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EDITORIAL

Improving Things for the New Comers

In the Great Lone Land known formerly as the Northwest, now the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, the great needs of the settlers and newcomers are means of communication with the outside; such including railroads, telephones, a mail service, roads and bridges. The first and third are more or less the affair of the Dominion Government; the other two, provincial matters, but none the less important. It seems to us that the provincial authorities might well devote more of their capital and surplus energies to the settlers going out into the virgin wilds, fifty, sixty and a hundred miles from railroad, their base of supplies and medical assistance, by building out into these districts a few trunk telephones line with stations every four or five miles. The expense would not be burdensome to the province and should not be objected to by the well-settled districts adjacent to the comforts and conveniences of civilization. One can hardly imagine the pain and anguish which might be saved by telephone lines as suggested, radiating from a few centers such as Medicine Hat, Lacombe, Edmonton, Hanley, Saskatoon, Moosejaw, etc., in the direction of the districts now being, and to be, settled up. Unfortunately the move to provide such facilities is generally confined to those districts which could get along without for a time, or else comes too late to do the most good. Take for instance the Goose Lake district in Saskatchewan, fifty to a hundred miles from anywhere, and with an apology for a mail service. Just to be specific, out from Hanley is staged the mail, once a week to Rudy, and distributed from there to other points thirty or more miles further on. At present the stage carries as big a load as can be taken, and with the present rate of ingress of settlers will not be able to carry it all, but up to date we have not heard of the Postal Department asking for tenders for a bi-weekly service which is needed now. Nothing helps to damn a country more quickly than a poor mail and railroad service, as the past six months has abundantly proven by the immigration statistics from the U.S., which show already a falling off of four or five thousand in the first four months of the year. One railroad in the West fell down badly because it seemed to lack capital, in the form of money and managerial ability, but the Government has not that excuse for its mail service. Another instance of some post office methods: The writer was on a C.N.R. train at Dundurn, side-tracked, awaiting the north bound train. Between the tracks was water up to the knees, and yet the sapient postal mail clerks on the northbound train, whose negligence had resulted in two bags of mail being brought a station or so too far north, with imbecile grin, gaily rolled the two sacks out into the water, for the south bound mail clerk to get. Is it any wonder that settlers are put to worry on account of non-delivery of mail. The climate has been blamed for much, the past winter for more, but it seems to us unjustly so, and it is disheartening to see the splendid work of the Immigration Department and the endurance and patience of settlers from Great Britain and the U. S. wasted or nullified by lack of efficiency or foresight in railroad and post office circles.

Commercial Sunshine

The man who sells grain or stock or hay from his farm reduces by a given amount the capital stock of his business. The man who sells butter from his farm parts with nothing that might have been retained with advantage to his soil.

Butter in its final analysis is nothing more than crystallized sunshine, water and air and in the manufacture of this product tons of inert unavailable plant food are rendered available for crops by the processes of bovine digestion. This is the secret of the fact that a man who keeps cows generally has money to spend whether or not butter is a high price, for he sells nothing of his estate and gets something because the sun shines and grass grows and his cows make his land more fit to grow crops.

Dairying is a highly specialized branch of farming. It is only adopted where people are of superior intelligence and is a mark of efficiency in farming wherever it predominates over other vocations. The dairy cow is a delicate mechanism. Milk is a very perishable product; it is full of potentialities to please the palate or disgust the taste. Dairy machinery is amongst the most intricate but simple of the devices of modern mechanics, and the marketing of dairy products require the exercise of the keenest commercial instinct and the best salesmanship ability.

Naturally dairying is not at once followed extensively by pioneers, but its early adoption marks a progressive community. Its pursuit demands commercial interests and the adoption of co-operative methods and in it is found the solution of many of the problems that vex students of rural economics.

Dairying is one of those industries that to flourish requires a fairly dense population and expanding markets. The population is necessary to provide labor, for a dairy farm supports more people to the acre than probably any other system of farming and markets must be reasonably near to eliminate competition.

