

## Are Midways Necessary at Fairs?

by Jack McPherson, in  
The Family Herald & Weekly Star

There is a place for midways and horse racing at fairs provided they are of the right kind. This seemed to be the conclusion reached by the four speakers who took part in a debate on this off-discussed subject at the annual meeting of the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies in Toronto, in early February. In addition to this debate the several hundred delegates from all over Ontario considered every phase of fair operation.

Leading off for the affirmative on the resolution "that too much stress is being placed on midways and horse racing at fairs," Mrs. Alex Anderson of Stratford stated that she felt these features were no longer needed at the fairs. In the early days when transportation was more difficult, the races and midways were "thrill attractions" and helped provide funds for bigger prizes. However, modern transportation has made it possible for patrons to see such attractions elsewhere and she felt they no longer were a major factor in attracting patrons.

To back up her viewpoint, Mrs. Anderson mentioned several fairs where little use was made of the races and midway. At Stratford, the fair has become an expression of community spirit. They have combined with the Junior Chamber of Commerce to put on a combined agricultural and industrial show with excellent results.

The Teeswater Fair is known far and wide as a great agricultural show which has greatly increased attendance by concentrating on their agricultural exhibits. They have no races and only rides for children.

At McKillop, they have made handicrafts a specialty with the Women's Institutes and Junior Farmers playing a big part.

Success Without Races  
She concluded that, as the show window of agriculture, a fair should put first things first. This would mean emphasis on the agricultural program. If the fair is well organized exhibits are well displayed and the show is well advertised, it will be successful without the races and midway. Mrs. Anderson stated.

Miss Charlotte McCullough of Georgetown, leader for the negative, showed a very different viewpoint. She agreed the agricultural show should be good, but felt the races and midway were an essential part of the fair. People want pleasure, as well as education at their fair. Even in getting the pleasure, the young people learn things too. As an example she pointed out it was worthwhile for

the young lad to lose a little money at a booth. It was often a cheap lesson.

Tory Gregg of Wingham, well-known in Western Ontario as a starter of harness races was second speaker for the affirmative. His viewpoint was simply that there was no place at any fair for either a broken down midway or poor race horses. Many of the midways appearing at small fairs were a disgrace. They set up at the gates of the show, gipped the patrons and gave everyone a bad impression of the fair. Instead, he felt service clubs would be glad to set up amusements which would be worthwhile at the smaller shows.

He felt much the same about the race horses. Many of the horses appearing at smaller fairs should never be allowed on the track. When people came to see a race they were entitled to a good one. As he put it, "this is the sport of kings, let's keep it on a high plane." To do this Mr. Gregg felt strict adherence to rules, putting out horses which did not meet the standards was the first step. Then proper facilities for the horses; and strict enforcement of having the horses ready for proper starting would help.

Ray Wilson of Avonmore as the second speaker for the negative led off with the point that while fairs are educational, you must get the people out if they are to be educated. He felt the midways and races brought out much of the attendance. Then while at the show, they see the agricultural exhibit and get their education too. He added that the increased attendance caused by midways and races, helped finance the fairs and made it possible to pay good prize money. Without them many fairs would fold up, according to Mr. Wilson.

While some claim light horses are not agricultural, he said he had heard it stated there was more farm income in Canada from raising Standard Bred Horses than from raising of heavy horses.

While the debate drew a crowd of some five hundred, the delegates gave attention to many other matters.

W. R. Walker, of Fort William, had some interesting points on "Keeping out of the Red." A fair is like any sound business. The first thing to develop is a strong organization, headed by an active board, representative of the various interests of the community. Next the condition of the plant is of vital importance. Buildings and all facilities must be kept in good shape, exhibits must be attractively displayed and judges of high calibre employed.

