

Island tobacco growers see continued growth in '63

Tobacco, the thrifty baby of Prince Edward Island's basic agricultural industry, is due for continued growth. Agriculture Minister Andrew MacIver said recently it could go somewhere close to 500 acres this year—and the development is being watched closely as it could eventually expand the province's annual farm income.

Veteran tobacco men from Ontario said several years ago when the tobacco crop was still in the experimental stage, that the industry could double the \$20 million annual farm revenue.

Ernest Leitch who came from Ontario to direct the provincial government's first experiments four years ago, suggested it would run to 100,000 acres and double or triple present farm income. Douglas Roloson, who came from the fringe of the Ontario tobacco belt to grow the

crop here, suggests, the P.E.I. potential is as great as Ontario's where the gross value runs to \$150 million or more.

Dr. Norman MacRae, associate director for crop research, Canada's department of Agriculture, has predicted "a future development far beyond the original hopes of those who sponsored the experiment."

He foresees a full-scale development from growing the crop to the export of the finished product. That would entail the establishment of a processing plant and a big company has suggested already it is interested in such a move when production reaches 1,000 acres.

The better growers produced more than 1,250 pounds per acre in the 1961 crop year and they reported good production again last year, despite the wettest

growing season on record. Final figures on quality were not available at the time of writing. Farmers here are confident that they can grow the crop and conditions were unusually favorable in the past two seasons. It was much too dry in 1961 with drought conditions being the worst in many years; last year was the wettest in living memory, with scarcely any heat and an even greater lack of sunshine, two things that normally are most definitely considered in a tobacco grower's mind.

The province's average of 194 to 185 frost free days annually compares with the top Ontario district of Harrow, though P.E.I. does not have as many units of heat. After watching results here last year, though, federal research officer, Keith LeLachour suggests tobacco people may have to take a new look at the importance they have been

assigning to the heat factor.

WAY TO GO

Most people are happy about tobacco results to date, but there's a realization there is still a great deal to learn. Less than one half of the growers have been hitting top production figures, and top people in the industry feel there's a long way to go before the full potential is reached.

Mr. Roloson, for example, believes manure from a grain fed lot of beef steers will supply needed fertility. Nothing else is as good, he insists. Many Ontario farmers truck it long distances, he reported. A neighbor, Albert Panley, who like Roloson is one of the better growers, suggests it may not work so well here. There's more humus in Island soil than there is in Ontario, he explains.

The disagreement con-

firm's Researcher LeLachour's insistence a great deal of study is needed in the immediate future. Experiments he has made thus far under the Research Branch Canada department of agriculture, include temperature checks at various levels—and this has proven to be most important—and tests with varieties and fertility.

Tests for calcium content were made from the 1962 plots. A September 24 frost ruined a large portion of plants on several farms last fall, Mr. Vickery told growers here. The Ontario crop has been killed off 10 days earlier—but several tobacco plants left out for experimental purposes on several farms still unharmed a month later.

The Hicks variety is most widely used though there is

some Delcrest, but experiments are testing five other varieties in the search for the best. Fertility tests are equally important and soil testing laboratories are a part of the team developing the Island's newest cash crop.

Many Ontario people have shown a keen interest in the development here. Mr. Roloson who moved here himself, says there are several reasons. One cannot produce tobacco for sale there unless he can buy a farm that is under the marketing scheme. And a farm like he is developing here which will cost about \$40,000—that includes the land, the kilns, packing barn, green houses and dwelling—would cost \$100,000 to \$110,000 in Ontario, he explains.

The desire here is to keep the new industry for the average farmer and not let it fall under

control of a syndicate or other monied interest. An Ontario syndicate purchased options on several thousands of acres two years ago but they did not follow up with purchases. Growers here now have organized a marketing board to control marketing—it will automatically control production—so they can protect their industry if future developments make that necessary.

Visiting tobacco people and governmental specialists suggest P.E.I. may achieve through tobacco production the prosperity it has missed through lack of industries. It's the only farm crop that compares with industry, they have advised, as a producer of wealth.

Tobacco growing has been tried several times in the past. A tobacco manufacturer tried it

half a century ago. Sir Andrew MacPhail, a P.E.I. man who was widely known as a writer and McGill University staff member, grew it experimentally for several years. Former livestock fieldman Harold Clay grew his own smoking for several years, but this is the first successful attempt at growing it commercially.

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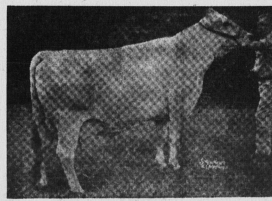
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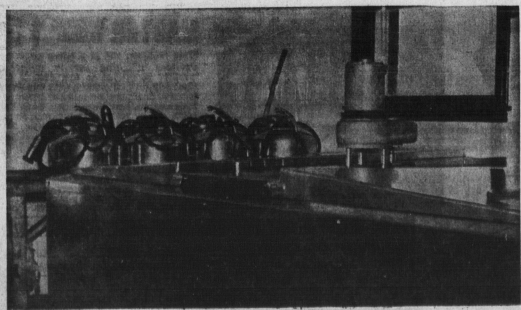


Walhalla Sara Lady purchased for \$2,100

The purchase of Walhalla Sara Lady for \$2,100 was the second highest selling animal at the recent Concord Farms Sale in New York State. Walhalla Sara Lady is a 2E, 1,000 pound fat cow.

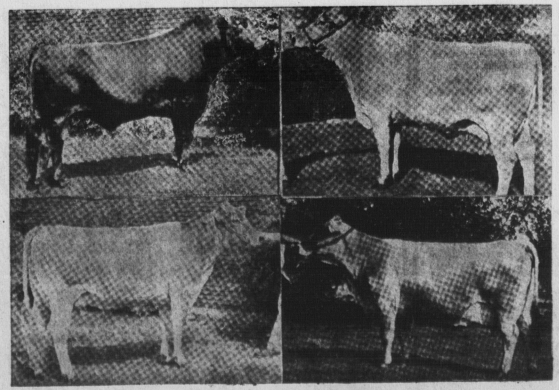
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