The Townships Sun

OCTOBER, 1975 VOL. 3, NO. 1



THE SUN ALSO RISES

When we found out that the government grant for the Townships Sun would be renewed for the winter, we greeted this news with our usual calm and dignified attitude. Typical comments from Townships Sun staffers ranged from «Yahooooooooo!« to «Whopeeeeeeeee!«.

The effect of the news that the Sun would rise again was dramatic. Russell Pocock got over having fallen off his bicycle and brought in a successful crop of buckwheat. Bob Dawson went right out and bought yet another three hundred dollar 1968 Volvo. Peter Hutchison bought a thousand feet of film and started spending his evenings in the dark-room. Jill Gyorgy topped off all this excitement by going to the Sherbrooke Hospital and giving birth to a daughter! At the same time, we dusted off the typewriters and started putting together this issue of the Townships Sun

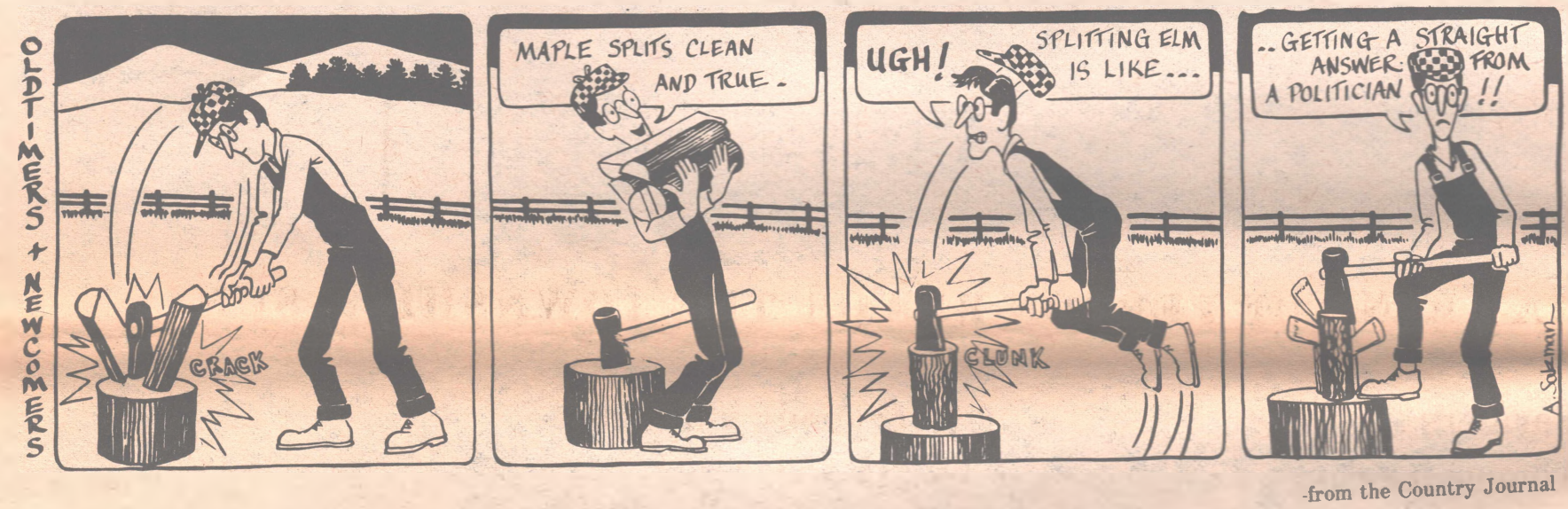
Yes, this is the first issue of the Sun to appear since last May. Many people called us or wrote to us over the summer to ask why they were no longer receiving their copies of the Sun, and the answer was that we had run out of money, and so we weren't printing any. Now we can assure you that the Sun will appear roughly once a month from now until next May.

We have now doubled our area of circulation to include all of the traditional Eastern Townships, so a lot of you are getting this paper for the first time. We print 20,000 copies of the paper and mail them out in bulk, with no addresses on them. We ask each individual post office to give one copy of the Sun to every family that normally receives their mail in English. We send them out free, one copy of the paper for every English family in the Townships. If you don't get your Sun, complain to your post office first and to us second. Also, if you happen to have an addressing machine sitting around in your attic not being used, let us know. We could sure do with one.

We operate under a Secretary of State grant for official minorities. We also collect voluntary contributions, which are used to expand the size, quality and frequency of the Sun. We can send you a tax-deductible receipt if you wish

We hope that you will react to this publication- write to us and tell us what you think. Better still write us an article! We pay for articles that we print. We pay from ten to fifty dollars. Now we don't pay for it if we don't print it, but such are the harsh rules of the free-lance jungle. If you want to write to us or send us an article, photo, drawing, letter or whatever, don't forget that we have changed our address. We are now located on R.R. 1, Compton, at Russell Pocock's house. It's cheaper for us to be at Russell's than paying rent for an office in town. When the money ran out we had to hide everytime the land-lord came around, so now we have fled back to the country, where it's much nicer anyhow.

As we said before, we would like to hear from you. What do you people out in Granby-Adamsville-Brigham area think about the whole Desourdy annexation business? What is that all about, anyway? And you elderly people, is it true that you are being neglected in this society? Is it true that you want more senior citizens' homes? And you young people, are you all going to leave the Townships and go to Ontario just at the time when the rest of us are re-discovering the many ways in which the Townships is a great place to be? We'd like to hear some good stories too, and some good jokes. So keep those cards and letters coming, folks. Let's start talking to each other.



-from the Country Journal

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Printed in 20,000 copies, one for every English family in the traditional Eastern Townships. Special thanks to Edgar Cormier of Imprimerie Cormier, East Angus.

The Sun's International Serial Number handed to us by Ottawa is 0316-022X.

Et il va sans dire que nous sommes également enregistré avec la Bibliothèque Nationale du Québec.

The alternate quote for this month was »Ice cream has no bones», but we couldn't find a photo to match.

Bulk mailing permit no. 84

Grade AA Fancy

Dear Townships Sun,

I would like to have this letter published as I feel it expresses the feelings of many farmers around the area.

Upon finishing an article in the Townships Sun dated May 2, 1975, I found myself especially concerned over what had been mentioned in the story. The name of the article was «Clifford and Edna Curtis in the Sugar Bush near East Hatley.«

I am an owner of a farm near the town of Stanstead and have been a farmer all my life. I love this life and feel I would not be content with anything else but farming. I take pride in my belongings and I also take pride in everything I do.

I am also a syrup maker and a good one at that! From this article on that sugar bush, I was inclined to believe from the feelings expressed that no other people, excluding the Curtis', can make any syrup that is good enough to sell as AA grade.

I tap 900 trees and I have only my family, consisting of three daughters, my wife, and my one son-in-law on the farm as help. We enjoy our work and are as careful and skillful in making syrup as it should be made. We can and do make beautiful syrup which is commonly known as Grade AA Fancy. On rare occasions, we do boil off syrup which is a bit below par (nobody is perfect) but none of which could be termed as «junk«. We have more customers than we can fill orders for. And each year the list grows longer! As yet, no one has been able to find any fault with our produce. For that reason, we are proud in our job and are content that people can have the chance to enjoy real, good quality syrup.

Please do not misunderstand me. I am not running anyone down, but I feel that a few more farmers in this region can also be deserving of good praise for their produce of maple syrup in Quebec.

(name witheld by request)

Kenneth MacPherson

Dear Editor,

I find the Townships Sun a wonderful paper, because it gives us a chance to express ourselves for our locality, as we see it.

We hear on TV, radio and read in the papers about hunger in many places of the world. Well as I see it, shortage is not far off here. How come? Here is an example:

Start from Ayer's Cliff and go to Tomifobia, a distance of 12 miles. Forty years ago or less there were some 30 farms there. Some were big and some were small, but all were producing milk, meat, grain and other products. Now there are only 5 dairy farms, one beef farm and one chicken farm. Seven have been sold to Montreal people, with no production, although some are leased for food crops to feed over-stocked farms, some are just let grow wild.

Has anyone ever seen one government representative looking things over? No sir. Who are they supposed to be? Weren't they elected to help out our needs?

Another thing: what could be done when the government lets immigrants in to be farmers. Why they don't even give them a chance to farm. No, once they are here, it is up to their friends. I have talked to some of them and they sure got a raw deal.

Now as I see it, what is the cause of unemployment? Overproduction. If you make three cars and only sell one, are you better off? Ford is making one car per minute, General Motors the same. There are the others and imports, and when they stop work, it means steel mills, fabrics, glass, chrome, paint, rubber, shipping, gloves, tool manufacturing, you name it. All these lines of mills are hit. So if it hurts, don't cry, it can still get worse.

kenneth MacPherson,
Ayer's Cliff



WHAT KIND OF PERSON READS THE TOWNSHIPS SUN?

Farmers read the
Townships Sun
Lawyers read
the Townships Sun
Factory workers read
the Townships Sun
Waitresses read
the Townships Sun
Politicians read
the Townships Sun
Truck drivers read
the Townships Sun
School teachers read
THE TOWNSHIPS SUN
Gentlemen sitting on
the front porch smoking
smoking pipes read
the Townships Sun

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tell you
Everybody who likes
The Townships
reads
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»When the sad, sad tale of the gradual disappearance and the eventual extinction of the small farmer is finally told, we'll all be the poorer.»

The closing of the small abattoirs- death of the small farmer?

BY RUSSELL POCOCK

PHOTOS BY PETER HUTCHISON

Once upon a time, not so long ago, the cultivation of the soil was a highly prized and respected profession in this country.

A farmer was a man whose work provided him with not only a security but an integrity and confidence that few farmers today will ever enjoy. Apart from his battles with the weather and the soil, he was master of his fate and his success depended upon the sweat expended from his brow.

Areas like the Eastern Townships specialized in producing a breed of small farmer who was then acknowledged as being the backbone of this country. Their individual strength made for a strong democracy. They were invariably well-versed in the politics of the day. Their economic independence gave them the self-confidence to rattle the desk of every MNA and MP in the country with the pounding of their leathery fists when threatened with bureaucratic tyranny.

Today things have changed. Farmers like the rest of us, no longer live off the land, but off the bank. Those same qualities of independence and debt-free living that were nutured in rural families for generations, are more likely to work against one today.

Depending on how you look at it, the economies of modern farming have evolved or disintegrated to the point where if you can't live with a $50,000 debt over your head, you aren't fit to be riding around on a tractor.

True, there are many advantages to today's farm subsidy programs and low-interest farm loans but I can't help but think in terms of the disadvantages and see this constant dependence, ever so subtle, as being part of the breaking of the spirit of today's small farmer.

For their spirit is slowly being broken. They are no longer society's backbone, but its victims. In 1972, 36 per cent of Quebec's farmers were receiving social assistance either permanently or periodically.

When the sad, sad tale of the gradual disappearance and eventual extinction of the small farmer is finally told -we'll all be the poorer.

It was just about a year ago that the plight of the local beef producers was glaringly brought to our attention with mass slaughterings of calves and road blocks caused by angry farmers on tractors. The heaps of dead calves made sensational headlines and for days people were discussing the morality of such acts.

No one seemed to get the point - that the farmers were desperate, that they were being shafted. Oh, the government decided to distribute a small subsidy to appease the shouts and accusations but most of it went to the dairy producers who needed it almost as badly.

Another winter passed, more farmers had to sell out, beef prices dropped a bit, the situation remains the same.

At the height of the events last fall, the president of the local beef farmers union, Guy Gauvin, who was also a national director of the Canadian Beef Producers, gave an interview to Sherbrooke's La Tribune. He said that the only way for beef producers to survive was to get rid of the middleman and market their own produce themselves. Mr. Gauvin added that the Mafia takes ten cents on every pound of fresh meat sold on the island of Montreal.

Since then, we've all been shocked by the revelations of this summer's enquiry into dead and diseased meat and Mr. Gauvin has given up farming.

Last spring the Federation's ACEF, a Quebec consumers protection group, published an article in the monthly farmers' magazine La Terre de Chez Nous in which they put together some statistics showing that both the farmers and the consumers were being shafted by the huge multinationals controlling animal feed companies, food processing plants and marketing.

The figures speak for themselves. When we can see on paper how methodically large corporations supply farmers with feed grains at high cost, buy back their animals for almost nothing, process and market meat for incredible profit, we begin to get the picture. The farmer is but a pawn in their game. He is their slave, manipulated by them from both ends. He is effectively working for them and they couldn't have cheaper labour by owning him and his farm outright. They would have to pay him a minimum hourly wage where now the beef producer is doing well to break even.

Farmers have been complaining that the feed and fertilizer costs are too high. Indeed, in the last couple of years the feed and fertilizer costs have doubled and 30 per cent of the average farmer's production costs are these basic necessities. The feed companies have defended themselves by pointing to scarcity of certain feeds and high prices of oil and fertilizer to produce the feed grains.

Well let's have a look at how a few of these feed companies are struggling along despite increased production costs:

Maple Leaf Mills

-Canadian company, operates mills, grain-elevators, sells feed grains, controls the Quaker Oats Company of Canada. Its profits increased by 448% in 1974, jumping from $3,777,000 in 1973 to $16,931,000 in 1974. (1)

Ralston Purina

-American multinational company, engaged in many operations of production and distribution of feed grains, farms instruments, etc.

-Declared profits in Sept. 1974 were $90,700,000, which was an increase of 77% over 1972.

Canadian Industries Limited [C-I-L]

-Multinational company, British capital, produces fertilizers and other products for the soil, as well a wide variety of products from paint and plastics to ammunition and explosives.

-The Financial Times reports that C-I-L's profits were $25,345,000 in 1974, which was an increase of 98% over the previous year.(3)

The profits of these three companies has been massive in recent years. In addition, the heavy concentration in their respective fields of activity puts these companies in a position close to that of being monopolies.

Sources;

(1) A Study of Profitability of 16 Canadian Food Companies, Minister of Corporate and Consumer Affairs, Government of Ontario, October, 1974

(2) From the financial report of the company, Sept. '74.

(3) Financial Times, Jan. 27, 1975 pages 5-8

Let's not forget that during the same period in which these profits were being accumulated, the costs of feed rose 89 per cent, fertilizers rose 76 per cent and cereals and forage went up 62 per cent.

At the same time the net revenue of the Quebec farmer **decreased** by 9 per cent.

Then on the other side of the business - the processing and marketing of the farmers' produce, one finds other surprises of equal nature.

For every 51 cents spent on a quart of milk, the farmer gets 30.5 cents. In 1973 alone, Dominion Dairies (Kraft Co) operating in Quebec under the disguise of Sealtest saw its profits increase 31.9 per cent! This is incredible when one sees that the average profit increase from '67 to '72 was only 9 per cent ! And this is back in 1973 when a quart of milk was still 39 cents! Imagine what's going on now with the increases!

Here's another look at some other friends of ours who are suddenly enjoying profitable times while everyone else is suffering from inflation:

	NET PROFIT in 000's of $$$			% INCREASE	
	1967	1972	1973	1967-72	1972-73
Canada Packers	7,345	13,264	17,906	12.5	35.0
I.M. Schneider	1,031	2,007	2,708	14.3	34.9
Dominion Dairies	1,237	1,907	2,516	9.0	31.9
Dominion Stores	10,508	10,022	13,664	.9	36.4
Oshawa Group	4,222	6,821	7,590	10.0	11.3
G. Weston	12,983	18,577	34,629	7.5	86.4
AVERAGE					

Source: «A Study of Profitability for 16 Canadian Food Companies.

At this point one might ask how they can get away with it. If one puts the question to the oil companies they respond that they need excessive profits to pay for new explorations. What is Canada Packers' excuse?

We were always taught that in a free enterprise system, competition between firms would keep prices down. Unfortunately as in other areas of our capitalist economy, the food industry in Canada is monopolized by a few who are running both the consumer and farm producer into the ground.

For example, many of these companies exchange administrators and directors from time to time. You'll also find things like the fact that Canada Packers are the second largest shareholder of the 393 Dominion Stores in Canada (Mainly Because of the Meat!)

In the dairy business, where there were 185 independent dairies in 1963, there were only 71 in 1973 In Montreal, Dominion Dairies (Kraft), Borden-Joubert (American-owned) and Quebec-Lait, control 80 per cent of the market.

One last sorry note to all of these statistics might be to add that consumption of milk in Quebec dropped 10 per cent last year because people simply couldn't afford the rise in prices. This, in a province where we annually produce more milk than we can consume! It cost a family $252 more to buy four quarts of milk a day in February 1975 than it did in December, 1973.

Keep all of this in mind as you scan the interviews on the following pages. My original interest in interviewing John Nichol, Kevin Danaher and Roland Guimand, was to get their opinions on Bill 31. This bill imposes new regulations on the processing and marketing of food in Quebec. It will make the intolerable situation described above even worse for it will effectively close down the 36 local abattoirs in region 5, centralizing more of the meat processing and marketing in the hands of the few.