Finances are all important. He felt admission was frequently too low. No one appreciated getting



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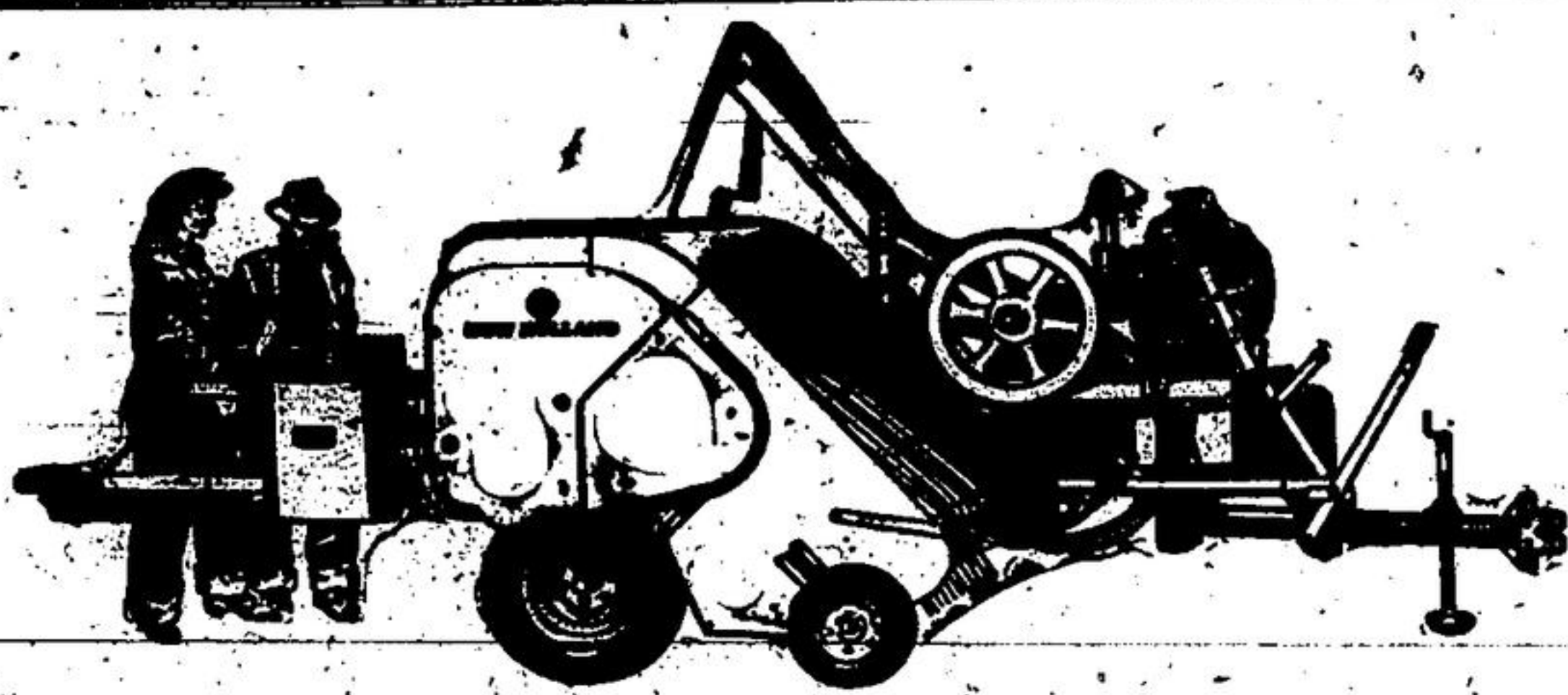
things free or even cheaply. Thus gate admissions should be adequate, and sufficient to make prospective patrons feel it must be a worthwhile event to attend. Another way of helping finances, is to find uses for the buildings and facilities at other times in the year, giving additional revenue to help finance the fair.

Having arranged adequate finances, a good plant and with a good organization behind the job, the final punch comes from good promotion. Advertising through press and radio, stickers and bumper signs were all found to be useful in promoting the Lakehead Show, stated Mr. Walker. Such promotion, combined with the other points mentioned kept the show and its finances in a healthy condition.

Schools and agricultural extension in relation to the fairs received attention from talks by J. S. Walker, of Leamington and F. Q. Dench of Renfrew. Both men emphasized that the fairs were a natural place at which young people could learn something useful. Mr. Walker told how the school exhibit at Leamington, had been greatly increased by interesting the teachers in the project. He added that this also helped greatly in swelling attendance of both children and their parents.

As the meeting drew to a close officers for the coming year were elected as follows: President, Herb Corbett, Dundalk; 1st vice president, Howard Giles, Almonte; 2nd vice president, Raymond Comfort, St. Anns; Secretary F. A. Lashley, Toronto; and Treasurer, M. B. Cochran, Almonte.

