

Editorial

Farm economy upswing foreseeable and deserved

It's hard to be optimistic after looking at the figures, but determination and optimism is what it will take to turn around the lagging farm economy.

The Omaha World-Herald has reported that the number of farms and businesses filing bankruptcy in Nebraska nearly doubled from 1981 to 1982. Two-thirds of the \$117.9 million debt was from farms.

Undoubtedly, the economic recession has hit us hard. For the 45 farms and ranches filing last year, the debts totalled \$75.1 million — up 12 times from 1981.

What are we to make of these statistics? Are we falling apart or picking up the pieces?

Bankruptcy Court Clerk Judith Napier sees it as an attempt to "hang on." If these farmers are trying to get back on their feet, they deserve all the help they can get.

Help may be on the way in Washington. At least indirectly, the House Agriculture Committee has taken steps that should help the agricultural sector. The Committee proposed an increase of \$347 million for the U.S. Department of Agriculture soil and water conservation programs. For the 47 percent of the farm population who live in the North-Central region of America, the action is a promising one.

If the proposals pass, the Soil Conservation Service would receive 30 percent more than President Reagan budgeted, and the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service would get a 40 percent increase.

Support for the proposals seems to

be unanimous among the committee members, with strong backing for improvements in the watershed protection and flood prevention program. If passed, the program would get more than twice the funding allotted by Reagan, and would near \$205 million.

It also gave priority to increased funds for the Great Plains Conservation Program, watershed planning and river basin surveys. John Block, Secretary of Agriculture, said that the program cuts were prompted by Reagan's spending restrictions. Yet in an Associated Press article, Block said, "I am now so confident about the future, I won't hesitate to say that I see 1983 and '84 as the pivotal point for the U.S. farm economy." He credits Reagan's policies for what he sees as a turnaround in the economy.

Block sees the declining inflation rates and interest rates as reasons to take heart. He said the 2 percent rise in farm production expenses last year was the smallest since 1964.

If he is right, maybe this will be the year that our farmers see noticeable gains. The change is certainly overdue. The Agriculture Department reported that a farmer's net income fell in 1981 to \$8,042, the lowest since 1977. With declining land values and record crop surpluses, the prospects seem cloudy.

But the nation's farmers are determined and the House Agricultural Committee is supportive. 1983 could very well be the year of economic turnaround for farmers if they can "hang on" — and if the government gives them something to hang on to.

Backward life Down Under

SYDNEY, Australia — It really *does* take a long time to get to Australia. I left Los Angeles Feb. 17 and 20 hours later, on Feb. 19, I was here (you lose a day crossing the International Dateline).

For those of you who don't know, I'm a UNL student spending a semester abroad in Australia. The exchange was made possible by the Institute for International Studies in Oldfather Hall, the International Student Exchange Program in Washington,



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D.C., and loans from my mother and the bank, both in Omaha.

At the moment, I'm sitting in my dormitory room (dorms are called "colleges" here) on the Macquarie University campus in North Ryde, New South Wales (North Ryde's a suburb of Sydney) sweating like a pig. It's about 80 degrees here, with 90 percent humidity. I don't suppose this is eliciting sympathy from any of you, so I'll move on.

A lot of things are different here; a lot of things are the same — I'm comparing, of course, American and Australian things.

For one thing, they drive on the wrong side of the road. Well, I probably shouldn't say "wrong," they just drive on the other side. That's hard to get used to. The steering wheels are on the other side, too, so I've been getting in on the wrong side of the cars.

This reverse arrangement works in other things, too. If you're walking down a hall or a sidewalk, you stay on the left side and people pass on your right. The escalators also are set up opposite the way ours are.

Everything's metric, too. I don't really know the current temperature because they keep saying it's 28 degrees, or it's 30 degrees. Even calories are different — I saw on a Fresca can the words "a low

joule soft drink."

"Yield" signs say "Give Way" here, and Rice Krispies are, believe it or not, "Rice Bubbles." They don't seem to have 7-Up here, but they have something called "Lemon Squash" that is about the same. Of course, they have Coke here, and McDonald's. (In fact, my first meal in Australia was from McDonald's.)

