

## Bunkhouse Philosophy

A Monthly Column

By W. R. COCHRANE, Cowley, Alta.

THE old familiar expression that "the show must go on" might aptly be applied to the stock industry this fall as the folks engaged therein go about their multiple jobs of getting the feed up, the steers down the road to market and all the seasonable work on the ranch attended to before winter sets in. This doesn't leave them a great deal of time to worry over world events. The meat supply must be kept constant and it is to be hoped that people engaged in other callings will not lose sight of that quality, in the folks engaged in producing meat for the nation, which causes them to keep right on the job through good years and lean ones. They don't need to be educated in preparedness as that is one of the lessons that they have in most cases learned the hard way. They are probably too busy right now to do much research work on problems outside of their own immediate sphere and probably have noticed that folks who have more leisure to devote to keeping up with rapidly changing world events are going around in sort of a befuddled state trying to figure out where our nation stands economically and whether this devaluation stunt is going to work out to our advantage or contrarywise.

We hear and read supposedly learned comments on the situation over the radio and on mail day, and when we run across statements made by prominent men in the public eye admitting that they reckon the thing is more or less of an experiment, we don't feel too badly about the limitations of our own thinking apparatus.

Seven Up opines that it is a question that requires a lot of deliberation and can only be settled on cold winter evenings around the bunkhouse fire by open debate with a plentiful supply of tobacco.

The gentleman that made the famous remark that "What the world needs is a good five cent cigar" knew what he was talking about, and we would go a bit further and add a good plug of ten cent chewing tobacco. We have searched in vain so far in an endeavor to find any reference to the above necessary items to a cattleman's equipment in the new tariff agreement between the various nations, but reckon they will soon discover their error and rectify same when the solutions to some of the more knotty problems are not forthcoming. However, it is gratifying to note that the tariff gates are to be opened a bit wider so that we can do some considerable more swapping of commodities and hope that the gates will be permitted to swing still further as time goes on and that this exchange business will even up. Then we folk of the range will feel more content to go ahead with our job of beef producing, as we would feel assured that a steer would purchase his true worth in goods that we could utilize to good advantage in our chosen calling. If wearing apparel, means of transportation, imported grub and such-like even up a bit in price and we get a somewhat lower quotation on our eating and smoking tobacco, maybe we could furnish steaks and roasts a bit cheaper and find time to chew, smoke and meditate on some of



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the other problems and make some contribution toward a solution. In the meantime and until the whole proposition gets clarified and into operation we will have to continue doing our chores and hope for the best.

### Tariff Reductions More General

The tariff reduction idea seems to be gaining ground with our neighbors in the U.S.A. as articles in support of it have been appearing in their press, and the recent bill renewing the President's power to make 50% reductions on his own hook look all to the good for this neck of the woods. And while we would gamble that a huge majority of our folks here at home are highly in favor of very substantial reductions in our own tariffs it might be a darned good idea if they would stand right up in meeting and say so, for to have reciprocal tariff reductions it is essential that we go as far as our neighbors. The cattle interests would welcome a downward revision in the tariff against our cattle for export; our cousins across our southern border will be needing these cattle and if our Parliamentary representatives are at all up on the bit and have even an elementary knowledge of swapping procedure, we shouldn't have to make any further suggestions.

### Freight Rates

We had sort of hoped that before now all parties concerned would have arrived at some sort of a solution of this freight rate business. Durn it all, we just get used to figuring one outfit of rates when another set is issued, and the date is all set for the new one to come into effect when we hear that the decision on one or t'other of them is going to be appealed, and no mention seems to have been made along the line about any trend in them which might be taken to allude to a reduction. It looks a lot like the old time idea of trailing the herds to the central markets sure was a contributing factor in furnishing the population with cheap beef.

We don't know enough about maintenance, costs per mile, depreciation and such-like to get into any argument about these increases, but we do know that an increasing number of our young chaps in the cow business are beginning to talk with surprising intelligence about dressing percentages, transportation costs, grazing and feeding costs and inquiring whether these increases are figured as a straight 28% increase on the old freight rates or an added 20% and then another added 8% on the whole issue. They want to know whether or not some por-

tion of the granted increases will be utilized in the purchase of a few additional stock cars as the shortage of such rolling stock is plumb disconcerting at times when they have a bunch of prime beef in the yards a-bawling their bovine heads off some 20 or 30 miles from the home range and taking on an alarming shrink with no transportation in sight.

### New Shipping Methods

The changing methods of these times are causing some to figure on the possibilities of direct trucking from ranch to packing centres, as the improvement and projected improvement of our main trails from range countries will soon make this idea entirely feasible. The revenue being received by our government by the development of our natural resources seems to leave no excuse for not fixing up the trails to the country where one of the main items of our grub supply originates. Modern refrigeration has made such great strides that the processing of all our livestock in central plants right here in Alberta and shipped to points of consumption, less insides, less outer covering, etc., would save quite a freight bill. When we read of trying to entice more industries into our fair province maybe we could do a lot worse than expand some of the ones already in operation. Never could see the sense of paying freight on a lot of innards and stuffing away down east, or west either for that matter. The proposition might also alleviate the shortage of stock cars as there wouldn't be so many to get lost away down east and would also relieve our railway officials of the perennial explanation, and may we say gripe, due to the empty haul back our way, as they would no doubt make more money filling their refrigerator cars with a lot of stuff for the back haul that we could use, if, again, transportation was not so darned high.

The west has been doing a power of growing up recently. We are still a mite short on population and likewise voting power but reckon we are doing fairly well and have discredited the old worn-out statement that one of the eastern provinces was the milch cow for the west. We have shipped them cattle and feed and helped them pay the freight on both. We've furnished them with quite a lot of flour at bargain prices and will soon be supplying them with oil, so it probably won't be long before we will be finishing and processing our good western beef (and shipping it to them) all ready for the oven and skillet. We hope they will be duly appreciative and amply repaid for all they have done for us in the past.