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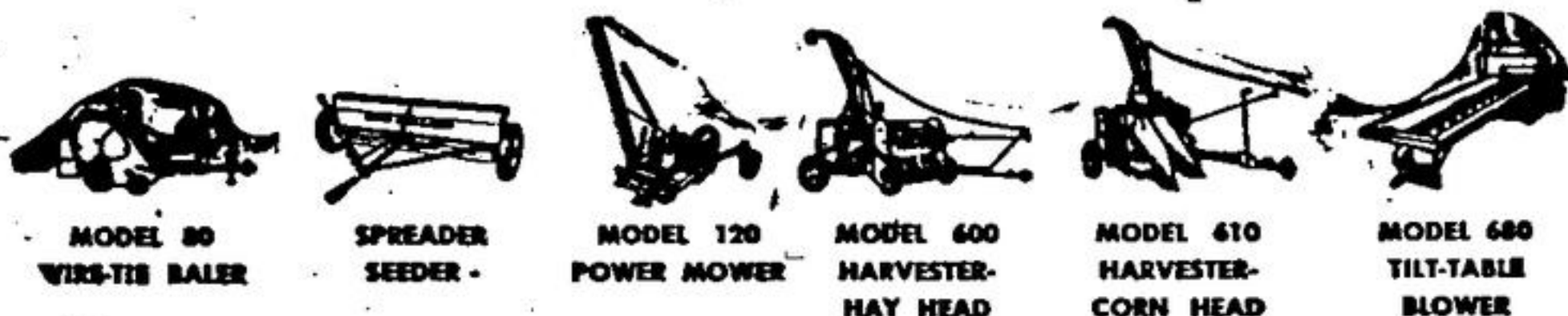
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8 BRITISH NORTH AMERICA ACT PASSED BY BRITISH HOUSE OF COMMONS, 1867	9 SUSPENSION BRIDGE OVER NIAGARA RIVER COMPLETED, 1855	10 QUEEN'S OPENED, 1842	11 ONTARIO ENACTS THAT ONLY DENTISTS PROPERLY QUALIFIED CAN PRACTICE IN PROVINCE, 1908	12 CLOTHING PRICES, 1903	13 DETROIT'S CARL LUSCOMBE SCORES 3 GOALS IN 1 MIN, 52 SECS - FASTEST IN NHL HISTORY, 1938	14 YORK CREATED A MARKET TOWN, 1815
15 FIRST AND SECOND CANADIAN CORPS UNITED IN HOLLAND, 1945	16 DETROIT'S BILLY TAYLOR SETS RECORD OF 7 ASSISTS IN ONE GAME, 1947	17 THOMAS D'ARCY MCGEE GUEST OF HONOUR AT ST PATS DINNER, OTTAWA, 1876	18 RUNAWAY TEAM GOES THROUGH GROCERY STORE WINDOW KINGSTON, 1876	19 GREAT FIRE SWEEPS BOTHWELL OILWELL AREA 1867	20 LEAF'S GORDIE DRILLON WINS NHL SCORING TITLE (52 POINTS) IN HIS SECOND YEAR, 1938	21 GREAT BOUNDARY DISPUTE BEGINS BETWEEN ONTARIO AND MANITOBA, 1881
22 GRANITES DEFEAT REGINA FOR THE ALLAN CUP, 1922	23 TORONTO'S ATHENAEUM PUBLIC LIBRARY AND MUSEUM CHARTERED, 1848	24 TORONTO CAB DRIVER FINED "22 OR 10 DAYS" FOR DRIVING A LADY ON SUNDAY, 1893	25 DETROIT L MARoons Q IN MODERN HOCKEY'S LONGEST GAME, 176 MIN 30 SECS, 1936	26 HUDSON'S BAY AND NORTHWEST FUR COMPANIES UNITE, 1821	27 BARE DYE SCORES 4 AS TORONTO ST. PATS BEAT VANCOUVER FOR STANLEY CUP, 1922	28 FEES FOR IMPOUNDING ANIMALS IN THE POUND OF YORK, 1800
29 NIAGARA FALLS STOPPED TO A TRICKLE BY ICE JAM IN LAKE ERIE, 1848	30 TORONTO SCHOOL ACT ESTABLISHES COMPULSORY EDUCATION, 1885	31 BRITISH COMMONWEALTH AIR TRAINING PLAN OFFICIALLY ENDS, 1945	MARCH BIRTHSTONE BLOODSTONE OR AQUAMARINE			

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