No longer will you be able to have your own beef killed by local abattoirs like Nichol's abattoir outside of Lennoxville. No longer will Kevin Danaher and Roland Guimand, two local beef producers, be able to sell their beef directly to the consumer.

No one can figure out why this is all happening when the only people to benefit will be the invisible middleman to the detriment of both producer and consumer. His hand in the processing and marketing of meat will be strengthened at a time when consumers and producers are trying to get together to get rid of the expensive middleman altogether.

By the way, at the local commission sale last week, the prices for beef were even lower than last year when producers were killing them behind the barn because they weren't worth feeding. A young 310lb calf sold for 25 cents a pound; milk-fed suckling calf of 434lbs went for 29 cents a pound; 600lb heifer - 25 cents a pound; 1000lb (prime weight) steer at 28 cents a pound; 1200 lb cow at 18 cents a pound.



»If this is one way that the Liberal government is trying to prove that Quebec cannot be separated, because we are so dependent on the other provinces for food - they're doing a goddamn good job of it.»

Roland Guimand,
beef farmer

For beef producers like Roland Guimand, the new regulations for Bill i? are adding insult to injury. As if it wasn't impossible to make a dollar already, thanks to the power of the middleman, the new regulations will make it insane to stay in business.

For Roland the slap in the face is especially hard because during the last few years he's been trying to address his energy to solving some of the problems of this like himself. He and 9 other local beef-raisers have been working on a project that would effectively get rid of the middlemen in the processing and marketing of their animals.

Their project was a co-operative feedlot and eventually maybe a co-operative abattoir that would allow them to sell directly to the consumer.

It all began a few years back when Roland was elected anglophone representative to the Regional Development Council (C.R.D.) at a meeting in Sawyerville. This Council has an office in every region of Quebec and its function is to promote the economic development of the area.

«You can call me a French-Canadian - I got Indian, I got Irish, I got Scotch, I even got French in me...Well, when they nominated me to represent the English, that was one of the proudest days of my life and I decided that if they had enough faith in me, than I was going to tackle it, head on!«

Around Bishopton, within a radius of 15 to 20 miles, one finds from 25 to 30 per cent of the beef cattle in region 5. All of these producers, like Roland, were looking for better ways to make beef-raising viable.

Most of the beef calves from these operations are sent to Ontario feedlots to be fattened for market. This didn't and still doesn't make any sense to Roland, so he and 9 other farmers got together to discuss the possibility of a co-operatively owned feedlot in Bishopton.

Now, to get 10 local farmers together to discuss a co-operative sharing of resources can't be the easiest of tasks:

«It was uphill all the way. We are all individualists and we like to be independent but at this stage we've got to group together. There's no other way out....We had a group of ten: 4 Scottish boys and 5 French...we spoke French, we spoke English and we got this thing organised.

The project involved buying 3 farms commonly, using them for corn fodder, pastures, etc as well as having each individual farmers running his own farm. Where each farmer presently had an average of 35 cattle, they hoped to each be able to raise 75 annually when things were under way.

«We figured if we couldn't make money selling our cattle live, we'd slaughter it and sell it directly to the consumer as freezer beef or whatever...«

The next step was to try and get the government to guarantee the loan which they would have to make in order to get themselves started. It didn't seem like a lot to ask when one considers the money given in grants to other projects and farm research groups. They didn't want any hand outs, just a signature in case something went wrong.

«That was a test. We weren't planning on losing money. At the Experimental Farm in Lennoxville, they'll buy 50 calves and lose 45 of them just to prove something. Well if we bought 50 calves we were going to save 50 calves and we were going to prove something - that a farmer can make a living producing beef in Quebec.«

Roland and his co-operators wrote up the project and presented it to the Regional Development Council which gave them full support. In fact, the Bishopton feedlot project was hailed by them as being one of the development priorities to upgrade the rural economy of the Townships: if it worked, the model could be used elsewhere and the significance for a local beef industry would be astounding.

The project also received support from the provincial farmers' union - the UPA, local newspapers and people working in the Dept. of Agriculture itself. Meetings were held, articles were written, political representatives were visited, trips were made to Quebec City - but no one would sign the $30,000 loan. Discouraged, tired of waiting, the group broke up last year.

«Some had to sell out....some had two jobs - one as a farmer, one at the mines or in the woods. Well, the mines folded up and they couldn't support their families with just the farm, so they had to sell.«

Why the government wouldn't sign the loan is the million dollar question that no one can answer. To try and understand Quebec's attitude is a difficult pastime at best - a frustrating one if you're the farmer.

«They use provincial money to promote more beef by giving you subsidies to winter over your cow. They give us taxpayers' money to winter over the cow but they won't even sign a loan to help us fatten up the spring calf! We got to ship the calf to Ontario to be finished! What's the point in encouraging us boys to keep a cow over winter to produce a calf when we have to ship it to Ontario! The taxpayers' money is only supporting the producers in Ontario! When we only produce 2 per cent of the choice beef that's consumed in Quebec it don't make sense.«

»I get excited sometimes I get so mad. I take it very seriously because I don't see that the sweat and the work that we put in on the land should not be recompensated.»

«The Dept of Agriculture in Quebec is the biggest liar there is. They tell us that we're 50 per cent sufficient in pork, 70 per cent in eggs, etc...it's all a lie! If it wasn't for the other provinces supplying us with the grain to produce those pigs or chickens or milk or cheese or butter - we wouldn't have a god-damned thing here in Quebec!«

«If this is the only way the Liberal Government is trying to prove that Quebec cannot be separated because we are so dependent on other provinces for food - they are doing a god-damned good job at it...«

«I get excited sometimes I get so mad. I take it very seriously because I don't see that the sweat and the work that we've put in on the land should not be recompensated.«

«Why do they allow so much dumping of meat into Canada? We get meat from the States, Australia, New Zealand - us poor little buggers here, we look stupid. We try to produce the meat that Quebec needs and they put the chain blocks on us.«

«Now in British Columbia, they've just introduced a program for five years where they're insuring the farmer cents a pound as the cost of production. This would be beautiful because we could budget for 5 years in advance because we'd know what we'd be getting in return. How can we calculate, how can we grow, how can we survive when we might be getting even less this year than last year?«

Meanwhile, Roland and others like him have had to continue to try to make ends meet despite a rock-bottom market, Last year most of his cattle were sold directly to the consumer who would come to his farm and choose the animal he wanted. Roland would then have it slaughtered and delivered.

This way the producer is assured a better price and the consumer saves money while being assured of quality. But Bill 31 will make this kind of arrangement impossible.

«Last year the consumers, they came here and bought good meat. We'd go out to the pasture and 'hey, that's a cute one'. We'd slaughter 'em and then he would bring them to his local butcher and put them in the cooler.«

«Now this year they tell you, 'farmers are allowed to kill one beef.' Well I'd like to see the sons of bitches stop me from killing two! I take three a year, 'eh? I'd like to see the son of a bitch come over and say 'Now Guimand, you're just going to kill one, 'eh?'...«

«After the meat scandal came out there, I started to get calls right off - reserve me this beef, reserve me that beef. But it's no good because we're not allowed to do this...«

«Suppose there's only one or two slaughterhouses, like the big one in Bromptonville. Suppose you have 1 or 2 beef to be butchered, stamped and brought home. They're not going to give you back your own beef - they'll buy your beef and give you back another one. Nobody's going to fool around with paper work for your beef and my beef and his beef from morning til night 6 days a week....We'll never know what we're getting!...«

One gets the impression that farmers are suffering from lack of organization and leadership. The UPA hasn't done much of anything for the beef producers who are in a minority within the union. Within the union however, are separate syndicates for dairy and for beef but the beef syndicate in the Townships hasn't had a president or a vice-president for most of the year. The president quit farming and the vice-president was offered a job with the Dept of Agriculture. So Roland and friends have been trying to represent themselves in Quebec city. His MNA Omer Dionne set up a meeting a while back in Quebec and when the Bishopton farmers arrived, they were not met by anyone

«Omer Dionne, he's quite a 'patate', that boy. We wanted him to arrange a meeting for us in Quebec...nobody will ever believe this, but we got to Quebec for the meeting and nobody showed up! I phoned him up at the Parliament Buildings but the bugger wouldn't show up and the secretary said that he had never made an appointment with anybody...Oh, that was a slap on the face! We looked pretty stupid, eh?«

«We don't even know what the program's going to be this fall, we don't know the beef policy, we don't know nothin. Should we keep our calves? Should we sell our calves? Nobody's informing us - it's stupid.

«I asked Omer Dionne if the UPA had been bought and he says 'What do you mean bought? By whom?' And I said, 'By you guys'...«

« «Those packers have got all kinds of financing, all kinds of lobbying...it's pretty hard to push that dollar bill, you know. I can see this all over the country. That dollar bill is going to win and they've got it.«









»That's where the farmer is screwing himself, by letting Canada Packers do the processing and retailing for him.»

Kevin Danaher
beef farmer

Kevin Danaher doesn't seem to be the kind of guy who'll back down from a challenge. In fact you get the impression that he rather enjoys the occassional dispute, especially when something he cares about is being threatened.

In this case his beef operation is being threatened and the challenge is in the form of Bill 31.

Kevin is a guidance counsellor at Richmond Regional High School. He speaks very softly but behind the quiet voice is a determined punch that has lately been directed at Georges Vaillancourt and Kevin Drummond.

With Green Clover Farms, Kevin has been trying to raise beef, process it and retail it directly to consumers. He'll tell you that he's not making a killing but he's doing better than the producer who sells to the local auction barn-commission sale. He'll also tell you that he's hoping to retire with his beef operation one day and that he doesn't want foolish legislation like Bill 31 knocking out his local abattoir owner - a key to his operation.

Since its inception last spring, Kevin, although he's a producer and not an abattoir owner, has been the guiding and driving force behind the Comité pour la Conservation des Petits Abattoirs. It was he who a few weeks back, set up a Saturday morning meeting with Georges Vaillancourt, recently attached to Agriculture, to discuss extension of the September closure date.

Vaillancourt was expecting one lone beef producer but Kevin showed up armed with an organized committee, TV crews from Montreal and the local press. They later got an extension until Oct. 4 and the suggestion that the regulations might be changed.

Then there was the meeting in the Wellington Hotel in Sherbrooke where Kevin suggested they hold a field day for farmers at the grounds in Richmond to get all of the producers involved. At that meeting they'd have Art Bennett auction off a calf for 5 cents a pound and let the farmers get a taste of what they are in for if this bill goes through.

I visited Kevin at his farm in Ste. Elie d'Orford one morning to get his personal view on this thing. I didn't have to ask many questions. This is what he had to say:

The hardest end of beef farming is selling the beef. In our business here, we have all our steers killed, we have a feedlot here during the winter, we take our steers through one or two winters, and then we put them on a lush pasture. We fatten them on the grass and then we kill them, around 50 a year. Then we have them butchered and we package them in cellophane bags and we freeze them in our 4 freezers in the back of our house. We don't kill too many of them at a time, freeze them fast and I deliver them to Montreal in my car. Our prices compare very well with prices in Montreal at the wholesale houses there.

This year we're taking a beating, the prices aren't very high and the feed costs last winter were very high, even though we did get some subsidies from the government. But the hardest part is definitely the retailing.

What I have to do in the fall, I've got to go into Montreal and I've got to get on the phone, and I stay on the phone maybe one or two week-ends. I get an office and I phone customers. I put an ad in the paper in the districts where people have freezers and the money to pay.

I get on the phone and introduce myself, tell them it's good beef, etc. I'll probably have more trouble this year because of this meat scandal thing. Usually they'll want to call back and that's why I have to go in two week-ends. Then you have to give them a delivery date and you have to stick to that date. So I'm producing, marketing and distributing.

Look, the other night I bought a steer at the auction for 30 cents a pound. A hereford, a finished steer. Now the only reason that that guy sold his steer was that he was desperate. There's no question about it, he must have been desperate and needed the cash. The Buyers were there and hadn't I been there it would have gone for 25 cents a pound, but Bonneau pushed me up to 30. Well even at 30 that's a gift, that guy must have lost at least $150. With the price of feed and everything, he fed that steer through the winter.

So what I'm saying is that's the final price for a local farmer - that is his price. My price, however, doesn't stop there. I'll turn around and sell that steer for $1.04 dressed in Montreal, minimum 99 cents, which gives me at least 40 cents more.

That's where the farmer is screwing himself, by letting Canada Packers do the processing and the retailing for him.

I guess you know that the UPA beef syndicate fell apart during the last year. The president quit, then the vice-president quit and it only left behind a full-time secretary who hasn't called a meeting all year. During all of this beef scandal and everything, he hasn't even called a meeting!

Now about Bill 31, Last winter we were faced with the second reading of this bill. The abattoir owners called a meeting and they called up and said 'Could you come and help us guys get organized'. So we went to a meeting in Magog and we formed an executive.

We passed some motions that we would push this thing and research it further and we'd have more information meetings later on. There was the local president of the UPA there, Gagné, and he said that they'd be behind us and everything. We passed the hat and picked up $100 to pay for expenses we foresaw.

I didn't hear anything else for a long time. I'd check back with my butcher every once in a while to see if he'd heard anything and he hadn't either. Then about 3 or 4 months ago he was visited by this inspector, Lynch, who Well our purpose now that we've got some new people is to get all the beef farmers together and inform them of their rights. We're going to inform them that there's a syndicate and we're going to explain to them what a syndicate is and just how much power they have. We're going to start trying to organize a retail, where instead of going through the auction, we're going to go through the abattoir. We'll process it and sell it.

The farmers have to realize that they shouldn't go near those commission sales. As much as possible they've got to sell the beef themselves, they've got to have a sales force. That's the step the farmer has not taken because he's tied down to his land. Somebody else has to take over here whom he can trust to process and sell the beef.

said that everything was okay and that they were going to keep his abattoir open. We both felt very relieved at that and thought that we'd get directives as far as upgrading the abattoirs.

It was around the end of July when the butcher called me and said that we've all received letters and that they'd all been visited by an inspector and given a letter saying that he'd have to close his doors on Sept. 4 if he couldn't meet these standards.

I talked to Beaudry and Tessier and these guys and they all said that it would cost them up to $400,000 to upgrade their places. They didn't know what to do.

Well I started to look at the consequences if they closed all of these abattoirs, leaving only one regional abattoir at Giroux's. I've got 50 head to kill and so does my neighbour - we got to do something.

Just at that time Vaillancourt had been named to the Dept. of Agriculture. So I phoned Coaticook and asked to speak with Vaillancourt but he was in Quebec. So I phoned person to person and finally got hold of him. I said «My name is Danaher and I want to meet you.« He asked me on what issue. I told him I was a beef producer and I was concerned over this Bill 31. He wanted to pass me to someone in Agriculture but I said, « Mr Vaillancourt, I don't want any information on Bill 31, I want to talk to you because you're my deputy.« He said he'd see me in Coaticook on Saturday morning.

My neighbour told me I shouldn't go alone but with the press, so I called channel 12, 6, CJRS, CHLT, La Tribune, and they were all there. Then I phoned up the abattoir owners and they were all going to come too. Saturday morning everyone was there, about 30 of us, and we told Mr. Vaillancourt what we wanted.

I was talking to Vaillancourt again this morning and I pinned him down about closure date for the fall. He said tell the farmers that there's no problem for this fall, they're going to be going alright, there'll be ample place and time to kill your beef, don't worry about it.

Then I asked him, «What is it that's going to close down an abattoir. Are you going to close him down because he only kills 5 beef a week even if he's as clean as a federally inspected abattoir? Well he started talking in terms of 15 beef a week and I said now, wait a minute, you're talking in terms of 15 being the minimum and I'm saying to you that no government has the right to come in and tell a man that he's not to do business because he's too small. If he meets the hygiene standards, you have an obligation to inspect him and that has nothing to do with size. Your argument that you can't send an inspector around to inspect these places is a lot of bullshit. There's no way that you can close down a guy running an honest business just because he only kills 5 head a week!«

«And another thing, you imply in this legislation that Mr. Laframboise and Mr. Beausejour join together in business. Now who is to say that those guys aren't enemies and that they don't even speak together and now you want them to put their family businesses together because they're in the same region.

From my point of view as a producer this bill is going to increase my costs for processing beef. If this thing goes through I'm going to have a job competing with the big guys.

If I've got a butcher on the corner, it's very easy for him to come by with his truck, pick up a couple of my beef, maybe keep them overnight in his barn and slaughter them next day. Whereas if I have to go to Giroux, that's 25 or 30 miles away. Now to bring a big cattle truck all that way I'd have to send at least 4 or 5 beef to make it worthwhile for him to come. I never have more than one or two beef to kill at a time because I just don't have the freezer space.

