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## ACROSS THE ISLAND

### Island Winter Is Appreciated

By NEIL A. MATHESON  
Provincial-Farm Editor

THE SNOW story is old but I heard a completely new approach to it this week. Agriculture Minister Andrew MacRae came home from a Prairie Provinces visit with the thought that "perhaps we have been lucky here on P.E.I. after all, although we have been complaining about the snow".

He made the statement after learning about a Saskatchewan drouth that was causing deep concern when he was there.

"The Saskatchewan minister and deputy minister of agriculture told me at Winnipeg the dust is so bad in some places that cars are being driven in daytime with their lights turned on", he said which reminds me somewhat of the dust bowl days there when whole farms drifted away with the wind.

AT THE Pas, the minister heard, farms are changing hands but no money is being passed out because there is none to pass.

LACK OF snowfall is at least partly to blame. And the complaint of moisture lack comes from immediately west of Ottawa, Mr. MacRae said. Farmers have been hauling water for their cattle since early winter. Of course that doesn't surprise farmers here, as some of them have been hauling water, or getting the cows to the brook all winter. And there were days when either were all but impossible, in the winter that has just ended.

When Mr. MacRae was there he heard serious talk of farmers selling their feeder cattle because there would be no grass for them this summer. But morale was not too low, as they were holding on to their foundation stock.

### Lobster Fishing In Early Days

LOBSTER FISHERMEN are eagerly awaiting the start next week of their season's operations. If they're lucky, and the westerly winds blow hard enough, they may make it. West winds are needed, I'm told, to clear the ice from our shores.

A chat with a Launching man suggested a look at the past. He recalled lobsters at four and one-half cents per pound, and hand hauling 200 to 300 traps per boat that made the job really tough. The day started at two to three am and ended 12 hours later "if we were lucky enough to escape a blow on the way in".

AN ALBERTON man went back nearly fifty years to lobsters at two and one-half cents per pound, although they were sold by quantity more than weight. Large ones were peddled in the town for a nickel, and the really big ones for a dime. But there were bright spots.

"I recall that two men would fish a 200-trap line and not get to the end of it in a week" because the traps were laden so heavily they couldn't clear them and get the fish back

to the shore. The boats carried more than one thousand pounds, he recalled.

“If the price seems low, remember that 1000 pounds brought \$25 and that would buy a lot of groceries and equipment. Tea was 25 cents a pound, sugar sold for 4 cents and flour was \$2.50 per 100-lb bag. Traps were a dollar each and rope was even cheaper by comparison with today’s prices”, he said

### Dougald MacKinnon Reminisces

DOUGALD MACKINNON talked with me from forty years of fishing experience, topped by his years as a fisheries minister and holder of several other important portfolios, during a 25-year term in the legislature, representing 4<sup>th</sup> Queens, that ended only with his voluntary retirement in 1959.

He remembers when fishermen got as little as \$1.50 per 100 lobsters but they were supplied with boats, traps and other equipment by the buyer.

HAND HAULING was only a part of the arduous work of those days, he said. “We used salt boats that had to be heavily ballasted in case of a stiff breeze. Yet we often had to row them four to five miles to the fishing ground in calm periods.” Add a hot day and you really had a tough job, he said.

Mr. MacKinnon fished out to Mt. Buchannan but the Point Prim boys went further to St Peter’s Island at times.

But the hand hauling was difficult too. “We used back lines with as many as 50 traps. Hauling them against a heavy tide - as many as 10 traps would be floating - was a really heavy job”, he said.

“MARINE ENGINES came into use in the early 1900’s - we got ours in 1908 - but mechanical trap haulers came much later with the use of the car engine and the power take-off they made possible,” Mr. MacKinnon explained.

The seasons opened earlier, on April 20, when he first sought the harvest of the sea. But those who feared damaged boats from the ice chunks that floated around kept pressing for a later date and May 1 was selected, said the former minister who cannot recall a year when the ice was so heavy this late in the season.

### Choice Of Site Is Awaited

WORD ON the location of the new Seabrook food processing plant is being eagerly awaited. I’ve never seen any keener rivalry here on the Island than that shown by the several areas seeking this project.

A friend in St. Peters told me last fall of the intensive efforts they were making to get the plant there. I don’t think anybody could do more than those chaps did. He asked me for some helpful comment.

Then I talked to Don Campbell, the energetic MLA for 1<sup>st</sup> Prince, and to several from other areas. I decided the rivalry was much too keen for a provincial column like this to take sides. Cardigan and the Kensington area are other places reportedly interested. I’ve been told Souris would be interested, also.

HOTTEST TIP I’ve had is that it is going to Kensington. But don’t take that too seriously. It’s entirely unofficial and it could be completely wrong.

I got the impression from Industry Minister Leo Rossiter last winter that a third processing plant may be encouraged here. It would serve the county that is left when the Seabrook site is chosen. That, at least, was my interpretation of a remark the minister made in the legislature.

The trend toward a processed product is increasing and there's nothing we can do about it. Top potato shippers have suggested, for example, that half our spuds will be processed in ten years time. But I'm not so sure that we should get too much of our farm production tied too closely to processing plants that are controlled outside the province. Processing benefits are evident, but I'm wondering about the pitfalls the future may bring.

### Snow Did Come In Every Month

LAST WEEK I talked of a year in which it snowed every month. I find it was back in 1816, so there are few details. But stories handed down through generations insist that there was snow each month, including July and August, usually considered the warm or hot months of the year.

It was called "the year in which there was no summer". Thomas Ledwell, St Peter's, is one of those who heard the stories as a youngster, and can recall them today.

Most unusual thing about it was that the weather was peculiar to Prince Edward Island. Nearby areas did not experience the unusual snow.