Prices in the fast food joints are about the same as in America. The difference shows up with the more expensive cuts of meat. I had a T-bone for about five bucks the other day. The meat didn't compare to Nebraska beef, but hey, what does?

Automobiles are much more expensive here, as is gas. It's about \$2 a gallon here now. The value of the Australian dollar is about the same as the American.

But the money is all different colors here — the one dollar bill has a picture of the queen on one side and what looks like cave scribbles on the other side, and it's kind of pink-orange, brown and green. The two dollar bill is green and yellow and has a picture of a guy and a sheep on one side, and another guy and some grain on the other.

On all the bills, there's a watermark — you hold the money up to the light and there's a profile of somebody important inside.

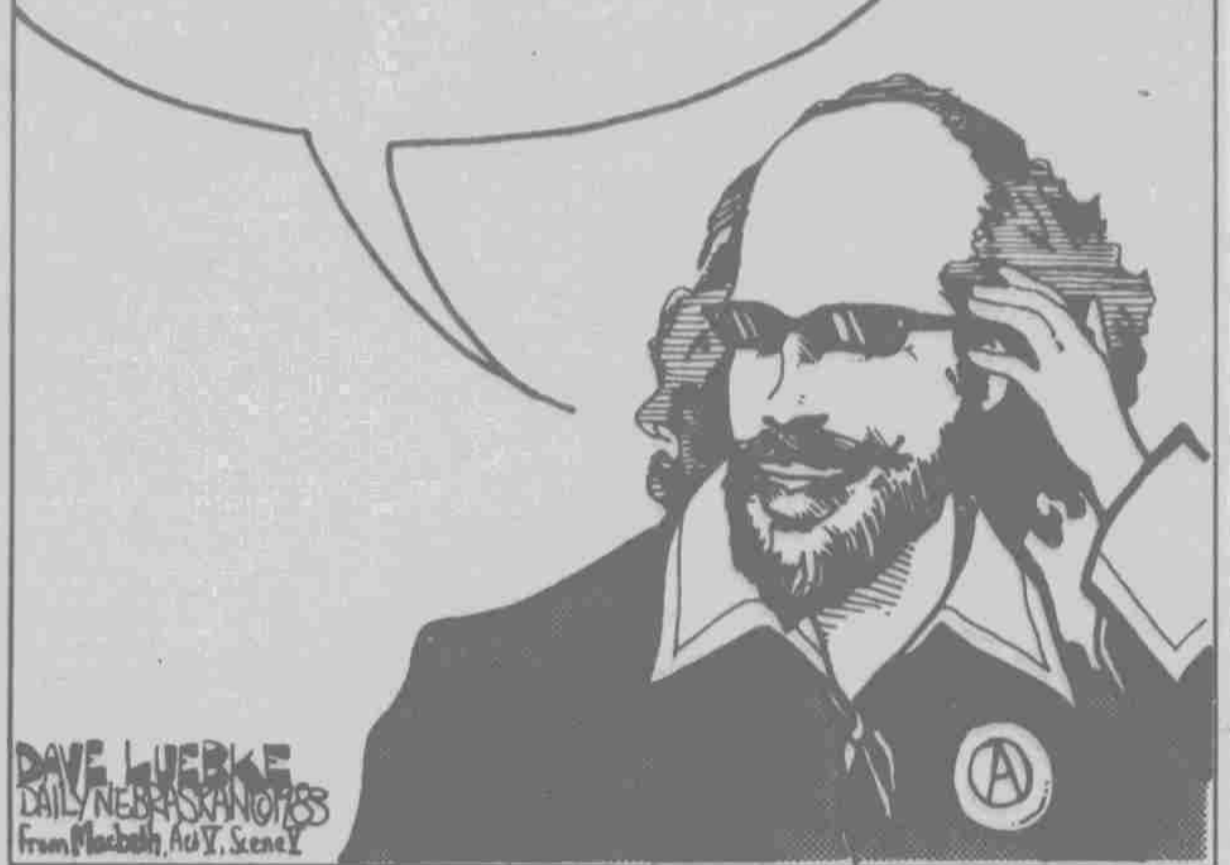
The coins are different, too. The various coins are decorated with creatures ranging from some kind of rat, a weird lizard with sails under its neck, a mole-like thing, a bird with four tails, a platypus, an emu and a kangaroo.