Suppose I just wanted to hire a local truck like St. Francois to truck one beef for me. Well, that's going to cost something to have him run 25 miles and back. Besides, with these new regulations, I have to have a refrigerated truck bring it back. Can you imagine what that will cost?

Next, everybody knows that in big abattoirs, sides of beef tend to get mixed up, and if I've grown a steer for two years and a steer is a steer - the meat is precious, there aren't many around. Now if they get them mixed up and they have the advantage to get them all mixed up -then I stand to lose a big buck. I've already taken one butcher to court for that and lost because it's absolutely impossible to prove!

Another thing, the government says that its okay for a farmer to kill a beef for himself and his family. What about inspection for that cow? St. Francois the butcher doesn't drink milk and I asked him why one day. He told me that when he was a boy, they had a beautiful big cow that gave his family milk for 12 years. Finally one day she was too old, they decided to kill and eat it. After they slaughtered it, the inspector came along and condemned the meat 100 per cent - she had TB or something!

Let's face it, there's no reason why they can't have inspectors visiting all of these abattoirs, 66 of them in region 5. If we had 6 inspectors to visit 66 abattoirs once a week, that would mean roughly 2 abattoirs per inspector per day. It would be so simple for the guy only killing 5 head to hire help so the inspector could see the entire pre-kill, kill and post-kill in half a day. Then he could put a little seal on your track so that you couldn't kill for the rest of the week

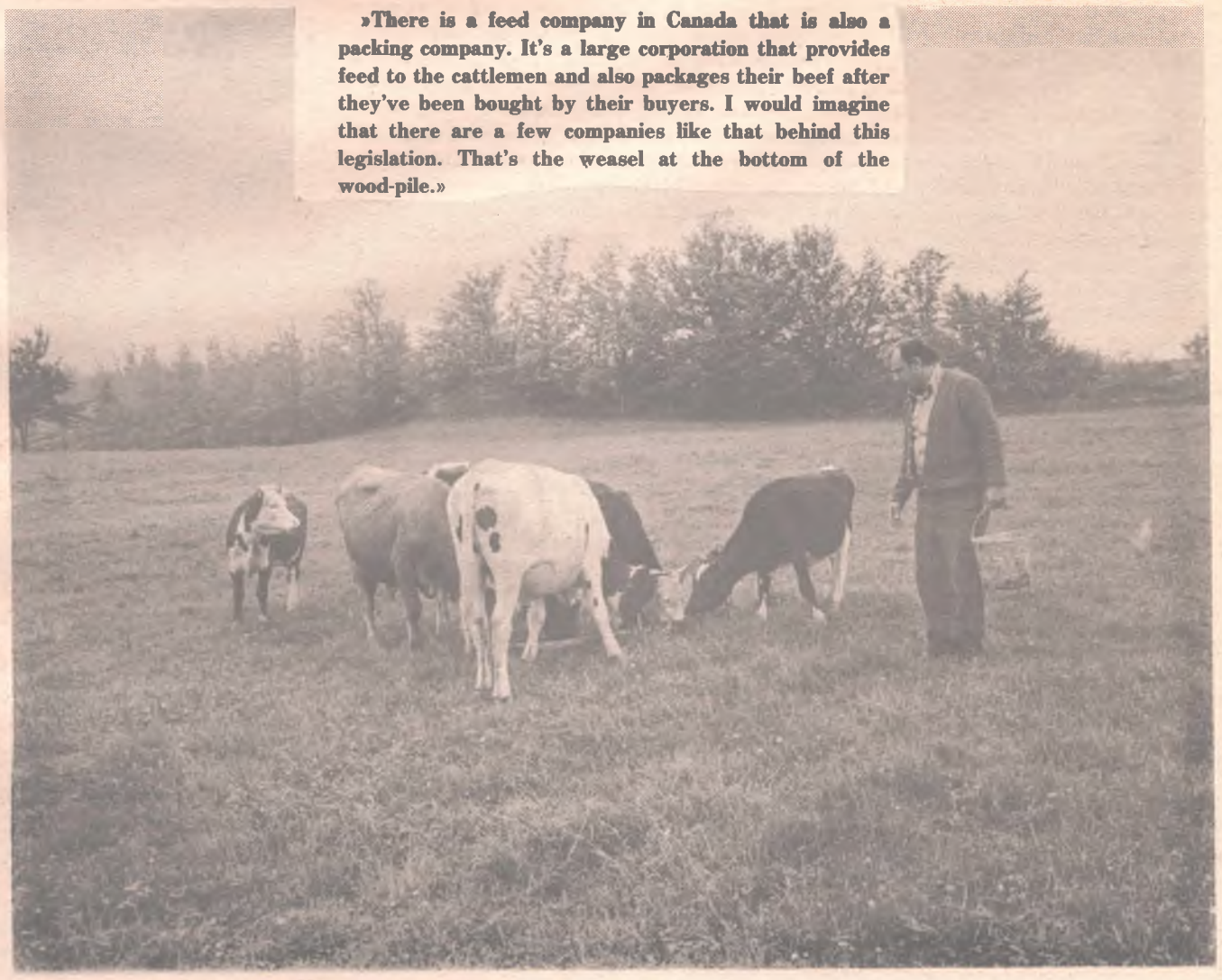
You'd then have the same inspection as the big abattoirs. If they had other improvements they wanted you to do like stainless steel in your fridge or something, okay you could do that. This inspector thing is only a red herring.

The more you think about it, it doesn't seem as though the Quebec Liberal Government would be pushing this thing so hard just to keep their inspectors in one abattoir. There must be somebody else with money putting pressure. It seems like the only people who'll really benefit from this are big boys like Canada Packers. Do you think that they're behind this somewhere?

Well that's what I told Barbara Frumm on the radio the other day. I told her that I can't name any big companies but there is a feed company in Canada that is also a packaging company. It's a large corporation that provides feed to the cattlemen and also packages their beef after they've been bought by their buyers. I would imagine that there are a few companies like that behind this legislation. We feel that that is the weasel at the bottom of the wood-pile. That there's a lot of pressure from some big money somewhere because there's no way that anybody can connect these small abattoirs with the meat scandal thing.

As a matter of fact, our abattoirs are the most inspected when you think about it because the public's in there all the time, every day of the week. But the public is never allowed into a big federally-inspected abattoir, if they ever did, they might be horrified.

»There is a feed company in Canada that is also a packing company. It's a large corporation that provides feed to the cattlemen and also packages their beef after they've been bought by their buyers. I would imagine that there are a few companies like that behind this legislation. That's the weasel at the bottom of the wood-pile.»



Nichol's Meat Market in Lennoxville is a local family business with a good reputation. They slaughter most of their animals in their own slaughterhouse on Nichol Rd., between Lennoxville and Waterville. Their smoked hams and bacon are sold under their own label in stores other than their own.

When the new regulations for Bill 31 came out last spring, John Nichol, in charge of the slaughtering, met with other abattoir owners to form the Comité pour le Conservation des Petits Abattoirs.

The new regulations insist that each abattoir house a full time government inspector who will inspect each animal before and after it is killed. Small local abattoir owners such as Nichol's and Marcel Dodier figure that to implement all of the physical requirements would cost them from $250,000 to $400,000.

Last spring none of the 67 local abattoir owners in Region 5 felt that the regulations would be enforced for some time yet but the meat scandal this summer seemed to freak a lot of people out in Quebec City.

September 4 was announced as being the date that would effectively close down every abattoir in the Townships except for one. Then, the date was extended to Oct. 4, and it was suggested y Georges Vaillancourt, now Minister without portfolio attached to Agriculture, that there might be some revision of the regulations.

The consequences of the closure of all of our local abattoirs would be severe for the local beef producer and consumer álike. This is how it looks to John Nichol who is as yet undecided to the future of their butchery operation and business.



»It's costing us $200 a day now, to get my butchering done where it wasn't costing us anything before because we had our own building....the extra cost is going to be passed on to the consumer.»

John Nichol
Nichol's Meat Market
Lennoxville

Sun: What have you people been doing as far as slaughtering animals?

John Nichol: We do it ourselves. We slaughter about 10 or 12 each week. It picks up in the fall when we do 16 or 18 a week for about 3 months. There are 3 of us and we work in the store the rest of the time. We just butcher one day a week (Monday).

We aren't going to do anything right away as far as a new abattoir goes. We have found a place to do our slaughtering until such time as we decide to build a new one or else continue under inspection where we are now. This is for our own protection because right now anybody selling meat in the City of Sherbrooke has to have it inspected and stamped.

We lost meat in Sherbrooke last fall that was inspected and stamped. It was pork that was stamped on the skin and when the skin was taken off, the stamp came off too. We bought them from Coté in Stoke and he had delivered them to the store himself. We boned them, rolled them and delivered them to an institution in Sherbrooke. They were sitting in the yard waiting for us. We even had proof of purchase that morning but the guy said that there was no stamp on it and he took it away from us - somebody had a good lunch - 200lbs of rolled roast of pork. It's probably in somebody's freezer and they're still eating it. You can't tell me that was burned!

S: Where are you supposed to put the stamp on the pork like that?

N: I don't know. It's the same problem with bacon. We buy all of our bellies stamped approved. Well you know, many places the bacon is sold rindless - you take the rind off, there goes your stamp - you throw it in the barrel and you slice your bacon. We lost bacon in Sherbrooke for that reason - by skinning it off we lost our approved stamp on the meat and it was confiscated.

S: So your're now slaughtering your own meat in an inspected slaughterhouse locally?

N: Right, we'll take care of our own customers until it's no longer profitable for us. If it's not profitable we're not going to do it. It's costing me $200 a day now, minimum to get my butchering done where it wasn't costing us anything before because we had our own building. We're still doing all of the actual work ourselves so the extra cost is going to be passed on to the consumer.If I'm killing two beef a week for each of you and I'm only making 5 bucks now, well, if I've got to go on in and spend $200 to do the same beef, I'm going to ask you $10 or $15.

For one thing, I know right now that I'm going to have to give the guy the hides. I get $7.50 a piece for beef hides, so if I kill 10 beef a day, there's $75 profit right there.

Maybe we'll go entirely to Western beef and not deal with any more local beef. I don't know if our customers will do that or do something else.

S: Do you mean customers at the store?

N: Customers at the store, customers we just do freezer work for. We have a lot of farmers we just do freezer work for - farmers that kill 25-30 beef a year and they sell it to somebody in the city and we do the work. We slaughter it, cut it up and freeze it for them.

Some of the butchers I know 80 per cent of their income comes from just servicing beef for farmers - no buying or selling - just doing the work. Now when these fellows get closed down, they'll lose 80% of their livelihood.

S: This is going to hit the local beef producer pretty badly then?

N: They're all calling up and asking us to kill their beef before we close down, but I'm not taking any new customers. We did all we could last year. I spoke at farmers' meetings and at the Women's Institutes last spring and I asked them all to write to their government representatives or go to see them. The women seemed more bothered than the men did. Some of the men did a lot of beefing about what the butchers were doing to them now and every time they sold something to the butcher they got skinned. Why I said that if you can't trust the fella you're doing business with, go and do it with somebody else - business is business.

I haven't seen any farmer that's not selling at least 5 head a year to friends or relations or to a customer - it's going to affect him. The fella that raises 15,25, or 30 beef a year for the freezer - it's going to affect him a lot more. I think a lot of them have just sat back and waited and waited - first thing they know they're going to be startled and they won't be able to get their meat done.

S: Do you think that they new regulations are really necessary?

N: Oh things have got to change, there's no doubt about this; and I don't care how clean you are! I don't think anybody should have an animal killed in the barn, unless hes just going to use it for himself. If he wants to let it hang outside 3 or 4 days in the warm weather, let the flies land on it - that's his business. But I don't think it's fair to anybody with a store for a farmer to kill his beef, keep it in the barn 2 or 3 days and expect them to put it in their coolers with all of their other meat.

I've refused meat from farmers - they killed it on the barn floor - they never swept the barn floor before they killed it and the wire or rope they used to hang it up broke, and the carcass fell on the hayseeds and the customer comes in and sees it.

No, they should clamp down, I don't think any farmer should be allowed to do his own butchering. If a fellow who's running an abattoir can't do it, if his abattoir's not good enough, I don't see why anyone's barn or garage should be good enough.

S: Don't you think that the new regulations will be abused? Won't there be a lot of farmers killing and selling beef illegally, at home?

N: They will be for the first few months,but it won't be for long. Are you going to sit in your store and watch your customers going over to where somebody's killing meat in their garage or cellar at night? I'm not going to lose my livelihood by being honest and allow somebody else to do it under the table.

I told this to one fellow at the Cookshire Fair who said that he was only going to kill 2 or 3. This guy kills in his garage and has no refrigeration - he tried to sell me 15 hides one week! I told him that if I hear he's selling beef, I'm going to call that inspector and tell him where he lives. I don't think it's fair - everyone should get the same treatment, they'll all get caught sooner or later.

But I do think if a farmer wants to kill his beef and use it himself, then he should be able to phone a vet or inspector to come out and have some kind of stamp put on the meat so he can take it to a butcher to have it cut up.

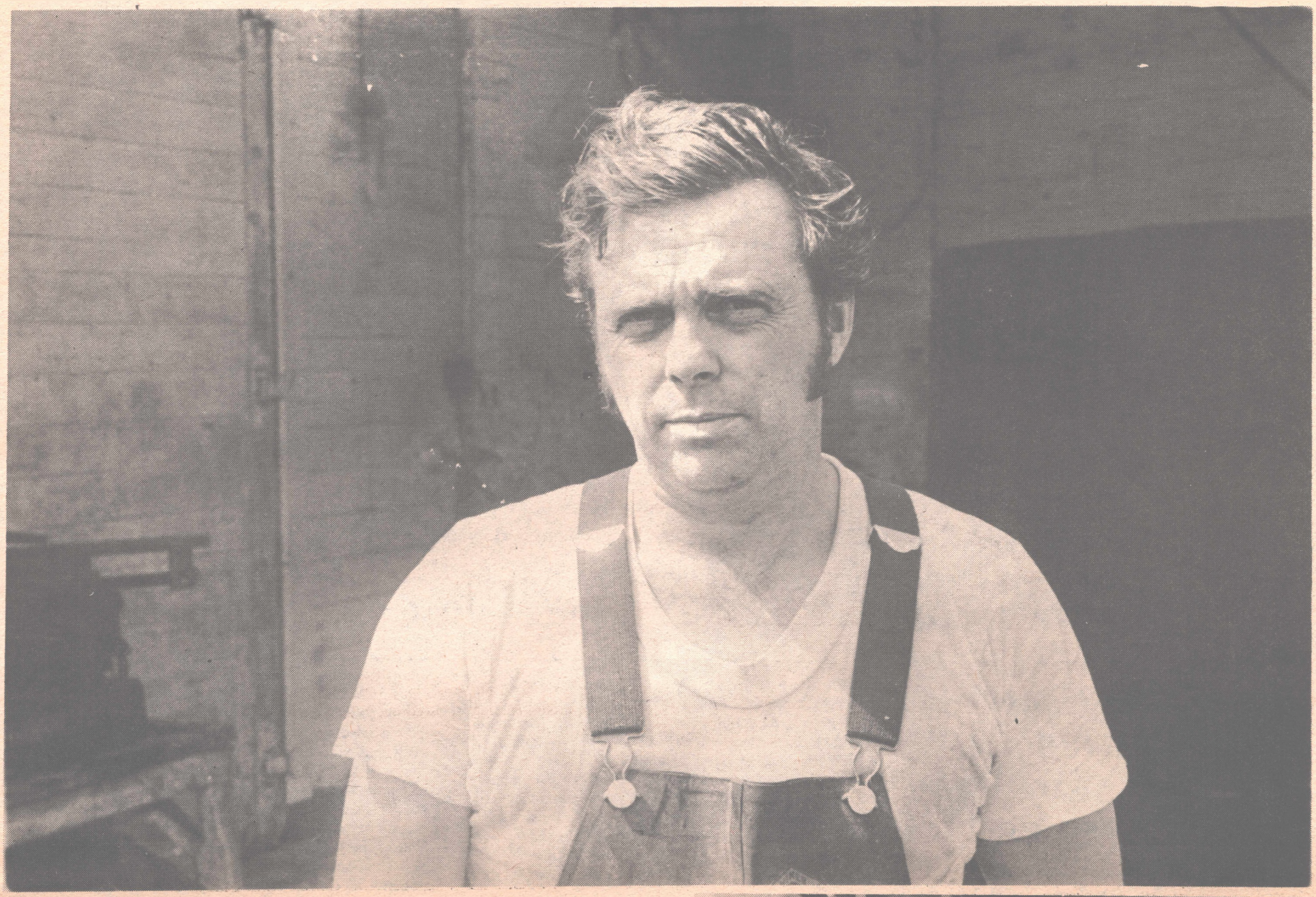
S: So is a lot of the problem just the fact that it has all come so sudden?

