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graded to four-letter-word status by a majority of those in power. Both major political parties have bowed before the sacred cow of free trade and all recent administrations have circled the globe, shamelessly sacrificing American jobs and squandering taxpayer money in exchange for political favors.

The Bush administration now plans to pursue a free-trade agreement with Australia and New Zealand to reward them for supporting the administration in its effort against Iraq. Thousands of U.S. dairy farmers and cattle growers would be sacrificed in this deal. Evidently this is what Bush administration officials really meant when they declared

that Trade Promotion Authority was essential in the war on terror.

What has the true cost been? Cheap toys, trinkets, parts and supplies become costly when they do not last, not to mention the frustration that they cause and the landfill space that they take up. Open borders have resulted in an illegal immigration nightmare, increased vulnerability to terrorism, and increased drug trafficking. The controversial dairy programs cost taxpayers billions of dollars in spite of the fact that domestic production has lagged behind consumption for years.

Even so, farm milk prices are at 1979 levels. Billions of consumer dollars have poured into China, making possible a huge military buildup in that country. In fact, when a U.S. spy plane

was forced to land on Chinese soil and was dismantled by the Chinese, the U.S. simply looked on in pathetic impotence because we have become dependant on the Chinese for a great host of consumer goods.

Chapter 11 of NAFTA makes a mockery of national sovereignty, democratic self-determination, and due process. The World Trade Organization operates in secret and is controlled by people who have no public accountability, yet our leaders bow before them in unholy reverence.

As unsettling as this is, perhaps nothing hits closer to home than the impact of globalism on agriculture. In 1973, the "Agricultural Trade and the Proposed Round of Multilateral Negotiations" outlined a plan to remove tariffs and subsidies from agricultural products. The goal was to force farmers into greater efficiency through global agricultural trade. The anticipated benefit would be lower food cost, more money for consumer goods, and increased economic growth.

Farmers around the world are reeling from the results of these

trade policies which have resulted in depressed farm prices, while consumers pay more and more for lower quality food. The GAO report, "Food Safety-Federal Efforts to Ensure the Safety of Imported Foods are Inconsistent and Unreliable," estimated the cost of food born illnesses to be between \$6.6 and \$37 billion dollars annually. Millions of tons of food pour into the U.S. every year. Much of this is produced under low or nonexistent sanitary standards or contaminated with pesticides or herbicides that have long since been banned in the U.S. or that were never legal here. Very little is inspected, and even the inspections that do take place are often inadequate and ineffective.

How can we put a price tag on the loss of rural infrastructure? A once prosperous and robust farm economy has become weak and anemic, kept on life support by costly government subsidies, which only repay a fraction of what is stolen by consolidated agribusiness facilitated by foolish and damaging trade policy. Good hard working and knowledgeable


farmers are being lost. Farm families are in despair and stressed to the max. A whole generation of future farmers has no incentive to pursue a career in production agriculture.

All this in spite of nearly one billion people around the world that go to bed hungry every night.

Elected officials have failed the American people miserably by allowing this foolishness to go on without even the slightest protest. Land grant universities have contributed to the farmers' demise by withholding the truth and by offering bad advice.

We are sliding down a slippery slope. American agriculture is in a state of collapse. If America wishes to preserve an adequate supply of domestically produced food, we must act quickly and decisively to free ourselves from the snare of global entanglement. The family farm system of agriculture that has served our nation so well must be preserved. The cost of failing to do so will be staggering indeed.

Gerald Carlin, dairy farmer  
Meshoppen




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nd the angel said,  
"I bring you good tidings of great joy... Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

Luke 2:10-11

May the peace and joy of this holiday season be in your heart now and throughout the coming year.

Rejoice with us as we celebrate the miracle of that night so long ago and keep close to your heart the wonders of His birth.

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Editor:

Consumers are paying more for dairy products and dairy farmers' net income is down 50 percent, yet certain dairy processors are earning record profits. This would lead one to wonder, "Just who is getting milked?"

Dean Foods, the largest fluid milk processor in the country, recently announced record earnings for 2002. The processor attributed the increased earnings to reduced raw milk costs, the synergy of mergers, and the success of its specialty lines.

Meanwhile, at least two ice cream makers are admittedly skimping on the amount of ice cream in a half-gallon container and scooping up profits from the sales of new 1.75-quart containers, for which they are charging the same price as the conventional two-quart containers. Processors and retailers cite rising ingredient costs for their actions. The opposite is true.

The costs for butterfat and nonfat solids, the main dairy ingredients in ice cream, have dropped by one-third since January 2002. Prices paid to farmers for their milk have dropped more than 50 cents a gallon in some parts of the country since that time. Nationally, U.S. dairy farmers will receive \$4 billion less in milk receipts this year than last.

At the same time, the administration is proposing additional changes in dairy programs that would cost dairy farmers as much as \$1 billion in lost income. Additionally, the U.S. is seeking to open borders even further to cheap dairy substitutes from Australia and New Zealand, further flooding the U.S. market.

Consequently, dairy farmers are receiving the lowest prices for their products since 1979 and are continuing to go out of business at a record pace. Unfortunately, economic projections predict that dairy prices paid to farmers have little, if any, chance of recovery in the coming months.

Manufacturers, on the other hand, are paying only 50 cents for the dairy ingredients used in a one-half gallon of ice cream. The retail price of that same ice cream is about \$5. And milk prices paid by consumers have held steady or increased. Recent surveys have shown that certain dairy processors and supermarket chains may be earning more than \$1 a gallon in profits.

Dairy farmers are not against processors and retailers having a successful year. However, a

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