

AN ALTERNATIVE OUTLOOK
By Everett W. Gross

Facing me is another deadline to get this written in time to print in the newspaper. Also facing me is a stack of newspaper articles to use as take-off points for a column. When that happens, the one which almost always wins out is the most catching article about the problem in agriculture. Do you suppose my farm boy childhood has anything to do with it? My earliest career plan was to be a farmer, but the 1930's forced me and many others to postpone that, and most of us did not get back to it.

Anyway, the usual modern discussions by the so-called experts and commentators still treat the subject as if the farm problem were somehow an isolated one. The usual blame is placed on the theory that "everyone else is getting too much of the goodies and the portion left to farmers is too small, and therefore the rest of the economy hurts because the farmers cannot spend enough."

Growing naturally out of that theory are three principal solutions: (1) subsidizing farmers in one or more ways, (2) restrict production by some scheme, (3) export more raw farm products to other countries. If you know of any suggestion which does not fall into one of those three "solutions", tell me and I will include it in one of my future essays.

Wouldn't it be great if I had room on this page to point out the errors in all of these solutions! And wouldn't it be great if there were enough people to read and understand that if there is a solution, it has to be somewhere else!

There is (a solution) and it is (somewhere else). Wouldn't it be great if there were more influential economists who could see the whole picture of the entire economy!

A young person training to be an economist has to load his brain with specialized knowledge to plead the case of a special interest. This automatically means the interest of a particular segment as opposed to all other segments. If he hopes to be hired by anyone after he gets his degree, it would be pointless for him to become expert at seeing the total picture of the economy of all of the people.

The only people in a position to hire anyone who has everyone's interest at heart are voters. And if voters cannot choose a person who can solve a major total problem, then representative government has no chance of survival.

The farm problem is a fraction of the major total problem. The entire economy has limped along for so many decades that even a teensy reduction in the total mass poverty picture looks like light at the end of some kind of a tunnel. Also, when farming now partakes of the same failure rate that the rest of the economy has been suffering all along, it is represented as some kind of a crisis.

Every farmer knows that he entered farming for one reason: it looked better than any other choice he could have made. That is not because farming was so good; it could have been because other choices were pretty punk too.

So when you observe the farm crisis, you are seeing just one more ripple as the total economy goes down the drain.