CHAPTER IX

WISCONSIN AND THE PROBLEMS OF THE FARMER

The early Wisconsin farmers were woodsmen first and farmers second. They had to cut the forests down to make open spaces for their farms. When they had felled and burned the trees they could put in grain and gardens to feed their families.

When the prairie states to the south demanded lumber for building, the professional lumberman came into Wisconsin, took up great tracts of land from the government, cut and sawed the timber and let the land go back to the government or sold it to settlers for farms. Gradually they worked their way to the north, the settlers following after them into the cut-over lands.

There were many in Wisconsin as well as in other new states who looked with disfavor upon this practice. As early as the forties the Party of National Reformers began to protest against the grabbing of large tracts of cheap land by individuals. They proposed that in new country not yet settled the amount of land which a person or corporation could own should be limited. In the older states already settled they proposed to limit the amount which any individual could inherit. The proposal to limit inheritance was carried in the lower house of the Wisconsin Legislature in 1851 by a majority of ten votes, but was defeated in a final vote. Wisconsin was the only state in which it got as far as a vote.

It is interesting to read now what Horace Greeley, editor of the New York Nation, and a leader in the movement, wrote:

"Well, this was the first earnest trial to establish a great and salutary principle. It will not be the last. It will yet be carried, and Wisconsin will not need half as many poorhouses in 1900 as she would have required if land limitation had never been thought of."

Mr. Greeley was mistaken about the direction which the interest of Wisconsin farmers would take. They have centered on other things rather than on land limitation.

They have interested themselves, for one thing, in the problem of keeping up and of improving the fertility of the soil. The early settler had to raise everything for the use of his family. Later Wisconsin farmers became great wheat growers and shipped much of this crop to the growing cities of Wisconsin and neighboring states. Like the pioneer farmers of other states they were so busy trying to wrest a living from the soil that at first they took all they could get from it and forgot to put anything back.

There are many fertile spots in Wisconsin, but in general the land does not in its natural state, yield such crops as could be won from the soils of Illinois, Iowa, and other prairie states as they were when white settlers came. Fortunately there were people in Wisconsin who very early saw the danger of using up the fertility of our soil by raising wheat year after year. They began to preach to the farmers that they should vary their crops, and especially that they should raise cattle in order to maintain or build up the fertility of the soil.

Certain conditions made dairying a natural occupation in Wisconsin. There are streams which do not dry in the summer, and well distributed rainfall which keeps the grass green when the meadows of the prairie states to the south of us are parched and brown. Then we have with us the English makers of Cheddar cheese; the Swiss makers of Swiss cheese; and the German makers of brick and Limburger cheese.
The early Wisconsin farmers were woodsmen first and farmers second.
A modern Wisconsin dairy farm—the Hoard farm at Fort Atkinson.
William Dempster Hoard, founder of Hoard's Dairyman; governor of Wisconsin, 1889-1890.
The Wisconsin Dairymen’s Association was the other great force in the development of dairying. It was organized in 1872. Its leaders came mainly from dairying districts of other states and countries. Chief among its organizers were W. D. Hoard of Fort Atkinson, publisher of the Jefferson County Union, and the founder of Hoard’s Dairymen, first published as the dairy edition of the Jefferson County Union. Other active members were H. F. Dousman, Chester Hazen, Stephen and A. D. Farill, W. S. Greene, and H. C. Drake. Chester Hazen, a native of New York, had built the first cheese factory in Wisconsin at Ladoga in Fond du Lac county—the first instance where the production of cheese was something more than a side line of farming.

The Dairymen’s Association did not waste time. Within a short time it had secured a reduction of sixty per cent in freight rates on cheese between Wisconsin and New York, so that Wisconsin cheese came into competition with New York cheese on the New York market. It secured refrigerator cars for shipment of Wisconsin products. It was influential in the establishment of the College of Agriculture; of the Butter Makers’ and Cheese Makers’ Association; of the dairy school at the University of Wisconsin; of the Diary and Food Commission in 1889; of cow testing associations; of Farmers’ Institutes. These Farmers’ Institutes in turn offered a good opportunity for propaganda for dairying. One of the pioneers who used these Institutes most effectively for that purpose was George McKerrow.

Two inventions of Wisconsin men have greatly helped in the process of transferring from wheat raising to dairying. The first was the roller flour mill; the second was the Babcock test.

John Stevens, the Welsh boy who came to live in Neenah, is credited with inventing a roller flour mill which, by separating the hard outer shell of the wheat grain from the flour and passing the former off into bran, makes it possible to use the hard wheat grown far to the north in the Dakotas and Canada, as well as the softer wheat grown farther south.

“This invention drove wheat raising from Wisconsin and the Middle West and closed the flour mills of Stevens’ own city,” said a writer in 1907. “Some day this invention of John Stevens’ will make Canada a rival to the United States in flour production.”

