

# The Farm Report — The Passage Of The "No-Netcost" Tobacco Program

By John Sledge  
President

**N.C. Farm Bureau Federation**  
The passage of the "no-net-cost" tobacco program last year was the latest evidence of growers' determination to continue a workable tobacco program that has served them well for many years.

This legislation reflected a high degree of unity among our Congressional delegation and all tobacco growers who worked to enact legislation that accomplished the Congressional mandate for a no-net-cost program. It represented a progressive and constructive effort to answer the critics of the program, while leaving the basic provisions of the program intact.

The new law was the result of many agonizing sessions and touch-and-go negotiations with congressional leaders. Luckily, the program emerged intact.

Tobacco growers, feeling they had made the necessary sacrifice to stabilize price supports, and the commitments to pay their own way, optimistically looked forward to producing another crop that they anticipated would be purchased by the buying companies. Unfortunately, the buying companies did not wholeheartedly respond by meeting the growers half-way in making the program - that has served both parties equally well in the past - a continued shining example for the future.

Grower optimism turned to disappointment, and as a result we are today hearing many diverse voices with some calling for hasty legislative changes to apply to the 1983 crop.

Several points must be made relative to seeking legislative changes in the tobacco program, now or in the future.

First, it is imperative that we keep the integrity of the tobacco program. It has served us well. Growers have always sought changes when they were deemed necessary, but they have always worked to preserve the basic principles of the program. We must never compromise on this.

Second, we must achieve a consensus before seeking any legislative changes. We have never seen a time when so many fragmented voices fill the airways and newspapers with emotional rhetoric that

eliminates any suggested consensus. We wonder if at least some of those voices are not echoing those who really care very little about preserving the tobacco program.

Third, when we consider the different types of tobacco grown, with their own unique problems, it is even more urgent that we speak with one voice when we do go to Congress for changes.

Fourth, it is essential that any changes be brought about in a nonpartisan manner; this is why we have been successful in obtaining changes in the past. The success of any future change will also hinge on the handling of tobacco issues in this same nonpartisan way.

In addition to the many fragmented voices that must be weighed before seeking legislative changes, there are other considerations. For example, tobacco growers, along with others who are dependent upon this commodity, are becoming alarmed over the increasing tax

burdens heaped upon it. The question is: If the program is now opened up to scrutiny under the national spotlight, will those who see tobacco as a prime target for additional taxes move again to add additional taxes?

The smoking and health issue continues to be on the front burner. Although that issue is completely unrelated to the current tobacco program, there are those who seem to believe that the way to solve the smoking-health issue would be to kill the tobacco program. Can we risk exposing the program to that kind of attack at this time?

The Board of Directors of the North Carolina Farm Bureau recently reaffirmed the policy position of more than 800 voting delegates to the state Farm Bureau convention last December when they recommended continuation of the no-net-cost tobacco program in 1983 without changes.

The action of the voting delegates and the Board of

Directors is not simply an "opinion", nor is it the result of hastily of emotional action, but represents the voices of reality as it exists today.

The voice of reality is also the firm belief of many in the

tobacco industry and government, who have demonstrated in the past they have the best interests of the grower at heart.

Despite the diverse voices, there is one thing on which all

can agree: tobacco is in trouble. Unfortunately, there is no easy or simple answers. We do know that this is a time for unity, a time for level-headedness and a steady hand. Tobacco is too impor-

tant to North Carolina's growers and to the total economy of the state to act otherwise.

We are not saying that legislative changes should be ruled out altogether. We are

saying that if legislative changes are sought in 1983 we might be "going for broke". We believe the tobacco program is too important to the welfare of too many people to take that risk at this time.

## First In 1983 Of Tetanus

Dr. J. N. MacCormack, head of the N.C. Department of Human Resources' Communicable Disease Control Branch recently announced North Carolina's first reported case of tetanus 1983 and urged the state's older citizens to make sure they are properly immunized against the disease. The reported victim was a 79-year-old Pasquotank County man who contacted tetanus after he cut his hand on a fence post.

Tetanus, also known as lockjaw, occurs when tetanus germs enter an open wound, usually a puncture, and cause the body's muscles to go into spasms and then lock.

MacCormack said that the average age of tetanus patients has increased from 15 years old in 1952, to 80 years old in 1980. "This shows that our elderly citizens are not keeping up with their tetanus shots," he said. "This is of particular importance because older people and newborn infants are less likely to survive the disease."

Tetanus immunization for adults includes an initial series of three shots followed by a booster shot every ten years. Most children in the state now receive their tetanus vaccination along

with other basic immunizations. In recent years there have been no reported case of tetanus involving children.

He pointed out that the relative cost for a tetanus vaccination is very small compared to actual treatment, which averages about \$10,000 per patient.

"I strongly encourage all North Carolinians, particularly our older citizens, to check their immunization records to be sure they have been properly vaccinated against tetanus. Parents should also check their children's records and see that they receive their booster shots. It's very rare to find tetanus in someone who has had the basic immunization series," Dr. MacCormack concluded.

Citizens can obtain more information about tetanus immunization by contacting their family doctor or local health department.

**John Parker**  
On Dean's List

RALEIGH—John W. Parker of Edenton has been added to the Dean's List at N.C. State University. He is an agronomy major and the son of Mr. & Mrs. Jack Parker, Morgan Park.

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