N: That 's right. I don't think the government was fair in not giving us warning. They didn't come out two years ago and tell us, listen you've got to build a slaughterhouse like this so you'll be able to operate and have inspection and all the rest. We didn't hear about these regulations until last spring and we all thought it would be a while before they'd be enforced.

S: Do you think the meat scandal made the government over-react?

N: But the meat scandal didn't involve the small abattoir owner in any way. The meat scandal was a good thing for the small butchers. It affected the big chain stores but our business increased right off and has been steadily ever since, even though people know we don't have inspection. We've had a lot of new customers in the last two months.

I think it's a fact that they trust what we do. In a small butcher shop, you'd only have to sell one bad carcass and it'd be all over town. I don't know of too many butchers who would kill a beef and sell it if it wasn't fit to eat. They're only taking away their own livelihood if they do that.



»I think people trust what we do. In the small butcher shop you'd only have to sell one bad carcass and it would be all over town.»

S: Did you people know that Federal Packing was dealing bad meat?

N: No, not really, because it's all government inspected and there's supposed to be a meat inspector there 8 hours a day. Everything that came into that place was supposed to be stamped. I don't think anybody ever expected it

S: Would it be feasible for a number of small abattoirs like yours to be equipped properly and share an inspector?

N: We suggested that. We had five butchers in the area which do 10 to 18 beef a week. We said we'd fix our butchery day so the inspector could be in one place one day and in another the next day. But they didn't like that idea. They want the inspector to work a full week in one place - they don't want him travelling around.

Maybe they figure they'd have four more headaches than they would have with only one.

We thought it would take a lot of heat off the government, too. What I'm waiting for is the heat to be put on the government. Just wait for the middle of October when people can't get their beef done for winter- there's going to be trouble. Just like there was last spring when they were killing their calves off. The calves were only worth $2 each so the guy didn't care if he killed a dozen and threw them in the road.

I don't know what they'll do but they'll do something when they can't get their beef done.

S: What are the possibilities of a group of you operating a large enough abattoir co-operatively?

N: I believe that that is what the government wants us to do. But I don't think 4 or 5 people want to go into a co-operative business and this has been discussed. There s a group of fellas around Weedon who've been talking about this for years and they never could reach an agreement. You know, if we ever ran a place together, we'd probably never get along. Why should we give up the privacy of our business to go into a co-op where we don't really know what we're doing when we're alright now?





THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS IS BLESSED WITH APPLES

BY RUSSELL POCOCK
PHOTOS BY PETER HUTCHISON

All men eat fruit that can get it; so that the choice is only whether one will eat good or ill; and for all things produced in a garden, whether of salads or fruits, a poor man will eat better that has one of his own, than a rich man that has none.

J.C. Loudon, An Encyclopedia of Gardening, 1826

I do not think that any civilization can be called complete until it has progressed from sophistication to unsophistication and made a conscious return to simplicity of thinking and living.

Lin Yutang, The Importance of Living, 1938

It's already September, time to tuck in my garden and fields for the long winter ahead.

My first growing season here in Compton won't contribute much to the world's starving millions, but it was a productive summer for learning.

Looking back on this year's harvest, it is probably the orchard that has brought the greatest joy - again, not only in terms of production but in terms of what it has taught me about the art of allowing things to grow.

All together there must be almost forty scruffy-looking trees in various stages of good health, disease and death. It was a year ago last June, just after I'd purchased this place from Mrs. Huff that she took me out to the orchard, to point out who's who and what's what: which variety for sauce, which trees were MacIntosh, etc. Unfortunately, my mind was somewhere else that night and I've since forgotten most of what she was passing on to me - the meaning of these gnarled old wizards as expressed by the keeper of this farm for 60 odd years

When Mrs. Huff sensed that I wasn't paying strict attention she followed my gaze to the neighbouring farm across the way where its new owner was bulldozing an even finer orchard than the one I'd just inherited.

The evening light was fading but her eighty year old eyes were still able to see the giant yellow caterpillar put under the last of 40 years worth of care and harvest after harvest of fruit.

I could see that she was bothered by it, and I remember thinking to myself that the last few years must have confronted her with many such changes that she found hard to accept as being «progressive«.

When she was my age, when apples were apples and owning a farm meant just about all of your food was home-grown, it would have been impossible to imagine cruising into Coaticook on a Friday night to blow 40 bucks on assorted groceries, including 5 lb of sprayed MacIntosh apples with plastic-perfect complexions thanks to modern technology's thermostatically-controlled environments.

Back then the autumn harvest would have been carefully collected and put away into glass-topped canning jars and old wooden storage bins in the cool dark cellar.

But farming was different then and somehow living in the country has changed to the point where people don't have time for such things anymore. Why is that? I thought that high-technology farming methods were going to give us more time. Or was the point of all these inventions just to allow us to cultivate more acres, to give us more money so that we don't have to bother with menial tasks like picking up blemished apples and messing around with canning jars and root cellars.

I've since learned that my neighbour, the one we were watching that June evening, doesn't even have to bother with a garden. He can buy all of his food in town.

Following Mrs. Huff from tree to tree in the gathering dusk, I remember thinking that I'd much rather be a humble apple-picker than a big-time bulldozer operator. Then I mentally chastised myself for being too romantic and wondered whether or not, when this whole farming thing becomes more real to me, whether I too might one day find that myself preferring an extra acre of oats or corn to a motley collection of antique fruit trees.

And Mrs. Huff was probably wondering what was to be the fate of these old friends of hers, in my hands.

Since that time these ancient strangers have come to mean more to me than I ever thought they would. They are teaching me something, about the innate desire of the earth to provide and about my role as midwife in her annual ritual of giving.

It seems like the more I struggle with this farming business, the more I realize I'm discovering a whole new realm of energy and life forces I know nothing about. These trees are helping me to understand that though I may slave for hours and hours to get something to grow my way, nature's way will give you an equal harvest with almost no effort at all.

The harder I try to «make« things grow, the more I try to «manage« and «direct« the growing process, the more it becomes obvious to me that until I can attain a better rapport with what's really happening beneath my feet, I'm merely meddling with a dimension completely beyond me.

Around here most farmers will tell you that it's a very simple matter of «reaping what you sow« which they interpret as meaning that the quality and quantity of your fall harvest is equal in proportion to the amount of C-I-L 10-20-20 you dumped on your fields in the spring. But I'm sure there's a lot more to it than that. I'm sure that if I could better understand nature's true secrets. that she'd happily provide me maximum quality and quantity with minimum meddling on my part - just like she's done through those apple trees.

This past summer I travelled 400 miles to discuss this with a wise old master of the art of allowing things to grow and he told me I'd find the knowledge in the forest. There, without interference from man's impulsive desire to harness and control things better left by themselves, nature goes about the business of growth, death and rebrith - that eternal ritual shared by all living things. There, the invisible life forces are caring for all and our task as keepers of this planet, is to try and duplicate this process in our own backyards. We have to humanly create the same conditions to allow these forces, this energy, to flow and do what only they can do. We have to accept the fact that in the art of growing, nature knows best and there's no point in man trying to master or manipulate her art.

Karl Jung said that though our rational intellects are only tiny islands lost in the sea of unconscious, we try to pretend that our reasonable minds are always in control. He felt that man's lack of faith in the «rightness« of these unconscious forces leads him to try to control them instead of allowing them the living expression that they need. Total repression of these forces could lead to self-destruction.

Ithink it says a lot about man's relation to nature and his essential lack of faith in nature, seeing her as man's destroyer instead of provider. Isn't it obvious to us all by now that nothing threatens our survival other than our own internal craziness?

Somehow, this apple orchard outside my window does something to help my own internal craziness. Like signs of welcome in the wilderness, the symbolize nature's ultimate generosity to man. Every once in a while it does me real good to wander out there, whether it be to prune dead branches in late winter, smell the blossoms in early spring, or to sit down and enjoy a bite of fresh fruit in the fall.

Out there it's so easy to see beyond my own immediate worries and rediscover the wonder and beauty of what's always happening all around us.We all need to be reminded of that now and then, but I also know that if I didn't have these friends sitting right next to my house, I might never pay attention to apple trees.

Every back road in the Townships offers abandoned orchards and wild crabapple trees loaded with sweet fruit needing attention every fall. Why not help yourself to the

experience some Sunday morning?

And Mrs. Huff....rest easy knowing that these trees that you and your husband lovingly planted many years ago, are still being appreciated and enjoyed. Their blossoms fill my wood-smokey bedroom with honey-sweet freshness every spring and their fruit will fill my stomach all winter long.

But most important, I need to have them around to help me get out of myself when I need to and to remind me why I moved out into the country in the first place. Their generosity is perfect statement of nature's ability to provide and care for us despite our illusions of being able to do it all ourselves.

TO STORE: Northern Spy and Golden Russet make good winter keepers. Pick them after the frost making sure that the stem is still on. Try not to bruise them- the apples will keep better. If your basement is very damp you can store the apples just in a bushel. Otherwise it is best to pack them in layers of maples leaves, hay, sand or newspaper-wrapped. For each basement there's a best way to store apples - you have to experiment! Make sure that the apples are not stored near anything else (carrots, beets, potatoes) because the apples produce a gas which makes these go soft. This same gas will turn your picked green tomatoes red if you put an apple in with a bag of paper-wrapped green tomatoes.

TO DRY: Take clean and perfect apples. Core them. Slice them thinly. String the pieces up in a dry and warm place. Over a wood stove is good. When they are dry, store the apple pieces in a glass jar. Or after slicing the apples, lay them on a cookie sheet in a warm oven. Store in a jar.

TO FREEZE: Sliced apples can be frozen without sugar but the addition of lemon juice or ascorbic acid is recommended to preserve the colour.

TO CAN: Use good quality tart apples.Wash, pare and core, cut unto quarters or halves. Put the pieces into salted water and this will prevent the apples from turning brown. Drain. Boil one minute in thin or medium sirup or water. Pack in jars, cover with boiling liquid and process 20 minutes in boiling-water bath. You can also bake the apples, pack them and cover them in boiling liquid. Process them 15 minutes in a boiling-water bath.

To make apple sauce, core and pare the apples if you want, cut into quarters or halves. Put the apples into the salted water as you are cutting them. Drain.Put the apples into a large kettle (enamel or stainless steel is best) and pour in water until you can see it through the apples. Cook the apples on a medium-high heat, adding water if necessary. When the apples are soft and mushy, add sweetening if desired- but watch out for sticking then! Cinammon, lemon peel, may be added to the sauce. Pack the apple sauce into hot, sterile jars and process for 15 minutes in a hot-water bath. You can make apple butter by taking the apple sauce and pushing it through a strainer or colander, then boiling it down more. Pack and process it in the same way.

The Eastern Townships is blessed with apples

APPLE TREE
[pyrus malus]

PROPERTIES AND USES: Apples when peeled or grated are excellent for illnesses involving diarrhea. A fasting diet of one or two days with only grated apple allowed is effective. Unripe apples are better for this than ripe ones. If, on the other hand, you need a mild laxitive, eat some apples whole. Apple peels can be dried and made into a tea that is recommended for rheumatic illness. Apple wine is an ancient cure-all that was mentioned by Galen in the second century A.D. Use only wine that is at least 2 years old.

PREPARATION AND DOSAGE:

INFUSION: Use 1 to 2 tsp. dried apple peels with 1 cup simmering water. Take from 1 to 3 cups a day.

CAUTION: Apple seeds eaten alone in large quatities can be poisonous. A case is recorded of a man who saved the seeds until he had a cupful. He ate them all at once, and they killed him. On the other hand, a great Professor Emeritus of Medecine once said that the best advice he could give was «Do what you did in Paradise, eat an apple a day and get some physical exercise.«

RECIPE

Apple Chutney

Simmer until the fruit is tender:

1 seeded chopped lemon
1 skinned chopped clove garlic
5 cups peeled chopped apples, and-or green tomatoes
2 and a quarter cups brown sugar
1 and a half cups raisins
2 cups cider vinegar

Add ginger (in powder or crystallized), mustard seed, cayenne, salt and chopped onions to taste.

Pack in hot, sterile jars and seal them.



Lowell has his press set up in his combination barn, art gallery, gymnasium, studio, workshop. The entire rig is contained in one large frame with motorized apple chopper on top, frames for collecting the pulp underneath, then the hydraulic press on Lowell's left.



Press apples with Lowell and Virginia Naeve

BY RUSSELL POCOCK

PHOTOS BY PETER HUTCHISON

If you have a lot of apples or know somewhere where you can get them, why not spend a Saturday or Sunday morning gathering them all up and taking them to Lowell and Virginia Naeve's to be pressed into juice? You need about 7 bushels of apples for one batch that will give you approximately 20 gallons of juice, depending on your fruit. Don't forget to bring along your own containers and money enough to pay them 50 cents a gallon for each gallon of juice made.

The Naeve farm is located just off Route 5 between the North Hatley turn-off and Massawippi. Follow the signs placed on Route 5 for their Hay Barn Art Gallery, another project of theirs worth visiting while you're there.

Sun: What varieties of apples make the best juice?
Lowell: Well, the ones that keep good for the winter are good, like Courtland, Northern Spy, some of the baking apples aren't so good and they have a surprising kind of taste that's awful - you wouldn't believe it.
Sun: How about crab apples?
Lowell: Yeah, but if they lay on the ground too long, they get dehydrated. There's not much juice in them and also the juice has a little different taste. Nothin' like apples that come right off the tree, right? The drops are fine unless they've been too long and they bring them in with dirt on them and you spend all day washing 'em - it's quite a job.

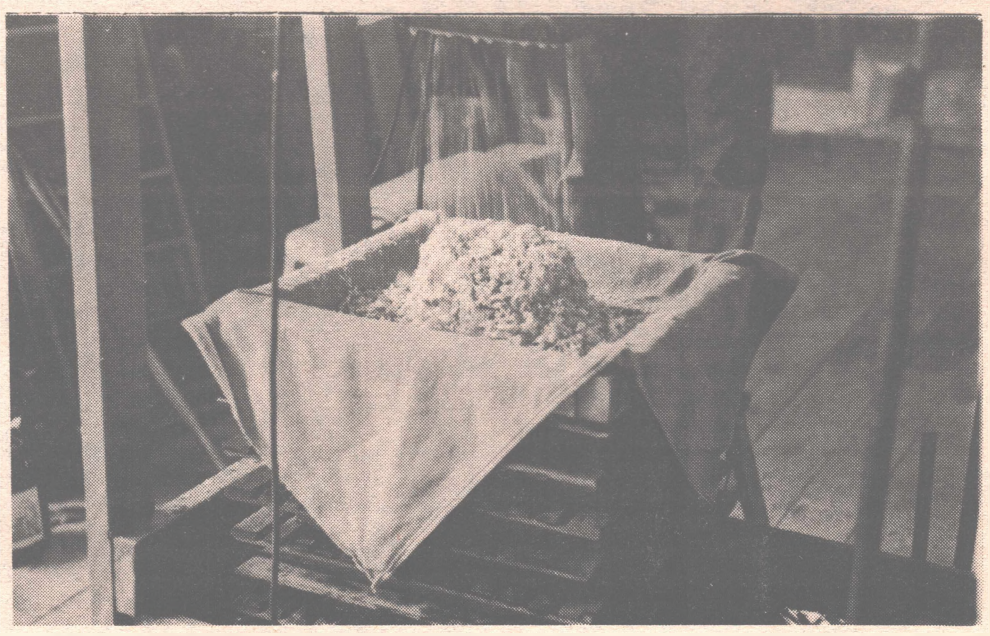
The later you go, the better they are, as long as you don't wait too long and they freeze. Once they freeze, they're no good at all. We can go in to November but in November it gets «iffy«. But you see, the Courtlands the Northern Spy and the MacIntosh, they're all just starting to get good at the very end. Crabapples too, there's a guy in Lennoxville who's got a red crabapple and he comes and makes a cherry-red juice - just like wine. And that's all he brings in, just from that one tree.
Sun: You mentioned that you like to freeze juice for the winter?
Lowell: Yeah, well freezing comes awful close to holding it where it's at unlike a lot of other things that you freeze. So if you want real fresh juice, straight from the deep freeze - you'd be amazed at what it's like in January or February. It smells just like it does here.
Sun: Where did you get the press?
Lowell: We built it. It's a copy of a machine they sell in the States, but they charge a lot for these things, and then they wanted 23 per cent duty to ship it through the border. They get crazy, there are no presses made up here so they're just killing the small cider industry up this way in Canada. The regulation is self-defeating. I went down to the plant in Connecticut where they make these and the guy told me that they've only sold one or two of these things because of that damn 23 per cent duty.
Sun: They don't make anything like this in Canada?
Lowell: No, there's only two places in North America. One's in Connecticut - Cider Equipment Company, which produces specifically this kind of stuff and huge commercial one, monsters. Then there's another place in Ohio.