If we should select the one occurrence most favorable to the dairy industry, it would probably be the invention of the Babcock test of the amount of butter fat in milk. It is a simple device—just a bottle with marks on the neck, mounted so that it can be rapidly revolved. The milk is put into the bottle with the proper amount of sulphuric acid. When the bottle is rapidly rotated, the fat rises to the neck of the bottle, which is marked to indicate how much fat there is. That is all there is to it. But it has meant all the difference between producing milk, butter and cheese blindly, and producing it with exact knowledge of the kind of milk the cow is producing; what the farmer is getting for it, and what the cheese and butter makers are getting when they buy the farmer’s milk. It has put dairying on a business basis. For it, Doctor Babcock has received testimonials of gratitude from every dairying country, and the grand prix d’honneur at the Paris Exposition of 1900. He did not have his invention patented, but simply gave it to the world.

One result of the predominance of dairying has been the maintenance everywhere of passable roads. All weather gravel roads for every milk producer have been considered more important than a few fine concrete roads. All over the southern third and in spots

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1 PUBLIUS VIRGILJUS LAWSON. The Invention of the Roller Flour Mill. Wisconsin Historical Society Proceedings. 1907. p. 244-258.
over the entire state, creameries and cheese factories dot every road at intervals of a few miles. The cheese factory must be close to the milk supply. For Swiss cheese the milk should arrive at the factory when it is less than two hours old. This means that it must be hauled to the factory twice a day. For other kinds of cheese, once a day is often enough to take the milk to the plant. For butter, the cream should be brought to the creamery three or four times a week. The dairying industry has thus forced good roads on Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin farmer found that not all of his problems were solved by going into dairying. New ones arise constantly. Again and again he has appealed to the law makers for help. In response to this appeal, besides the College of Agriculture, three different departments have been set up, one by one, to work from different angles upon the problem of successful farming: The Department of Agriculture, the Dairy and Food Commission, and the Department of Markets.

The Department of Agriculture has charge of the improvement of the health of herds through the use of the tuberculin test. The idea came in through the College of
Agriculture, but the administration and supervision of testing is done by the Department of Agriculture. So well has it succeeded in its fight on tuberculosis that there is a tremendous demand from other states for Wisconsin cattle.

The Department of Agriculture has been given many duties relating to the quantity and quality of farm products. It inspects the feeds sold for cattle in the state. During the war it saved the farmers thousands of dollars by forcing the sale of oat hulls at one-third its former price, which gives its true value relative to other feed. It has also saved the farmer thousands of dollars by establishing grades to prevent wheat mixing with low priced products and sale at the regular price; and by exposing the adulteration of linseed meal offered for sale as pure linseed.

The Department of Agriculture is engaged in the control of hog cholera, foot and mouth and other animal diseases; in the improvement of the quality of the horses; in the cleaning up of bee diseases; the protection of seeds to prevent sale of seeds with low germination power; the eradication of weeds; the inspection of fertilizers and the prevention of their sale under false claims as to what they will do for the soil; the protection of immigrants to Wisconsin farms.

The protection of immigrants was an important problem during the years when the settlement of northern Wisconsin was going on rapidly. Some land companies painted rosy pictures of conditions there, and inveigled into settlement many who were totally unfitted for farming. Land was sold for agriculture which was fit only for reforestation or summer resort. The many pathetic cases of failure aroused public spirited people to establish the Bureau of Immigration.

After the Bureau of Immigration was established the city tradesman who decided to buy a farm, had some place to go for advice. At the Immigration Bureau he could find out whether he had saved enough money to make a safe venture. He could learn in general what kind of soil there was on the farm at which he had been looking. He could study prices of farm land all over the state. He was asked "Did you ever live on a farm? Did your wife ever live on a farm? Does she want to leave the city?"

If after he had talked over everything with the Bureau people he still thought it wise to make the attempt, he could ask the advice and aid of the Bureau in laying out his money to the best advantage. How much should he put into his house and barn and how much into livestock? How much into farm machinery? All these questions and many others, the Bureau, with its background of years of contact with farmers who have failed and farmers who have succeeded is well fitted to answer. It has tried to insure that not only shall Wisconsin residents start right in their farm ventures, but also that prospective settlers from outside shall not be cheated by unscrupulous land speculators into sinking their money in hopeless ventures and becoming burdens upon the State of Wisconsin. For this purpose, representatives of the Wisconsin Immigration Bureau for many years kept an office in Chicago to which those who were planning to become Wisconsin settlers could come for information.

