

# Farmer's Advocate

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### EDITORIAL

#### When Doctors Disagree

We were looking over some experiment station bulletins the other day to find the proportions in which ordinary formaldehyde should be mixed with water to form a solution of the proper strength for destroying smut spores on grain. There seemed to be about as many different strengths of solution recommended as there are experiment stations issuing publications on the subject. The same thing occurs in regard to the proper proportions to mix Paris green with water to poison potato beetles. One experimenter says one thing, another something else. To the credit of the various stations it must be said that their conclusions very nearly agree. The trouble is that with our cumbersome English system of weights and measures, with its fluid ounces and ounces by weight, its pints, quarts, gallons and other standards of measuring the weight or volume of solutions, it is a little difficult to express clearly in all cases exactly what is meant. The whole system is confusing. Added to this is the further fact that the American standard differs slightly from ours. Our own standards of weights and measure are confusing enough, without borrowing disconcertion by mixing ours up with theirs, as is sometimes done. It would be a good scheme for the agricultural experts of this country to get together somewhere and find out exactly where they are at in matters as simple as the proper strength of formaline solution to use in treating grain for smut, or the concocting of Paris green solutions for poisoning the potato bug. So long as the doctors disagree the rest of us are not supposed to know.

#### Wastes in Agriculture

It is surprising the area of land, the amount of labor and capital that is involved each year in the production of agricultural commodities and grains—especially in this country—that are wasted. A large quantity of grain is never harvested at all; a tremendous quantity, take the country as a whole, is never threshed, simply blown out on the straw pile and burnt. There are wastes in marketing, losses to the producer in grading. The most conservative estimate places the proportion of the wheat crop wasted each year at ten per cent. of the whole. This year, at that rate, and on official estimates of the crop, there will be nine or ten million bushels of wheat produced on the land that will never be accounted for. Wealth has been created, land, labor and capital has contributed to its creation, but it disappears without remuneration to the interests involved in its production, has been wasted, and the cost of producing it is merely an additional charge against the cost of producing that portion which has been saved. It is an economic waste.

We believe that this estimate, that ten per cent. of the wheat crop is lost yearly through gross carelessness in harvesting, threshing and marketing, is away below the actual loss occurring. We have seen farmers smashing down about that percentage with the reel when they were cutting the crop, smashing down the grain because the reel was not adjusted to handle it properly. Nobody needs to be told that quite a considerable loss occurs in threshing; in some districts this loss is greater than in others. There are some places where we verily believe that twenty per cent. of the grain grown is left in the straw and burned. When threshing is fairly carefully done, there is a loss of five per cent. or so, five per cent. easily. Added to this there are the losses of marketing, the quantity lost about the stacks and granary, scattered along the trail or given away to the elevators in the form of small grain that could be used in stock feeding on the farm, all of

which totals up, we should judge, to rather more than ten per cent. of the total crop. But even reckoned as a ten per cent. waste, it represents a loss on this season's crop of seven or eight million dollars.

Over in the United States they have a commission investigating the possibilities of utilizing to advantage the waste products of certain industries. In the lumbering business, for example, sawdust is being considered, and ways are being sought for transforming this waste material into some form suitable for use. It is probable that a way will be found. Society must eliminate economic wastes. It cannot afford to permit them to continue.

#### Technical Education Needed

Though unable to agree with the Canadian Manufacturers' Association in its resolution calling for higher tariff protection to Canadian industry, we do most heartily endorse and approve their demand for a general system of technical education, to the end that our artisans and captains of industry may be trained to a greater degree of proficiency.

Urban as well as rural school education requires revolutionizing, and it must commence in the common school; so that, from the very beginning of his education, the manual and intellectual faculties of the child may be developed in consonance. School-gardening and nature study, manual training and, probably, domestic science, must be introduced into the lower forms of the public school. In the rural school, the emphasis will naturally fall on gardening and nature study; in town and city schools, manual training may properly receive the greater degree of attention.