You know they used to make juice all around here on these farms. Every couple of miles there'd be some guy who'd have some sort of press, but they're all gone - vanished. When I first came here, I asked around and they said that there's nobody except for Heath and there might be a couple of French farmers.

I had these antique ones, but I sold 'em. I think we had four people call up almost at once. It's finally hit I think and I think that the strawberry farm thing and all that's making people think, you know, «that guy does it«.



① Lowell presses apples into chopper



② The ground pulp falls into the frames



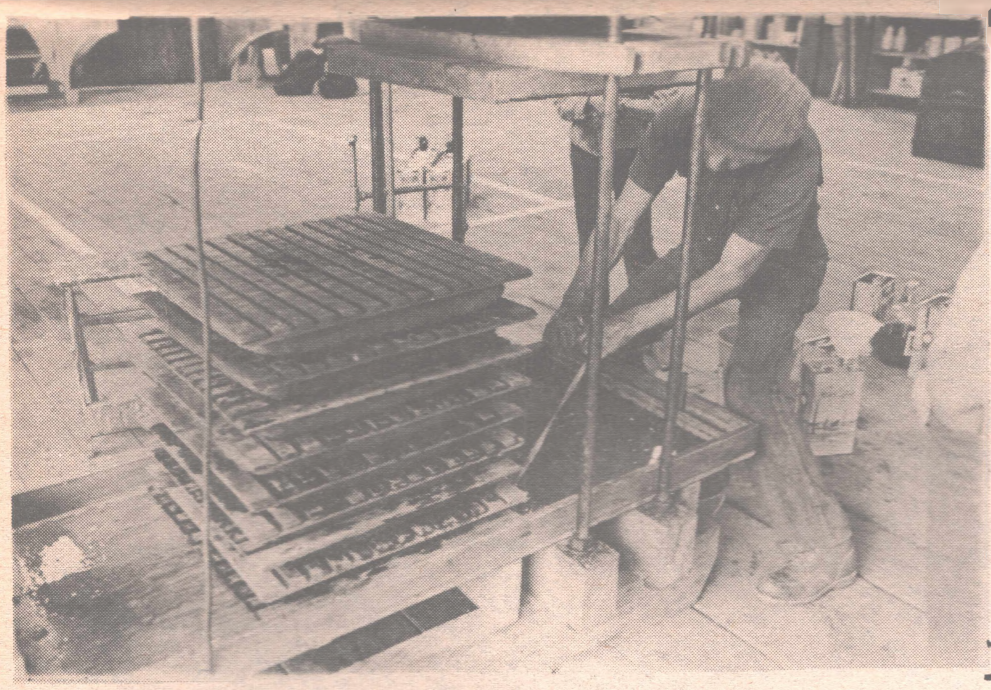
③ Each frame is filled and smoothed out ←



④ a special nylon cloth contains the pulp and is folded over →



⑤ then a new slat is placed on top, followed by another frame, another cloth, and more apples.



⑥ when all of the frames are full, Lowell pulls them all to where they'll be pressed by the hydraulic jack, until: - there ain't no more juice left worth squeezin' for! ⑦



Sun: What are the best ways to preserve the juice?
Virginia: Well, there's one method that I haven't tried. An old-timer at an old aplle cider mill in Vermont said that they used to take gallon jugs or barrels and they'd put in one to three tablespoons of horseradish per jug and it would keep all winter.

I always forget where my horseradishes are by this time of year and I haven't tried it yet but I'll try it this year.

Now what we like to do is freeze it - just put it in ice cream containers or something and freeze and when you take it out it's just like when you put it in. The other way is to bottle it, if you have a capper - half-gallon canning jars are good too.

For canning you have to sterilize the bottles and then you bring the juice just below a boil, pour it into the jars and seal the top. You don't really have to process it in a bath for 5 minutes but some people like to make sure that it really seals. It's just like canning peaches or anything. We then put it in a dark place to keep it until we need it.
Sun: Have you ever tried making cider?
Virginia: Well, what I do - I've got a formation of this stuff they call 'Mother' - it's a sort of gelatin stuff and I keep it in a bottle when I get a great big batch of it. I put a little hunk of it into the gallon jug that I want to make vinegar in. I just did one today. I won't use it until 1977. It's really not strong enough after one year. Today I took out some two year old stuff to make pickles with - it's really sharp.

I suspect that the early apples make the best vinegar because they're not so sweet, the later ones are better for wine.

Then, there's an old guy in Vermont who used to take the juice and boil it down very carefully, probably on a wood stove, until it made a very sweet jam without having to add any sugar. But I'm anxious to try this horseradish thing of only I can just get it together to dig up some horseradishes. He said it didn't change the taste.

Joyce Booth, Lennoxville:
«The food is great - walnuts, dates, raisins - I didn't even know they could taste so good. I guess I never had a fresh walnut before. They have types of beans and flour you can't get anywhere else.«

Michael Hartman, Sherbrooke:
«The two main reasons I joined the co-op are for the quality of the food and the price. And besides, I'd rather give my money to a group like that than to a place like Steinburgs.«

Mrs. Elmer Barter, Bury:
«I like the peanut butter. It's much better than what you get in a store. The rolled oats are good and the whole wheat flour - I like to cook with that. The raisins and peanuts are much better, fresher. We enjoy the food very much. We have room for new members in our group.«

Bob Macleod, St. Adolphe de Dudswell:
«I'm damn glad it's around. Otherwise we'd have to go to Montreal for some of the things we need. It's serving a very valuable need for people like us. I was very happy to see it set up.«

Mrs. Paquette, Sherbrooke:
«I feel that I can contribute something to the family food budget by working within the co-op. We get lower prices by doing the work ourselves.«

Cathy Longworth, Bishopton:
«It's been a gas. We've been down here two years and we've met so many people since we joined the co-op. And anyone who is trying to keep their finances together and compares the prices will see that the $5 membership pays for itself with the first order.«

Nancy Rahn, Stanstead:
«The main reason for us to be in the co-op is for the nutritious food. But it's really a co-op in the sense that we all share in the work.«

Mary Knight, Stanstead:
«The people who join the co-op have already been sold on the health food. As working members we get it cheaper than in a health food store. In our group we had a get-together and we plan more. We all met people we hadn't met before and I think everybody enjoyed it.«

Lin Jensen, East Hatley:
«We have gotten in touch with a lot of people through the co-op. We feel less isolated as a result. That may seem to be beside the point when the main purpose is to distribute food, but it's important to us. We also have sold some of our honey through the co-op.«

Sue McAlden, St. Isidore:
«The co-op is a centre for people to come together and meet each other. People who have similar interests can work together.«

Jackie Hyman, Bulwer:
«It's a source of good food at reasonable prices, food that's not available elsewhere. It also has a social function. It's a way to do things with other people. It's a good thing for the local community and for the new-comers.«

Angus Curry, Eaton Corner:
«It's people taking it upon themselves to control the things that affect their lives. It's a way for people to become involved in what is affecting them in a real way. No one is waving any banners here at the co-op. We're just doing what has to be done, when it has to be done.«

Brian Pombiere, Sawyerville:
«Different people join the co-op for different reasons. The whole idea of doing things co-operatively appeals to a lot of people. The co-op stands for a lot. It's almost religious in one sense, yet it's very practical in another. For me it's a centre for many things. There is no limit to the potential it has. I like to do as much as possible inside the co-op. It brings all kinds of people together and gives us a chance to deal with each other. I'm generally a shy person and I think most people are. The co-op brings us together.«

A few testimonials

THE SAWYERVILLE CO-OP



How it works

The Sawyerville co-op has its headquarters at the Corner Store in Eaton Corner. The co-op works on different levels of distribution. There are neighbourhood groups, the regional co-op and the provincial and international super-coop.

People get together to form a neighbourhood buying group. There are about 20 such groups in the Sawyerville co-op, scattered across the countryside from Lake Megantic to North Hatley, from St. Adrien de Ham in Wolfe County to Ayers Cliff and a lot of other places in between.

There is a monthly price list showing what you can buy. Each person or family in the neighbourhood group goes over the list and makes an advance order for the month. Then they put all the orders into one. They send the whole order with one cheque to the Sawyerville co-op, which is the regional level.

At the co-op the orders from all 20 neighbourhood groups are compiled into one huge order for the whole region. Then the Sawyerville co-op works together at a super-coop level with the other co-ops in Quebec, New Hampshire and Vermont. As much as possible, the co-ops buy things together and truck them together, to save money.

The food comes back the other way. From the super-coop level it comes to the Sawyerville co-op, then it is broken down into neighbourhood orders, then into family orders.

It's a case of consumers putting together their buying power to get the food they want at lower prices. An example: organically grown oranges. Last year co-op leader Angus Curry heard through the international co-op grapevine that in Florida there is a big orchard with oranges and grapefruit, organically grown, that is with no chemical insecticides or fertilizers. So Angus put this down on the monthly price list and newsletter that goes out to Sawyerville co-op members.

From Piopolis to Fitch Bay co-op members decide how many oranges they want to buy. If every member in Lennoxville buys 2 cases then that's 40 or 50 cases

»...the Co-op brings us together...»



Stephanie Wells hands a souvenir bag of raisins to the Corner Store's millionth customer. The second millionth customer will be awarded a complimentary 500 pound bag of sea salt.

right there. Combine this with orders from 20 other groups and suddenly you've got a lot of buying power at the regional level.

At the same time, Angus has told the other Quebec co-ops about the oranges and they are making their orders too. At the provincial level it gets to be a very big order. And the members of dozens of co-ops in New England are busy deciding how many oranges they want. Soon you are no longer counting the oranges by the crate, but by the tractor-trailer load.

Because the group buying power is so great at this level, the co-ops can get the oranges cheaper. They negotiate directly with the orchard owner in Florida. They make a deal with him, and the trucks start rolling.

The New England co-ops have their own trucking line, the Loaves and Fishes Trucking Company. Early one morning one of their trucks arrives at the orchard in Florida. The oranges are still being picked. They are taken straight off the trees and loaded into the truck. The truck heads back north, distributing to the co-ops in Vermont and New Hampshire.

Angus leaves Eaton Corner in the truck belonging to the Sawyerville co-op. He meets the Loaves and Fishes truck at Barton, Vermont, and loads the oranges for the Quebec co-ops. At the Corner Store the load is broken down into the neighbourhood orders. From there the food is taken to each neighourhood and divided up into family orders.

Fresh organic oranges at a low price, a couple of days after they had been picked from the tree. Steinburgs can't compare. That's what group buying power can do. The run for oranges happens once a year; for other kinds of food, once a month.

There is no boss at the top of this organisation. It works from the bottom up, with as little bureaucracy as possible. The New England federation of co-ops, for example, has the combined buying power of several million dollars per year, yet they don't even have an office.

The work is not done at the top, it is done at the bottom, based on the neighbourhood group. Each member of the Sawyerville co-op is expected to contribute work, without pay. Unloading the truck, dividing the food up, measuring 100 pound bags of flour into 10 pound bags, going to the Corner Store to pick up the neighbourhood order, dividing the food into individual orders, all of this is done by volunteers from each neighbourhood.

There are no middlemen in this food distribution system. Angus gets in the truck and goes straight to the producer. The co-op member pays the cost of the food plus a straight ten per cent mark up. The two Sawyerville co-op managers, Stephanie Wells and Chris Ljungkull, run the store and organise the monthly food orders for the miniscule salary of $60 a week. Even packaging is recycled, to save money. Wastefulness is frowned upon within the co-op. As a result of all this, the prices of most items are cheaper if you are a member and make an advance order.

You have to be a working member to make an advance order, but you don't have to be a member to buy in the co-op's Corner Store. You get the same food and you don't have to do any work if you buy directly in the Corner Store, but you will pay a higher price. The advance order from a neighbourhood group is always the cheapest way.

Most of the work is done by a member within his or her own group. Depending on the size of the group, a member may only have to travel to Eaton Corner once a year.

The neighbourhood group functions entirely according to how its members make it function. So every group is different.

The Bishopton group, for example, is widely spread out, from Weedon to Gould to St. Alphonse de Dudswell. So Cathy Longworth acts as a centre for the group. In her own words, «It's very simple. I make sure everyone gets their order form and I tell them to get their orders to me four days before the co-op deadline. I put all the orders together, and deposit the cheques in a special account we set up for that purpose. Then I send one order and one cheque to Eaton Corner. There are 18 or 19 people in our group. It's a working entity for us.«

Nancy Rahn of Lennoxville says her group has devised its own system of operation. «Our group has no leader, no central person,« she says. «We have a meeting every month to decide who is going to do what. We take turns at break-down and at pick-up. Even the bookkeeping for the group is done by a different person every time. This appears dificult at first because every member has to learn the whole system, but ultimately it's the most co-operative way. We are a smaller group and we prefer to stay that way. If the group gets too big, the amounts of food get too large to handle.«



Chris ponders a list of the people who signed up for the organic cooking course organised jointly by the Co-op and the E.T. Regional Adult Education service.

»...doing what has to be done...»

THE SAWYERVILLE CO-OP



In the pioneer days

In the pioneer days of the Sawyerville co-op (three years ago), young people were moving into the rural area, and they had no centre to gather around. At the Winter Solstice of 1972, George Kirkpatrick, of Sawyerville, an adept at Eastern thought, consulted the I CHING, an Oriental book of guidance. The book gave him two signs. The first was Youthful Folly, the second was Providing Nourishment.

So George established the Sawyerville Natural Foods Store, a youthful folly to provide nourishment. At that time there was no natural food co-op in Sherbrooke, nor in Quebec City, with its population of half a million. To expect such an enterprise to succeed in tiny Sawyerville was pure folly, and any business expert would have advised against it.

But George, not being a business expert, went ahead anyway. In George's words, «It just seemed there were the energies to do it, and it worked.«

After George left for Florida on his bicycle, a lot of the energy to keep the enterprise going came from Angus Curry.

Angus Curry is a man of relentless generosity. When he is not helping somebody, he is helping somebody else. Somewhere along the way he has adopted a philosophy of life, and he lives by it.

In the words of Brian Pombiere, «People who get to know Angus begin to feel that his presence is saintly. He has a capacity for handling and dealing with a lot of different people on whatever level they are on. He's really a good person for the position he is in. In a co-op you don't want a leader-leader. He is so modest, nobody minds. He is a good, good person.«

Supporting Angus was the quiet and steady devotion of Chris Ljungkull. The history of the co-op has been the history of silent acts of giving from many people, but it is only honest to recognize that the co-op would not exist today were it not for the two years of labour put in by Angus and Chris. In return they received barely enough money to survive.

Angus and Chris would head to Montreal in an ancient Ford Econoline that Angus had literally taken off a scrap heap. In Montreal they would drive around all day to each individual supplier - to the peanut butter company to get the peanut butter, to the mill to get the 3,000 pounds of flour, and so on.

They would load the truck until the wheels were bending outward. Then they would head down the Autoroute. Chris would take over the driving when Angus collapsed. The truck got older and older and the loads got heavier and heavier. They had trouble getting up the hills on the Autoroute in first gear. A tool case was always brought along because the truck would inevitably break down.

They would arrive at Eaton Corner and unload the truck, carrying the 100 pound bags of food into the house through the snow. They would finish around one in the morning, and then get up at five the next morning to go to Montreal for the second load. By the time the second load was home they were exhausted from carrying the food for 150 families. They were doing the trucking for both the Sawyerville and Sherbrooke co-ops.

The back room of their house was piled to the ceiling with food, and the front room was being used as a store. They had no electricity, and the insulation and heating in the house were such that a glass of water left overnight froze hard. That didn't happen too often, though, because they didn't have any water either.

The food would have to be broken down into the individual orders, because there were no neighbourhood groups at that time - it was all done at the home of Chris and Angus. It would get dark early in winter and so the work would be done by candlelight. People who came in to help with the break down of the food couldn't see too well in the darkness, and raisins and honey would be spilled on the floor. People would be marching in and out, tracking in snow and tracking out honey.

The food orders had jumped from $400 a month to $800 to $2,000 and started climbing to $3,000 a month. In addition to all this, Chris and Angus were typing up the monthly price lists and newsletter, mimeographing them, folding, addressing, stapling and stamping them by hand. In addition their home had become a centre of activity and a meeting place for dozens of members of the co-op. For the total amount of work they did over two years, Angus and Chris never came close to earning the minimum wage. They could have turned it into a private business, raised the prices and made a profit. But they wanted the food to be inexpensive and they wanted it to be a co-op.

But the work simply became too much for two people to handle, and besides, if it's going to be a co-op, two people shouldn't have to do so much of the work.

