

AGRICULTURE'S HABIT of crying wolf at every adversity has bothered me for a long time. It upsets me particularly that we editors not only go along with this practice, we may even encourage it in our efforts to produce good copy.

The latest calamity — the corn blight problem — is a perfect example of how we milk every possible cloud of gloom from a bad situation. This in no way denies the seriousness of the problem, because it has caused heavy farm losses. But this damage has been exaggerated in scores of statements by ag leaders and in releases from college information offices.

## *The Editor's Corner*

Many stories strongly hinted that the entire crop was gone. I have no inside information on how much the nation's corn crop was cut, but the official estimate from Washington does not support the earlier prophets of doom.

There are many other examples. How many times have we reported that certain crops were wiped out by drought, or excess rain, or cold weather, or insects, or diseases, when the final result was far from a complete failure. Politics enters in, of course, since such wolf crying often precedes a request for a region to be declared a disaster area and thereby qualify for certain federal funds.

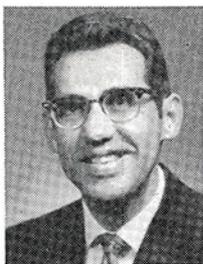
The imported fire ant has been the topic of all sorts of dire reports. This pest came into Alabama's Gulf Coast Area 40 or 50 years ago, but nobody really got excited about it until it moved near the State Capitol. Farmers in southern Alabama had endured the fiery stinging ant for a generation, but it suddenly became a serious problem when it invaded lawns and golf courses where the political powers reside and play. The fire ant now qualifies as a political football, so it is difficult to assess its importance. Now, most college editors in the South seem to be avoiding the subject of fire ants, just as they avoid the ant mounds.

No doubt our public relations efforts can be hampered by continued wolf crying. It's obvious that the general public should know about agricultural problems so they can better appreciate necessary government farm programs. But we need to practice some restraint in telling this story, so that we will be heard when the real wolf arrives at our door.

R.E.S.

## *Meet ACE Authors*

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