

Worse Than We Thought

Farmers as a class seldom pay much attention to commodity and industrial averages, except where their products are directly concerned. Just now they all realize that 1948 income will be off—because of the tobacco cut, in North Carolina at least—but few of them are completely aware of the deteriorating farm economic situation.

With a 28 per cent cut in tobacco acreage, farmers of this section must plant more cotton, wheat, and corn, and grow more meat if they are to maintain any semblance of their present standard of living. But what do market prices for these agricultural products promise them. Considerably less than a month ago!

Grains have fallen off 70 cents a bushel since January 20, and corn has dropped 65 cents. Cotton (all grades) has dropped an average of three and a half cents per pound in the same 30-day period. Cottonseed meal has dropped \$17.00 a ton, and peanut oil is off 6 cents a pound (drops of 17 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively).

Nor can any better be seen in beef and hog prices. Steers are down from \$34.00 a hundred to \$29.00, and hogs are now selling at \$24.65, as compared with \$34.00 a month ago.

If this matter were just one of universal dropping prices, the outlook would not be so dark for Tar Heel farmers. Certainly local housewives welcome lower meat and staple prices, but dependent on farm economy as is our local town economy, local housewives can no longer count on as much money with which to pay for staples—and the situation is much worse for the farm families.

For example, while prices of farm products fell around 20 per cent, steel from which farm implements are made remained at exactly the same price—\$45.00 a ton—for the last thirty days! Raw aluminum for manufacture of roofing stayed at 15 cents a pound from January 20 to February 20. Tin for galvanized roofing remained at exactly 94 cents a pound for the same period of time.

Finished products for the farmer are even worse, for the price has risen on many implements. One large tractor manufacturer has just announced a straight 10 per cent increase, and prospects are no better for trucks or farm engines; for automotive unions have declared their intention of seeking a wage increase in the face of declining food and textile prices.

Coal and oil for curing tobacco will be higher—how much higher will be determined by John L. Lewis and the United Mine Workers. Lumber is actually higher than a month ago, since the local lumber situation is so fluid that the cold weather of the past month, when trucks could not get into the woods, has raised its price.

For rural North Carolina, at least, the present economic situation is not merely one of readjustment, as National industrialists and governmental officials have alike declared. The situation calls for use of the extraordinary powers held by the President and the Secretary of Agriculture.

More than that, it calls for pressure to be exerted by our state farm organizations in order that action may be taken before it is too late. It calls for action by Southern congressmen to insure that the Marshall Plan utilizes sufficient tobacco to keep a fair price for at least that one commodity through this period of decline.

So, in a measure, it is up to us. We can use our influence now, or draw in our belts and wait for the crash.

A Letter from Philip Bunn

A letter written by Philip R. Bunn of the Hopkins Chapel community on behalf of farmers in general and the Hopkins Chapel people in particular is published in the *Record* this week.

A good many of us have wondered at the expenditure of several hundred thousand dollars on the magnificent new approach to Raleigh from the east, while highway employees have labored with inadequate equipment to keep dirt roads passable.

We showed the letter to a farmer friend before publishing it, and his comment was, "I've been thinking that same thing and Phil Bunn has said for me!"

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This, That and the Other

By Mrs. Theo. B. Davis

It wasn't a Wakelon pupil, but an eighth grader in another school who wrote on a test "the planets are kept in their orbits by the gravitational pull of the sun and obstetrical forces." And the teacher's resigned comment is "Just further proof that 'It's love that makes the world go 'round.'"

No, I most positively did not make that up as a Valetine motif for this column.

One good housekeeper that I know gets out enough glass jars to hold the lard she makes at hog-killing time. The jars are sterilized and heated, then are filled jars look after they after which they are sealed as in canning fruit, but no processing of jars is done.

You'd be surprised to see how attractive a row of these lard-filled jars look looks after they are cooled and stored. There is no worry over rancid lard during hot weather, as the contents of one jar can always be used before becoming strong in flavor.

A writer in *Harper's* magazine for February is afraid we are headed toward famine. He suggests as one way of averting this the growing of acorns for food. These are not to be the small nuts we have been accustomed to seeing, and which are the especial property of pigs and squirrels; but acorns from hybrid oak trees, grown for their nuts instead of

for timber.

Some of the new varieties are said to be as large as golf balls and less bitter than those we may have nibbled on through curiosity. They have also less tannin, which causes the bitterness. Anyway, there is a process which removes all the tannin. Then we have left oil and protein; or that's what the writer said. He, said, too, that oaks will grow and flourish where no grain can be raised.

It would be wonderful to be able to sit around and wait for your crop to grow, with no cultivation, no worry or work. However, from the tone of the article, the harvest would be so enormous you'd probably need to rest the remainder of the year. And you'd better get at your planting right away.