So they called a meeting at the town hall and they asked everybody whether they wanted a real co-op or just a food store. People said they wanted a real co-op. So the members were divided into neighbourhood buying groups and were called upon to do more of the work and take more of the responsability. Last spring, the co-op rented Glen's Store at Eaton Corner and renamed it the Corner Store. It acts as a regular health food store, community centre and headquarters of the co-op. Two managers were hired - Chris and Stephanie. Angus did not want the job, but he still does the trucking and maintains the provincial and international co-op contacts. Angus and Chris have phased themselves out of the co-op to some extent, because they want the membership to take over the responsability. But Angus, Chris and Stephanie still do more work than many members of the co-op realize.

New directions

A HOUSE FOR THE WARES

The food warehouses in Quebec are controlled by the big food companies, and they make big money. They exercise a kind of group monopoly. They only stock food made by certain companies. Food stores can only get what the warehouses offer. That's why you can get Kraft peanut butter with its chemicals, but you can't get Desy peanut butter, which is made right in Montreal. You can't get pure rolled oats, you can only get the instant kind that tastes like cardboard mixed with glue.

The co-ops don't buy from these warehouses. Instead they maintain a list of the almost-forgotten little companies that still offer pure food. And Angus has to go around to each one of these companies every month.

These big commercial warehouses act as a blocade. They make it difficult for the food producer to market his produce, because generally they won't stock your produce unless your name happens to be Kraft or General Foods. And they make it hard for the consumer to get foods other than those produced by these big companies.









»..there is no limit to the potential it has...«

What the co-ops in Quebec are hoping to do is establish their own food warehouse. All health food producers could market their produce at this warehouse, and all health food co-ops could go there and buy all they need, instead of having to search everywhere for it.

Meetings of all the co-ops in Quebec have been held at Eaton Corner to discuss this project. If the co-op warehouse comes into existence, the distribution of good food in the province would increase rapidly.

As this newspaper goes to press, it looks like the co-op warehouse is in the process of becoming a reality.

CO-OP SEPARATISM

In its early days, the Sawyerville co-op was essentially an off-shoot of the Montreal co-op. Then it grew up and became an independent co-op on its own.

Now the Sawyerville co-op is encouraging its own neighbourhood buying groups to separate, to become independent co-ops. They could still order through the Sawyerville co-op and Angus could still do the trucking, but the new co-ops would be equal to the Sawyerville co-op instead of being part of it.

New co-ops would be able to take in new members in their own areas, and the movement would become much larger. The new co-ops would feel more responsable for their own affairs and would come up with new ways of doing things.

Another reason for decentralisation is to cut down the distance. In general, the people who are the most involved in the co-op, who put the most into and get the most out of it, are the ones who live the closest to it. If you live in Lake Megantic or Georgeville or Lennoxville, you can't drive to Eaton Corner all the time, especially if you have a full time job. And in the other direction, the co-op members in the Eaton Corner-Sawyerville area may be able to arrange community activities for their area, but they can't arrange them way out in Megantic. The distances are just too great.

One group that has been talking about making the big jump to independence is in the Stanstead area. That group has members spread out from Stanstead to Georgeville, Fitch Bay, and Boynton-Tomifobia. It's a long trip from there to Eaton Corner, especially on a January night. Mary Knight of the Stanstead group says it would be easier for that area if they had their own co-op. They could make the change gradually, starting off by finding a place to store bulk quantities of food.

Mrs. Paquette in Sherbrooke thinks the time will come when the three Sherbrooke-Lennoxville groups will form their own co-op. They have a combined total of 30 members and this could easily increase if they had their own co-op. They are already duplicating efforts to some extent by having three separate groups travel to Eaton Corner. If they had their own place in Lennoxville, the bulk food could be transported directly there. «It has to happen sometime,« says Mrs. Paquette. «We need the people and the place to do it.«

It is no secret among co-op watchers (co-opologists) that a Lennoxville co-op would quickly outgrow the Sawyerville co-op.

A Lennoxville co-op would ideally be open one or two evenings a week and on week-ends. This would suit the needs of that area more closely. In the Lennoxville group of which Joyce Booth is a member, for example, 8 out of 10 members are mothers who have young children and who also have full-time jobs. It is impossible for them to get out to Eaton Corner to help with break down, which usually happens on week days. A Lennoxville co-op with its own depot would be an answer to that problem.

Again, the major hurdle is finding the people and the place to do it.

GROW YOUR OWN

Angus was at the Montreal Central Market one day when he saw truckloads and truckloads of cauliflower being brought in. From California. Go down to your local IGA and you can buy vegetables that were grown 3,000 miles away. The same vegetables could have been grown here.

Some members of the co-op feel that the co-op will really, really make sense only when a lot of the food is grown right here in the Townships. Some members of the co-op will be farmers and some will be consumers and in the co-op they will deal directly with each other.

A lot of the things that are sold through the co-op could be produced locally: soybeans, buckwheat, organic apple juice, different types of beans, and whatever else local people can produce. Co-op members are growing about 100 tons of buckwheat this year, but this is only a beginning. A lot more could be done. The co-op doesn't even have a steady source of locally produce organic eggs, or local dried peas, honey, herbs...you name it, or rather, you grow it.



THE SAWYERVILLE CO-OP

Not by bread alone

I go down to the Corner Store to get some more crunchy peanut butter. Kid eats it like there was no tomorrow. It's a Saturday morning and there's a bunch of people outside the store selling vegetables and honey. They are trying to get a farmers' market going. There's a big sign outside hand-carved by Ritchie Ellis of St. Malo. Inside the store they sell some of his art work.

I get inside the store and Francis Elliot is there with her daughter and granddaughter. Francis is a staunch co-op supporter and knows a lot of good health food recipes. She works on the co-op newsletter and she tells me she is upset about a controversial article that was in it and I say well it's been a painful controversy but at least it's made a lot of co-op members start thinking about what the co-op is and where it is going. Francis goes over to talk to Stephanie and then this guy somes roaring up in a jeep and he wants to know where to get a legal aid lawyer. The road crews are cutting down the trees along the road where he lives and he wants to have it stopped. He is fit to be tied and says they had better not try to cut down the trees in front of his house.

Everybody talks about this for a while and the guy gets directed towards legal aid. Someone suggests he should tie himself to one of the trees.

Somebody else comes in and says they heard on the radio there is danger of botulism this year if you can your own tomatoes, because the lack of rain has resulted in a lack of citric acid in some types of tomatoes and citric acid is what kills botulism bacteria. The agricultural department in Sherbrooke says to put a quarter teaspoon of citric acid in every quart of tomatoes you can. But it's hard to get citric acid

FILLING A GAP

One aim of the co-op is for the region to become self-sufficient in food. One gap is the lack of facilities for canning, freezing, milling, baking and storing. For under $12,000, the co-op could have its own cannery, grain huller and flour mill. These could be community facilities that any co-op member could use. For example, grain could be grown organically by Townships farmers and made into flour and bread at the co-op. The flour would also have a large market with the other co-ops. Individuals could grow their own vegetables and can them at the co-op for a small fee. Other co-op members have predicted a need for community freezers and root cellars.

If the co-op can find a way to obtain some of this equipment, the circle from producer to consumer would be complete within the co-op and within the Townships.

Self-reliance is anti-inflationary. The price of flour at the Sawyerville co-op has not gone up in a year and a half. During the same time, the price of bread in the stores has virtually doubled.

The essential ingredient, the grain, has not changed much in price. What has gone up is the transportation, the chemical additives, the packaging, the labour and the cut taken by the middlemen. Eliminate as many of those steps as you can and the price will stay down. By growing grain and milling it locally and co-operatively, prices could be kept down, and food could be fresh and pure.

AND SO ON

The co-op is already moving in a number of directions beyond distributing food. The co-op obtained the franchise for rock phosphate fertilizer for the whole province to prevent someone else from buying the franchise and raising the price. Last year they brought in three 50 ton carloads of the fertilizer and expect to bring in more.

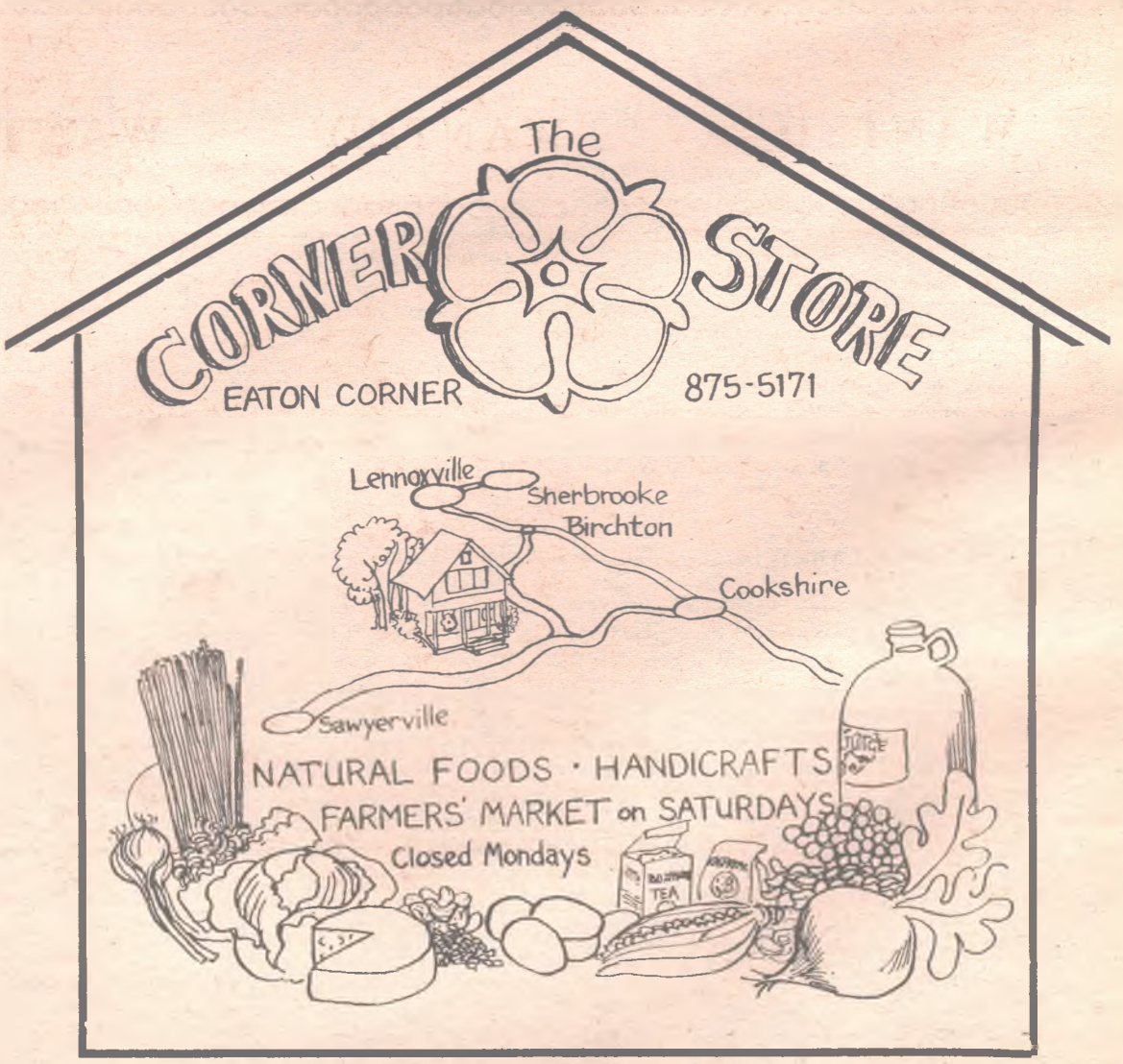
Various unofficial groups within the co-op have organised day care activities for children, others have joined together to share farming and gardening equipment. For quite a while, the co-op has teetered on the brink of having its own co-op garage.

More community services will probably be organised around the co-op. Members have sometimes grouped together to take French courses. Now the co-op is working with the Adult Ed Department of the E.T. Regional to have organic cooking courses. The co-op is also working with Adult Ed and Manpower to start an Introductory Farming course. If this course takes place, it will be the first time in Canada. It would be for beginning farmers, whereas previous farming courses have always been for established farmers.

In typical co-op style, the proposed curriculum was worked out by the would-be farmers themselves. They want to be taught things like market gardening, bee keeping and woodlot management. The course would be full time and would last ten weeks.

In the economically depressed area of Sawyerville, some co-op members want to get right down to the business of creating jobs by starting a centre where people can make things they can sell. Brian Pombiere and Tony Perkins hope that eventually the co-op will able to set up a co-op workshop. Members of the co-op would be able to create work for themselves by using the workshop to turn out anything from bee-keeping equipment to furniture.

Tony and Brian hope they will eventually be able to set up a co-op workshop, for woodworking, metal working and so on. Members of the co-op would be able to create full time jobs for themselves by turning out anything from bee-keeping equipment to furniture.





For the purposes of this article on the Sawyerville Co-op:
Photos by Peter Hutchison
Illustrations by Stephanie Wells
Taperecorder by Bob Dawson

because it's all been sold out at the drug stores. Somebody wonders if the citric acid has been bought up by the same people who bought up all the canning jar lids. Swears he saw this truck from the States went around to all the stores in Weedon, Scotstown, Notre-Dame-des-Bois, La Patrie and Chartierville and bought up all the canning jar lids. Now people can't do their canning because of it, so they have to buy canned goods from the stores. Sounds fishy, somebody says. You mean smells fishy, says Stephanie.

Francis comes around again and brings free ice cream cones for everybody. I begin to realize that this is the first time I have been in a store and have a neighbour bring free ice cream cones for everybody.

Kids are running around now and the store has toys for them to play with. Stephanie wants to set up a place for them to do colouring. Some guy comes around in an Austin with a rocking chair on the roof He fixed up the chair to give to the co-op. He puts it on the front gallery and a girl sits down in it and starts to read a book.

A woman comes in from Toronto. She is new here and is looking for a place to buy. Hard to find, lots of people asking. She buys some cheese and gives pieces of it to everybody on the store. Somebody says a bunch of people should go together and buy 300 acres and put separate houses on it and grow organic food for the co-op.

Angus comes in and blabbers around about seed orders and getting fruit trees to plant and he's trying to get a load of peaches but the price is too high. They've just repaired the co-op truck. It got damaged when it fell eight feet through the floor of a barn. Chris says Angus, has been through just about everything you can imagine with those trucks.

An old-fashioned refrigerator with glass doors has been brought in from Scotstown. It needs work on it so it's sitting in the middle of the store waiting for a volunteer to fix it. In walks a volunteer. Stephanie doesn't know his name, but without a word he starts working on the refrigerator. But it's a big job and it never seems to get done. More help is needed.

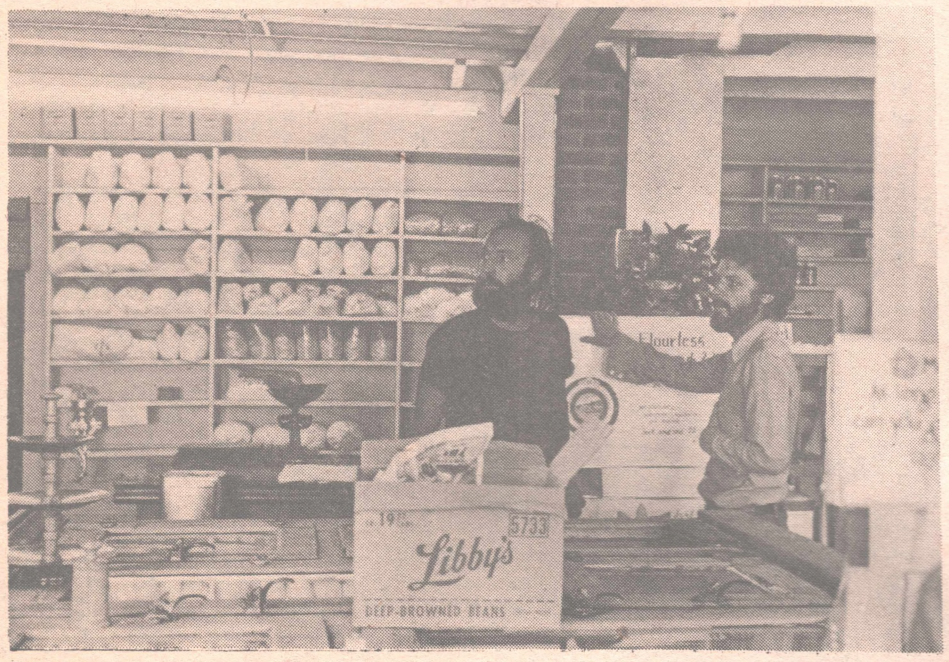
Somebody comes in to join the co-op but Chris tells him the co-op isn't taking any more individual members. You have to join a neighbourhood group or start a new group with a minimum of three families.

