

Strange and Unique Ranching Schemes Launched in Canada

Written for The Western Home Monthly by Francis J. Dickie
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The Federal Government of Canada has just granted a concession of 75,850 square miles in the region of the Churchill River in the Hudson Bay district to a private ranching company, the North American Reindeer Company, capitalized at \$750,000, which proposes to embark upon a ranching project unique in the history of the Dominion. The ranch is the largest in area in the entire world, and upon it will be grazed domesticated caribou, commonly known as reindeer, to supply beef and leather. Musk-oxen may also be raised in captivity. In return for the concession the company pay a yearly rental of \$192,000, which is four cents an acre on their 48,000,000-acre holding. They also are to give the government five per cent of the yearly total of their herds. The animals which the government so acquires will be turned over to Indian and Eskimo living in the territory. By this plan the government hopes to foster a new industry and make the Indians and Eskimo free from the danger of starvation which now frequently faces them when game fails. The plan is very much the same as that so successfully carried out by the United States Government in Alaska. Twenty-seven years ago the United States Government imported twelve hundred head of reindeer into Alaska from Russia. To-day, there are 85,000 head in Alaska, and the native Eskimo, from a nomadic and wretchedly existing people, depend entirely on game and fishing, have changed to a very prosperous people, many of them owning individually as many as a thousand head of reindeer.

The new Canadian company propose to drive their first herd from Alaska overland to the Churchill River country, a difficult undertaking, as the distance is about two thousand miles through wilderness region.

If this drive proves successful, it will be the most unusual feat of its kind perhaps ever performed in the world's history.

The great possibilities that lie in raising reindeer and musk-oxen were called to the attention of the Canadian Federal Government in May of this year by Stefannson, the Arctic explorer, when he addressed the House of Parliament on his return from the Arctic. He suggested the establishing of a station on Melville Island (see map of Canada for a better understanding of this article), where a start could be made in the domesticating of the musk-ox and the caribou, which animals abound upon the Arctic prairies. These prairies, called "barrens" because of the absence of trees, are, however, richly clothed with moss, that feeds the animals both winter and summer; rank and plentifully growing grass also flourishes in the summer, and dries for winter feed. The members of the House at Ottawa reported favorably, and Stefannson's scheme will in all likelihood be put into practise in the near future. Meanwhile the private company have undertaken to graze reindeer on the largest scale in the history of the world.

But there are still other possibilities which in the near future are bound to receive attention. Thirteen years ago the Dominion Government started the conservation of wild animal life on the largest scale ever attempted by placing seven hundred and fifty bison, commonly called buffalo, in a natural park at Wainwright, Alberta. To-day this herd numbers over twenty-two hundred, and soon will be too numerous for the park to support. At the same time, nine hundred miles to the north, near Fort Smith on Great Slave River, are between three and five hundred wild buffalo, called "wood-buffalo." Undoubtedly, these are a remnant of the great prairie herds that were so numerous seventy-five years ago. The new environment has somewhat altered them in appearance, but as far as can be learned they are the same animal as formerly roamed the plains to the southward. If a few hundred of the herd at Wainwright were transported to the Fort Smith region, there is every

possibility that in a quarter of a century the buffalo would roam the region in thousands. The buffalo can be brought back to flourish in this northern region, which will undoubtedly never be used by man. The rapid increase of the Wainwright herd proves this, and the infusing of some of their blood into the strange wild herd in the northland

would be bound to result in a large increase.

On the Arctic Barrens also roam wild caribou in numbers so vast that men who have watched some of the herds on the march have been appalled. These caribou are estimated to be greater in number than even the buffalo two hundred years ago. The great naturalist, Ernest Thompson Seton, in a recent report to the Commission of Conservation, Canada, estimated them at 30,000,000. At present the people of Dawson City get their yearly winter supply of meat by killing thousands of the animals which pass near on their winter migration inland. With a railway pushed to the

barrens, which, it is hinted, the Rhonnda interests have now under consideration, immense numbers of these animals could be killed and shipped to market. The flesh is good and the hide worth about four dollars a pound for buckskin if taken in the late fall.

