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Farmers still taking lumps from low grain prices

A depressed grain market, inflated operating costs and high interest rates are squeezing area farmers, and, in turn, our farm dependent economy, according to reports from Perquimans County grain dealers.

Partly due to the grain embargo against Russia, and partly due to other factors, cash prices on corn and soybeans are lower now than they were at harvest-time.

This means that farmers who held on to grain supplies in anticipation of the traditional rise in prices due to

scarcity, may have taken a bad gamble.

Broughton Dail of Hertford Supply, said that his company paid \$6.50 per bushel for soybeans on Nov. 19 (harvest-time). By March 19, that figure had slid to \$6.21 per bushel. Ned Nixon of J&N Supply in Winfall, said that his firm is paying some 10 percent less for corn and soybeans today than it was at harvest-time.

"It really looks dim," said Nixon of the current market. "The future market is really not too good either."

Dail said that a lot of far-

mers use stored grain sales to finance their spring planting, and to purchase supplies for the coming season.

The prices generally rise steadily after the harvest-time glut has been processed through the market. "Seven years out of ten you make money storing grain," Dail said.

But this year, their is an over-abundance of stored grain, creating a sluggish, even stagnant market. "The old law of economics most of the time prevails...supply and demand," said Jimmy Onley

of Towe-Pike Grain and Supply in Chappanoke.

So farmers are caught in a waiting game, sitting on grain supplies in hopes that prices will go up, said Dail, and this has slowed the local economy.

A combination of factors has created a weak export market and knocked the bottom out of grain prices.

"The grain market has been weak since the embargo," said Onley. "In the last two weeks the soybean and corn future's market on the fall crop have been going down also."

Onley said that representatives of Cargill and Continental Grain companies had speculated that recent weakness in the grain market had been caused by a drop in gold prices, a strengthened dollar, and a corresponding increase in grain prices on foreign markets.

The \$6.20 Towe-Pike was offering for soybeans last week was "the lowest beans have been in a long time," Onley said.

Another factor is the large South American soybean crop currently being harvested.

"Brazil had one of the best crops they've ever had," said Nixon. The United States, he said, also had an excellent season.

"U.S. farmers just grow too much grain for the U.S.," said Nixon. "They've got to have a big export market."

That market was partially snubbed by the grain embargo against the Soviets. "The grain embargo had a lot to do with it," Nixon said. "It really hurt prices."

Current low prices are even tougher on Perquimans County farmers because

many of them had a poor growing season last year.

Now credit is tightening, interest rates are soaring, and supplies, such as fertilizers and gasoline, are increasing drastically in price.

"Everything you buy is going up and what your selling is getting cheaper, said Nixon. "Farmers are going to be operating on a lot closer margin than they've been used to," he said.

Edgar Roberson of Albemarle Chemicals said the current state of the market is "depressing." Because of inflation, interest rates, and

recent wet weather, the farmer faces tough decisions on what to plant to get the return on his money next fall.

The wetness will delay corn planting on into April which may hurt yields, he said, but the depressed market may prevent him from switching more land over to soybeans.

For many area farmers, however, the future hinges on having a good growing season this year.

"If farmers can have a big year, maybe we can make out," Nixon said, "but it's going to take a big crop."

Mental health rejects prospect

A Perquimans County appointment to the Albemarle Mental Health Center board of directors has been rejected by that board in what may be an unprecedented move.

The six county mental health agency's governing board, which consists of appointments from the boards of commissioners of the six counties it operates in, has never before turned down an appointment, according to chairman Selby Scott, also a commissioner in Pasquotank County.

Scott said the six commissioners who serve on the board are authorized to vote on whether or not appointments are allowed to serve on the board. Five, he said (Dare not present), voted against the Perquimans candidate.

He said the candidate was a former employee of the center, and had resigned. In a public hearing last spring prompted by complaints against the management of the center, she outlined a long list of criticisms. But after the hearing the board gave the center management a unanimous vote of confidence.

Scott said that in light of her previous complaints, and her employment at the center, the general consensus of the board was that it would not be

in the best interest of the appointment to have the Perquimans County appointment serve.

But county commissioners apparently felt that their power of appointment had been compromised by the rejection.

