

# WHAT IF... IT HAD LASTED LONGER

---

**A**griculture has survived floods, drouth, insects, disease, farm labor strikes, inept legislation and market wrecks. Never has it completely stopped. But in less than a week, a poorly organized truck strike very nearly brought the world's most magnificent agriculture machine to an agonizing halt.

Suppose, just suppose, the strike had been better organized. Suppose all the independent truckers who carry 95-99% of the perishable food products had complied with it.

Suppose it had lasted longer. A week. Two weeks. A month.

What would have happened?

Absolute destruction of the summer fruit and vegetable crop. Devastation of the fresh meat, poultry and egg industry. Slaughter feeder and stocker cattle ready for market—but no way to go. Chaos in the food distribution and marketing chain. Consumer riots.

Or would the federal government step in and nationalize the transportation industry? (Some states used National Guardsmen, remember.) If so, could we expect to be as efficient as other government services such as the U.S. Postal Service?

Panic psychology? Not really. Remember what the 3-week disorganized strike produced.

The message is clear enough. Agriculture cannot survive without adequate transportation. The independent truckers can't make it without agriculture. Without both, the U.S. can't make it.

It's time agriculture and independent truckers work together for mutually beneficial programs. Each must know it can count on the other. (It's time for states to standardize rules pertaining to the trucking industry. It seems simple enough to grant one permit, one license, just like passenger automobiles.) It's time for the federal government to get it in gear, to recognize there is more at stake than the welfare of 13,000 federally regulated carriers and the Teamsters Union.

Unless everybody does get it together, and soon, the next strike just may take us all to our knees. In prayer. In economic depression. Or hunger.

As consumers, we can get by with less fuel. Less energy, perhaps. Can we get by with less food?

That's the ponderous question that agribusiness, the trucking industry, and state and federal officials must answer. How we answer—and respond—will have a thundering impact on your future as a beef producer.

Now is the time to get involved.