

# Sees Greater Challenges Facing Rural Youth Groups

Following is the text of an inspiring address delivered by Mr. W.R. Shaw, retired Deputy Minister of Agriculture for Prince Edward Island, at the recent annual conference of Canadian 4-H Clubs at Amherst.

Recently I read an intensely interesting book by Irvine Stone entitled "Men to Match My Mountains". The author, taking as his theme a poem by Foss, constructed a fascinating narrative concerning the westward migration of early settlers over the plains and mountains to California, Colorado and other western lands, and the drama, adventure, courage, and hardships endured by the pioneers, who conquered almost insuperable obstacles, particularly in the mountain regions, before their objectives were achieved. Men and women were not daunted by the cruel hardships, and although death and disaster were common attendants of the trail, the high aspirations of great souls carried them through to the establishment of homes, and orderly settlement in the valleys beyond the hills. Surely they more than matched the mountains.

The same great saga of courage and fortitude marked the paths of our own pioneers, as they pushed with their primitive equipment over the prairies, beyond the Rockies, into the great Northland, or along the coast of the Atlantic seaboard. They, too, were souls of high courage and conquered the hazards of unknown trails.

But pioneering is not confined along to opening up new lands. Pioneering never ceases. It reaches into every unexplored realm in which men undertake to solve the problem of human progress, and where a challenge to human genius and acquisitiveness exists. The development of the 4-H Club movement may well be classified as a type of pioneering, the success of which is destined to exercise a tremendous influence on the welfare of our nation and its people. True, it is a recent development, quiet, undramatic, and yet not without its great moments of achievement. Here, too, we may safely assert that from this great movement will evolve a new vision, courage, and knowledge, to match the mountains, that may be found from time to time in the way of progress.

## INITIAL EFFORTS

I do not know where the first feeble attempt was launched to rural youth into the organized educational movement that is presented today as a great influential national entity. But I am told the credit must go to the Prairies. In my own Province I became associated with Boys' and Girls' Project Clubs thirty-five years ago, and almost every year since then until my retirement three years ago I have been in close contact with many types of youth enterprises, rural and urban. It seems fitting that that initial venture should have been named the "Pioneer Boys' and Girls' Club". The first organizers, and those that immediately followed, were in the form of Helo Clubs, and the undertaking required considerable persuasiveness on the part of the promoters, and a large amount of faith and outlay on the part of Club members and their parents. The purchase of two year old, registered and bred heifers, usually ranged from \$150 to \$300 each, or a community expenditure within Club limits of from \$2,000 to \$4,000 a very considerable item in a day when a dollar was a very distinguished "gentleman". Nevertheless, many of the Clubs were formed, and they had the advantage of intensifying interest and enthusiasm, not only on the part of parents and members, but in the community in which the Club was located.

Frequently these Clubs established farm herds of improved breeding ability, and laid the pattern for a community livestock breeding program that is not always associated with 4-H Clubs. Swine Clubs were also formed with breeding sows as the basis, and gave considerable impetus to swine improvement. From these modest beginnings, and from the participation derived from the active participation of boys and girls, the splendidly attended Field Days, and other Shows, was quickly developed into the less costly and more extensive framework now known as 4-H Clubs, involving a great variety of projects on the farm and in the home.

## PHENOMENAL GROWTH

During these years there has been phenomenal growth, and this notable rural youth movement across Canada has been integrated into one strong National Organization with its competently directed head office under the new designation in 1955, 4-H Clubs All the ramifications of a broadened, intensified program including camps, tours, cultural and practical training, entertainment, regional and national conferences, and demonstrations, have been promoted. In some areas these programs have been conducted to a greater degree than in others, as is also

a more intensified year round program.

The total number of young people who have been influenced by Club projects would be hard to estimate, for the effects of Club training extend far beyond the limits of Club membership, into the rank and file of community, regional and national activities. The present membership of about 75,000 young people tells only a part of the story. Large numbers have moved beyond the club age into the adult stage. The impact of other members of the family group, the neighbours, the leaders, the administrators, livestock and other Associations, and the overall cultural and handicraft interests, are beyond computation. Into the wrap and woof of the national rural fabric appears the bright, traceable threads of rural youth activities.

In the livestock industry of the country we recognize the herds, flocks, forage and other developments, that have found their source in the first feeble ventures of the 4-H Club organization. We see aggressive intelligent farm producers who receive their first grasp of successful farm operation at the local community Club level. We recognize from this source many of our farm leaders turned toward the investigators, our extension men, our parliamentary representatives, our domestic science and women leaders.

Not the least of our advances are found in our homes, where the girls associated with home economics, sewing, cooking, handicraft, poultry, and many of their projects have revived and established that greatest of all skills that under modern conditions have had a tendency to weaken Home-making. Overall there has resulted an obvious development of citizenship, responsibilities, an understanding of community problems and procedure that has tended to elevate community life on to a higher plane. The attention of rural youth has been turned inward to the good earth, and all its living associations, and a home life, dignified by the character building influences of those who live near to nature, the soil, and its mysterious forces.

