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EDITORIAL.

Experience in Cow-testing.

With this number we place before our readers a few of the hundred or more letters recently to hand on the subject of individual milk records. They are printed, without selection, just as they came to hand in reply to a letter of inquiry, and their almost unanimous and, in many cases, enthusiastic endorsement of the wisdom of keeping accurate account of the work of individual cows may well cause dairymen to pause and think hard. Of course, our letter was addressed only to men who, we were advised, were or had been keeping records, and it is to be expected the opinions of most of these would be much more generally favorable than a verdict obtained by a hit-and-miss census. It is true there are many good dairymen who have never made a practice of weighing their milk at all. They either have never thought of it, or else have dismissed the proposition with the mental comment that help was too scarce and milk records too much bother. This latter objection is, to our mind, most effectively answered by our correspondents, nearly all of whom state that the time required to keep milk records is inconsiderable, while the greater care in milking, feeding and attention results in a substantial increase in milk yield that handsomely repays the trouble of weighing the milk and keeping the records. Several mention that the hired man has become as much interested in the records as they themselves. So far from making the milking irksome, records give the men a new pleasure in their work.

We grant that some men will take an interest in the records when the idea is new and the cows increasing in response to the stimulus of improved feed and care, but will find their interest waning when the record becomes an old story and the cows have reached a stage whence further increase is not easy. The wide-awake dairyman, however, will not allow himself to lag. Once started, he will become so seized of its advantages that he will feel he cannot afford to stop keeping records. He will continue, not merely for the sake of maintaining his milk flow, but in the ever-absorbing ambition to weed out his poor cows and ascertain the good ones by several years' continuous records—for let us warn most emphatically against drawing final conclusions from one year's results. Many a cow does well one season, but falls short the next, and many heifers are slow in reaching their best producing capacity. It is the average of several years' performance that counts.

Among our correspondents are those who have kept records four, five and six years continuously, and these evince no thought of discontinuing. Their testimony is worth heeding. Even men who see little use in milk records must admit that those who have tried it are best qualified to judge. Their evidence is that the scales have no end of surprises in store, even for the best of herdsmen. In fact, records are worth most to the up-to-date dairymen. These men make more intelligent use of their records, learning more readily what lessons the figures convey. Not the least of its advantages is that record-keeping, in the case of dairy cows, fixes the habit of close observation, and shows the wisdom of applying similar rules to all the operations of the farm. Its benefits are cumulative.

The milk record is the basis of dairy-herd improvement. It points the way to progress in breeding, weeding and feeding—that trinity of effective purpose. Now is the time to start. A line to Prof. J. H. Grisdale, Agriculturist, Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa, will bring

blank ruled forms very well suited to the purpose. A trifling expense for a spring balance will complete the outfit, and a creameryman or some neighbor will generally be found willing to make occasional Babcock tests.

Pessimistic, but Wholesome.

The recent retiring presidential address of Mr. P. Howland, before the Toronto Board of Trade, contained a number of observations, the timeliness, candor and sanity of which will commend themselves to the farming community, as they should to business men generally. Notwithstanding the large deposits in the banks, indicating the thrift and saving of the people, he pointed out that bankers are finding it difficult to keep their reserves in safe proportion to their liabilities and find means to meet the constantly-increasing demands of their customers and the very speculative disposition of the times. Mr. Howland, therefore, felt warranted in presaging a probable period of dear money, a tendency upon which our readers who contemplate increasing their liabilities for land or improvements would do well to keep an eye.

The old maxim read, "In time of peace prepare for war." Mr. Howland, we gather, would translate this, in time of prosperity prepare for the inevitable cycle of depression, and so defer and minimize its advent. Railway construction, immigration, unusually good crops and high prices for all commodities, including labor, Mr. Howland diagnosed as the causes of the "good times" prevailing. The producers of beef, dairy products, bacon, poultry and like articles, will hardly concur with Mr. Howland that the prices are about at the inflation point, because, by keeping tab on taxes, cost of fodder, and sundry items in the cost of production, they will probably conclude that their margin is certainly not inflated. On this very point, as competent and careful an observer as Mr. Wm. Duthie, of Collynie, Scotland, in a lecture, after his tour of Canada last year, declared that "the great drawback to successful farming in Canada was the comparatively poor prices which the farmer got for what he raised and sold, together with the high prices he had to pay for what he had to buy."