A man comes in with his wife and child. The co-op

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Evenings Till Nine
Member of the Sawyerville Co-op





has corn and grain mills for sale, little hand-operated things that look like meat grinders. This guy buys nine of them at $21 each. Says it's for all his friends. They live out in the hills by Notre-Dame-des-Bois and they have been eating nothing but the purest organic food for forty years. In the back of the store there is literature available on organic farming and co-ops and so on, and this guy takes one of each and goes out the door with his nine grain mills. I go to the back of the store and pick up one of the pamphlets. There is an article saying that one reason why so many people are starving is that so much of the world's grain is used to make alcohol. Another reason is that the best farm lands in South America, Asia and Africa have been bought up by big American and European companies to grow non-food products such as coffee, tea, rubber, tobacco and sugar.

Two girls in a rented car come in and ask if anybody knows of a house to rent, but nobody does. Chris talks about the rummage sale coming up. There are signs up about meetings. Somebody says if you counted all the neighbourhood group meetings plus all the other meetings, there were about 40 meetings in the last 30 days within the co-op. Somebody asks when the next dance is going to be. This is a food store, for God's sake, that holds its own dances! The sun is out now and everybody goes out on the gallery and talks and sits around and looks at the vegetables for sale.

About six hours later I get home and the wife says where have you been and I say oh I just went down to the Corner Store to get some peanut butter for breakfast.



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**We shall not cease
from exploration
and the end
of all our exploring
will be to arrive
where we started
and know the place
for the first time
T.S. Eliot**

HAND-BUILT HOME

by A. Walters

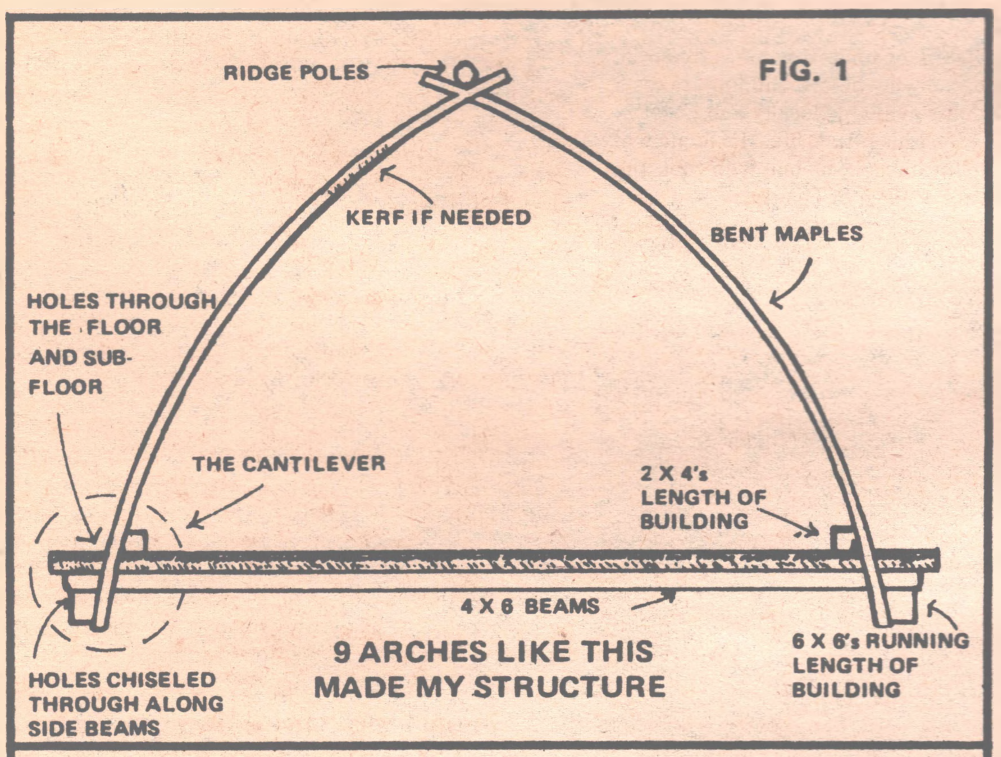
The structure you see in the photos is the second home I've built, more or less singlehandedly, in the woods on my 100 acre place here in the Townships. The house is 28' X 14', rises 10' at its highest point, and cost just a little over $200. I had a lot of fun putting it together and would like to tell you about the process.

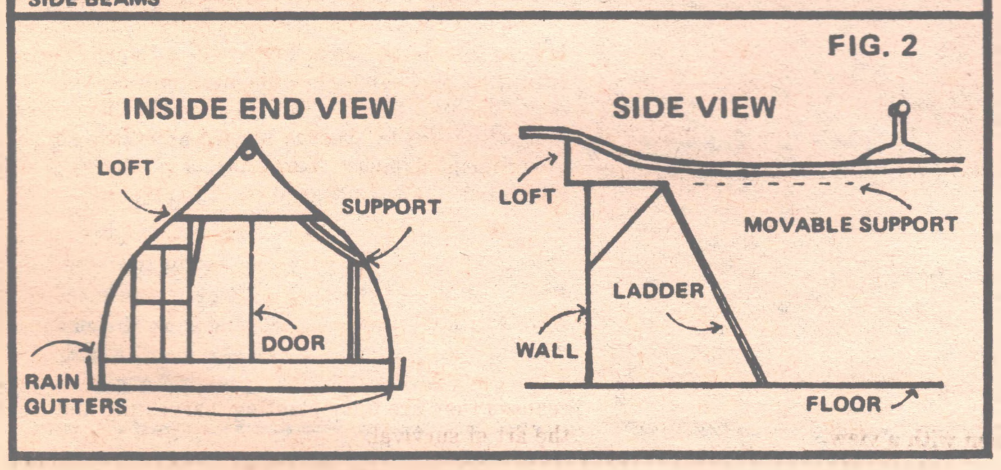
When I first began the project early in 1974, I was partial to a dome of some kind. I'd built models from plastic straws and had an idea of the strength inherent in the triangles of a geodesic structure and the stress distribution of the curved form. Yet I had neither the money nor the inclination to buy the new materials such domes seem to require. What I did have was platform left from a building I'd torn down...so it seemed reasonable to use that as the floor plan for whatever I was going to construct.

But what other resources did I have? Well, there was timber on the place, of a sort. All the larger trees had been cut as pulpwood, by a «hurry-up« logging crew that felled many just for being in the way. Other trunks had been bent and then left to grow in that position for four years. Aha! Ready-made arches!

By the time I noticed the preformed arches, I'd begun to pay attention to various other irregular-shaped objects lying around my property: car parts (including the rear window of a '55 Ford station wagon)...old snow fence wire... a couple of bicycle rims... a large metal loop. Also bottles. Lots and lots of bottles.

OK. I decided that the form of my house would follow the shape of the materials I had to work with. There would be many a compound curve... and if you doubt the strength of such construction, study domes and drops of water, or just take an egg and try to crush it in the palm of your hand.





I began work early in the spring, by girdling the trees I'd need for the frame. They were sugar maples, and the sap that dripped from them was sheer ambrosia. These were cut off as needed... maybe 26 of them to get 18 useable trunks, since not all of them were curved just the way I wanted them. I used the timbers while they were green and flexible and let them dry while the rest of the construction went on - the threaded nails I used in framing hold well even after the wood has seasoned and shrunk away from them.

The framework I set up consisted of nine arches like the one in the drawing, cantilevered out of the floor on centres of four feet. I simply chiseled holes in the existing platform along the side beams, shoved the ends of the trunks down into the openings, added an interior brace of 2 X 4's running the length of the building, and then confronted the problem of joining the tops.

Since I'd left the ends of the house open, I was able to drive my micro bus onto the platform to serve as a scaffold. Now and then I'd tie a rope to the vehicle and pull down a rafter that needed a tighter bend. Even so, I sometimes had to kerf the inner curve of a trunk to increase its flexibility.

I'd originally intended to rent a strapping machine to join the curved timbers at their tops, but when the time came, none was available. Then someone suggested that I use stainless steel hose clamps (the ones with the little worm gear tighteners), I did, and supplemented them in most places with suspension straps or carriage bolts. Sometimes I'd notch the joints where the trees crossed to maintain the smoothness of the flowing shape. The ridgepole, which rests on top of the arches, is made of two trees with the big ends set on either side of the central chimney space.

I wedged the frame here and there (partly by squeezing the bicycle rims - which have great compressive strength - between the uprights) and then set in five car doors where they'd fit. This gave me an operating window and even a built-in ashtray. A loft was mounted on braces. When I'm up there at night, I can see the stars through the station wagon window installed high in the wall.) The house's skeleton was then crisscrossed, «X« fashion, with the salvaged fence wire, and burlap bags were cut open, stretched over the underpinnings, and nailed. Things were taking shape!

Next came the outer covering: a serious consideration, because it had to serve both as a roof and walls, besides standing up to the harshness of the elements. The material I found - called felt, but really more like canvas, turned out to be a real blessing. It comes from Domtar where it's considered scrap once it has served its purpose in the manufacturing process as a conveyor belt for wet cardboard running through the drying machines.

The biggest piece of felt I bought was maybe 40' X 12', and free of holes. The material is a cardboard brown which bleaches quickly to tan in the sunlight. It looks almost like suede but is as strong as leather. A test I did showed it to be flame-retardant, and it seems to have a bit of insulation value too. Best of all, it's incredibly inexpensive: around 7 cents a pound.

I imagine that this substance would make a good cover for a tipi or a fine base for sprayed-on foam. It could also be covered with latex or concrete paint. I'm told that it can be used as roofing, but works best on a steep pitch with good drainage - be sure to waterprood the material is you use it for such a purpose. I later covered an A-frame barn with untreated felt and found that it acts like a large blotter.

Anyway, back to the house. I stretched the felt over the form, nailed the sheets at the edges, and waterproofed the covering with four gallons or so of clear Pentox wood preservative. It was difficult to spread the compound evenly on the absorbent fabric. Another time I might use a tinted product - Pentox also comes in green - to see that no spots are missed. Or I might try another coating, one meant for tents, perhaps, or maybe a concrete sealer. Or, if I had the money, I'd apply the

with good drainage - be sure to waterproof the material if you use it for such a purpose. I later covered an

With the outer covering finished, I was ready to remove the microbus and get to work on the end walls at



The house isn't really slanted like that, it's just the picture. This house cost $200. The slanted model costs extra.

last, a vertical surface.One of the walls is built up about a foot by means of bottles chinked with fiberglass wool and clay. The threshold is thus raised to about three feet above the ground outside, about as deep as the snow gets. The doors open inward anyhow, just in case!

Speaking of doors.... both those and the windows for the end walls, plus one in the side of the house, were found at auctions. Using them was a matter of being flexible enough to work around what I had. The problem was more difficult in the south end, where the loft hangs out over the foundation. The windows in the peak were built up from small pieces of glass joined with silicone sealant, a great product, if a bit expensive ($5 to $6 a tube).

When I'd finished the outer walls, I went on to staple batts of fiberglass insulation against the burlap inside the house and add a vapor barrier of two-mil plastic. Finally, the interior was covered with more felt. It was untreated and has remained a nice earth colour. The completed wall-ceiling is about 4 inches thick.

The following is a general idea of costs:

Existing platform	$50.00
Felt scarp	20.00
Doors and windows	20.00
Fiberglass insulation and plastic vapour barrier	47.50
Sealer and preservative	24.00
Paints, cement, etc.	15.00
Rain gutter	11.00
Hardware, nails, staples, etc.	15.00
Misc.	5.00
TOTAL	$207.50

You'll notice that the structure was roughed out for almost no money. Most of the cost was for new materials bought to insulate and protect it, and in our climate, that's cash well spent. As winter drew on, I took some further steps: doubled the windows wherever possible, and as leaks were discovered, chinked them with either fiberglass or oakum. I knew the wind wouldn't be much of a problem because the house is almost surrounded by the forest. Water runoff had been provided for with galvanized steel gutters recessed behind the barn siding on the lower edge of each outside wall, where they wouldn't show.

I was learning to arc-weld at the time, and made a wood heater as my first project - basically two-thirds of an oil drum welded to a heat-circulating doughnut-shaped affair. The door I installed in the other end of the stove turned out to be warped and made it hard to hold a fire overnight.

The new building ended up being uninhabited over the winter, for practical reasons. I snowshoed out to the woods now and then during the winter to evaluate the house, and I could see no structural difficulties even under the weight if eight inches of snow. Many of the arches were put under a downward stress to cancel out such loads, and a flexible structure of this kind can absord many changes in any case. I did find that the covering leaked a bit during one thaw - perhaps another coat of Pentox will catch the places that didn't get quite enough.

In conclusion, I can't say enough for the beauty of native (including «found«) materials. Someone has said that waste is our only increasing natural resource. Just look around - especially at the discards of a big industry - and you'll be amazed at how many useful items you'll find. The irregularities do sometimes try one's patience, but when whatever you're building is finally all together, the result is satisfying indeed.

One more point: advice is of limited value, of course, but I think it's a wise person who, before building, takes a year or so to find out what's available locally and observe the conditions that will affect his future life. His home will then be a true reflection of himself, as one who took the time and energy to create a place of beauty.



A room with a view.

THE NEW HOMESTEADERS

BY MS. JILL GYORGY

Homesteading and farming for self-sufficiency are nothing new. For centuries « living from the land« has been a way of life for the majority of the world's population.

But the Industrial Era's means and techniques have attracted more and more people to the cities. In Canada, for instance, the urban population increased from 7 per cent of the total population before Confederation, to 73.6 per cent in 1966, when only 9.6 per cent of the nation's population was still farming.

INDUSTRY —VS— FARMING

This migration continues in the same direction as it becomes increasingly difficult to «make it« on the farm. Large-scale farming, it seems, has become the only way for the farmer to survive. Unless the farmer is willing and able to invest large sums of money in acreage, machines, buildings, chemicals and manpower to produce even larger crops, unless he accepts to specialize and to shift to automation, he is not able to compete. He will have to sell out as so many have done already.

CITIES SUPPLY NEW FARMERS

As these defeated farmers move to the city seeking an easier and more secure way of life, other people leave city life. They are looking for a healthier and more meaningful life.

Who are these people? Where do they come from? What are their expectations? What means do they use? How are they different from the industrial farmer? Can they survive?

Paula Obermeir of Ayer's Cliff did research to find answers to these questions. She sent a questionnaire to those «homesteaders« in a 30 mile radius from Sawyerville. The results do not give a scientifically representative view of the larger situation in Quebec, but they do tell us much about the «back-to-the-land« movement in general.

YOUNG, EDUCATED, DISILLUSIONED

A good percentage of those Paula contacted were originally from the States, trying to escape the «American Way of Life.« The Canadians shared with them a dissatisfaction with city life, its artificiality. Most of those surveyed were young and well-educated, more than half of them holding university degrees.

WHY FARM THEN?

They want to become self-sufficient and un-specialized farmers: to grow food. have a feeling of real community, value their work, independence. All agree that they have much to learn about country life.

AGAINST INDUSTRIALIZATION OF FARMING

They don't like the long-range consequences of the industrialization of farming. They support the development of small-scale organic farming. That is not to say that they totally reject what technology has to offer, but rather certain aspects of it which destroy nature's delicate balance. They are against the use of chemical fertilizers and insecticides, for example.

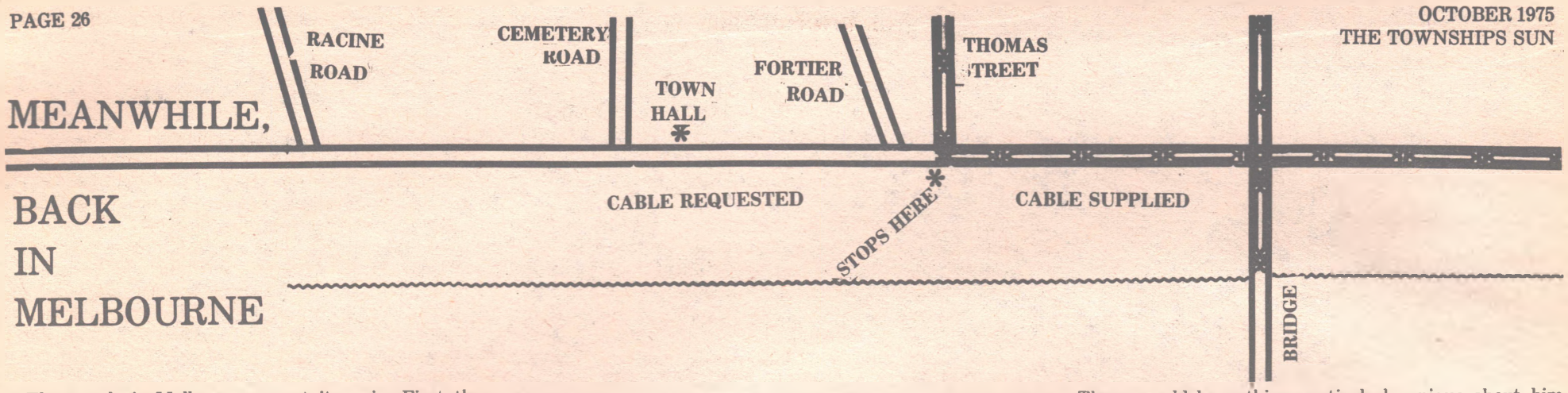
PROBLEMS FOR THE SMALL FARMERS

The new organic farmers face major obstacles as they try to establish themselves on a small scale: the transition period between chemical and organic farming methods, its effect on soil health, the need for more manpower in the absence of large families, the lack of government support. Marketing of produce on a small scale is another problem to be overcome.

