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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Island's Potato Quality Is High

(No byline)

THIS WEEK I'm going to boast a bit about some of our P.E.I. products. A chat with Marketing Director Reid Sangster leaves me at least mildly elated. He has some good reactions to our potatoes and somehow it seems a long time since that has happened before.

He was careful, as I suppose a man in his position must be, but he did relax enough to say "although we are having difficulty getting our potatoes off the Island right now, we have learned that quality-wise we are way out in front in the Ontario marketing area".

A TORONTO housewife, Helen Boyd, wrote several months ago complaining of Island spud quality. "When your potatoes are good", she said "they are better than any others but the quality has been slipping every year and now one can count on being able to use only a small part of every bag. We like our potatoes baked but nobody would dare to bake one of the wretched little things I have. They are like sponges, have great long eyes, have a sort of fungus growth and almost every one has a slash on it apparently from a digging apparatus".

The disappointed and disgusted Toronto woman was just about to give up on P.E.I. spuds and "pay ten cents apiece for an Idaho product and get assured quality".

Still Wants Good P.E.I. Spuds

THE LETTER was to the minister of agriculture but she finished up with "If you can tell me where I can get good P.E.I. potatoes here, I will most gladly buy them and so will my friends".

The letter was handed to Mr. Sangster who wrote a friendly, homey type of reply. He explained that the "spongy, sprouty, long eyed" condition indicated the spuds had been kept too long in improper storage conditions, sympathized with her frustration at not being able to get quality potatoes, and explained some of the methods that are being tried to correct the situation.

A RETURN letter from Mrs. Boyd says in part "I got some good P.E.I. potatoes last week. They were big enough to bake nicely" - she evidently likes baked spuds - "I hope I won't get a certain chain store manager in wrong if I tell you that when I complained to him about the grading problem he took me, with the air of a conspirator, and showed me a low cupboard in his store, where he has a large box into which he puts large, good P.E.I. potatoes and he let me choose as many as I wanted and weighed them for me.

"I hope that when you come to Toronto you will let me know and come to dinner with us. When my husband read your letter he said that your job must be a perpetual headache. It was most kind of you to answer at such length.

The correspondence illustrates some of the human elements involved in keeping spud consumers in good humor. Some days when I talk to Reid Sangster, I also get the feeling his job has plenty of headaches. So I was happy this week to find he had some good reactions.

### Newfoundland Reaction Is Change

THERE WERE other high spots."In recent visits to Newfoundland I found people high in their praise of P.E.I. spuds this year. The situation was so bad in some localities not too long ago that one store owner posted a large sign outside indicating "we do not sell P.E.I. potatoes". So you'll pardon a bit of boasting, I hope.

The marketing director stopped in on some Sydney merchants for their comments. "I asked them if P.E.I. potatoes stood high in demand and they told me 'Yes good P.E.I. potatoes are ten-to-one favorites here'". I think it was only last year that certain Nova Scotia people were trying to tell us Nova Scotia spuds were favored by the same margin. So there's another switch.

The improvement is good, Mr. Sangster said with restraint "but we can't afford to relax".

IT'S ACTUALLY beginning to look like spring although there are still mountainous banks in the country, but storm stories still come to my desk. George MacEwen, St Peters, tells me about four men from his area who had dinner in a Charlottetown restaurant and walked to St Peters a distance of 32 miles. One man, Johnny Sutherland had to go three miles farther.

The rate of progress over the wintry travelling was most unbelievably fast as Mr. Sutherland reportedly reached his house at 10:30 that night. Perhaps someone else has another good story about travelling on foot over storm blocked roads.

STILL ON the blocked roads theme, I talked this week to the province's largest dairy plant about some of the problems their producers faced when they couldn't deliver their milk.

In many cases deliveries were impossible for as long as six days and I feel there were longer delays in some other cases. The problem was to find containers for the milk.

### Even Wash Tubs Used For Milk

EVERY TYPE of container that could be found was used, even to wash tubs. Cans and other household equipment were borrowed from neighbours, so were other containers.

John A. Simmonds of Central Creameries told me that where possible his company sent out extra cans by train, although there were several days when even trains were not running.

One man near Hunter River had collected 67 cans of milk before he was able to ship to the plant. He lived more than two miles from the village and hauled the cans home on hand sleighs. Other people did the same thing. I haven't any details or names but I

have been told several times of people who had to dump milk during those storm periods when they could no longer find containers for it.

The hand sleighs were used in many cases to haul supplies.

I know of several government inspectors who hauled their equipment in this way.

It's surely been an unusual winter. Young people of today will have some wondrous tales to tell about the winter of 1961 in forty or fifty years' time. By then the distance of the past will have lent added enchantment to the feats and they'll naturally be exaggerated. Some of them are unusual enough without any exaggeration.

### Farm Edition Brings Co-operation

OUR FARM Edition comes out next week and I believe readers will find a great deal of interesting and helpful stories and information about the agricultural way of life. I want to express my warmest thanks to the officers and staff members of the department of agriculture, federal and provincial, and to the many other people who co-operated so splendidly in making the edition possible.

Other editors and staff members on these papers join me in most sincere thanks for the way you people helped. In almost thirty years of newspaper experience, I cannot recall that I have ever received such effective and willing co-operation.