THE FARM FRONT
by John Russell

Writing a column like this, which appears simultaneously in a large number of Ontario papers, I am somewhat at a disadvantage regarding the time element. Over a week must elapse between my writing this and the time it appears in print. That being the case, if I try to comment on any current happening, the whole thing may be over and forgotten when you read it.

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For instance, as this is written all Canada is in the grip of the railway strike. When you read this, the strike may be—and I sincerely hope WILL BE settled. But even if it is, I doubt if it will be forgotten. The automobile has come to play such a prominent part in our daily lives that most of us had entirely overlooked just how dependent we are on the services of the railroads. But now we have had a very rude reminder.

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Who was originally to blame for the strike is a matter on which I wouldn't care to express an opinion; but I think the Queens' professor who tried to act as mediator wasn't far off the target when he said that both labor and management acted childishly.

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However, even should the strike be settled by now, the problems it presented were so serious that it deserves deep consideration from every thinking Canadian, and especially from those who derive their living directly from the soil. So here is an Editorial—published while the strike was in its first week—from the Financial Post. I'm passing it along to you without any comment except to say that The Post's attitude, on most matters, is that of Management rather than Labor.

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This Editorial was headed FARM LABOR GULF WIDENS, and ran as follows:

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"Any hopes of a better understanding between organized labor and Canadian agriculture were blasted by the railway strike this week.

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"Of all the innocent sufferers from a transport tie-up, as a class, the farmer is by far the hardest hit. Virtually everything he produces is of a perishable nature—some of his crops must be marketed in a matter of hours—and a very large proportion of his production normally moves by rail.

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"Most ordinary manufactured goods can be stored for weeks or months with no deterioration in quality or appeal. The same applies to the great bulk of our raw materials, like metals, lumber, coal, etc. But it is a different story entirely when we consider agriculture.

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"True, wheat and other grains, when matured are not of perishable nature and can be held almost indefinitely in proper storage. But few farmers who make grain-growing a business have facilities for long holding. In any case, grain-growing is confined to only one area of Canada. Elsewhere it is mixed or specialized farming and prompt marketing by rail is vital.

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"With even meat animals, and before they have left the farm, there can be no long delays. Hogs, sheep, cattle and calves are all marketed at certain definite weights. The whole schedule of farming is based on them being marketed at those weights. If held beyond that, the cost of feeding increases sharply while quality and value deteriorate. To make first-class bacon, for instance, a hog must weigh around 200 lb. and reach that size at six months old. Once there, however, he must be slaughtered within a matter of days or his quality slumps.

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"The CCF's hope of marrying into one party, labor and farmer, is as hopeless as most of their dreams."

Eyes Right!—That arrow on the picture is intended to guide your eyes over to the right, to notice the beautiful 20-karat diamond engagement ring. Well, okay, if you insist on looking to the left, that's French movie star Denise Darcel. The ring came from her fiance, Peter Crosby, real estate broker. They plan to marry in October.

SPORTS-&c
by A SIXBIT CRITIC

One of the most amazing sports novelties of this or any other season has turned up in the persons of the softball quartet known as "The King and His Court." (Actually it's a quintet, but as only four of the players appear at one time, there's no use quibbling over such a matter.)

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When word first got around Toronto and its environs that folks would have the chance of witnessing a softball foursome playing against fully-manned teams, there was considerable shrugging of shoulders among the fans. The folks take their softball very seriously in those parts—almost, although not quite as seriously as they do their pet hockey team. In fact there are those who argue that the grade of softball played in and around what is sometimes tagged "The Queen City" is better and faster, as a whole, than it is anywhere else on earth.

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That, of course, is taking in a whole heap of territory. But it's too hot, right now, for any heavy arguing; so we'll just say that Torontonians know good fastball when they see it, and let it go at that. So it's not too surprising that when they saw the advance notices of "The King etc." they took it as being something strictly for laughs—a bunch of clowns who would put on trick stuff between regular games, or something of the sort.

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But as for the notion that four men—any four men—could get in there and even hope to make a showing against mighty outfits such as Tip Tops, Peoples, Robertsons and others of that ilk, it was just too ridiculous for words. "A smart promoter's brainstorm and maybe not too smart, at that," as one bystander put it. "They might get one fair crowd, just as a novelty, but after that they'll be playing to empty pews!"

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However, as the ancient ditty put it, "Ain't it funny what a difference just a few hours make; and before Eddie Feigner—"The King"—and his cohorts had been in Toronto two days, they were the talk of the town. Prospective fans by the thousands were turned down, solely because the parks where the games were played weren't half big enough to accommodate those wishing to attend. And when you saw seasoned newspaper men—even sports writers! believe it or not—trying to spend their own personal money for tickets, and unable to do so, you may be certain that something exceptional was going on.

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That "The King and His Court" are something more than just clever comedians is best evidenced by the game with the Tip Tops. The latter, in case you don't already know, are Champions of the World. And you may be certain that there's nothing they'd have liked better than to have crushed the opposing foursome, and driven them clear out of the park into Lake Ontario.

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And the result? At the end of nine full innings of ball the score stood TIP TOPS — 0; THE COURT—0. The world's champions champions had made three hits and committed one error; the visitors had played errorless ball and made four hits. And of the Tip Tops' trio of bingles, only one of them had cleared the infield.

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So you may take it from us, genteel reader, that this Eddie Feigner is really something out of this world, and his teammates aren't far behind him. A lot of Eddie Feigner's truck stuff is slightly over the borderline of illegality. But when he's in there pitching for keeps and sticking to more-or-less straight stuff, he has the other fellows fairly breaking their necks trying to get even a loud foul off of him.

