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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Experimental Farm Policy Is Under Fire

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THERE WAS a genuine feeling of optimism among our farm leaders after they had talked to Agriculture Minister J. J. Greene, his deputy minister and the director of the Experimental Farm at Ottawa here last winter.

I'm referring now specifically to the appeal that was made to have livestock stressed more – at the Experimental Farm here – I believe the reference was to cattle for the most part. The farm leaders explained that agriculture is basic to our economy, and that livestock is a most important part of farming. Take away our livestock and farming is dead, one farm leader emphasized to me a few weeks ago.

But a talk with R. C. (Bob) Parent this week convinced me that there has been no change in the Ottawa thinking; the idea still is to de-emphasize effective and practical work with cattle here, and concentrate it at Fredericton, N.B. And this, Bob Parent tells me, is contrary to many strong recommendations. Wait until you learn the “experimental” and “records” work the Ottawa experimental farm people have planned for Charlottetown.

NORMALLY I would be saving this material for my farm column which runs on Tuesdays. But a story elsewhere in today's paper tells something of the work Bob Parent has been doing at the Experimental Farm. Members of the staff tendered him a farewell party last night – he's retiring in a few days – so I decided to talk about it in today's column instead.

Instead of stressing work with livestock here from the practical standpoint that is in keeping with our economy, the proposal, I am told, is that all of the work with dairy cattle, and with beef cattle, concerning nutrition and management, will be conducted at Fredericton under three or four highly qualified research officers.

That will leave us at Charlottetown with one lesser trained research officer, to more or less supervise a large experiment called “Inherent study of dairy cattle”, Mr. Parent tells me.

3,600 Records Per Heifer

CHARLOTTETOWN WILL merely be collecting data, listen to this: “Every heifer that goes through this experiment from the time she's born until she has completed two lactations – we'll have something more than 3,600 records which are sent to Ottawa where they are put on computers and the data is processed.

“Our man will have very little time to conduct any pasture experiments, or to give the leadership we would think this industry deserves,” I was told.

“My contention,” Mr. Parent emphasized, “is this should be at Charlottetown, rather than at Fredericton. I've told this to my superiors, farming is our basic economy and if we took livestock out of P.E.I. our economy would be dead. Livestock and forage go

together perfectly. And it is recognized that we are to do the major forage work.” Mr. Parent added, though, there are plans for “quite a large forage setup”, at Fredericton as well.

I asked Mr. Parent what in blazes would these 3,600 records per animal comprise. I understand animals, Holstein and perhaps Ayrshires too, are to be tested here from birth or at least baby calves, until they have completed two lactations. Here’s his answer:

Some Measurements, Facts

“FOR EXAMPLE, we’ll have to make some 60 odd body measurements on every calf; the heart girth, the muzzle, the rump length, the heart beat, all this type of thing – the temperature. And for two 60-day periods we have to record individual daily gains and individual recordings of everything the animals eat, how much hay, how much grain, etc. What’s given to them has to be weighed, if they leave any that has to be weighed also.

“For a 60-day period we have to do quarter milking. We have to weigh separately, morning and night, the milk from each quarter. Butter fat records have to be made, production of solids-not-fat, etc.”

As Bob told me, the Ottawa-inspired program calls for 3,600 records, or slightly more, for each animal.

Mr. Parent told me that farmers have much more interest in the work of the Experimental Farm now than they had, for example, when he started to work here back in 1927 as director of illustration stations. I’m wondering how long this interest, and respect, will continue when they hear about some of the work which this “3,600” record business entails.

Many of the top livestock and other agricultural men in the Maritime area have talked to Mr. Parent and agreed with him, he told me this week, that the major cattle work should go to the Experimental Farm station here at Charlottetown.

A “Top Brass Decision”

“BUT A few of the top brass have decided that this is how it should be done – at Fredericton. We’re the livestock area, here is where the major cattle work should be done,” says Bob Parent who has spent 40 years in this province, and in New Brunswick where he was born. I know N.B. just as well as I know P.E.I.,” he emphasized.

“Working in this area for 40 years, working in all parts of the province, you know the conditions, and you know that you know them, better than the people at Ottawa could possibly know them, Mr. Parent observed. “So you can’t lay back and accept such stuff too easily. As you approach retirement”, he added, “the feeling that you can’t lay down is all the stronger.”

Attractive Scallop

SEVERAL MONTHS ago I referred to Carl Profit, a man who is making a gallant effort to earn a living for himself and family after being badly crippled – he's a wheel chair case – when the side of a building fell on him away back in 1960.

He was making book ends of wood, and decorating them with scallop shells, when I met him first.

Recently I called on Mr. Profit at his service station – it's on the Western Road about four and one-half miles from Tignish – and was surprised and delighted to find he has branched out, with a dozen or more interesting objects with scallop shells the central manufacturing material. In most of the items, the colorful sea shells are virtually all that is used. And scallop shells are colorful when they are cleaned and polished.

I can imagine some of our summer visitors really going for his fruit basket – Mrs. Matheson uses ours for biscuits, and for other delicious eatables – for his TV lights, for other types of lights for his garden path markers, and for the many other most interesting scallop-built articles he has designed and made.

The largest item he designed was intended originally as a small monument, or a substitute for a headstone. I believe Carl had the idea of selling it, complete with a plastic dome to protect it from the weather. He found it most difficult to get this dome at a price that would be practical, but he sold the first half-dozen for ornaments without the plastic top. He'll probably keep on making them. He has many other interesting designs.

I like to see a man who refuses to be overcome by adversity. In my book Carl Profit is such a man. The best of luck to you Carl. I really believe your creations should attract wide interest from the people who are looking for something different.