

Shortgrass Country  
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Shortgrassers have stopped their rain talk. It is practically a breach of manners to mention the subject. Around the coffee houses, hombres complain of postponed shipping dates. You are more apt to hear one bragging of how dry his corrals are than you are of his moisture score.

San Angelo has a three year supply of lake water now. Their future has changed from a dry camp to a wet one. Taking the Angeloans off bottled water and putting them on tap water has made them mighty high-handed again. The other morning I was in a drug store that had a big sign above the fountain saying, "No breakfast after 11 a.m."

The sign didn't give the source of the orders. Until I saw it, I'd always thought the Internal Revenue and the housewives were the only outfits powerful enough to tell a man what time he could or couldn't eat breakfast. Breakfast sovereignty, I thought, was left to the individual, unless, of course, the tax agents or the wives wanted it eaten out on the back step with the dogs. I hadn't realized that medicine peddlers were empowered to order citizens around. I did know that doctors could throw their voices in a manner that'd make a ventriloquist think he was tongue tied, but I hadn't heard that drugstore operators were setting hurdles too.

After studying the sign, I told the druggist that I believed I'd go on eating my breakfast whenever the notion struck me. As it is, the federal agency in charge of miniature golf course has more power than the high courts used to have. Ranchers are afraid to use one way streets for fear that the director of minnows might decide to run us down. Country people's rights have degenerated so badly that the members of the kennel clubs feel sorry for us. So I decided that I was going to contest this medicine man's authority to say whether I ate my breakfast at noon or at midnight.

Proper respect is due the drug industry. Any outfit that can sell one pill for more money than what a pound of wool or a pound of lamb brings had to be favored. People complain about the cost of medicine, but I think it's a privilege to be a customer of the leading highrollers in America today. In these times, too many of the merchants deal on too small margins. It's a real thrill to walk in a drugstore and pick up a prescription that costs, say, \$15 or \$16 a bottle. Action in the drug lines fulfills a family man's craving for a wild binge in Vegas or Mexico. On top of that, you don't have to do a lot of driving or flying to get there. Drugstores are easier to find than the resorts are.

No formal action has been taken about my breakfast hour. For all I know, the country's apothecaries may be organizing this minute to converge on the ranch. The next thing we know, barbers will be giving commands. Thomas Jefferson was lucky that he got his views on liberty done a long time ago.