

## **09/24/2002 Entry: "How Long Can America's Farmers and Ranchers Give Their Labor Away?"**

By Patrick Goggins...reprinted with permission

I can't help think about labor. We've just celebrated the annual national holiday called Labor Day for America's laborers. But it appears as though most of the emphasis that we read about and hear about and talk about is about labor and people who work in unions or work for other people - in other words, the laborers who create things of commerce here across our country. I don't hear much at all about the farm and ranch folks who are "laborers."

The injustices of payment to the farmers and ranchers of America on a per hour basis are grave. I don't think there is a group of folks in our society, in town or out of town, that's more grossly underpaid for their time, their expertise, their investment than are the farmers and ranchers of America.

I'd like to suggest in the future that maybe the ag community develop statistics and publish them well in advance of Labor Day to remind America's population that the food producers, the farmers and ranchers of America, are truly in a situation of being underpaid.

Not only are they not being paid very much per hour for their endeavors, but also they're not being paid very much for the products they are producing. Yet when they go to buy machinery they have to have now and again, when they go to buy parts they must have to keep the old outfits going, when they go to buy fuel that they have to have to run the operation, all of these 'musts' that - be they taxes, food, clothing, seed, equipment, vaccines, whatever - that a rancher and farmer buys are at rather high prices. Yet what they can produce off that farm or ranch are not even close to what you call 'parity' or close to a decent return on investment.

Some way, some how this must change, or we'll see America work itself into a total socialistic dictatorship in years to come. I know many people don't like to hear this, they don't want to even talk about it, but it's the truth. Our free enterprise system is in the balance, and the greatest part of our free enterprise system is our farms and ranchers, our ag people.

Remember, the USA has the largest body of productive land in the moderate temperate zone of anywhere on earth. The only place in the world that's even close to this body of beautiful growing land is the mainland of China. What are we doing with this wonderful soil? Not very much, I'm afraid. We've gotten ourselves into a non-productive position where the government will pay people NOT to grow, where the government will set aside acres, where the government will do all kinds of things that eliminate production on this wonderful soil in an attempt to keep and pacify our farmers and ranchers. Added to this, the government seems to be doing all they can to keep ranchers and sheepmen and cattlemen and timber harvesters off federal lands for timber. They do not way commerce to use these God-given wonderful mountain and foothills country. This isn't what a free enterprise system is about, not at all.

I know that the farm community is not being helped by many of the national organizations. Whether it's livestock or crops or others, organizations that are in bed with the processor, the retailer, and yes the import-export sector as well, no one seems to want to worry about production. Now with the advent of TPA and the trades that they're going to anticipate from all of the Central and South American countries, this is going to put additional pressure on American producers because America's producers cannot even come close to competing with production costs with these countries. So what happens? What could happen? It could really put downward pressure on the way of life for America's producers.

I was watching on television the other evening a program on garlic. Evidently in one section of China, they grow garlic by the hundreds of thousands of tons. The biggest market they have for this garlic now is the US. Even though the US has a 212% tariff on that imported garlic coming into the US, it still gets shipped over here, the tariff is paid, and it enters the grocery stores and markets of the US at less than half of the production costs of American-grown garlic. Now you swallow that and chew on it and you consider most everything that the American consumer might be buying or needing, and if this application is applied, how in the world is an American producer of anything going to compete. In a short word, "They're not!"

One of the most noted national publications for covering "think tank" organizations as well as conservatism is the "National Review." When their publication people were asked: "What in the world is wrong with American agriculture and our American labor?" they gave the answer: "It's the trade deficit, stupid."

Boy, they got right in the middle of this. They said, "Bad trade deals such as NAFTA and the World Trade Organization are the basic cause of these deficits. They allow US and foreign producers to use nations with penny-wages and lax regulations as their manufacturing platforms to ship their product almost duty-free into the US market."

It went on to say, "Put into context - China offers global manufacturers a virtually unlimited supply of highly productive manufacturing workers for a price of 37¢ an hour. Since the year 2000, more than 250,000 jobs have been moved from Mexico to China. In that same period, the US has lost more than 1.8 million good-paying manufacturing jobs with most going to low wage locations such as China."

They further say: "Instead of addressing the trade deficit, Congress passed "Fast Track" trade negotiating authority. On the horizon are new agreements that will worsen the trade deficit, cut more good paying US manufacturing jobs, and further increase instability in the stock market."

This writer has been saying this for some years, and I can't find people in high places in politics or in our own agricultural organizations that believe it at all! We have many, many dollars being spent on the so-called farm broadcaster stations, and they're promoting, because of advertising money, the needs of the folks up the line. They're not promoting the needs or the absolute wishes of the production economy. No. Same thing - many of the national publications and

their editors, who are getting big dollars from these various checkoffs and other grant money situations, are not worrying about production agriculture. So many of these people who sit behind a desk and shuffle papers and get on the computer and talk on the telephone and go to the parties and drink the whiskey, eat the hors d'oeuvres, and rub elbows with the mucky-mucks, the first thing you know, they start acting like the mucky-mucks. But, I'm telling you and I'm telling them, the day is coming when they might wish they would have rubbed elbows with the farmer or rancher and should have worried about him, because America could get into a terrible plight if we don't start worrying more about our producers, our farmers and ranchers and American labor in a real, real way. I'm not talking about throwing more money at them. I'm not talking about more subsidies. I'm not talking about more rules and regulations. I'm talking about rewarding these people on the farms and ranches for their terrible hard work, their long hours and yes, their knowledge in producing goods for America and beyond. We can't give away our markets, and that's what we're doing with our deficits. They're not being paid, ladies and gentlemen; they're not being paid for the crops and the livestock they're growing, they're not being paid for the labor they are putting in and sooner or later, this will hit a dead end. Then, what will America do? We can't continue to give away the labors of our most productive people, our farmers and ranchers!

AgriNews Sept. 6, 2002