

"When we got rain in July, it used to add to bushels, now it takes away," says Neal Fisher, deputy administrator for the North Dakota Wheat Commission.

For some producers, scab has robbed them of profits for five years.

"It was the sure crop to plant. We could always pencil in a profit," Loeslie says. When farmers deliver grain to their local grain elevator, its quality is evaluated, and the grain is "graded." Grades vary from elevator to elevator. At the MayPort (Mayville and Portland, N.D.) Farmers Co-op elevator grades include milling, No. 1, No. 2, No. 3, No. 4 and terminal or feed wheat.

The price impact of a difference between grades usually amounts to 5 to 10 cents. Feed wheat usually brings 70 cents less than the top market price.

Farmers also receive discounts for low test weight and damage, or they may collect premiums for high protein content.

This year, discounts for damaged wheat aren't as severe as previous years because the shriveled, scabby grain kernels didn't make it into producers' combine hoppers, says Dan Pinske, general manager for MayPort Farmers Co-op elevator.

Instead of discounts, farmers harvested less grain.

"It (scab) was so severe it (scab-damaged grain) didn't make it into the combine, so they lost a lot of bushels," he says.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Those lost bushels affect producer's profits and the entire region's economy.

Elevators profiting on volume have been hit in the pocketbook as scab reduces the region's wheat yields.

"If we start knocking off 30 to 40 percent of the potential (crop), it's a huge income loss," Pinske said.

A study recently done by Demcey Johnson and George Flakerud, both of North Dakota State University's Agricultural Economics Department, shows scab caused a total economic impact of \$2.875 billion from 1993 to 1997. That's a combination of a \$934 million direct impact and an indirect impact of \$1.941 billion.

Producers in Minnesota saw a 33 percent loss due to scab in 1993. This year, the loss is expected between 12 percent and 18 percent in the northwest valley area of Minnesota, says Roger Jones, Extension plant pathologist at the University of Minnesota.

That loss is comparative to the direct impact of losing one year's entire wheat crop, Fisher says.

The total economic impact of spring wheat production on the region would be about \$3.96 billion, using last year's production of 313.5 million bushels multiplied by an average seasonal price of \$4.10, a plus a "multiplier" effect. Durum, at 79.4 million bushels times the seasonal average price last year of \$4.40, plus the multiplier effect, equals roughly \$1.08 billion. All barley, at 143 million bushels, times an average seasonal price (average of feed and malting) of \$2.45, plus the multiplier effect, also is equivalent to about \$1.08 billion.

The scab epidemic has made research efforts a main focus to get the wheat industry back in the black.

But, that takes money.

Scab has become a more prominent issue since 1993 and was the reason for a visit by the newly appointed U.S. Department of Agriculture undersecretary for research, economics and education, Miley Gonzalez.

The North Dakota Wheat Commission and other state grain commissions and councils also are making research a priority when preparing budgets.

The North Dakota Wheat Commission has about \$2.4 million to spend this year. If esti-

mates are correct, and the wheat harvest is 100 million bushels lower, the commission will have \$800,000 less than last year. The commission's budget comes from an 8/10 of a cent per bushel checkoff.

But, commissions and councils can't shoulder the entire research effort, either.

Attempts at gaining more federal dollars for research are slowly gaining strength in Washington. About \$1.2 million in federal funding is planned for 1998.

STOPPING SCAB

Instead of battling the problem individually, states also are teaming up to stop scab.

Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Canada joined forces in 1993 after the Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers organized a scab symposium.

A 12-state scab initiative, which includes the Dakotas and Minnesota, also was initiated a few years ago.

"The fact that it affects other wheat is, in a way, a blessing in disguise because it becomes a national problem," Wiersma said.

One of the key research tasks is finding varieties that resist scab.

"Variety shifts have cut the disease levels in half," Jones said.

Most of the varieties used by producers existed before the epidemic hit, and some new varieties have proven to be less susceptible. Barley has not made variety changes to date, but varieties on the horizon look promising.

For a variety to be successful, resistance would need to be twice the current resistance level, Jones says.

"I have a lot of confidence in our scientists, but it's not going to be overnight," Fisher said.

In order to solve the scab problem, the industry needs to focus on more than resistant varieties.

Although controversial, different residue practices, such as plowing, may help destroy scab inoculum.

The only way to prove it is by plowing the whole valley, which is unlikely, Wiersma says.

"Producers need to look at their residue programs. Simply relying on genetic resistance, we are going to have a difficult time resolving this problem," Jones said.

Change in rotation practices and alternative crops also are options, but they alone cannot solve the problem, either.

"Rotation has an impact, but it's marginal," Wiersma says.