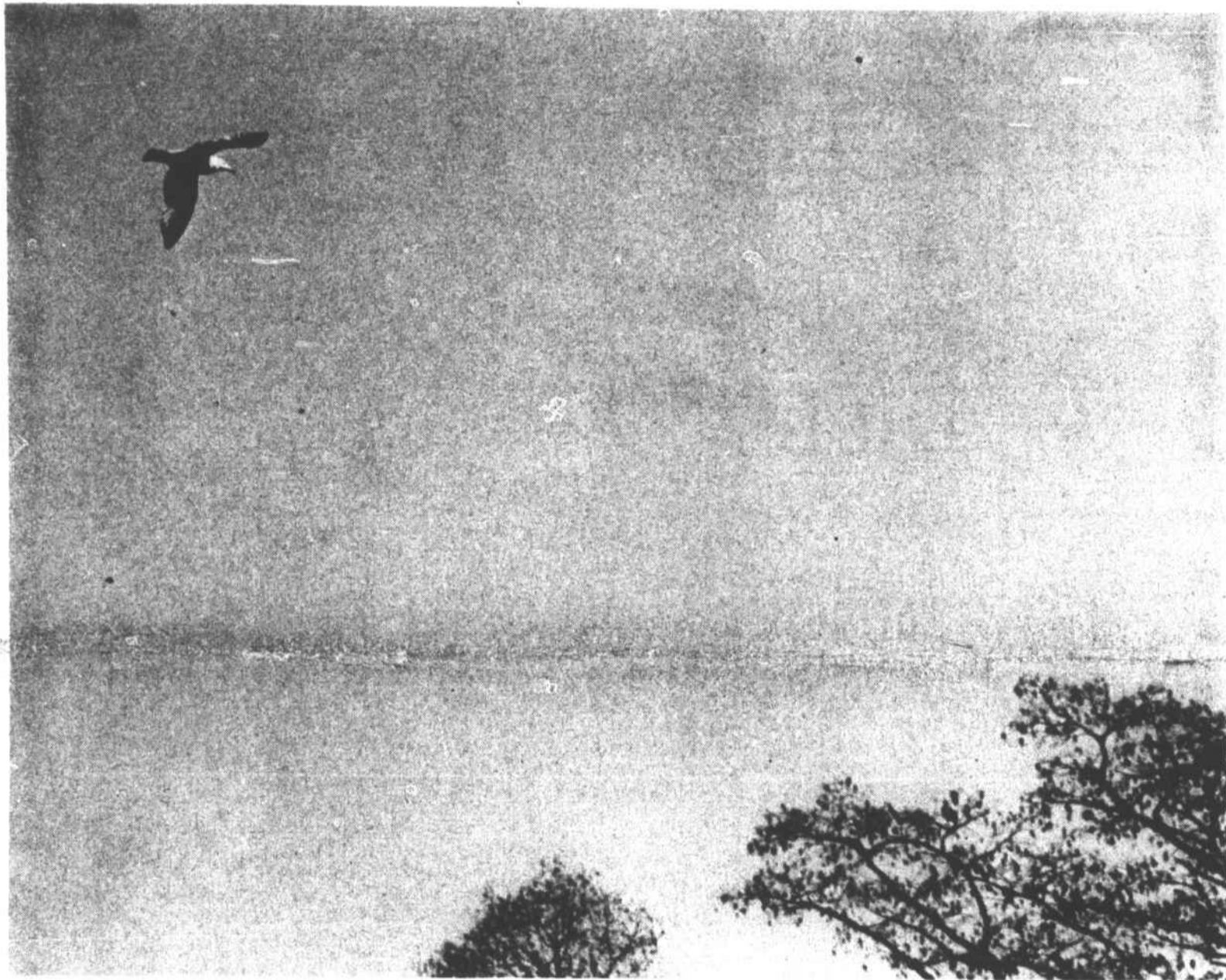
"There's no need to have a rubber stamp board," said chairman Joe Nowell. "Why should we, an elected board, appoint somebody if they've got the authority to turn (that person) down?" Nowell asked.

He also maintained that the vote against confirmation had been 3-2, rather than unanimous, as indicated by Scott.

Upon initial notification of the rejection, Nowell wrote a letter to Charles R. Franklin, Jr., mental health program director, stating that despite her resignation from the center, the Perquimans County candidate was well qualified to serve on the board, and asking that the board seat her at their next meeting.

The response, signed by both Franklin and Scott, stated that the nominee could not be seated, and asked that Perquimans County submit another candidate.

As yet, the commissioners have not responded.



In the blue

A seagull soars against the blue sky on a recent sunny day. The sunshine and blue skies indicate that spring is here, and hopefully, an end to the harsh wet weather of recent weeks. (Photo by MIKE MCLAUGHLIN)

Schools receive monies

The U.S. Department of Energy has awarded \$6,870 to the Perquimans County school system as financial assistance for energy conservation measures.

Superintendent Pat Harell, notified of the grant on Monday, said that the grant monies had to be matched by non-federal funds. "We have funds in our budget for energy conservation that we can use to match this grant," he said.

Harell indicated that the grant would be used to implement some of the energy conservation methods cited in a recent state energy audit report.

Among projected implementations are plans to lower ceilings, install more insulation, and install thermostat controls for spot-heating options.

Some of the money will also be used to procure technical assistance. "We would like to hire an engineer to work with us on our broilers and heating systems to make sure that our present thermostats are efficient," said Harell.

The grant was obtained through the office of Walter B. Jones, Chowan College, and the Washington County school system were awarded similar funding.

Meet the candidates coming April 16

Residents of Perquimans and surrounding counties will have an opportunity to meet the candidates on Wednesday, April 16, at the Perquimans County High School auditorium. The event will begin at 7 p.m.

In addition to an appearance of all the local candidates, candidates (or their representatives) running for state office are expected to be on hand.

Each candidate will speak

for five minutes. A time for questions and answers will be provided for during the refreshment hour following the program.

Although originally planned for the Perquimans County Courthouse, the program has since been rescheduled for the high school auditorium to accommodate the projected large turnout.

