

A Better Farming Proposition

Why the Appointment of Agricultural Secretaries in Saskatchewan is a Solution to the Weed Question

When speaking of a solution to a question it is understood that the so-called solution is a system or outline of work that will accomplish maximum results in a minimum amount of time. All will agree that the weed question is a good farming proposition. Numberless suggestions and schemes have been put forth, but all show lack of thoroughness, and indicate that very little thought has been given to the subject. We hear entirely too much these days about mixed farming and "educate the farmer." The only way to go into mixed farming is to grow into it, and all the average farmer needs is a chance to educate himself.

People say, enforce The Weed Act—suppose we do. It will not be a solution to the weed question—you can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink. Farming is a personal equation; weed control is a personal matter between a farmer and his fields. Law enforcement will never make good farmers out of poor ones any more than you can legislate to make men Methodists or Mormons. Law will help, but it will not cure.

People say, do educational work. How are you going to do it. In the first place no man can tell me thru a book or from a platform how to till my fields; that same man out in my fields with me can give me material assistance. Again, altho there is a vast amount of knowledge that can be gleaned from literature, a great proportion of our people do not read, farm papers do not reach them, government literature they do not use or seem to demand, there is no direct connection between the man on the farm and the experimental farms and agricultural colleges, many of these men will not come out to hear institute meetings, short courses, etc. Education will help, but it will not cure.

People say, organize. Well and good, but who is going to do this organization work? The margin of profit is too small to permit of people giving to this work the amount of time that the needs of the country demand. We will not get the organization work done as it ought to be done until we are prepared to pay a man to do the work. Organization will help, but it will not cure.

"Weed Question" is Incorrect

We must recognize that the phrase "weed question" is incorrect, it is not comprehensive enough, but in using it we do so realizing that it refers to a condition of affairs that in some parts reduces the salary per family to starvation wages and bids fair to do the same in the newer parts of the province, unless some means can be found to handle the question. As stated before, it is a good farming proposition using the term in its widest sense, and if we are to suggest a solution this must be borne in mind, and the scheme proposed must fit every phase of the question. Little is accomplished by riding to death such hobbies as Weed Act enforcement, educate the farmer, social life in the country, demonstration farms, agricultural co-operation, mixed farming, etc. These things are all good, all necessary, but they must be taken up side by side. The appointment of a qualified agricultural secretary is a step in the right direction leading to the proper development of the lines of work requiring attention in Saskatchewan. The term qualified is used advisedly. The common criticism is that the scheme may be all right, provided the right man can be secured. This is not a reason for objecting to a scheme. All improvement movements depend upon the kind of man—our province would be less progressive than darkest Africa if the forces working for development refused to use any but ideal men. The agricultural secretary will enforce The Weed Act, attend to the educational matters and do the necessary organization work and aside from all this will be a medium thru which the municipality will

be enabled to take advantage of whatever outside assistance may be available from the Department of Agriculture or the College of Agriculture.

In stating that the agricultural secretary could enforce The Weed Act, we should bear in mind the meaning of this. In enforcing the Act, we are putting into effect legislation to prevent the spread of weeds by winds, machinery, seeds, feeds, fodders and by careless and indifferent farmers. Canada thistle and sow thistle must be cut before they go to seed, Russian thistle and tumbling mustard destroyed on vacant lands—threshing machines cleaned, and careless and indifferent farmers compelled to pay attention to their weeds, and absentee landowners taught their responsibilities. Weeds come in to the country in chicken feed, poisoned grain, packing material, thru new settlers and dozens of other ways. It is not the first few weeds that do the harm, but the fact that these few are not attended to that does the damage.

We must recognize that to do all this is a man's job; not a job for a town loafer, nor for an incompetent man whose winter board bill is generally paid by the municipality; nor is it work for a few sunshiny days in June just to drive around to see if there are weeds in your fields or mine. It is work that requires constant attention by the biggest and best man that the municipality can find. We can get that

to do his work, and that there is no chance of his ever getting back to see the field again. A qualified man would know at once what to do; in fact, the farmer in question would have been ready to do the necessary work, because he knows that what an agricultural secretary orders would have to be carried out.

There prevails in all municipalities employing such a man the feeling that the agricultural secretary is always as good as his word, that he knows his business, and this eliminates 99 per cent. of the so-called hard cases. Small boys will hardly throw stones at the neighbors' cats while the town constable is in that particular neighborhood. The appointment of voluntary game guardians has been of immense assistance in preserving Saskatchewan's wild fowl. The presence of a qualified man in a municipality will develop wonderfully people's moral responsibility regarding weeds.

The attention of the agricultural secretary to the indifferent and careless farmer is but a small part of the work. There is seed grain to be found for men who would use clean seed if they knew just where to obtain it. All new seed imported into a municipality must be inspected. Many new weeds are brought in by new settlers and by the importation of feeding stuffs for use in the working up of new lands.

