but a heavenly one. In our society much is based upon merit—being paid on the basis of productivity,

time and effort. From that standpoint, the parable would appear to be unjust, someone getting the same pay for a lot less time and effort. But when we come to God's salvation, grace, not merit, is the basis. In the kingdom of God we are not claiming just wages but God's mercy. God forbid that he should give us what we have coming to us!

We may think that it is unjust for God to give salvation to the person who, after a lifetime of godlessness, becomes "converted" at the last minute. According to human judgment, it is unjust. That's the way the

brother of the Prodigal Son felt. He had stayed home and worked hard for his father, while his brother went off into the far country and squandered his inheritance in licentious living. Now, however, the Prodigal Son returns and his father throws a party for him in celebration. Where's the justice in that?

Things Too Wonderful

It was much the same way with Job. He is best known to us as a man of great patience and he was—up to a point. After a while, however, Job became very impatient and he challenges God to come and explain himself. When God appears he responds in a way Job had not anticipated: "Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you and you shall declare to me. Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me if you have understanding." God's answer to Job and to us is that the divine mind cannot be comprehended by mere mortals and Job confesses: "Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know." So, the grace of God is often too divine for humans to comprehend.

Unfortunately, we who are totally dependent upon God's grace too often become resentful when others are its beneficiaries. As the George Arthur Buttrick asks, "Why did the earlier workers not rejoice that the man who had waited long in the market place was now at peace, with money to take home to his family? Why did not the elder brother rejoice that the prodigal was now restored, set free from the rags and hunger of the far country? If you and I are so dependent upon God's grace, why do we not rejoice when someone else finds that same mercy?"

The RSV renders Matthew 20:15: "Or do you begrudge me my generosity?" A variant reading of this same verse is found in a footnote: "Or is your eye evil because I am good?" The evil eye of which you need to beware is the resentful, begrudging look that comes from your own eye!

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