OTHER CROPS

Alternative crops, such as oilseeds and beans, face market uncertainty because of overproduction. Many producers have decreased wheat acres as much as possible and are trying other crops.

"Producers are looking for every alternative they can, and that's understandable considering the circumstances. (However) those markets are easily saturated," Fisher said.

Many producers also are considering planting winter wheat, but it also can be attacked by scab if excessive moisture comes at the wrong time, Jones says.

And there simply is not a large enough variety of crops to choose from in the northern valley.

"There aren't enough specialty crops to tide us over. We don't have the luxury of the southern areas," Loeslie says.

Besides, producers who use wheat as a rotation for other crops, such as sugar beets, can't change their rotation plan.

Sugar beets are planted on a field once every three years, with four years being optimal, said Mark Weber, executive director of the Red River Valley Sugarbeet Growers.

Like the flood that hit Grand Forks this spring, this river of scab will never be forgotten, Loeslie says.

"It's not a healthy situation for the region."

But the producers in this area will not go down without a fight. Loeslie is confident the dedication and work of a team effort will prove to be successful in the long-term.

"I hate to give up. Wheat has been too good to us for too long."●

TRIBUTE TO DR. MARY LYNN TISCHER

● Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I rise today to thank Dr. Mary Lynn Tischer, who leaves my Washington office after almost a year of ceaseless effort as a Transportation Fellow. As we sought to develop consensus on the ISTEA II legislation, Mary Lynn provided superior analysis and assistance, working extensively with her counterparts to gather a large coalition of support for this complex piece of legislation.

Mary Lynn worked with Virginia Secretary of Transportation Robert Martinez and Virginia Governor George Allen as they sought to steer the Step 21 legislation at the State level. In her role as the Administrator of the Office of Policy Analysis, Evaluation, and Intergovernmental Relations at the Virginia Department of Transportation [VDOT], Mary Lynn served the Commonwealth of Virginia admirably. She has worked on travel forecasting, analysis of travel behavior and mode choice, model development, goods movement, and trucking issues. Mary Lynn was chosen to manage the congressionally mandated Heavy Vehicle Cost Allocation Study, the Study of the Feasibility of Designating the Interstate for Larger and Heavier Vehicles, and several studies on state regulation of motor carriers.

Mary Lynn received her Ph.D. in political science from the University of Maryland, with an interdisciplinary major in social psychology as well as a specialty in American government and public policy. Dr. Tischer also serves on the Group I Council of the Transportation Research Board, and is active on several committees and task forces of TRB and AASHTO, including the Reauthorization Task Force.

Mary Lynn is widely recognized as an expert in her field. She was chairman of the International Association of Travel Behavior, editor of *Transport Reviews*, and on the editorial board of *Transportation*. Her proficiency has led to her participation on steering committees for national and international conferences, most recently for Household Travel Surveys and Uses of the Decennial Census. She has given numerous papers, and is extensively published in the transportation and marketing fields.

Mary Lynn has been tireless in her work here in my Washington office. Her cheerful demeanor, quick wit, and skillful assistance and intelligence will be sorely missed. I extend my warmest regards to Mary Lynn, and wish her all good luck in her future endeavors.●

EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS

• Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I oppose the Coverdell bill because it uses regressive tax policy to subsidize vouchers for private schools. It does not give any real financial help to low-income, working and middle-class families, and it does not help children in the nation's classrooms. What it does is provide yet another tax give-away for the wealthy.

Public education is one of the great successes of American democracy. It makes no sense for Congress to undermine it. This bill turns its back on the nation's long-standing support of public schools and earmarks tax dollars for private schools. This is a fundamental step in the wrong direction for education and for the nation's children.

Proponents of the bill argue that assistance is available for families to send their children to any school, public or private. But that argument is false. The fact is that public schools do not charge tuition. Therefore, the 90% of the nation's children who attend public schools do not need help in paying tuition. Even worse, the people helped most by this proposal are families in high income brackets—and these families can already afford to send their children to private school.

The nation's children deserve good public schools, safe public schools, well-trained teachers, and a good education. Private school vouchers disguised as IRAs will undermine all of those essential goals by undermining the public schools, not helping them.

We all want the nation's children to get the best possible education. We should be doing more—much more—to support efforts to improve local schools. We should oppose any plan that would undermine those efforts.

Scarce tax dollars should be targeted to public schools. They don't have the luxury of closing their doors to students who pose special challenges, such as children with disabilities, limited English-proficient children, or homeless students. Vouchers will not help children who need help the most.

Proponents of the bill argue that vouchers increase choice for parents. But parental choice is a mirage. Private schools apply different rules than public schools. Public schools must accept all children. Private schools can decide whether to accept a child or not. The real choice goes to the schools, not the parents. The better the private school, the more parents and students are turned away.