## INFLUENCE OF TRAINING

Not all our Club members, of course, have proven successful, or have followed the initial training. Some have followed non-farm occupations. Irrespective of their final decisions, the training provided has left an influence behind, and continues from a new vantage point in the general benefit of all. In the original Club which I have mentioned, five distinct registered herds were established; one member became an out-standing medical doctor; one an officer on the Experimental Farm; one a herdsman and Farm Manager at a large Institution; one a Physical Director. Surely that is a good record.

In other Clubs the same pattern could be followed, and the same story told. Those who gravitated to urban vocations, boys or girls, by no means lost their influence. They fulfil an extremely important function in public relations, between town and country, carrying the story of farm difficulties and objectives to many who sometimes entertain prejudices and thinking regarding rural problems that lack justification. These ex-Club and ex-farm former members, have kept open a two way street over a rural-urban bridge, and have developed a desirable understanding of mutual rural-urban outlooks.

These are a few of the tangible results of this fine movement. These are our credits to date, under conditions to date. They are the achievements of the past. But what of the future? Are we ready to pioneer into new activities? Are we to train unchanged conditions that affect our agriculture in the new era, "Men to Match My Mountains"? Is the present program and training not only in 4-H Clubs, but generally among the organized and inorganized rural youth of Canada, broad and sufficiently complete to do the job?

The junior policy has been extended and strengthened, and new activities have been undertaken that more effectively emphasize citizenship responsibilities. In some respects there has been a distinct departure from old practices. The program during National 4-H Club Week, for instance, has been to some extent changed. Early efforts were centered chiefly on judging skills, and very often the overall effectiveness of a broader training for all members, suffered, because of the concentrated attention to the few. A new policy has been substituted that will provide scope for a wider education and one of greater value to all.

## SUDDEN TRANSITION

We are now facing as rural people rapidly changing conditions, a sudden transition in the life of rural Canada. In view of these changes there is a need for a forward organizational program for our young people? There are problems and obstacles ahead that challenge our progress, courage, and intelligence. Agriculture is no longer concerned with production



MR. W.R. SHAW

alone. It reaches from the nurture of the soil through to the finished product in the home of the discriminating consumer and all the intermediate functions associated with management, scientific application, marketing, grading and merchandizing, and extending further into the fields of exploration and study that affect successful farm economy. It is indeed a broad and comprehensive task requiring intelligence, training and aptitude. Agriculture today requires a larger measure of skill and expert leadership than ever before in our history, and its success and responsibility will rest mainly on an educated, inspired and competent youth.

Let us take a closer look at this picture. During the years immediately past a great change has taken place in the Canadian outlook. Canada has bounded forward in industrial development, and the process from rural to an industrial relationship is going forward at an exhilarated pace. If controlled by wise leadership and policy, a measure of balance in rural-urban relationships may be maintained on a basis of advantage to the whole nation. But note the following figures: Between 1946 and 1956 the number of farms in Canada dropped from 695,000 to 531,000 or 24 per cent. The total farm labor force dropped from 1,271,000 to 804,000 or 37 per cent. The unpaid family labor from 419,000 to 167,000, or 60 per cent; and the paid labor from 157,000 to 106,000, or 32 per cent.

Much of this decrease took place in years of relative farm prosperity. With a rapidly expanding consuming population, and a decreasing farm population, even with the offsetting influence of modern mechanization, the problem of food production could develop in the next few years into an acute stage while on the other hand, the conditions in rural life, churches, education, and social welfare, could become correspondingly unfavorable. During the present transition conditions there may be a tendency to ignore long-term prospects, and our young people particularly, respond to the influence of present day farm difficulties and industrial attractions, and fail to recognize many of the prospective opportunities that the trends of the time indicate over the longer period in rural living.

## MECHANIZATION

On the other hand changes are taking place in mechanization, and with great advantage, as well as cost, to our farm people. Technological advances are being developed at a tremendous pace, and within the next few years machines will displace men in industry. Will there again be a back to the farm movement to become re-established on lands that in the meantime have been neglected and the homesteads broken down? It is a thought worthy of consideration.

In any event a big rural problem is centered in the present situation. Overhead costs because of equipment tightened credit restrictions, and labor difficulties pose a problem of deep concern. Modern expensive machinery may not be a cross country farm solution. There is a tendency to fit the farm, irrespective of size, into large machinery units, instead of adjusting farm management acreage, and form of production, to a recognition of modern consumer demands. We need only observe the changes that have taken place in variety and packaging of our food needs. The wheat, potato, and beef grower, for instance, needs expended acreage and large equipment, but the fruit, the vegetable grower and poultryman may be able to adjust his program with lesser expenditures, and reasonably fruitful returns, in supplying fresh markets, and our expanding processing requirements. Co-operative use of machinery as successfully practised in Denmark, might well be initiated in this country with excellent results.

to be concluded

tel. Guest speaker will be the Honorable C. B. Sherwood, Minister of Agriculture for the Province of New Brunswick and President of the Holstein-Friesian Association of Canada. Dr. George Fisher Provincial Veterinarian, will address the meeting on questions of animal health. Farmers are invited and urged to attend these meetings which represent an opportunity to take part in policy making for agriculture.

