

DESTINY OF THE FAMILY FARM

I spoke today with a disheartened friend--a man who loves his land and knows his farming days are numbered. He is discouraged and filled with despair but he is not alone in his plight. A couple of decades ago there were two dozen farmers from his place to mine; now there are three. Succession, that healing process of nature that follows man's failure to wrest a living from the land, has started on most of those farms. Some of the land has fallen into the hands of speculators while much of the remainder is owned by a rich man from outside the province. What has happened to these farmers, their pride and possessions, their community? The answers are not pleasant, nor are they appreciated or understood by governments (at least they have been practically ignored by our elected representatives).

According to my neighbour, most of those displaced landowners "hung on" for many years as the wealth, accumulated for generations, gradually bled away. First there was hardly enough money for fertilizers and lime, then there was little money for luxuries like fencing and paint, eventually with no money to repair archaic machinery even their children had to forsake that impoverished life. The decline of the family farm would, by itself, have been a harsh blow to our rural communities, but, combined with errors like our centralized school system and large scale vertical integration, a serious crippling of community life has resulted.

Normally extinction appears to those species that are too specialized but the rules of nature seldom apply to potato farmers on P.E.I. Is it because the large specialized operations "make a mint" when potato prices are high but rely on public coffers when prices decline? How long can those huge fields withstand severe land erosion and still produce? Is it wise to allow the extinction of the family farm on P.E.I.? If we do what sort of heritage are we leaving for future generations? I sincerely hope that government policies will change so that farmers, like my friend, can leave his land to his family and not to L.D.C. or some ruthless speculator!

- Daryl Guignion
Biology Department
University of P.E.I.

Canadian Nature Federation - Renewals

It's time to renew your membership to Canadian Nature Federation for 1976. The Federation is just pulling itself out of a severe financial crunch, so it is important that renewals for 1976 be prompt. Diane Griffin and I have devised a way to beat the postal strike! Diane is going to Ottawa on December 4 and is planning to visit the C.N.F. head office. If you take a cheque or money order payable to "Canadian Nature Federation" to the December 2 Natural History Society meeting or get the cheque to us before the meeting, Diane will convey your renewals to Ottawa. She will also try to obtain our October - December issues of Nature Canada to bring back to P.E.I.

If you want to order from the C.N.F. Bookstore, you could prepare the order for her to take up, and when postal service resumes, you will receive your order quickly. Please inform any Canadian Nature Federation members of this arrangement.

- Kathy Martin
Biology Department
University of P.E.I.

JUNIOR NATURALISTS CORNER

November Days

November days are here again!
Cold and frosty with the wind.
I love to run and scamper about on a November day!
It's such a thrill to jump in snow banks up to our necks.
Come in frozen cold but we don't mind that on a November day.
Why don't you come out and play on a cold November day?

- Wendy Connelly
Grade 5
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