

Shortgrass Problems Solved By Emergence Of Even Greater Ones

By Monte Noelke

9-18-69

Page 10

MERTZON — Area-wide rains are easing the Shortgrass scene. The grief of a summer hot enough to give a pyramid builder a heat stroke has turned into a promising autumn season. Hopes are running high as the tender green shoots of grass in the country are being supported by evidence of strong markets in town.

Many of our problems are solving themselves by what is known as an offsetting process. The acute shortage of livestock trucks is softening because of a threat of the end of capital gains benefits for ranchers. Dry weather livestock diseases are taking a similar trend. As worry concerning the drouth-originated, mortal, lingering waste-away disorder ends, an increase in cases of brain virus deterioration is fitting neatly into its place.

Right in line with this, close observers have noted that the critical labor situation is receding into the background. Experts who once labeled the decline of stockhands as the most serious dilemma facing the industry are now having to admit that the void of suitable contract services has become far more desperate than the near disappearance of a regular working force. Evaluations of the reports on fall shearing crews, who are said to be performing with the same zest that a draftee shows for the inoculation lineup, make the regular labor picture seem bright in comparison.

Developments in the field of state and local government are also encouraging to the ranch community. No one has actually been caught doing a toe dance as he scanned the news, yet small things such as school districts deciding to raise evaluations on land instead of taking the dreary route of upping the tax rate have been heartening. Thoughtfulness of the state legislators has been heartening. These worthies have worked diligently to coin words to fit new levies.

For instance, instead of calling the recent plan to include every merchant from sidewalk needle peddlers to heavy equipment dealers as collectors for the state sales tax, the solons termed the increase a harmless-sounding "small addition to consumer's taxes." This was a superb job of merchandising under circumstances which normally make selling extremely difficult.

Nothing from the lawmakers has had the wrong ring. I liked the way the men who live by the fickle turn of the ballot boxes chose to raise their own salaries. It worked like this:

In August, the electorate wholeheartedly rejected a constitutional amendment which would have given the legislators power to raise their own salaries. (The framers of the Texas Constitution had a warped view on rights of private citizens; down here, we get to vote on things that politicians know we shouldn't even hear about, much less voice an opinion on. Papered scholars scream for constitutional reforms along these lines. People with less education and a damn sight more sense are reluctant to relinquish the last vestige of control over their government. I think the whole fracas could be settled if the politicians and the book-trained folks would take over the entire tax burden and pay it themselves. Publicans have always been a nuisance after election time; I guess they always will.)

By the tail end of the legislative session, the representatives had honored the mandate of their constituents by tacking the proposed salary raise onto their expense accounts. Thus, democracy triumphed in its finest graces, and what seems to be the ultimate aim of all ruling bodies was attained and satisfied. What more could we voters have asked?

It remains to be seen how long the land can continue under this euphoria brought on by wet weather. Oldtimers claim the worst years they went through were followed by booms lasting one or two weeks. Time will tell if that pattern will be repeated. My stand is to let us all rejoice under the spell of a new day. Short intermission of happiness isn't going to spoil a group of people who have already been through more troubles than any 14 of the impoverished nations in the universe.