For a number of years, while the lumbermen were cutting steadily north and the settlers falling in behind them to establish farms on the cut-over lands, the immigration problem was one of the most important which the commissioner of Agriculture had to handle. But the period of rapid settlement is over now. New problems relating to the comfort and prosperity of the settlers now press for solution. Most people expected that the valuable timber land would be changed into valuable farm land. But settlers are finding that while some of the land is suited to dairying, or to potato raising, some of it is not at all suited to dairying or to the raising of other crops. Some of the counties which once were rich because of the valuable timber crops now find themselves poor with cut-over land which will not yield a living to the hardest working farmer and his
A well regulated wood lot near Seeley, Wisconsin. The owner is a Dane who learned good forestry practice in the old country. The tall trees are second growth pine; the smaller ones are spruce.
family. The cities depending upon the fast disappearing lumber industry themselves threaten to disappear. People are beginning, now that it is too late, to say that the forests should have been treated as farms, not as mines; that instead of slashing blindly at everything in sight and cutting old, young and middle aged trees in a clean swath, the owners of forests should have taken out, year by year, the trees ready for harvest, following good forestry methods now practised in many countries of Europe. The care and proper harvesting of forests, in other words, should have been one form of farming. The cutting should have been careful; seedlings and young growing trees should have been planted wherever necessary to replace the old ones.

The growing need for putting the raising of trees on a permanent basis as one phase of farming has let the Department of Agriculture into a new field. The Commissioner of Agriculture, in cooperation with the College of Agriculture and other departments, has completed a careful land survey of Bayfield county in order to find out for what use the various lands are best suited: dairying, the raising of potatoes, forestry, recreation, or something else. This is only a beginning. Numerous requests coming in from landowners in various counties for advice as to the most effective use for their land show that there is a real demand for this service. The State of Michigan has begun a similar survey. The need for a widespread training in forestry begins to loom up as one of the future problems of agriculture and education. The task of transferring some of our farm land from the present crops which give them quick returns to a forest crop which requires years to mature is not an easy one. It will take earnest effort and intelligence to accomplish it.

A second state department grew out of the realization that prosperity does not come with quantity even of dairy products. There must also be quality. It is not enough to produce cheese and butter. The cheese and butter must be good if it is to command a good price. Every producer in the state is hurt if one producer sells bad cheese or butter. At one time the reputation of Wisconsin cheese was so bad that cheese producers tried to conceal its identity, and Wisconsin butter was quoted on eastern exchanges as “Wisconsin grease.” Cheese made in America was so poor that exports fell from almost 150,000,000 pounds in 1881 to 34,000,000 pounds in 1896.¹

This second department was the Dairy and Food Commission. It was established in 1889 to prevent the sale of adulterated, impure, or diluted milk, butter and cheese. It maintains a laboratory to test samples of dairy products. It has inspectors who visit the dairies, creameries and cheese factories of the state. They give orders as to sanitary conditions and as the need arises, instruction on the Dairy industry. It is also the duty of the Dairy and Food Commission to prevent the adulteration of drugs, drinks, and foods, and the mishandling of foods; to enforce proper sanitation not only in cheese factories, creameries, and condenseries, but also in canning factories, bakeries, confectioneries, cold storage warehouses and bottling plants; and to enforce the laws relating to trading stamps, linseed oil, white lead, zinc oxide and turpentine. The Commission also inspects and tests all commercial scales and measures. It is estimated that during the first year that the tests were made, the correction of short weights and measures gave a saving of $325,000 to consumers on gasoline; $162,550 on milk; $97,-187 on cream; $743,750 on butter.

J. Q. Emery, at one time state superintendent of Public Instruction, served in the capacity of Dairy and Food Commissioner from 1902 to 1915, and from 1921 to 1926.

The third state agency created particularly to assist the producers of farm products was the Department of Markets.

Ex-Governor Hoard was recognized as a leader in the state and nation in the early movement for the improvement of the dairy industry. In the movement of the past twenty years for better marketing methods, and for securing better quality of the product through the setting up of state wide standards of quality, one of the leaders was Charles McCarthy, of the Wisconsin Legislative Reference Library. He went to Europe and brought back to the Swiss and Danish and German farmers of Wisconsin the stories of the marketing organizations of their Swiss and Danish and German brethren in the old country. He brought samples of the standards used by the cooperative marketing societies of Germany and Ireland and Denmark in grading their products—their potatoes, their eggs, their butter, their cheese, their poultry. He filled shelf after shelf of the Reference Library with the most carefully selected material on cooperative methods elsewhere. He went out and told groups of farmers what farmers of other countries were doing. He showed, for example, how the Danes, by forming cooperative societies to market their own butter, were getting better prices in the New York market than we were getting for Wisconsin butter. He showed how the California raisin growers were beginning to organize to market their product.