In fact, many private schools require children to take rigorous achievement tests, at the parents' expense, as a basis for admission to the private schools. Lengthy interviews and complex selection processes are often mandatory. Private schools impose many barriers to admission. Few parents can even get to the schoolhouse door to find out if it is open to their child. For the vast majority of families with children in public schools, the so-called "school choice" offered by the voucher scheme is a hollow choice.

Public schools must take all children, and build a program to meet each of their needs. Private schools only take children who fit the guidelines of their existing programs. We should not use public tax dollars to support schools that select some children, and reject others.

Senator COVERDELL's proposal would spend 2.5 billion dollars over the next five years on subsidies to help wealthy people pay the private school expenses they already pay, and do nothing to help children in public schools get a better education.

It is important to continue the national investment in children and their future. We should invest more in improving public schools by fixing leaky roofs and crumbling buildings, by recruiting and preparing excellent teachers, and by taking many other steps. We should not invest in bad education policy and bad tax policy.

We know that at the current time, 14 million children in one-third of the nation's schools are learning in substandard facilities. Over half of all schools report at least one major building in disrepair, with cracked foundations, or leaking roofs, or other major problems. If we have 2.5 billion more dollars to spend on elementary and secondary education, we should spend it to deal with these problems.

During the next decade, because of rising student enrollments and rising teacher retirements, the nation will need over 2 million new teachers. Yet today, more than 50,000 underprepared teachers enter the classroom every year. Students in inner-city schools have only a 50% chance of being taught by a qualified science or math teacher. We should support teachers and rebuild our schools—not build tax shelters for the wealthy.

It is clear that this proposal disproportionately benefits wealthy families. The majority of the tax benefits would go to families in high income brackets. These families can already afford to send their children to private school.

Working families and low-income families do not have enough assets and savings to participate in this IRA scheme. This regressive bill does not help working families struggling to pay day to day expenses during their children's school years.

The majority of families will get almost no tax break from this legislation. 70 percent of the benefit goes to families in the top 20 percent of the income bracket. Families earning less than \$50,000 a year will get a tax cut of \$2.50 from this legislation—\$2.50. You can't even buy a good box of crayons for that amount. Families in the lowest income brackets—those making less than \$17,000 a year—will get a tax cut of all of \$1—\$1. But, a family earning over \$100,000 will get \$97.

Even many families who can save enough to be able to participate in this IRA scheme will receive little benefit. IRAs work best when the investment is

long-term. But in this scheme, money will be taken out each year of a child's education. Only the wealthiest families will be able to take advantage of this tax-free savings account.

In addition, "qualified expenses" are defined so broadly in this bill, that parents could justify almost any expense even remotely connected to the costs of elementary and secondary education, creating a large loophole for people to spend funds in ways not intended.

In order to guard against fraud and abuse, the IRS would have to take on more tax audits of families that establish these accounts. The IRS will have to ask what school a child attends, what expenses the parents actually incurred, and whether the accounts were properly set up and used.

This bill is bad tax policy and bad education policy. It does not improve public education for the 90 percent of children who go to public schools. It is a waste of scarce tax dollars.

Education reform should help education, not undermine it. Students need to master the basics, meet high standards, and be taught by well-trained teachers. We need to hold schools accountable for results, and create safe buildings and learning environments.

This bill is simply private school vouchers under another name. It is wrong for Congress to subsidize private schools. We should improve our public schools—not abandon them. •

A FITTING NEW HAMPSHIRE TRIBUTE FOR FALLEN AMERICAN HERO

• Mr. SMITH of New Hampshire. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to the memory of Sgt. William Roy Pearson, USAF. Earlier today, his remains were returned to his native town of Webster, New Hampshire where he will finally be properly laid to rest with full military honors this weekend, more than 25 years following his tragic loss in Vietnam.

Sergeant Pearson was the all American boy who grew up in a small, New Hampshire town, played varsity baseball and soccer all four years at Merrimack Valley High School, and then, like his father before him, went off to serve his country in time of war. As an Air Force Pararescue "Maroon Beret", he was awarded a Silver Star, Purple Heart, two Distinguished Flying Crosses, and five air medals for his actions. To Sergeant Pearson, living up to the USAF Pararescuemen motto—"that others may live"—was a daily routine in the jungles of Vietnam.

Then came the tragic day on April 6, 1972 when once again his unit was called upon to rescue a downed U.S. Air Force pilot whose rescue story was later depicted in the movie, BAT-21. During the rescue attempt conducted by Sergeant Pearson and his crewmembers, the Jolly Green was shot down by enemy fire, killing those on