



Practical Talks to Threshermen

Conducted by PROFESSOR P. S. ROSE

TALK No. XXXI.

In order to give a concrete meaning to some of the points discussed in the last lesson, let us assume an example and figure out the various items of expense connected with the operation of a threshing rig and, if possible, arrive at what should be a reasonable price to charge for threshing. It must be borne in mind that the values which I shall assume are liable to carry in different sections of the country, but the general treatment of the subjects will be the same for all sections. All that need be done to make the results fit the local condition is to insert the proper values for labor, interest, etc., that obtain in the given locality.

We will assume that a thresherman, located, say in North Dakota, bought an outfit consisting of a 30-horse power engine, a 40x66 separator, with self-feeder, weigher, wind stacker, and main drive belt. Besides this he purchased two tank pumps, two water tanks and a cook car. The total cost of the outfit, after paying freight and equipping the cook car, amounted to \$4,000. He had \$400 to begin with and gave four notes of \$900 each for the balance. This first note was made payable October first, after delivery, and the other three notes ran one, two and three years respectively, falling due on October first of each year. Interest was charged at the rate of eight per cent. per annum. The rig was delivered on August first and settlement was made on that date.

The average life of a threshing outfit may be figured at eight years. The engine may last a little longer, but the separator will probably not last quite so long; so that an estimate of eight years is fairly liberal and actually a little more than the average for the section of the country where this thresherman lives and where farm machinery does not always receive the best of care.

The average number of days of actual threshing will be about twenty-four. In some places it runs as high as thirty days, and in other localities eighteen or twenty days will complete the season's run.

Following the custom of the country, the thresherman will furnish a complete crew, as follows, and pay the scale of wages set forth below:

1 Engineer	.....\$5.00 per day
1 Fireman	.....3.00 " "
1 Separator man	.....5.00 " "
1 Water boy with team	.....5.00 " "
6 Bundle teams with drivers	.....30.00 " "
4 Spike pitchers	.....10.00 " "
4 Loaders	.....10.00 " "
1 Cook	.....4.00 " "
1 Manager	.....6.00 " "

20 Men. Total—\$78.00 per day
The cost of board for the men

will not be less than fifty cents. per day, making an additional charge of ten dollars per day. The wages of the crew do not have to be paid in wet weather when they cannot work, but board must be furnished regardless of the weather, and it is an item of considerable importance in wet seasons.

In the last lesson it was suggested that two dollars per day should be charged to repairs. It is doubtful if this is figured high enough. With good luck the first year, repair bills will be light, but after that they will get larger each year until the rig is worn out. In regions where alkali is found in large quantities in the feed water, it makes flue repairs heavy. A set of flues will last only about four or five years and a new set will cost about one hundred and twenty-five dollars. It will thus be seen that two dollars per day is a low estimate for repairs.

Oil for engine and separator will cost about one dollar per day, and incidental expenses another dollar. These incidental expenses cover such items as tools, waste, packing, belting repairs and small extras.

We are now ready to consider the total expenses and figure out how much they amount to per day. These may be tabulated as follows:

Interest on \$4,000 at eight per cent	.....\$ 320.00
Depreciation per year for eight years	.....50.00
Total wages paid for 24 days at \$78 per day	.....1,872.00
Total for board and crew for 24 days	.....240.00
Total for repairs, oil, incidentals	.....96.00

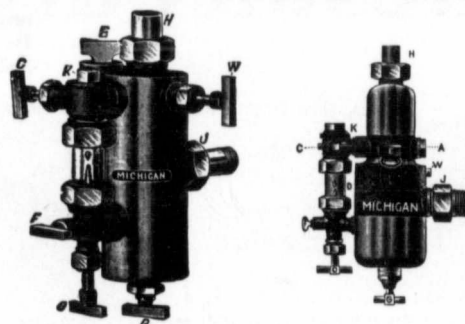
Total expense for 24 days \$3,028.00
Total expenses per day . \$ 126.16

The usual price for wheat threshing in this thresherman's part of the country is nine cents per bushel. In order to meet expenses, therefore, without making any profit for himself, he must thresh on an average 1,402 bushels per day. This average takes in account all delays, time on the road, and time consumed in setting. Working at this rate, the thresherman would come out exactly even at the end of eight years, provided he had no bad weather and no bad luck, on an outfit such as I have described. However, he would have a good deal of trouble meeting his notes when they came due and would have an extension of time on all of them.

Let us now see exactly how much he must thresh each day in order to meet his notes when they come due, assuming, as before, that he runs twenty-four days each season and that running expenses are as before indicated.

The debt of \$4,000 was assumed

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