The law of averages will, he argued, bring about the lean years, and that condition will be hastened by the extraordinarily large expenditures, national, provincial, municipal and individual, against which he properly sounded a note of warning. These expenditures involve a large burden of interest, and it is not surprising, therefore, to learn, as lately announced by the official reports of a leading financial agency, that the vast bulk of all the business failures in the country are due to want of sufficient initial capital, which is especially dangerous in a speculative period.

He condemned Government bonuses as one of the worst forms of class legislation. The extent to which these are growing is shown by a late statement of the Minister of Customs to Parliament, showing that to date over \$8,000,000 had been paid out in this way, including \$998,000 to the Soo Company, \$1,416,469 to the Nova Scotia Steel Company, and \$3,466,519 to the Dominion Steel Co. While these bonuses may not, like a high tariff, directly operate to increase prices, they must, in the end, come out of the pockets of the people, who are led to believe that without the presence of these artificially-stimulated industries we should be at the mercy of some big American trust. We do well not to place undue emphasis upon the advantage of a whistle that may cost us dear.

Referring to the deplorable revelations in com-

mercial, financial, insurance and political affairs during the past year, characteristic of a buoyant, speculative era, Mr. Howland contended that these things were doubtless fostered by paternalism, whether taking the form of protection by customs duties or bonuses, sumptuary laws that tend to make the individual lean on Government help for his profits and his wage, thus weakening self-reliance and independence; but we think that no student of modern economics can shut his eyes to the socialistic evolution in relation to public control of public utilities and the care of the individual by the state, through which the world is just now passing.

In conclusion, Mr. Howland designated a weakness in the Canadian Railway Commission in failing effectually to deal with rates, rate combinations and discriminations, while spending so much time on the less-important details of railways crossing each others' tracks, while the interests of the shippers and the people generally were suffering.

Let us Know What we are Feeding.

The Ontario Experimental Union, a body composed chiefly of students and ex-students of the Ontario Agricultural College, has at four of its annual meetings discussed the advisability of a Federal law providing for an official system of inspection and analysis of concentrated feeding-stuffs, such as gluten feed, oil meal, and the dozens or hundreds of other by-products in the manufacture of starch, glucose and other articles derived from the cereal grains. The law desired would, further, compel the manufacturer or vendor of these commercial feedstuffs to attach to each package or parcel a tag bearing a guarantee of the percentage of protein and fat contained in the feed, or, if sold in bulk, to produce on demand a guarantee of the percentages of the two constituents mentioned.

Legislation to similar purpose has been enacted in many States by the American Republic, where bulletins are regularly issued by the State Experiment Stations giving the results of analyses of all the brands of feedstuffs sold in each particular State. In Canada, a plan similar to the one outlined above has long been in force with regard to commercial fertilizers, and the ever-increasing number of milling by-products renders a law necessary to regulate the commerce in them.

Two reasons demand such a law. In the first place, the very large and increasing number of these feeds makes a study of their composition confusing, even to an agricultural chemist. It is practically impossible for anyone to learn and keep in mind anything like an accurate knowledge of their average composition. In the second place, even if one could possess himself of such information, it would be of little use, because analysis shows a wide range in the composition of similar products from different mills. For instance, analyses of gluten meal at the O. A. C. have shown a variation in the content of crude protein from 15 or 16 up to 34.9 per cent, and differences of considerable consequence occur in most of the other commercial concentrates also. As a rule, these commercial feedstuffs are valuable; some are richer than any of our staple grains. But, in order to buy and use them wisely, one must know how the particular brands in which he proposes to invest compare with staple feeds in the total amount of nutriment contained. Not less important is it to know of what nature the nutriment is, whether rich in protein, as are bran, oil meal and peas, therefore adapted to produce growth and milk; or whether it is more of a purely fattening property, like corn. If a