An important part of the secretary's

the municipality, but the experience of agricultural secretaries has proven that the number of bad propositions requiring personal attention in midsummer is not too many for the attention of one man, for the simple reason that the work he has carried out during February, March, April and May has eliminated practically all of the cases which under the old system would require attention during the growing season. As stated above the knowledge that proper attention is going to be given to all questions makes fewer questions for the attention of the agricultural secretary.

Due to the propaganda being carried on thru the agricultural press, a great number of farmers are sowing small patches of alfalfa, clover and grass. This is the surest possible source of supply for new weeds. Thru proper developments of the agricultural secretarial work every sample can be examined before being sown. Many farmers have this spring sown alfalfa seed infested with Russian thistle, brome grass seed infested with quack grass; they are sowing stink weed in rye grass and night flowering catchfly in alsike clover, and Canada thistle and sow-thistle in fodder mixtures, simply because there is no ready means of having these seeds examined by a qualified man previous to their being sown. The agricultural secretary can enforce The Weed Act. This will help, but it will not cure.

Agricultural Secretaries as Educators

The agricultural secretary can attend to the agricultural educational work of the municipality. The great need in Saskatchewan today is general primary information. Only a very small percentage require detailed scientific information. The masses do not read agricultural journals effectively; very little of what is written ever reaches them. It would be foolish to mail all kinds of bulletins to every farmer, for the simple reason that most of it would be wasted. There is no use sending a bulletin on poultry to a sheep man, or a bulletin on wheat growing to a man trying to make a specialty of hogs. The great mass of the people today are not in touch with the sources of information of agricultural subjects, but by keeping the agricultural secretary posted on all new agricultural publications he can act as the direct connecting link between the educational institutions and the man on the farm who requires particular information. The agricultural secretary will meet every man on his own farm two or three times a year, and will meet most men at meetings and in organization work a good many times. He will carry the experience of one man to another and will himself become an agricultural expert, because of what he will learn from the experience of other men. He will be in a position to help with all of the cultural questions in his districts, and will learn the nature of the information required by his people, and will undertake to supply that information. He will be able to arrange for short courses, institute meetings, etc., and can arrange for competitions along various lines, such as potato clubs in the schools, pig feeding competitions, acre yield contests, etc. He can do any or all of these things. People say, this is work of the agricultural society; so it is, but in many cases the secretary of the agricultural society is too busy on his own farm to do these things, and further, the agricultural secretary is only supplementing the work of this society. Certain lines of co-operative demonstration work can be instituted. Most of our agricultural information applies only to particular districts of the province, but it is not necessary to cover the province with experimental farms, as the only place for demonstration work is on the farm of every farmer. The agricultural secretary can arrange small demonstrations on the co-operative plan to prove out principles of agriculture, and by so doing will teach more truths than can

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Corn in the rotation is one of the steps towards permanent agriculture. A view on the farm of Ed. W. McConnell, Hamiota, Man.

kind of a man, provided we are willing to pay for his services. Paying small salaries for short periods as done in the past meant that the only kind of men who could afford to take on the work were men whose time on their own farm had no particular cash value. If we subscribe good money for this work, we will get a good man, because he will be willing to leave his farm work to do this work the way it ought to be done.

Experience is Essential

To carry out legislation is not work that can be taken up and dropped again at a moment's notice. If orders are given they must be carried out, and action taken against persons refusing to comply with the orders. This is where experience counts; a man with experience will do more in a day than an inexperienced man will do in a week. Some councils appoint John Jones as weed inspector for a division for ten days' inspection; the fourth day out Mr. Jones finds a field full of bad weeds, but doesn't quite know how to act, so he drives ten or twelve miles across country to see his councillor, and the two drive another ten or fifteen miles to see the reeve; the three of them go to the field, come to some decision, and an order is given and cordially received by the owner of the land in question, because he well knows that this is the end of the matter, as he knows that the weed inspector has only about ten days

work is to attend to the weed question on wastes and vacant lands. A great deal of this work can be done in February and March much better than in August. The short time inspector coming to a piece of waste land in midsummer is unable to deal with it properly, because he does not know who owns the land, what complaints, if any, have been made regarding its care. He does not know where he can get the necessary help, and he is at a loss to know how to proceed. The qualified man can get in touch with this particular proposition in February or March and take the matter up with the owner, and in a great many cases will be able to arrange by the permission of the owner to have these lands summerfallowed or otherwise cared for. Again, in practically every municipality a man acquainted with the district knows of a number of pieces of land that will require going over, or perhaps plowing, and he knows in March just as well as he would know in June that it is up to him to find some one to do this work. A neighboring farmer can plan in March to do some extra work in July ten times as easily as he can plan on the first of July to do a little extra work, and for this reason alone attention early in the season makes it much easier and much cheaper to get necessary work undertaken. The objection is sometimes raised that it is physically impossible for one man to handle all the work of