They've got a bunch of weird birds around here, too. One is an Indian myna bird that walks all over, another is a miniature parrot that's blue, green, red and yellow, and there's another one I haven't seen yet that sounds like a calf or a bleating sheep. Maybe the sheep live in trees here, who knows.

Oh, and although it's hard to tell, I think the water goes down the drain clockwise here.

ASUN is...

*... but a walking shadow; a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.*



DAVE LUEBKE
DAILY NEBRASKAN ARTS
From Macbeth, Act V, Scene 1

Upcoming German elections have long-range ramifications

Perhaps you remember freshman year in college, dozing through a Christ-to-Krushchev survey course on Western history, when suddenly Professor Whatwashisname mentioned the Peace of Westphalia and a groan rose from the soles of your penny loafers: Another damned date to memorize.

Why disturb the dust on such memories? Because Sunday's elections in Germany are among the most important in postwar Europe and Germany's past is always tangled up in the present.

The Peace of Westphalia (1648, ended



**George
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the Thirty Years War) ratified the existence of more than 300 sovereign German principalities. That suited the princes and the national interest of Germany's rivals. But it retarded the evolution of a mature German nationalism. France and Britain were nations in the 1400s; the United States was a nation in the 1700s; Germany was not a nation until the second half of the 19th century. Today German nationalism, always problematic, is a force on the left and is associated with neutralism — the escape from history and geography.

Most Germans do not think constantly about — or vote in consequence of — the proposed deployment of modernized intermediate-range missiles. But the Social Democratic Party under Hans-Jochen Vogel has moved radically leftward, partly pulled by competition with the Greens, partly by latent inclination. The SPD now opposes deployment by NATO of missiles to counter the Soviet SS-20s — a deployment first urged upon NATO by a former SPD chancellor, Helmut Schmidt.

It is unlikely that the SPD could do well enough for Vogel to govern other than in coalition with the Greens, who would deepen the SPD's neutralist predisposition. With some SPD members now talking about "security partnership" with Moscow, Moscow would seize upon a SPD-Green victory to connect nationalism and neutralism. Even if Chancellor Helmut

Kohl wins, one thing has been changed, radically and perhaps irrevocably, and one substantial danger will remain.

What has changed is the SPD. Schmidt held it to what can be called Bevinism, named for Ernest Bevin, foreign secretary in Britain's postwar Labor government. Bevin was a fiercely anti-Soviet socialist. A decisive event in the growth of postwar German democracy was the SPD's adoption of the Godesberg platform in 1959. In it, the party formally disavowed its Marxist past and class orientation, put aside dogmatic anti-military doctrines and endorsed socialism compatible with "free enterprise and free competition."

But the current campaign has been a kind of anti-Godesberg, in the sense that the party of the left among the two natural governing parties has broken with the central tenets of Germany's postwar consensus. Those tenets are that modern Germany's identity is indissolubly linked to the West, and that German nationalism can find full expression within the transnational purposes of the NATO alliance.

Today the SPD is within striking distance of power that it would use to frustrate the most important decision NATO has made in a generation. Doing so would have the perverse consequence of strengthening the "peace" movement by making arms-control talks pointless. Why would Moscow negotiate about limits if NATO cannot consummate deployment decisions?

If Kohl wins, extra-parliamentary extremism may follow. With an impertinence that reflects its growing contempt for Western Europe, Moscow, in a German-language broadcast, has warned Germans that Kohl's election would mean social disturbances.

Today many Europeans, and especially Germans, are preoccupied with the destructiveness of modern weapons. Thus, it is well to remember that in the war that ended with the Peace of Westphalia, Germany lost 35 percent of its population. Bohemia's population fell from 3 million to 780,000, and 30,000 of 35,000 villages were destroyed. By 1641, Wurttemberg's population had fallen from 400,000 to 48,000.

Today as then, Germany's inescapable fate is to be the cockpit of European history and never distant from danger.

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