

CASTOR COMMENT

Farmers need more — or we won't eat

Consider the following statistics compiled by the Toronto Star:

Between 1971 and 1976, the farm population in Canada plunged by nearly 30 per cent.

Agriculture Canada specialists estimate that farm income in Canada will decline by 12 per cent this year. In Ontario alone — a region that produces 30 per cent of the nation's agricultural goods — farm income is expected to drop by 40 per cent.

The cost of farm machinery has increased at least five-fold in the past 10 years.

Between 1966 and 1976, Ontario alone lost more than a million acres of farmland, much of it not only the best in Canada, but among the best in the world. During those same 10 years, more

than 130,000 farms across the country ceased to exist.

Agriculture Canada estimates that, across the nation, about 200 acres of arable and potentially arable land are built over, swamped, flooded or eroded every day.

In the metropolitan Toronto area, an acre of farmland that cost \$1,300 in 1971 soared to a price of \$6,100 by 1976.

It is any wonder that, at the Canadian Federation of Agriculture conference in Ottawa earlier this month, the faces of farmers from across the country were fraught with worry?

It is any wonder they passed resolution upon resolution asking the government to reverse what can only be seen as the disintegra-

tion of Canada's farming industry to foreign and domestic speculators and to urban sprawl?

One could detect an undercurrent of desperation at the conference, a foreboding that, like a cheese in a big family, the farming industry in Canada is slowly but surely being sliced away. Unfortunately, in this case, there is only one wedge. Will we look up too late to ask 'where did it all go'?

The Canadian federation asked Marc Lalonde, the energy minister, to help them out by subsidizing soaring fuel costs. Lalonde, who boasts of his farm boy roots, said no; that they were already enjoying prices much below the world rate.

The Ontario federation, through its president Ralph Bar-

rie, asked for subsidies to cushion inflated interest rates. Eugene Whelan, the agriculture minister, who professes to be the farmer's friend, said no; that they should be no better off than other Canadians.

It is not as if the farmers were demanding ransom or kickbacks. They were asking for help; they got none. Nor were these men — steady of gaze and thick of hand — spendthrifts. Many wore suits that had obviously been altered several times, many forsake the Skylife Hotel dining room for the hot dog stand downstairs.

Farmers are already — directly or indirectly — subsidized by all levels of governments through loans at reduced rates, property

tax reductions, crop insurance, research funding, irrigation projects, transportation and storage systems.

But the programs are simply not enough, as statistical projections suggest. The farmers need more. In asking ourselves whether we are willing to pay, we must also ask ourselves whether the survival of our food production is as vital to our well being as guaranteed health care.

The alternative? As the Toronto Star said recently:

"Canada has a chance now to learn from the mistakes of the past — if we do not, we will be doomed to repeat them, and in this case risk becoming another hungry nation in a world of starving millions."

They're off

The Ontario election is in full swing. Premier Davis has swept the rug out from under the Liberal leader by simply taking over his position of full support for Mr. Trudeau's policies. This leaves Mr. Smith hanging in mid-air, where he is likely to be when the election is over. As for Mr. Cassidy, he moves about assiduously digging up issues of great concern to himself and debating them in detail with anyone who will listen.

What are the issues? The first is, of course, the 38-year lease on power possessed by the Conservative Party. This is a long time for the same party to be in power. The Conservatives will say it is not the same party. Mr. Davis is not Mr. Robarts. Mr. Robarts was not Mr. Frost and so on. Too bad.

On the constitutional issue, Mr. Trudeau needs Ontario badly, so

he must tolerate Mr. Davis' curious performance as the Premier of the most populous province in Canada, tacitly agreeing that the Federal government and Parliament shall be permitted to rewrite the constitution even in matters within provincial jurisdiction, in spite of the objections of the provinces. Mr. Davis thereby collaborating in the demise of a Federal arrangement which has stood for one hundred years, in order to win an election.

Mr. Trudeau needs Mr. Davis on the Constitution and Mr. Davis needs Mr. Trudeau; neither needs Mr. Smith, so Mr. Smith will be thrown to the wolves and Mr. Cassidy will be left to pick up the pieces, gaining whatever advantage he can out of the situation. As John Diefenbaker would say, "Is this the way to build a nation?"

POETS OF THE...

HOCKEY HERO

Well, there he goes, my seven plus six
Wobbling and reeling among
hockey sticks.

Skating the length of the arena ice
Swinging this way once and that
way twice.

Round a weaving enemy shirt
Carrying the puck, always alert.

Bent on completing an urgent mission
Rocking and wheeling into position.

He trips — he falls — head over
heels
The world spins round as over he
keels.

The ice swings up to meet his eye
He rises, he staggers and plunges
by.

On to the blue line, my, oh my
Determined never to groan or cry.

Snow-covered snow and sporting
an egg
A rosy cheek and a badly bruised
leg.

Defiance strong in his young soul
He totters on towards the goal.

He loses the puck — it bounces a
yard
And over the stick of the goalie
guard.

