

IS AG A DRAG ?

From time to time we have shared this space with others, with spokesmen for agriculture who express some of our own views (as well as their own) in a manner pleasing to us and to our readers.

Such is the editorial by Ralph Reynolds, editor of "The Furrow," in the current issue of that sprightly little magazine produced by the John Deere Company, the large farm machinery manufacturer.

Mr. Reynolds writes as follows, under the catchy title: "Is Ag a Drag?"—

All the talk about sweeping change in cities, rockets into outer space, supersonic transportation, automated medicine, electronic communications, the hippies . . . all this seems almost humdrum when I see what's happening on modern farms.

We read in the city press that agriculture is changing, that this is the age of ag abundance and ag technology. We even hear some reserved expressions of admiration and gratitude for the accomplishments of farmers. But these reports, welcome as they are, don't begin to tell our story.

Our story is this: Agriculture has come alive, it swings, it's where the action is. Modern farming is a hotbed of vitality and creativity, where exciting new ideas are flourishing and innovation is the order of the day; it is the grass roots of change and progress in North America. Seems like an extravagant way to tell it, but that's our story.

There may be some urban people who still believe that farming is dull business and farmers are dull folk. Let them think that way. We have no time for city provincials; they've been left behind for good. If they don't perceive what's going on out on the acres now, they sure won't 10 years from now. Agriculture is the nation's biggest business and it's growing faster in productivity and efficiency than any other. You know that already. The point I want to make here is that farming is also the liveliest industry. Nowadays rural air fairly sings with change and progress. Wherever you look in rural North America and you see daring and inquisitive men at work doing bold and imaginative things.

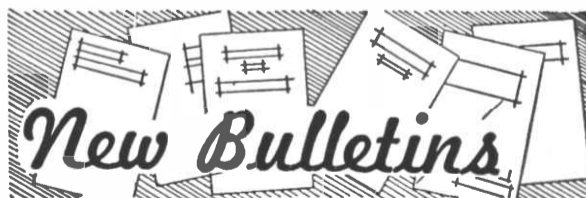
Within the past few months, for instance, Furrow editors have talked with farmers who are fertilizing with carbon dioxide, breeding their own crops, building solar-conditioned

barns, storing grain under refrigeration, using computers, regulating the breeding cycle of sows and cows. Last year we described some moves farmers and farm scientists are making that are of great importance to everyone in North America — including the fantastic but realistic goal of extinguishing entire species of insects and disease germs. Ahead, we see soaring efficiency from new field machines and farmyard equipment, plants re-shaped and manipulated by spray-on chemicals, massive changes in livestock breeding. Last year, farm operators used a host of inputs that were unheard of 10 years ago and they're now eyeing new ones for this year and next. The caliber of modern farmers can be judged by the fact that they are demanding progress, suggesting ideas, quickly testing and grasping those new practices that have real promise.

This is not to suggest that modern farm life is without troubles, or that modern farmers live a life of perpetual stimulation and excitement. Agriculture continues to struggle with harsh economic problems, and there are seasons of relative tranquility on most any farm. But to the city guy who remembers only the old agriculture, or especially to that young square who really isn't with it yet, I want to say: *Man, ag is no drag. It's where the action is.*

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School of Home Economics



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A half hour in the garden, morning and night, will total a day's work by the end of the week.

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