CAN THEY SUCCEED?

The success of the homesteaders often rests on their ability to compromise in order to survive economically. Perseverance is not always enough. They keep that picture of the kind of life they want- and until that is realised they are busy planting, harvesting and learning the art of survival.

MEANWHILE, BACK IN MELBOURNE



The people in Melbourne are at it again. First they stopped a highway from destroying their town, forcing a Quebec cabinet minister to admit that the government had been wrong and that the citizens' committee had been right. It was a remarkable case of democracy in action - of citizens making sure that their local community is developed the way they want it to be developed.

Now it's the people in Upper Melbourne who are causing a ruckus, and this time it's about cable TV service. Mrs. Marjorie Page of Granby and her father, J.A. Morgan of Upper Melbourne, wrote and telephoned to the Townships Sun to explain the situation:

Television reception is lousy in Upper Melbourne. You can build yourself an antenna half way to the moon, and still the television picture looks like a snow-storm. You can't even see the faces. The picture is just a bunch of fuzzy blurs. You can hardly tell the difference between Hockey Night in Canada and the National News. When they say, «He shoots, and oh he misses by just a few inches,« you can't see the picture well enough to tell whether they are talking about Yvan Cournoyer shooting the puck at the net or another maniac shooting at President Ford. That's how bad the television reception is in Upper Melbourne.

Now the reason why the people in Upper Melbourne are so upset about this is that their neighbours down the road in Melbourne have perfectly good television reception, because they've got the cable.

And the cable company refuses to extend the cable down the road. So the people in Melbourne have cable TV but the people in Upper Melbourne can't get it for love or money. And they feel that it's no fair. Why should one-half of the town have the right to get cable TV and not the other half?

The people in Upper Melbourne feel that cable TV is a public service. It's something that's really needed. Many of the people are retired, and TV is their only source of entertainment and information on those long, cold winter evenings. TV is their window on the world. And that window is so snowey they can't see anything!

Can you imagine a town where only half the people were allowed to have telephones, or only half were allowed to have electricity? Nobody would accept that. So in the same way, if cable TV is a normal public service in Melbourne, why can't the people in Upper Melbourne get the same service as their neighbours down the road?

Now there's one thing about the people in the Melbourne area, when they get an idea in their heads, there's no stopping them. In the words of Marjorie Page, «They are awful fighters once they get going.« And that tney are.

They started a petition demanding cable TV service and just about everybody signed it. Mr. Morgan sent letters to George Poulin of the Richmond Chamber of Commerce, Maurice Bellemare who is MNA for the area, Lionel Beaudoin who is the federal MP, and to the Regie des Services Publics, the Quebec government agency that regulates cable TV.

Already the response has been considerable. Bellemare wrote back a letter of support, saying he would see what he could do. The case has gone right to the president of the Regie des Services Publics, and his legal adviser, Maitre Michel Ouellet, told the Sun that no matter which way the decision goes, it will set a precedent. Meanwhile the Richmond cable TV company has been receiving pressure from Quebec to pay attention to this situation. Here is what's happening:

What the government thinks

Because cable TV is an important aspect of the socio-economic development of its citizens, Quebec has made cable TV a public service. To start a cable TV company, the owner has to get a permit from the Quebec government.

The installation rate and monthly charge varies from company to company, but the rate has to be the same within the area service by any one company. Thus in Montreal, where a single company may have 600,000 subscribers, the rates are low because the company has a lot of customers. In Montreal these days it costs about $15 to have cable installed, and then it costs about $4 or $5 a month after that.In Melbourne, the installion rate is about $20 and the monthly rate is also higher. But the principle set down by Quebec is that the rates may vary from one area to another, but they have to be the same within the same area. No one company can charge two different rates.

Another Quebec rule is that if you live within the area for which the cable company has a permit, the company is obliged by law to provide you with cable TV service when you ask for it.

Anyone who feels they are getting ripped off by a cable company in any way can make a complaint to the Secretary, Regie des Services Publics, 2875 Boul. Laurier, Ste. Foy, Que. But it's better to complain directly to your cable company first.

In some cases, the Regie will come to the community in question and hold a public hearing to find out what people have to say. In this way citizens have a good chance of getting attention when they have a complaint to make.

So, in the mind of the government, cable TV is a public service and people in towns generally have the right to expect that service.

What the company thinks

But hold on now, Edward Roy, who owns the cable system in the Richmond-Melbourne area, doesn't see it that way. For him, cable TV is a private business like any other business. «This is not a church,« he says, «I can't give service to Upper Melbourne under present conditions because I would lose money on it. I want to give service to these people, I want to do everything I can, but why should I lose money on it?«

Mr. Roy says that there aren't enough people in Upper Melbourne to make the service pay for itself. He says it would cost him $10,000 to install cable in Upper Melbourne, not counting the maintenance costs that would come later. The big cable companies in Montreal and Toronto have lots of money because they have so many customers, but the small guys like him are hit hard by inflation...the cost of cable has gone up, the salaries of the technicians have gone up, and so on...

So Mr. Roy says he can only put the cable in Upper Melbourne if the government lets him charge a higher rate. Instead of $20 for installation, he wants to charge the people in Upper Melbourne $70 for installation.

Now wait a minute, isn't there a rule that the cable company has to charge all the same rate? Yes there is, and that's why the Quebec government is so interested in this case. The permit given to Edward Roy to run a cable company says that he must charge the same rates in the designated area.

Mr. Roy says that he only has to provide service in Melbourne itself. Upper Melbourne is outside his area, and so if they want cable TV, they are going to have to pay a special rate. But Quebec has never allowed «special rates« before, and if they allow Mr. Roy to charge more, it will set a precedent for the whole province. Soon all the other cable companies will ask to be allowed to raise their rates in areas where they are losing money.

And it is a fact that all cable companies make money in the areas where there are a lot of people and lose money where the houses are spread out. It's the same with the telephone company and Hydro. They make money on the big apartment buildings where one big cable serves the whole place, and they lose money in the less populated areas where they have to string cable for miles and miles. That's just part of the game of providing public service.

So although it is no doubt true that Mr. Roy would lose money in Upper Melbourne, it is probably equally true that his whole territory is made up of areas where he loses money and other areas where he makes money. There would be nothing particularly unique about him losing money in Upper Melbourne, it's just the price these companies have to pay to get a permit to make money in the more thickly populated areas. What would happen if Bell Canada said, «Well, we are losing money in the Townships so we are going to cut off all the phones in that area and just serve the big areas like Montreal where we can make a lot of money«?

Another point of interest is the rule that says the cable company is obliged by law to give cable service to anyone within its area. The company gets a permit from Quebec to serve, say, Richmond and Melbourne, and then they are obliged to give service to anyone within that area who asks for it. Now Mr. Roy says his permit includes Melbourne but does not include Upper Melbourne. In Quebec City, however, the Dept. of Municipal Affairs told the legal advisers of the Regie des Services Publics that there is no difference between Melbourne and Upper Melbourne - it's just one settlement. Therefore any public service in Melbourne wold have to include Upper Melbourne, because in the mind of the government, there is no difference between the two. This is a technical point that is under consideration.

Everybody is jumping

The name «Melbourne« seems to be well-known in Quebec City. The battle to change the highway did not go unnoticed. Maybe soon they will appoint a Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Anyway, they are really jumping on this cable TV thing. Mr. Coté, the president of the Regie des Services Publics, has been meeting with his top legal advisers to discuss the Melbourne cable case. Whatever decision they make will set a precedent, one way or the other, so they are paying a lot of attention to the matter. They have been calling Municipal Affairs, they have been calling Mr. Roy, they have been calling the Sun to answer our questions. Rarely have we seen a government department so much on the ball, never have we found it so easy to get through to the top men and discuss the thing at length with them. We found them open and concerned and they deserve credit for it. It seems that the people of Melbourne really know how to get attention focused on their problems.

Mr. Roy at the cable company is also open and willing to discuss. He's just a businessman trying to make a living and he finds himself caught between the citizens and the government. He's running a private business in what everyone sees as a public service, and his role is not the easiest in the world.

What now?

The Regie des Service Publics will probably make a decision about this whole thing sometime soon. They are playing their role of being the government, trying to make a decision but perhaps hesitating because it will set a precedent. Mr. Roy is playing his role as a businessman. He doesn't want to lose money but he wants to provide service if he can.

Since everybody else is playing their roles, the people in Upper Melbourne should go on playing their role as will. Their original request was that they be provided with cable service as of this fall, the same service that their neighbours in Melbourne get, which would mean at the same price. They should stick to this request and see what happens.

If they don't get it, if they get no service at all or if they are asked to pay a higher price than anybody else, then they should demand that the Regie des Service Publics come to Melbourne and hold a public hearing on the matter. The Regie has held public hearings in other cases less serious than this one. At a public hearing everybody can get together and talk about it, and it's a way of making sure that the people in Quebec are paying full attention.

So far the case has been progressing very well. Looks like the people in Melbourne are once again showing that democracy can work very well when you make it work.

THANK GOD THE SKY IS BLUE

Talking with Ronald Henderson

BY BOB DAWSON

Well that was one long hot summer, I can tell you. Felt like those Arab countries had taken over the weather. Soon as it got hot in May, the old-timers said it was going to be a hot dry summer and they weren't wrong. The hay was bad and the pastures all burned out, browned right out by the sun. My cows got so hungry they started to hunt wolves. For a while it looked like it would stay hot and by next spring we'd all be out planting banana trees.

Well some people had trouble with water. The wells dried up and the trout streams dried up and the trout were dead. Yes sir, it's been a dry one, I can tell you. My neighbour down the road bought up whiskey and boiled the alcohol out of it, just to get the water from it. Now that's what I call hard times!

Over to Cookshire they took to pumping water from a river six mile away, and at the end of the pipe they hardly got enough water for the mayor to gargle with.

In Lennoxville even the water that ran down the hill through all the basements dried up. Nobody could figure out whether it was an act of God or an act of Mayor Dougherty.

On Lake Massawippi the water got so low people were asked not to wash their Cadillacs more than five times a day.

Over to Megantic the only way they could get water this summer was to take pots and pans out to the forest fires and catch the water dropped by the government water bombers. Now that is something to make you think. They say the real reason that Bourassa fellow is building the James Bay project is to make sure he has all the water. Then he'll have water bombers to make it rain on counties that vote the right way. If you don't pay your taxes, you don't get any rain on your farm. If the Minister of Agriculture wants to close off the whole area from Sawyerville to Lake Megantic to farming like they say then he could just call off the water bombers and the whole area would dry up. They say the land in the whole area is no good for farming anyway. I suppose the four generations who farmed it were just trying to confuse the agronomes.

The government don't know what to do to get rid of those farmers. It would cost too much to build another Mirabel airport out here just for them. They figure they can cover the better part of it with new highways and if they build the highways right through the houses, the people have a tendancy to move away once the diesel trucks start driving through their living room and there is a toll booth in the kitchen.

But they can't cover the whole of the Townships with roads, so what do you suppose they will think of to do with the rest? I suppose they could sell a lot of it to city people to park their ski-doos on, and the rest of it they could make into a national park, so the people from Montreal and New York City could have a decent place to paint their initials on the rocks and strip the bark off the birch trees. Maybe the whole Townships could be made into some kind of African Safari Park, like the one they have over by Hemmingford. All the farmers would get rid of their cows and sheep and get elephants and giraffes and hyenas and the like instead. We would all do tribal dances around the barn. The tourists would love it and we would have a big tourist industry building up. Talk about hyenas, I was driving to town in the pick-up the other day when I heard over the radio that they took Toupin out and put in Kevin Drummond as Minister of Agricuture. Well by Jeez, I damn near drove the pick-up straight into Mrs. Hodge's apple orchard. Kevin Drummond, Minister of Agriculture! Everybody knew that poor Toupin had gone drier than this year's hay fields and that the poor fellow would have to be shown the way out and even then they would have to open the door for him so he didn't bang his head against it.

But to put Kevin Drummond in there, well by Jeez if that isn't a miracle of modern agriculture! They must be using some mighty powerful fertilizer in Quebec City if Kevin Drummond thinks he is Minister of Agriculture!

Oh now sure they say he is a good man, you can talk to him straightforward and he won't do you a bad turn. But he's just not your agricultural man. He doesn't know which end of the cow is up. Now I don't know, there are some that says we might be better off like that. Maybe Kevin will give us subsidies on crab grass is he thinks that it's a cash crop. Maybe we'll get dairy subsidies for growing buttercups. Who knows?

Oh no, the man at the top should know what it's like to be in the shoes of the man at the bottom. He just don't know about farming. He should come and work on different farms. He'd see what it's like to lay on the wet ground at six in the morning to grease the fixings on the machinery and throw bales of hay all day long when it's hot enough to fry an egg on a tax-collector's forehead and then you add it all up at the end of the year and see that you lost money. If Kevin did this for a while, he'd be the best Minister of Agriculture since the time when there wasn't any. He should come down and work on our farms. And he could bring that Bourassa fellow along to fix the meals and do the dishes.

Do you want to know why there aren't any meat inspectors? Well I can tell you. Because they've all switched over to stone inspectors. Know this man works in a gravel pit where they have this big crusher and he says twice a day a government man comes around to measure the size of the stones. They have different grades of stone depending on how small you crush it. Well this government man, he comes around twice a day in a big government car to measure the size of the stones. They should be giving stone inspection courses at Alexander Galt school so we could get some of those good government jobs.

Well sometimes I get so i'd just as well give up farming and sell the place for some crazy price to some half-wit from the city. When I think about the money I've lost trying to raise beef, and the prices I got last year were lower than in the Depression, I sure wonder why I bother doing it. The prices I'm going to have to pay for hay and feed this winter, and the tractor breaks down and I have to pay $80 for some part the size of your finger not worth more than $5 I'm sure. I've just skinned my knuckles for the third time inside of an hour, the water pump is broken, the cows got through the fence again and I work all day long in the heat or rain or snow and I realize that some years I lose more than I make. You have to be a damn fool to do this. I even half-killed myself cutting pulp and now it's all just sitting there beside the road collecting squirrels. The mills aren't taking enough pulp to make a roll of toilet paper for a flea.

But what else can I do? Move to the city? No sir, I'd join the Viking foreign legion first. Maybe I'm just too old to change and I guess I'm kind of scared of the big city, you know. Or maybe I'm just stubborn, but I figure I'll stay here. I like animals and machines and I like to step out the door and already be at work. I've had the children grow up around me, learning the work I do instead of me coming home at night from some factory when they are already asleep.

I like to be up when the sun comes up and all the people in the city are still in bed with hangovers and I can see the sun go down when they are riding home under the ground in subways.

In the winter there's still nothing like a country kitchen for warmth and there's still no meal anywhere like the one you get out of your own garden with double helpings all around. It's a job where you call no man boss. When I've patched the roof or finished the haying or delivered a calf in trouble, I feel that I've done something. It may not be worth much in money, but it's something to me. I know what it's like to be tired after a week of haying and I understand other men who know what it's like.

You know, the colour green is soothing to the eyes. People in the country can see better than people in the city and I think it comes from the colour green being soothing for the eyes. When your eyes are real tired just look out at the green fields and right away your eyes feel better. Works every time. My Grandma used to have a saying that green must be God's favorite colour because He made so much of it. She said imagine how terrible it would be if God had made the grass and trees white or red or black or just any other colour. All summer long fields and fields of red hay or white trees. It would get to be terrible depressing.

I used to laugh at her old sayings but sometimes I wonder but what she might have hit on a real truth. You know for thousands of years the whole of mankind lived in the country where their eyes got used to seeing green fields and the forest. Now the people in the cities never see the natural colours. They don't see the colours that are soothing to the eyes. They all grow up seeing the black streets and the gray buildings. And look what it does to them!

Some of Grandma's sayings were comical. She used to say that the pigs could see the wind and that the wind was pink. Every time a wind come up the pigs would get excited and they'd look sort of wild-eyed and Grandma would say, «The pigs are looking at the wind. The wind scares them because the wind is pink.« She had some comical old sayings, I can tell you.

All my memories are about the country. It's a good life out here.