## WESTERN GRAIN DIRECT

During the course of the present debate in the legislature the suggestion was made by one speaker that Island poultry men could operate to a better advantage if there were in a position to purchase their requirements directly from the western farmer. It is not our intention to offer any opinion on whether this system would produce a saving but rather to point out the difficulties involved in bringing this sort of a system about.

The western grain farmer has over a period of years spent a great deal of money and devoted a great deal of time setting up marketing organizations in the form of local elevator associations and provincial wheat pools to do his marketing for him. He has long realized, and here it might be remarked that he is considerably ahead of his eastern brother in this respect, that his bargaining power as an individual is practically non-existent. Within the last few weeks the parliament of Canada has extended for a five year period the authority of the Canadian Wheat Board to carry out the marketing of western grain.

In the face of the above mentioned marketing technique there is not the slightest possibility of the eastern farmer being able to buy direct, for the western farmer knows that once he became involved in a system of this kind that complete chaos would very soon develop in his marketing, price stability and regulated marketing would be anything of the past and result in the clock being turned back at least 30 years. We make this statement believing that Island farmers should not be led to believe that any relief could possibly come from the suggestion that he may be able to purchase direct from the western farmer.

## FREIGHT ASSISTANCE

The recent announcement by the Hon. J. G. Gardiner that certain freight increases are to be absorbed under the Freight Assistance Policy on western grain will be welcome news to many Maritime farmers. Briefly eastern feeders instead of having to pay \$7.00 a ton towards the freight will now be paying about roughly \$5.50, this in total on our purchases will amount to quite a large amount.

This concession is a tribute to what can be accomplished through the combined efforts of farm organizations and Departments of Agriculture officers. A worded statement was prepared by a representative of the three Maritime

Departments of Agriculture, of Maritime Federation of Agriculture, and of the Maritime Transportation Commission, this statement was submitted to interested people in Ottawa and was emphasized in the brief presented by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture to the Cabinet on February 15.

It results like this that should prove to farmers the importance and value of keeping their farm organizations in the position to do this kind of work. This is a concrete example of dollars and cents value, another recent one was the prompt action taken at Ottawa to adjust egg prices and we may also mention two others (1) the fact that farmers may now purchase station wagons under the Farm (2) that a son who buys a farm from his father, is allowed to charge, for income tax purposes, depreciation either on the actual purchase price or a fair value for it rather than on its depreciated value as it had stood previously listed by the fether.

## FARM ESTABLISHMENT

A recent editorial draws atten-

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tion to the necessity of providing this province with some form of policy by which would assist young farmers in becoming established. This is a recommendation which the Federation of Agriculture has been urging upon our government for consideration over a period of years.

As the situation now stands we are the only province in Canada, with the possible exception of Newfoundland, which does not have a policy of this type. Further, with the exception of Saskatchewan, there is no other province depending to a greater extent for its prosperity on Agriculture. It would almost appear to be elementary that the future of the province depends upon a fostering and developing of our farms.

The need of such a policy is now becoming acute and if the matter is not soon dealt with we will

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## Coming Events

Postponed Shur-Gain Amateur Cavalcade in Harrington Hall will be held Monday night, March 11th, weather permitting.

The annual meeting of New Glasgow Dairying Company will be held in the New Glasgow Hall on Wednesday, March 13th, at 2 p.m. Elaine Bulman, Secretary.

Unloading car Canadian O11 Cake Meal Friday and Saturday, March 8 and 9th. Special Price, P.L. Morris, Shur-Gain Feed Service, 12 Lower Queen St.

Regular skate North River rink tonight, starting 8 to 10. Door Prize, Saturday morning School Hockey, first game, in semi-final, North River vs. Winslow 9.30. Bonshaw vs. Winslow 10.30. Nine Mile Creek vs. New Haven 11.30.

## AMONG THE FARMERS

Federation of Agriculture Newsletter

### MEETING DATES

The annual meeting of the Federation directors which was to have been held on Tuesday, March 5 was postponed by reason of indifferent travelling. Today, Friday, had been set as an alternate date but at time of writing (Wednesday) roads are blocked much worse than they were on Tuesday. P.E.I. winter weather presents some real difficulties in organizing and holding meetings.

For next week meetings are laid out for Thursday, March 14 for the Sheep Breeders, Central Farmers Institute and Federation of Agriculture. The afternoon meeting

of the Central Farmers Institute will feature addresses by Mr. R. C. Parent, Superintendent of the Experimental Farm and Mr. Bruce MacLaren who will discuss matters relative to grain production.

The Federation meeting at night will feature a panel discussion on turnip marketing and beef production. This meeting will be addressed by Mr. M. W. Chespeuk, District Supervisor, Livestock Marketing, Moncton, New Brunswick.

Friday, March 15 the Dairyman will take the entire day using the evening for a banquet and entertainment at the Charlottetown Ho-