With such a foundation laid in the common schools, the High Schools and colleges may continue the evolution of the child's faculties by weaving principles of agricultural science into the rural High School curriculum; while in the city schools, those pupils with a bent for arts and trades may be offered a course of instruction that will develop them into proficient workmen, instead of heading them off from the occupations for which they were cut out, by stuffing them with an academic and purely bookish education, and finally graduating them into second or third-class teachers, doctors, and lawyers. The problem of technical education is indeed a large and pressing one, calling for immediate attention and action, and the vote of \$5,000 offered by the Canadian Manufacturers' Association towards the expense of investigating and reporting upon the matter is an act of generosity, the fruits of which will reward the donors and their successors manifold.

#### The Equal Freight Rates Question

To farmers out on the rim of the universe, and ten thousand miles or so from market, this equal freight rates scheme appears a splendid one. To our correspondent from Alberta, who, in another column of this issue, undertakes to convert to us the idea, there seems to be a principle adaptable of universal application in the equal haulage rates for milk or cream, which he states prevails to the satisfaction of all creamery patrons in his locality. He proposes, therefore, a great freight union based on lines similar to the postal union now existing among most civilized nations, providing, of course, that the various countries concerned would fall in with the suggestion, which is extremely unlikely. The proposal is rather too far-fetched to appeal very strongly to public intelligence. It may be popular enough from the view-point of the producer living the greatest distance from the place where any particular commodity is to be sold or consumed, but the popularity of the scheme will decrease proportionately as the distance lessens between the farthest outlying point from which commodities are to be shipped and the market where they are to be sold.

The general principle enunciated in our previous discussions of this subject, that products, whatever they may be, must themselves bear the charges of carriage from the point of origin to the place where they are finally sold, cannot be departed from. Freight cost is a charge against the commodity carried. It may be quite possible in some cases to pro rate the charges, average the whole cost up, as our correspondent points out in the case of his local creamery, or in the case of delegates to religious conferences, where the community is willing to sink individuality and bring to a dead level the natural advantages of all its members, but there are no indications yet that the average individual of the human species is willing to share up whatever advantages he may possess with his less fortunately situated brethren.

Our correspondent's ideas about every individual working, not for himself, but in the interests of the particular body he is a part of, might be satisfactorily realized if he could have his stock and farm products laid down in the British market, say at the same carriage cost per pound as the farmers of Manitoba, Ontario, or even of the British Isles, pay for the carriage of their produce to the same market. Suppose however, the Alberta Government went into this pork packing business, put up a plant in this man's town, and he lived on the outskirts, where he could drive his stock in without cost at all. If now, the unusually low rates brought stock in from all quarters, from down here in Manitoba, and from away up in the Peace River valley, how long would the hog raisers in that locality be satisfied to go on helping farmers a thousand miles or so away to ship in stock to compete with their own? This scheme works well only one way. The hog business locally would be throttled. Since the freight charges actually for shipping the longer distance would be greater, a competing packing company would quickly drive out of business any concern that tried to operate on the flat rate basis. Soon there would be nothing left to the philanthropically conceived packing house but the business from the most outlying points, and when its operations dwindled down to that, its customers out there would be paying the actual cost, or at least the prevailing carriage charges on their products. So we get back to the starting point, to the principle that products of all kinds must stand the cost of carriage to the point of sale or manufacture. That is a fundamental principle of trade.

The case in favor of equal freight rates is not strengthened much by comparing the proposition with our flat rate postal system. The postal business is a public monopoly, designed as a great public convenience. Were it not a publicly controlled monopoly, were it possible for competing mail-carrying concerns to exist, then the charge for carrying mail matter the shortest distance would be less, and the charges to the most distant point more. Even as it is, it pays us in some cases to express mail matter of certain classes where the distance is not great. But it is doubtful, extremely doubtful, if all the businesses in the world could be monopolized as the post office is. It is very much to be doubted whether the several hundred million individuals in the various quarters of the entire earth want it to be. The postal business is an arrangement of public convenience, it is not based as the carrying business generally is—on the cost of the service rendered, or something supposed to represent that cost. As a basis for some specious arguing, the postal system may be indicated as an example of successful working out of the flat rate theory, but when all the facts are considered and the question considered broadly, we cannot see that the scheme proposed gains anything by the comparison, or that we have any occasion to depart from the opinion previously expressed.