The annual event is sponsored by the Hertford Business and Professional Women's Club.

Center may wear \$5 million price tag

A projected price tag of approximately \$5 million has been placed on the proposed Tri-County Career Education Center, according to Tri-County Career Center director Ken Stalls.

Stalls and curriculum advisor, Dr. Jack Owenby, a consultant with the Southeastern Regional Agency of Tuscaloosa, Ala., completed a tentative curriculum last week after reviewing and compiling the results developed from the teacher recommendations received at a regional planning meeting in February.

Included in the tentative curriculum are the projected floor plans of the center in square feet, the relative

estimated cost of the building, and the estimated cost of furniture and equipment needed.

As soon as the curriculum and floor plans are finalized, Stalls will be in a solid position to begin the search for construction money from state, federal, and private foundations.

The total estimated cost of the Tri-County Career Center is some \$4,966,060 for a building to house about 26 different program areas in approximately 104,370 square feet. Stalls said the estimated cost of construction of \$38 per square foot was based on an average of the cost of the last buildings constructed in the area. Approximately one

million dollars worth of furniture is included in the total estimated cost of the project.

Some of the tentative program areas to be served by the Career Center based on teacher recommendation include mathematics, art, music, drama, vocational agriculture, business education, drafting, home economics, auto mechanics, English, carpentry, masonry, and welding.

In addition to the teacher recommendations of subject areas to be included, Stalls and Owenby developed some additional programs. These include health occupation, cosmetology, auto body, marine/small engine repair,

food service, and electricity/electronics.

Stalls emphasized that the plans could possibly be amended if sufficient funding is not available. "Some areas may be retained, some eliminated," said Stalls, "this will all depend on the money that is available."

Stalls presented the tentative curriculum to area superintendents Friday morning and described their

reaction as favorable. "The superintendents were well pleased with the document and with the detail with which the document addressed each curriculum area," said Stalls.

Copies of the tentative curriculum will also be sent to the teachers who initially developed the programs and to the Tri-County Career Center Steering Committee for their responses.

Although the site for the Career Center has not yet been selected, Stalls said the Site Selection Board is expected to meet sometime in April.

The Tri-County Career Education Center is a project designed to meet the advanced vocational and academic needs of students in Perquimans, Gates, and Chowan Counties.

Registration deadline

New and relocated Perquimans County residents will have until April 8 to get their names on the registration books for the May 6 North Carolina primary.

With 18 candidates seeking only six available county offices, political activity in the area should soon begin to pick up. Because there is only one Republican candidate for local office, the primary becomes all the more decisive.

Three seats on the Perquimans County Board of Commissioners are up for grabs, and in District I, candidates include incumbent Lester Simpson, Lee Brabble, Margaret Stowe Garrison and John London.

In District II, two seats will be decided, and candidates

include incumbents Joe Nowell and Waldo Winslow, and challengers Charles H. Ward and Billy Pierce.

Republican Wayne Winslow faces no opposition in his bid for a District II seat.

The non-partisan school board race has attracted a wide field of candidates, including Janice Y. Boyce, Clifford P. Towe and Edward E. Brown, Jr., all of whom are seeking the Parkville seat vacated by George Baker.

Incumbent Emmett Long is the only candidate running in the Bethel Township, but candidates for the Hertford Township seat include incumbent Preston Stevenson, George White, Gilliam (Gil) Underwood, and Edward (Ed) Nixon.

Incumbent Jeanne C. White

is the only candidate for the register of deeds office.

One Perquimans County resident is among those candidates for two year terms on the state legislature. Leonard W. Overman is seeking election to the N.C. House of Representatives from the First District. But Overman must defeat two incumbents to get there, Vernon James of Pasquotank County and Charles Evans of Dare County. All three are Democrats and two will be selected.

The race for state senate in the First District includes incumbents Joseph "Monk" Harrington of Lewiston and Melvin R. Daniels of Elizabeth City, and challenger Winifred

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Census day

April 1 has been declared Census Day, a date by which census forms should be

returned to sender. The goal: to count every living American.

Cancer control month set

Hertford Mayor Bill Cox has proclaimed April Cancer Control Month in keeping with a statewide proclamation issued by Governor James B. Hunt, Jr.

The Perquimans County Unit of the American Cancer Society will hold a "kick-off" meeting for the April crusade on Monday, March 31, at 8 p.m. at the Perquimans County office Building on Edenton Road Street.

Dr. Richard Hardin of Edenton will be the guest

speaker. Hardin has been active in the American Cancer Society on the state level.

Those who have volunteered to work in the April crusade are urged to be present and all interested persons are invited.

According to the proclamation, cancer is expected to strike 18,000 citizens of North Carolina during 1980, and cause the deaths of 9,200 persons.

One third of all cancer patients are receiving successful medical treatment,

and this figure could be increased by as much as 50 percent by early detection and treatment.

In addition, more lives could be saved through acts of prevention, such as avoidance of known cancer risks.

The principal purpose of the American Cancer Society's annual education and fund raising cancer crusade is to make the community aware of such health preserving opportunities, reads the proclamation.