Back he comes with feet
a-prancing.
Ankles dragging — brown eyes
dancing.



Beaver Bob

Phil who?

theless, that is their story and they are sticking with it.

I have a groundhog at the bottom of my lawn, a fine old fellow, greying around the muzzle, not quite as old as Punxsutawney Phil, who allegedly has been making his appearances for 94 years (proving the difficulty of telling one groundhog from another).

Perhaps I should not use the possessive when referring to "my" groundhog. After all, he may regard me as his tenant, not the other way round. He was here first. In any case, he allows me to inhabit a house on his property, provided certain elementary conventions are observed between us.

As far as he is concerned, he has agreed not to dig holes in my lawn. He understands this perfectly well. One hole he dug in advance of the Demilitarized Zone was quickly filled in with sand and he never tried to reopen it. He has one hole under the willow tree and another near the river bank. He is entitled to those. He has another one 250 feet away opening onto the Castor. At least, I presume it is the same groundhog, because it certainly looks like him. It may, of course, be a relative.

We have this working agreement, where he keeps to his territory and I keep to mine. There is no question of his being in subjection. He is an irascible fellow and if I come too close when he is feeding on the lawn, which he often does in summer, he sits up and gives me a baleful glare, as though to say, "Watch it, bub."

Last summer, he came up as far as the pear tree, picking up fallen pears; sitting up, holding them in his paw and demolishing them with an appearance of gourmet enjoyment, while I sat and watched him. If I came forward, he would suspend operations and stare, first inquiringly, as though to say, "what is this idiot up to now? Can't he see I'm eating." Then the stare would become hard and fixed if I approached beyond the recognized limits. Often through binoculars, I would watch as he lay in the field, beside another of his holes, sunning himself in the afternoon. He is a large animal, the size of a small dog and it is strange to think of a creature that size spending most of his life under ground. How would you like it, dear reader?

I mention the Castor Groundhog, simply to go on to my main point, which is, that since he disappeared into his den in late October, when the wind was lashing the branches of the willow and the rain was whipping coldly across the meadow, he has not been seen.

Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania is noted as the home base of the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club as well as the habitat of the groundhog called "Punxsutawney Phil."

Last week, right on schedule, before TV cameras and a host of watchers, including, of course, the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club, which was out in force, Punxsutawney Phil climbed out of his burrow at Gobbler's Knob at 7:28 a.m., and dived right back in again when he saw his shadow, predicting six more weeks of winter.

Some doubt was cast on the report of the members of the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club covering this incident, since it was pouring rain at the time. Never-

CASTOR

With a toothless lisp and a mile wide grin
"Didja see that Mum, didja see me win?"

My son, may you always have
courage like this
When things are seemingly going
amiss.

Dare to do what you did to-day
Your very best when you work or
play.

Avoid the obstacles, using good
sense
Go bravely in search of excellence.

Success will be yours in the years
that span
Your three score and ten as a full-
grown man.

Phyllis Curran
Martintown

LIFE AND CLARITY

As a child
I have often travelled
the expanse of the Universe
In one step
I conquered whole Galaxies.
Giants begged forgiveness
at my feet
Stars melted around me.
Astonishing you say!
Follow me
What you will see
will amaze and astound you.
But soon you will believe
for I am reality
and you merely a dream
inaccessible to all
including the dreamer.

Bruno Santilli
Russell

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Correspondence

Editor,
Castor Review.

I was saddened by Mark Van Dusen's article entitled "Tabernacle television" in the Castor Review. I can agree with him in some respects, but I disagree quite a bit in others.

Firstly, I agree that the dramatic style of a TV preacher can be a 'turn-off' to some people, myself included: but I don't believe it is to all. Because we are all different and unique individuals I think our Lord has one certain person to tell each one of us of Jesus' love and power. About two years ago, I heard a Toronto area hog farmer tell of the changes in his life after he asked the Lord to become real to him and direct his life. I was very moved by his simple, quiet way.

Since then, I have had a desire to read the Bible and see what Jesus and his church was like, before we each directed it our own way with our own interpretations of his instructions.

Jesus' church was powerful — converting, healing and even resurrecting people and He said that his followers (us) would do even greater things. Many churches don't teach us to expect healing when we're sick or a comforter when we're distressed, but God promises it to us in the Bible, and I have experienced it myself many times in the last two years.

I can't see the hearts of those television ministers that you were speaking of, but the Lord can. Just because I am put off by an individual, it doesn't mean that he is not doing the Lord's work and helping many others according to His plan.

James 2:24 "You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone."; 26 "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead."

We all reach a point in our lives when we must search inwardly and ask "Is my faith alive with works?"

Yours sincerely,
Sharon Guntzel

Editor,
Castor Review.

Your publication is enjoyed immensely in spite of the fact that it usually arrives a month after publication. I plan to attend the home-coming reunion in June and look forward to visiting your office at that time.

Sincerely,
Donald A. MacKeracher,
San Jose, Calif.