

The Guardian, Charlottetown, Fri., April 28, 1961

ACROSS THE ISLAND

Transportation Need Stressed

BY NEIL A. MATHESON
Provincial-Farm Editor

THE URGENT need for better potato shipping facilities - dealers tell me the situation is extremely serious - and the comments at Saint John this week by John R. Baldwin, make the causeway proposal a natural subject to start this week's column.

Mr. Baldwin, deputy minister of transport at Ottawa, is one of the most highly rated and best informed deputies there. He "was not speaking officially" - only a minister can do that - but I know that Mr. Baldwin would not speak so negatively of the Chignecto Canal project unless he knew that Ottawa frowns on the proposal.

He questioned whether the economic benefit from the proposed canal would be sufficient to "justify the substantial expenditure". He said that the time taken by ships to go through the proposed locks might not mean any time saving, and a system of necessary tolls might further contribute to sparse use of such a canal if it were built. There were several other quotes in a story that came from St. John, but I noticed that all of them reflected a negative reaction to the proposal.

I TALKED with top federal economists in Ottawa about the Canal proposal's merits several years ago, and I knew one or two of them well enough to get an appraisal that was completely frank.

"Canal boosters tell us", they told me, "that a tremendous amount of shipping would use the canal if it were built. But they have never been able to tell us what shipping would make up this predicted traffic."

That's paraphrasing the economists' comment and putting it as briefly as possible. But it is an accurate summary, as I recall it now several years later. I should explain that I wasn't knocking the Canal proposal, for I don't believe in knocking the other chap's ideas to boost our own. The information was volunteered by the men to whom I was talking about our pet transportation proposal. So Mr. Baldwin's comments came as no surprise.

New Emphasis On Need Is Urged

THAT SEEMS to remove the canal as a priority threat to our causeway demand so that now the proposal can stand or fall on its own merit.

The important thing now, I suggest, is not that we try to blame or excuse anyone, or anything, for our present impossible situation - we can do little about it right now - but that we make the best possible use of it to emphasize anew our urgent needs.

The immediate need is for a new ice-breaking, train-carrying ferry. Our legislature has made that decision with a united voice. The demand had not been made previously for fear it would conflict with the province's demand for the causeway itself. But the

decision now is that even if a land link to the mainland is built, present Strait crossing facilities are not nearly good enough to meet our requirements until it could be completed.

SOME MAY argue that this has been an unusually tough winter for cross-Strait transportation; that it has been an even more unusual spring. But nobody can guarantee us that next year, or the next, won't be as bad, or even worse.

We are taking a beating in potato shipping operations right now. The seriousness of the problem has been stressed to me by shippers whose opinions are not open to question. I suggest we salvage some benefit from the present unfortunate situation by using our difficulties to emphasize anew the urgent need for improved facilities.

THE IMMEDIATE need, I repeat, is for an ice-breaking, train-carrying ferry. That has been decided already. But the long-range view is for the land link, the only real solution to our problems. For when ice is packed solidly to the bottom of the Strait no ice breaker can provide the uninterrupted communication with the mainland we were guaranteed in the pact of Confederation back in 1873.

Quadruplet Lambs In West Prince

MOST INTERESTING farm note I've heard this week comes from Alma where W.B. MacLellan has a sheep with quadruplet lambs. It's the first time I've heard of a sheep having four lambs, and the same applies to many to whom I have spoken. I'm told that they have occurred before but in the words of Stewart Eagles, senior livestock fieldman, Canada department of agriculture, "they are so rare they are almost an oddity".

The lambs are several weeks old now, and the three ewes and one ram lamb are doing fine, I'm told by Frank Weeks, Alberton bureau manager for these papers.

MR. MACLELLAN is a man who has stuck with sheep through his career. He has 22 ewes now and 36 lambs but eight of his ewes are only one year old and they have had single lambs this year. Most of his sheep are Shropshires.

An Elmsdale man, Dale McKenna, has 36 lambs from nineteen ewes which is real production. They include two sets of triplets. One of Mr. McKenna's sheep had quadruplet lambs ten or eleven years ago, he reports. He has Cheviot and grade Oxford ewes and a pure bred Suffolk ram. The sheep industry is declining in the province but these Western Prince men are doing their part to keep it alive.

Landrace Hogs Gaining In P.E.I.

LANDRACE HOGS are making inroads in this province, I was told this week by Livestock Director L.W.Roper. "You might just as well try to stop the incoming tide with a pitchfork as try to stop the Landraces from coming in here", he told me this week

The agricultural department is encouraging the Landrace development particularly, I gathered, for crossbreeding value with Island Yorkshires. It's putting better feet and legs on the pigs, better bone, and breeders are getting much better livability, he said.

ALLAN COOK OF Cooksville, Ontario "told me he had cut his mortality in small pigs in the last two years to less than one-third of what it was formerly," he reported. Cook was one of the men visited by some seventy Island farmers earlier this month.

The livestock director insists we need that strength in the lower limbs of our hogs. All too many of them are showing feet and leg weakness, he reports. An enthusiastic believer in what new blood can do for commercial swine breeders, he sees real possibilities.

When I asked him if the Landrace have the streamlined bodies and the length of our Island Yorkshires he quickly assured me that they have. Two Landrace hogs I saw at Cooks were easily the longest pigs I have ever seen, he said.

Snow Reported In Every Month

WE'VE HAD a tough winter and we're in for a late spring or so it seems. But things could be worse. Do you know that they had snow during every month of the year in this province some years ago? I have no further details on it now but think I can get them for next week. At least it looks that way right now.

If you think it sounds impossible, I'm right with you but one of the chaps in this news office tells me that he has heard the story from a reliable source, so it looks like an interesting possibility.

DHIA Is Good For Grade Cattle

A FARM Edition story on the dairy herd improvement associations promotion dropped a line that made Earl Adams, who is in charge of the program, say something that didn't make much sense. Without repeating what it did make him say, I'll put it straight by saying Mr. Adams was emphasizing that DHIA provides the grade cattle breeder with an opportunity to test production of individual cows. The pure bred breeders get the same thing through the record of performance testing program.