In Western Canada there are immense stretches of country that are eminently adapted to dairying on account of their rich pastures, increasing population of a laboring sort, and facilities for access to larger centers for markets. Dairying is coming into vogue in these districts for the reasons mentioned, but in order that the industry grow steadily in favor it is important that it be made as profitable as it is possible for it to be. To this end we publish on another page personal experiences of men who have been engaged in increasing the productiveness of their cows. The recital of these experiences we believe will point the way to others by which they can make what cows they keep yield a larger income and having evidence of what a selected herd will do, more cows will be kept and dairying will take its place along with the most profitable branches of farming in Western Canada.

The Beef Commission

The laudable attempt of Alberta's Minister of Agriculture to do something to help one of the greatest industries of his province, the trade in beef cattle, does not seem to be taken seriously by many of the stockmen out in the foothills country. Unfortunately the Commission has such limited powers that is shorn of any authority to begin with and we have frequently heard the question asked, "What can it do?"

In the first place a commission of this kind should have been a Dominion rather than a provincial affair, and it could then have made a thorough attempt to investigate. Second, the personnel of the Commission, although made up of most estimable gentlemen, is not a composition of men at all well acquainted with the cattle trade. Again, on the second, and we must admit wiser thought, Saskatchewan and British Columbia decided to stay out, so that the commission is now narrowed down to two provinces, and it is very doubtful if results will be obtained worth the expenditure. Then again the trend of beef prices is upward and people do not enthuse over such investigations unless the grievance is present and recent.

Reducing Expenses, Mental or Manual?

The scheme of Government ownership and operation outlined by the conference committee of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association has a fascination about it which grows with more extended study. One has only to reconcile himself to the theory of Government ownership of utilities and all the difficulties in connection with the elevator problem and many of those in the marketing of grain will disappear. The wheat grown in Western Canada is under many handicaps in reaching the world's markets. Our country is far inland, the standard of living of the producers is high, our seasons are short, and so far, excepting for some work that has been done in seed selecting and breeding, there is very little in our methods of farming that gives us any advantage over countries where labor is cheaper and ocean ports more easily available. The aim should therefore be to evolve a system of marketing and storing that will reduce the cost of these operations to the minimum by removing costly competition and excessive charges for services, all of which eventually comes out of the crop. From the very nature of things our position as a wheat producing country, and that is really what our land is most adapted to, can only be maintained in two ways—saving in the handling of our wheat or by the producers sacrificing many of their comforts in life. The former is feasible, the latter intolerable. The subject is one of universal interest. The tendency in modern economic arrangements is to give the man who does the manual labor more of it to do for less compensation and to the man who does the mental or clerical work less to do with an increasing compensation. The tendency is to be deplored. There should be a judicious mixing of the mental and manual, but this mixing will have to be done by those who now have the most manual labor; the others cannot be expected to favor it.

Utilising Coarse Grains

The opinion is general throughout the country that the proportion of coarse grains to wheat will be greater this year than at any other time in the past. Barley and oats will constitute the greater increase and barley and oats are essentially stock foods. Through stock these grains reach their greatest value and without stock it is easy to glut the market with them. The aim, therefore, should be to raise pigs, and when possible get control of young cattle to be carried over next winter. Hog values show no sign of diminishing and cattle prices have every indication of having passed their low level.

We are not advocating this policy now because cattle and hogs are bringing good money. We have always preached stock feeding as an adjunct to farming and the past year or two have referred to it time and again, and are glad to note now how stock raisers are having an innings. Readers will have noticed the description of the methods of certain feeders up Yorkton way in our May 15th issue and will also have noticed the letters from raisers of hogs, on how they manage to raise large litters. The gist of these articles is that one does not require expensive and elaborate buildings before embarking in stock feeding and raising, but so long as shelter from the wind can be provided, either natural or artificial, and rough grain grown to feed such stock, the greatest essentials in feeding have been secured.

The time between seeding and summer-fallowing and between fallowing and harvest will probably be short this summer, but there will doubtless be many who will snatch time to build pole sheds over which straw can be threshed which will furnish as much shelter as full grown cattle require or where hogs can feed and grow as well as though they were protected by stone walls and board roof.