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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Support voiced for insurance

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STRONG SUPPORT has been voiced this year for unemployment insurance for farm workers. It has come from federations of agriculture here, and from some of our legislature members.

This is not a new demand. It has been heard for many years. But I'm wondering when the federation of agriculture people are going to decide they really want it. I'm talking of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture now, and before someone decides I'm all wet, let me explain.

THIS WAS brought to my attention when I had the honor of being one of the province's representatives at Ottawa. I talked with the appropriate people in the department of labor. I also talked with some of the senior people in the federation of agriculture. I found that the labor department people were honestly trying to work out a formula that might meet the demand the federation people were making then. They were trying to find a plan of insurance that could work on a voluntary basis.

Grave Misgivings Are Voiced

I'M SORRY to say I did not find the same unity of purpose in the federation. Some of the top men – and I mean top men – told me frankly that they had misgivings. One of them said for example he thought it would be an added charge on the farmer. "If one of my men was insured, I'm sure that I would be paying his share of the premium as well as the employer's share", he said. At that time at least, the federation officer didn't want any part of it.

My reference has nothing to do with politics. A Liberal government was in power at the time, but the chaps I talked to were department men, civil service employees. They're the same people who are staffing the department now. They are the people who have to work out such things and administer them, if and when they are adopted by parliament.

I cannot see much chance of insurance for farm people right now with the employment fund so badly depleted, but I believe that it will develop soon when farm spokesmen really decide what they want and give it solid backing.

Lord Selkirk Planning Recalled

THE CURRENT discussion on the new ferry being built for the Borden - Tormentine run reminds me of the Lord Selkirk, and the time she was being planned. It also recalls some of the errors, one of which I'll mention.

Angus MacGugan, a little Scot on the Canadian Maritime Commission, was charged with her construction. The man was proud of his job and was giving it his best effort. I talked to him about her many times, and was struck by the sense of personal pride he showed in her planning

UNFORTUNATELY MacGugan died before the ship was finished and someone else had to take over the job which he had begun. That could be partly responsible for the error I mentioned.

The engines were ordered from Holland and, presumably, they were adequate for the ship that was designed originally. However a new transport minister decided a bigger ship with more carrying capacity was needed. The decision was wise but the power of the engines was not increased. I'm told the Selkirk lacks the power and speed that MacGugan talked of so confidently. He talked of 15-knot speed with quick "turn-arounds" at either port and five round trips per day.

Handling Difficulties Are Seen

I DO not think it's any secret that the ship is hard to handle in strong winds and I believe her high superstructure is largely responsible.

I know that Capt. C. R. Hunter, who is now president of the Northumberland Ferries Ltd., was responsible for several changes that greatly improved the efficiency of the ship. He's much too modest a man to tell it himself, but I know that his knowledge and experience are highly regarded in Ottawa. At least they were when I was there.

THE TIME has come when we should have another large ferry on the Wood Islands - Caribou run. The Dunning is far too small and her facilities are not in keeping with the modern needs.

I know that MacGugan had the need of a second such ship in mind even as he worked on the Selkirk plans. He talked about it several times. I imagine that other people there must have the same idea. There should be a favorable atmosphere there when the time comes to press this worthy claim.

MacKean Rescue Comment Heard

ONE OF the more interesting comments we have had on the A. J. MacKean rescue story of last week came from Mrs. John T. MacLeod, Charlottetown. Now 91, Mrs. MacLeod recalls that the MacKean had been in distress off Kildare Capes in 1899, some seven years before she finally broke up, as related in the story of a week ago. Mrs. MacLeod states that hundreds of men and women gathered at day break on the shore to peer helplessly at the ship which was just out of reach with four men on board. A Tignish man brought a big dog that finally swam out to grab a rope tossed from the ship and bring it to shore. The men clambered hand-over-hand to safety in the late afternoon.

A 'TERRIBLE storm, it sent waves over a 60-foot bank of rocks and finally washed the ship ashore where it rested in some 12 feet of mud. Refloated, it was taken to Tignish, or nearby, for repair, only to be lost in the fierce November storm of 1906.

Mrs. MacLeod recalls that the MacKean “would have been dashed to splinters on the rocks” if it had been washed ashore a few yards from the spot where it did land. Thirty-two men are buried nearby from five other ships that were broken up there, she said.

The Charlottetown lady also recalls that a large bible washed ashore was “hard as a rock” from sea water and that it remained there on the beach “grey and battered’ for several days.