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Just what permanent effect "The King and His Court" might have on the game is interesting to think about. For one thing, within a year or less there will probably be half a dozen outfits trying to copy the act. We'll be invited to see three-man softball teams, two-man softball teams and even, possibly—although Heaven forbid—one-man ball teams, until the public finally turns sour on the whole thing.

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But another effect might be that the softball solons, both here and south of the border, will give some prayerful consideration to a matter which, in our opinion and that of many more, has been too long neglected. In regular baseball they're looking for some way to give the pitcher a little better break—too many base hits, too many home runs, show pretty clearly that the batter has too much of an edge under the present rules.

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In softball, just the reverse is true. The success of "The King and His Court"—99 games in 105 days—75 wins, 22 losses, four ties" points up, all too vividly, the fact that the pitcher has too much of an advantage to make for good all-round sport. For several reasons we personally never did develop into anything like a real, dyed-in-the-wool softball bug; and the principal of those reasons was that we very soon got tired of seeing batters come up to the plate, make feeble gestures in the direction of the ball, and then go out on strikes. A little more latitude for the pitcher in baseball—and a little less of the same in softball—would, we really believe, mean an improvement in both sports from the standpoint of the customer.

The Old And The New—A French farmer, carrying a scythe, watches a modern harvesting machine at work in a farm district outside of Paris. Unusually good weather and abundant rainfall have combined to get France's harvest operations off to an early start this year.

Stones That Grow

When British settlers first penetrated into Southern India they found that in one place the natives worshipped a huge figure of a bull, carved from solid stone.

At frequent intervals special celebrations were held when the priests annointed the image with oil, and pilgrims rubbed it in much as if they were massaging a human being.

The British were amused when the priests told them that the stone bull was alive and that every year it grew bigger. Since then it has found that the bull has, in fact, increased in size.

Mr. William Barber, of Iken Cliff, Surrey, does not find this the least bit amazing, for there is a boulder near the place where he was born which, as a lad, he has often rocked by hand.

To-day it has grown so big that even with a man's strength he cannot budge it.

He Waters Them

Mr. Barber is quite sure that the boulder has grown; that it is not imagination, because for the past quarter of a century his hobby has been growing stones.

He takes as much care of them as a gardener does of a sensiitive plant. At regular intervals he waters them and periodically turns them over. Through the years he has noted the measurements of each stone, and says that the average growth is one-sixteenth of an inch every four months.

In Arizona there are trees which have turned to solid stone. They are among the oldest things on this planet.

They belong to the period when prehistoric animals roamed the earth, before the first man appeared. There are thousands upon thousands of them, piled up in heaps or lying singly, in an area of ten square miles which is called the Petrified Forest.

London's Fossils

When the last Ice Age receded huge floods covered the earth and these trees stood in the way. So powerful was the surge of water that they were pulled up by the roots and submerged.

They lay under the water for thousands of years until they became completely petrified by the gradual absorption of minerals in the water. Today they lie in the middle of a desert, a reminder of a cataclysm greater than any atom bomb.

There are stones in London which are as old as those trees. They are the walls of Bush House, St. Paul's Cathedral, the Bank of England and the Cenotaph.

The stone for these buildings was quarried at Portland.

At one time Portland was at the bottom of the sea and often, when cutting the stone, traces of fossilised fish and shells of species that are extinct today have been found.

Some of these fossil marks can still be seen in the walls of the buildings.

Made Fortune From "Uncurling" Hair

A man who was mainly responsible for putting baking powder on the market died recently and left a fortune. His success has been equalled time and again by men and women who have hit on a simple device and sold it to a grateful world.

George H. Dowty had a new idea; liquid springing. Despite what he had been told at school, he found that all liquids are compressible, and that when compressed they are far more resilient than rubber.

He applied his principles to aircraft springing, although they can be adapted for use on road and rail. To-day every British air-craft carries Dowty hydraulic equipment, and the turn-over of the firm making it is extremely high. Yet in 1930 Dowty's premises consisted of a single room over a garage rented at a few shillings a week.

A young insurance agent felt highly embarrassed one day when the pen he had handed to an important client scattered blots all over his signature. From that day he devoted all his spare time to making a pen that would not blot. The modern fountain pen is the result. The man's name was L. R. Waterman.

Women, too, have invented hundreds of articles in common use today. One is the reel of cotton which was invented by a young English girl named Christine Shaw in the early eighteenth century. It is to her that the cotton industry, employing thousands of men and women, virtually owes its existence.

Mrs. Walker, an American working woman, dreamt one night that she had earned a fortune by making curly hair grow straight.

She could not rest until she had made endless experiments in her kitchen, and eventually succeeded in discovering a lotion which straightened curly hair. It became the rage with Negro girls and she made a fortune out of her dream.

Ideas don't always make fortunes, however. In 1860, a young schoolmaster, Philip Reis, rigged up wires from one building to another. His pupils were told to listen at a primitive microphone made from wide-wrapped knitting needles, and Reis sat in a room and played the violin into the world's first telephone.

The instrument worked. Reis and his pupils believed in it, but the scientific world did not.

In 1876 the telephone was invented again, successfully this time, by a young American called Bell.

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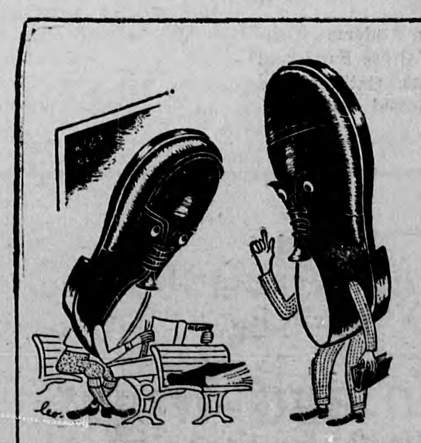

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