



tom braden

The question behind Mr. Butz

WASHINGTON—We are like men about to continue a journey, looking around to see whether we have forgotten something. If we find it, do we really want it? Or shall we leave it behind? The Senate isn't so much questioning whether Earl Butz would be a good secretary of agriculture as it is asking itself: "Shall we take along that small farm?"

It has served a useful past. "It gave me and my family a good living," wrote a farmer in Jefferson's time, "and left me, one year with another, 150 silver dollars, but I have never spent more than \$10 a year which was for salt, nails and the like. Nothing to wear, eat or drink was purchased, as my farm provided all."

But it has been of diminishing importance for a long time. Chances are you could count the senators who grew up on 160 acres on the fingers of one hand. One-hundred and sixty acres won't farm any more. "Farming is not a way of life," Mr. Butz has said, "it's a way to make a living."

They measure farms these days in sales. Farms with under \$5,000 in annual sales have only 8% of the market. Those who farm them earn less than \$3,000 cash per year.

So maybe we ought to leave the small farm behind. Thirty million people have left it in the last 30 years; 2,000 farms a week are selling out to the large owners who control 24% of the market and gross an average of \$270,000 annually.

But there are disadvantages, too. The Senate seems to be saying so as it ponders Mr. Butz, who represents agribusiness, thinks the number of farms ought to decrease and sees nothing wrong with the vertical arrangements whereby Del Monte, Swift, A & P and Campbell Soup own or lease the land from which they buy the crop and make the product.

The disadvantages lie partly in the cost and quality of food. The price goes up. We eat hard tomatoes because hard tomatoes can be picked by a machine. We shall shortly eat hard strawberries for the same reason.

Is there also a social cost in leaving the small farm behind? For every six farms which fold, a small-town business folds too. By 1980, according to the Department of Agriculture, another million farms will go out of business. Do we want to keep traces of the Middle West of Zora Gale? Do we care about preserving crossroads

towns, white houses, the traces of self-sufficiency left over from the yeoman dream?

If we do, we shall have to do a lot more than question Mr. Butz. We shall have to prop up the independent farmer with the same zeal with which we have propped up the great combines. We could start by insisting that the \$4 billion annually which the government spends to buy food be spent with the independent farmer. We could fund small farmers in co-operatives; we could insist that the \$234 million annually which we spend on land-grant colleges be used to pioneer and produce cheap farm equipment instead of being used to research for the benefit of agribusiness.

It would require a major turnaround, and it probably won't take place. Those who yearn may ease their consciences by voting against Mr. Butz. Doing more than that would require battle with large interests who will argue, "You can't fight progress."

But it is well to pause and look around. Is rural America to be a factory or a place to live? That is the real question behind the question of Earl Butz.

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Interviews for Daily Nebraskan East Campus News Editor will be held Dec. 1 beginning 12:30 pm. Fill out application and sign up for interview in Daily Nebraskan office Rm 34, Nebraska Union.

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"I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night. Alive as you or me. Says I, but Joe you're ten years dead. I never died says he."

"Joe Hill"

Joe Hill, the man: Joe Hill was a banjo-playing drifter who became an organizer of the radical "Wobblies". In 1915, he was indicted for murder and executed. Many felt he was framed.

Title song sung by **JOAN BAEZ**

It has fallen to Bo Widerberg, director of "Elvira Madigan", to tell this uniquely American story. In "Joe Hill", he chooses not to concentrate on the political being or musician but concentrates on Joe Hill the MAN.

GP

WIDE WORLD OF ENTERTAINMENT

LETTERS to the NEBRASKAN

Brevity in letters is requested and the Daily Nebraskan reserves the right to condense letters. All letters must be accompanied by writer's true name but may be submitted for publication under a pen name or initials. However, letters will be printed under a pen name or initials at the editor's discretion.

Dear editor,

I and each of the other members of the Housing Authority staff very much enjoyed and appreciated Steve Strasser's editorial (The Daily Nebraskan, Nov. 4) on the housing problems in Lincoln. His statements were properly researched and truly presented.

Doris K. Kunkle
Lincoln Housing Authority

Dear editor,

Attending a recent meeting of the Legislature's Judiciary Committee in Lincoln, I heard state fire marshalls testify that only 36 of "over 400" jails and prisons in Nebraska have 24 hour surveillance for prisoners.

This situation ensures that any prisoner will almost certainly burn to death in the event of a fire in an unattended jail or prison. No matter what crime the prisoner has committed, I believe it is criminal not to offer that person decent protection while in prison.

Michael Willey
Human Relations Insight League

Dear editor,

I am writing to ask the ASUN committee that sponsored the November fast for the Pakistani refugees to

provide a clarification of just exactly where the money will be sent.

The money was supposed to be sent to the Pakistani refugees who are in India. However, in one piece of publicity, the statement was made that the money was being sent to Pakistan.

It seems illogical that the Pakistani government would use this money to feed the people upon whom it is waging a war. I hope this is not the case, and thus ask for

clarification.

David E. Gardels

Editor's note: Ann Pedersen, ASUN Human Rights Committee chairman, said the November fast for Pakistani refugees was jointly sponsored by two relief agencies--Oxfam-America and Project Relief. All money collected from the fast went directly to Oxfam's field director in India, where about 9 million people from East Pakistan have sought refuge.

THE DAILY NEBRASKAN

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