Years ago when I was substituting for a teacher at Wakelon School, we had a reading lesson from "The Courtship of Miles Standish." It included the part about John Alden's feeling mean over having let Priscilla know he loved her, and the line, "I have done wrong; I have sinned," he said to himself in abasement.

Wanting to be sure the class understood what they read, I asked Hugh Pippin "What is abasement?"

Hugh had not been paying much attention and was surprised at being called on, but he rallied quickly and answered, "It's a place dug out under a

house for a furnace or to store things in."

Somehow I have an idea that if I were today to ask owners of basements (or cellars, if you prefer that word) what they are, the almost unanimous reply would be that they are places under houses into which water rises or seeps or otherwise accumulates and has to be dipped out or drained out or pumped out.

If you have a basement and it is dry, please put on display a bit of its dust. This will make you the envy of your less fortunate neighbors.

This is not good basement territory; the land being too flat and sandy. Where I came from it takes lots of pressure to force water through red clay; and it hurries downhill too fast to bother with standing any where; so whoever wants a cellar has only to dig, with no necessity for concrete walls and floors, unless he really wants them. Down here we use precautions, seal-tite mixtures and what not, but there'll come a time when some one makes the tragic announcement, "There's water in the basement."

If you are planning to build a house, take my advice and save money, temper and time by building a utility room above ground instead of anything underground.

Or else, dig a deep ditch all around your home and lay drainage tile its entire length and most of its depth.

Kicking Each Other

Glory be! Seems like the weather man threw everything he had at us, but most of us survived pretty well. The good brown earth looks mighty good—and as it dries out, it looks better all the time.

I got my motorcycle out and kept it on its own two wheels for a while. It and me stayed together long enough for me to learn several things about those two-wheeled buzz-bombs. Listed in the order in which I found them out are a few things I learned:

1. Don't let a motorcycle fall over unless there are three good men to help set it back on its wheels. Mine flopped over and it took two days to rest up from trying to set it up alone. I grunted and groaned, but it took real man power to right the thing.

2. They don't start immediately when you want them to. Fact is, sometimes they don't start at all. On Hillsboro Street in Raleigh I held up traffic for two blocks while I jumped up and

and down on the starting pedal. After I busted a couple of blood vessels, I found that the switch wasn't turned on. My right leg now measures a full inch larger than my left from the exercise it is getting.

3. They'll kick like a mule. So far my leg is skinned, two fillings in my teeth are loose, and the leather is skinned on my Sunday-best shoes because me and the motorcycle tried to see who could kick the other the hardest. The cycle won when it picked me off the ground and flipped me over the seat without half trying.

4. Although apparently designed for highway travel, a motorcycle has a great liking for ditches. Jack Potter was leading me a merry chase last Saturday, and I determined to catch him. So when he turned around in front of Wakelon School, I followed—part of the way, anyhow. But I hit a bump, skidded off the houlder, and plowed up the ditch in front of

the Riggsby Masseys. It took two of us to push the motorcycle out.

5. You can trust them just about as far as you can throw them, because if you do trust them, they'll throw you! Or so that's what the experienced riders tell me. Gordan Temple says that a person can't claim to be a motorcycle rider until he's been thrown at least three times. According to that requirement, Pat Farmer doesn't qualify. He says he hasn't been on one of the things since he was tossed and nearly trampled to death years ago.

That is just about the sum total of what I've learned. Lots of advice has come my way from lots of people. Most of it boils down to something like this: Stay off of motorcycles; you'll live that much longer.

But they're really fun. There's not much to worry about—except automobiles. Seems that most drivers think it's fun to try running a two-wheeled vehicle off

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Stores and Ideologies

It isn't often commented upon, but retail stores here and in the Soviet Union are an excellent example of the essential differences between free enterprise and government enterprise.

In Russia, for instance, there are various "classes" of stores. A few modern shops carry good stocks and go in for attractive displays and high standards of service. But these stores, under present policy in the workers' paradise, are open to only a relatively few top level people—important officials, high ranking officers, artists whose work is in favor with

the ruling clique, foreigners with diplomatic status, etc. The stores which the masses of the people can patronize are dreary and dirty, and carry only the barest of necessities and few of those. The worker has to deal in the black market to keep alive. There isn't, of course, any competition between stores—the state owns and runs them all, and the customer is always wrong.

By comparison, America has the finest retail system in the world. Every store is in direct competition with many others. Chains and independents, department

stores and super-markets, specialty shops and mail-order houses, are all out for the business. The customer is king, and every possible device is used to attract him—courteous service, lower price, interesting advertising, colorful displays, and so on. Anybody can buy wherever he pleases, and if he doesn't like one store he is free to take his money down the street. The average Russian just wouldn't believe the truth about American retailing—just as, living in his totalitarian darkness, he wouldn't believe what free enterprise achieves for all the people.