

Facilitated Farm Credit, New Live Stock Policy Urged by Commission

Extension of rural education, improved provisions for farm credit, soil conservation assistance and research, increased aid for the live stock industry and appointment of a special Deputy Minister of Agriculture resident in Northern Ontario were among recommendations contained in the 90-page report of the Ontario Agricultural Commission of Inquiry tabled in the Legislature yesterday. It was signed by Archibald Leitch, chairman.

The report, which covered the whole field of agriculture except marketing, was the result of 121 days of hearings held in all parts of the Province by a commission of practical farmers appointed Sept. 22, 1943.

The commission reported that it was unable to report usefully on marketing of farm products because of "the obscurity which wartime controls throw upon the future of marketing conditions" and other circumstances beyond its control.

Pure-Bred Sires

A new live stock policy for Ontario was urged, aimed principally at elimination of scrub bulls and their replacement by pure-bred sires. Repeal of the Protection of Cattle Act was advised in favor of legislation banning unregistered, non-pedigreed animals for breeding. Financial aid to help farmers acquire pure-bred sires, on a basis of the number of calves produced over two or three years, and a census of all farm sires in the Province were urged, as well as extension of artificial breeding units in beef and dairy cattle.

The commission recommended expansion of the Government's bacon hog policy, greater encouragement of sheep raising and provision of veterinary services in sections now without it, extending, possibly, the plan now in use in the Kenora area. Greater research in animal diseases and establishment of a research centre at the Ontario Agricultural College were advised.

Erosion of Soil

Specific recommendations on soil conservation were based on an exhaustive review of soil degradation, failure of water supply and erosion of valuable top soil. It was proposed that the Government follow a vigorous program to assist municipalities to expand tree planting projects and acquire for this purpose lands unsuitable for other economic use. Formation of flood control and conservation areas was

recommended on a stream watershed basis, municipalities affected being permitted to enter into mutual arrangements "irrespective of present customary boundaries." Establishment of a soils department at O.A.C. was suggested and greater emphasis on soil conservation research.

Pointing the need for improved agricultural credit, the commission recommended continuation of the Federal Farm Loan Board to provide credit facilities for farmers unable to obtain them through regular agencies.

Assume Part of Mortgage

The State should, it said, assume some portion of the mortgage risk arising from making a mortgage at a higher percentage of the value of the security than orthodox practices would warrant, a principle similar to that involved in the National Housing Act. Special Government assistance was asked so that young experienced farmers could establish themselves.

Diversion of a share of timber and mineral revenues for the agricultural development of Northern Ontario was included in the recommendations. The proposal was to reinvest this revenue to provide new settlers with farm clearings and sufficient equipment to support a family, primarily in areas already settled. Creation of local improvement districts, enlargement of marketing facilities, extension of Hydro and establishment of composite high schools also were urged for the North.

Interim recommendations also included payment of hog subsidies, continuation of bacon contracts on a two-year basis, licensing of livestock truckers, horn money payments, institution of artificial breeding units for cattle in eight areas, sugar beet subsidy increase and a plan for training specialists in soil conservation.

Education of Rural Youth

To provide for the informal education of rural youth in Ontario after they leave regular schools, the report has recommended to the Government establishment of short agricultural courses in all counties and districts on a permanent basis. The courses would have subjects for girls and young women as well as for young men.

The commission felt that the Department of Agriculture should appoint a special officer to direct the policy. Night classes were suggested to teach cultural and aca-

demie as well as agricultural subjects, also assistance for rural youth groups carrying on correlated subjects within the field of education.

Weaknesses Noted

Drawing attention to "the weaknesses of the present method of administration of the Ontario Agricultural College through the Department of Agriculture," the commission strongly supported steps now under way to establish a board of governors there, and suggested a permanent committee, to advise on matters of a purely academic nature, such as courses, research and examinations.

Recommended also were establishment of a soils department to study soil conservation, restoration of the Department of Agricultural Economics to again meet modern needs, expanding of farm engineering department facilities, and a "more realistic system of salaries for the academic staff," and opportunities for junior staff members.