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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Canada Recognizes Island's Beauty Plan

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AN IDEA developed in the mind of a Prince Edward Island farmer, Lt.-Col. E. W. Johnstone, Burlington has been chosen as the inspiration for one of this country's most important nation-wide efforts for the Confederation Centennial celebrations in 1967.

I talked this week with Mrs. David (Jean) Mutch, Mt. Herbert who represented the Canadian Federation of Agriculture at a pilot meeting of the Centennial planning commission in Ottawa a few days ago.

Jean took with her a group of color slides which show the winners in the 1964 Rural Beautification Society's competition here, and the reaction of the other members of the cross-Canada group – there were approximately 20 in all – was one of pleasurable amazement. "The 'oohs and ahs' were really something," Jean tells me.

THE FANCY name for the cross-Canada plan is "Operation cosmetic" but it will be based, I am told, on the sort of thing we have been doing here in Prince Edward Island since Col Johnstone launched the idea here. I believe it was 1946 when the first competition was held.

The man who was chosen as the first Islander of the Year in the competition sponsored by The Evening Patriot, showed the way with his own fine example at Burlington. He made such a tourist show place of his farm home grounds, that the visitors came in such numbers he was virtually forced into making the plan a commercial venture. Mr. Johnstone and his family simply found it impossible to greet the large number of visitors, show them around and answer their questions, and look after the normal farm operations at the same time.

Endless Capacity For Taking Pains

FINALLY THE spacious barn was removed from the property and that provided the site for a pretentious replica of Dame Flora MacLeod's Dunvegan Castle. It's built one-third the size of the original in Scotland, and like all the other castles and famous Old Country buildings he has reproduced on his lawn, Dunvegan shows the artistry and skill developed by the Johnstone father and son (Archie Johnstone) combination, and the seemingly endless capacity for taking pains, which one observer has described as one of the true signs of genius. Dame Flora was impressed when she saw the castle last summer.

Centennial program director John Fisher has said "Operation Cosmetic" as he has called it "can be among the most significant and important Centennial projects if there is cooperation from across the country."

THERE IS one main difference. The beautification program has been a rural development here for the most part. The national effort planned for Canada envisions participation by urban centers as well.

Mr. Fisher has suggested, for example, the objective is “to clean up lake and river fronts, and the approaches to towns and villages, and to clean, paint and brighten up streets, roadways and buildings.”

That is a capsule description that doesn't begin to describe the extent of the possibilities of such a program. But most Island readers know what is being done here as well as I do, some of them know it much better. The significant thing, I suggest, is that the idea started by Col. Johnstone and his family is being hailed now as the inspiration for one of the most significant developments of this country's centennial celebration effort.

Jean tells me that a national seminar is planned next month on a considerably larger scale with possibly 100 Canadians participating, and the Canadian Tourist Association will have an understandably large part in the planning.

Enthusiasm Need At Local Level

MRS. MUTCH is really enthusiastic over the possibilities. The people represented at the Ottawa meeting were tremendously enthusiastic. “But we must get this enthusiasm down to the local people all across the country,” she emphasizes. This is something in which everyone can participate. No matter how small a property may be, it can be improved. And though we know such a program here as a rural development, the thinking now is that it will take shape in every part of the country.

The hope, of course, is that there will be some continuity to the program. The Federated Women's Institute, for example, is behind the move with the slogan “Make Canada Lovelier in 1967” but Jean, and others like her, hope the beautification idea will carry on through the years ahead, so that Canada will continue to be beautiful for both resident and visitor.

I believe that the urban planning took into account the success of a plan in Norwich, England where a spruce up campaign was launched to celebrate some important anniversary or event. I haven't the details.

Yorston Was Cook On Wrecked Ship

LAST WEEK'S column on the wreck of the “Barbara MacDonald” wasn't on the street long until I had a call from Arthur Yorston, the man who had been cook on the schooner and had gone through the tremendous ordeal of the storm, the wreck, and the climb for life up an almost perpendicular cliff. I said the cliff was 350 feet high but Mr. Yorston insists it was closer to 500 feet, and there were spots where “the face was sheer granite, almost as smooth as glass.”

Mr. Yorston, then a man of about 31, was with the owner, the late Senator John A MacDonald, Cardigan in the perilous climb. Though the rest of the crew had reached the top before dawn, MacDonald and Yorston spent the hours from midnight to dawn on a narrow ledge about 100 feet from the top.

MR. MacDONALD – he would be about 46 at the time – lost his nerve temporarily and couldn't go any farther in the dark. Mr. Yorston had no trouble with nerve at that time but decided to stay with the man who had hired him for the trip. When daylight came, though, Mr. Yorston's nerve wasn't so good as the sheer cliff stood out in all of its

fearsome proportions, though Mr. MacDonald was ready to resume the perilous journey to the top.

I'll skip over the details of the climb the rest of the way, except to report that Yorston made the last six to 10 feet grasping a long belt that had been let down to him from the top by Michael Burke – he died late last year – and he inched his way to the top with his elbows pressing on either side against the sides of a sort of fissure he had entered for the last few feet of the climb to the summit.

Mr. Yorston, a school teacher, had gone on the trip when Mr. MacDonald offered him \$70 per month and his meals to go as cook. "It was twice as much as I could have made at the time teaching school," he told me.

First And Last Attempt At Sailing

BUT IT was his first and his last attempt at being a sailor. He remained in Newfoundland and taught school for approximately seven years. The salary there was slightly better than here. But he came back to the Island and taught in various schools. They included Victoria West, North St. Eleanors, Boughton Island, the Magdalen Islands and he ended his career at the old school at Southport. That would be about 1932 or 1933. The supplement in his final year was \$25 per month and the late Arthur Burke – he died late in 1963 – was school board secretary.

To my friend who gave me the interesting facts on the Marshfield sale, I haven't space today to do it justice. But I'll be using it in a future column.