At this period of the world's history when the world seems even farther from meeting the demand, the wonderful possibilities of Canada are now commanding the attention of financiers and economists, and undoubtedly in the next few years undertakings in the way of making use of caribou, musk-oxen, and let it be hoped, the buffalo, will be made.

The Increased Price of Wheat

The Canadian Wheat Board has announced an increase of 50c. a bushel in the price of wheat to the millers. This action has been taken because Mr. Julius Barnes, of the United States Grain Corporation, has succeeded in his attempt to have removed those war-time restrictions which prevented the free entry of Canadian wheat into the United States. The farmers of Western Canada must appreciate what has been done for them by Mr. Barnes.

There was a time when there was loud discussion in Canada as to what effect free wheat between Canada and the United States would have upon the price of wheat. It was argued on the one side that the price of wheat at Minneapolis would be reduced to the Canadian level, and it was as emphatically asserted on the other side that the price of Canadian wheat would approach to the higher level usually obtaining in Minneapolis. Upon whichever side of the controversy the merits of the case lay, those who argued against free wheat won in the reciprocity election of 1911.

Many things have happened since the year 1911, so many that we are living now in a new order of things altogether. Amongst the many changes that have taken place are those affecting trade in wheat as between Canada and the United States. Both countries have removed the duty on wheat. So far as governments and parliaments are concerned, free trade in wheat between Canada and the United States is now the law. During the war, and for many months after the Armistice was signed, both countries maintained restrictions which made free wheat impossible. Now, however, the United States Government has removed all those restrictions, while the Canadian authorities have not. We have now a one-sided free wheat between the two countries, and the immediate result of this is an increase to the Canadian farmer of 50c. a bushel in the price of his wheat.

Have the farmers of Western Canada changed their attitude in regard to free wheat? The question sounds comical now that they have at last a concrete demonstration of the value of the American market. But the question is not as comical as it sounds, and for this reason there is not a chance in a hundred that the United States will keep its market open if Canada continues its present method of selling wheat. The farmers of the United States, especially of the spring wheat growing areas, cannot be expected to look with favor upon the free entry of Canadian wheat into their markets, and they will find allies in the United States in any attempt they may make to re-impose the duty or the restrictions. And in making such an attempt their spokesmen can make use of the kind of argument which has never failed to find a response in the United States.

They can argue that while Canada has removed the duty upon American wheat, it still maintains its restrictions, because American wheat and flour cannot come into Canada except through a permit or a license from the Wheat Board. Not only so, but it can be argued with perhaps still greater effect, that American millers cannot purchase Canadian wheat on commercial terms and by commercial methods; that if they attempt to purchase Canadian wheat they can deal only with a Wheat Board which has a statutory monopoly of all Canadian wheat; and that, therefore, the Canadian market is not only closed as against United States wheat and flour by its licensing system, but also that this form of protection is reinforced and strengthened by the Canadian Government method of selling.

It is impossible to show that this argument is false. This being the case, it is unthinkable that the United States will long keep her market opened to Canadian wheat if Canada continues this method of selling. True enough the United States authorities have not objected so far as the present crop year is concerned, and they have not objected for the simple reason that they have no logical foundation upon which to base such an objection as far as this year is concerned. If Canada has a Wheat Board, they have a United States Grain Corporation. If Canada has restrictions still, they had restrictions until the other day. The operations of their Grain Corporation were so limited since the beginning of the present crop year that it was no inconvenience to them to remove their restrictions against Canadian wheat in the middle of the crop year.

The operations of the Canadian Wheat Board are so complicated that it cannot be expected that they should cease their operations before the end of the present crop year. So far, therefore, as the handling of this year's crop is concerned, there is no reason why the United States should object to Canada's method of selling her wheat, but should Canada maintain her present method of selling beyond this crop year, there is not a chance in a hundred that the United States will keep her markets open free to Canadian wheat.

It would be a curious development if, while the farmers in 1911 fought and voted for free wheat, they should for 1920 adopt a method of marketing Canadian wheat which would as inevitably defeat free wheat between Canada and the United States as thoroughly as it was defeated in 1911.

The above article appeared in the Winnipeg Telegram, December 29th. Without expressing any opinion on it, I think it is worthy of the most careful consideration.

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