Slowly the number of cooperatives grew. Many able and public spirited men engaged in the practical work of organizing and establishing on a safe footing hundreds of cooperative organizations. Perhaps you know and remember the name of some one of these heroes of the cooperative movement, such as Henry Krumrey of Sheboygan, who gave years of his life to building up the Cheese Producers’ Federation. Most of them we shall never know but we can be fairly sure that behind every one of the hundreds of successful cooperatives scattered over the state, whether they be creameries, cheese factories, feed, elevator and produce companies, potato shipping concerns, livestock shipping associations, cow testing associations, fruit exchanges, the statewide,
Where 83,000 Wisconsin Dairy Cattle Were Shipped in 1927

Courtesy Division of Agricultural Statistics, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture

Where 83,000 Wisconsin dairy cattle were shipped in 1927.
UNITED STATES TOTAL CHEESE PRODUCTION

THOUSAND POUNDS

Wis. 204,125
Cal. 48,410
Ore. 11,384
Ohio 2,212
Ill. 7,322
Miss. 7,922
Ind. 7,922
N.Y. 1,439
Mass. 1,439
Ta. 4,684
Utah 2,582
Conn. 3,180

Prepared by
Wisc. State Crop Reporting Service

Courtesy Division of Agricultural Statistics, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture

United States total cheese production.

Henry Krumrey, leading spirit in the organization of the cheese federation.
Headquarters, National Cheese Producers' Federation, Plymouth, Wisconsin
now nationwide, tobacco selling organization, the livestock breeding associations, cooperative stores, laundries or insurance companies—behind every one of these, can be found some person who sacrificed his time and money, perhaps his wealth and life to the task of building up and nursing the organization in which he believed.

While managers labored at home, the law makers had work to do at Madison. One of the first things which had to be done to clear the way for the development of cooperation was to get rid of the unscrupulous promoter who would sell stock in any kind of cooperative venture regardless of its chance of success. To sell stock in a cooperative creamery where there was no hope of getting enough milk was as profitable for the promoter as to organize a legitimate plant. One of the first things needed therefore was a law establishing safe practices in the organization of cooperatives.

Wisconsin passed one of the first cooperative laws in the Union, limiting to a reasonable amount the payment to the promoter, and insuring a real cooperative by prohibiting the use of the word "cooperative" except for organizations in which every shareholder has just one vote regardless of the number of shares.

But even with a good cooperative law, efficient marketing did not come fast. Too many cooperative organizations began and failed. Too many faithful workers saw their sacrifices go for nothing. Without some central department whose business it is to assist and encourage farmers in marketing, it is only slowly that producers come to see the desirability of getting together, of grading their goods, of advertising and building up a demand for their different grades of goods, of guaranteeing their reliability and of adopting the best business practices in marketing.

For many years the need for such a central agency was felt. Gradually the idea crystallized in the form of a bill introduced into the legislature. Of course, the first bill did not pass. It was discussed and criticized and rejected. But at last, after several sessions, after a careful investigation by a legislative committee, a bill was actually passed in 1919. The new Marketing Department which it set up as the third great state agency to help the farmer, was given the power to establish standards for all products raised in Wisconsin and to require that they be branded before being sold. Thus we now buy Wisconsin potatoes as Wisconsin Badger Brand, U. S. Grade No. 1; U. S. Grade No. 2, and Ungraded. When we buy them we know exactly what we are getting. Gradually, people in Wisconsin and out of it learn to know our grades, and learn to have confidence in them.

To have men from the State Marketing Department going around from farmer to farmer inspecting his apples, his potatoes, his cabbages, would be expensive and annoying. The farmer would not endure it. The Marketing Department tries, therefore, to help the farmers to organize themselves into cooperative marketing groups so that they can be instructed through their shipping organizations. If the farmers have no shipping organization the Marketing Department works with the shippers, whoever they are. The latter call on the Marketing Division when they need an expert in cabbage or potatoes or fruit or some other product to come and instruct them in grading it. Each group thus becomes responsible for the quality of each box or barrel or crate of produce it puts out. The name of the organization is attached, and the buyer can come back upon the organization if the goods are not as represented.

In addition to instructing the organization in grading its own goods, the State Department of Markets also gives valuable advice and assistance to the farmers who need help in starting their organization. It furnishes the forms of organizations that have been found to work best, starts their books and shows how to keep them. If the cooperatives desire, it will audit their books occasionally or at regular intervals. It advises them as to the most economical way to lay out their funds in the light of the
experience of other organizations. In this way the Marketing Division acts as a sort of clearing house for good and bad experiences for farmers' cooperation in the state. Another state department might well be listed with the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Markets, and the Dairy and Food Commission as departments relating to agriculture. That is the Conservation Commission. It is becoming clearer all the time that the cutting of the trees and the killing of birds may mean disaster to the farmer. Floods sweep his land and wash away his good soil. Insects eat his grain and his fruit. Streams go dry in the summer when he wants them for his cattle.

Farm problems in Wisconsin have changed and will continue to change. Perhaps the state government will also have to be changed again and again to meet the new conditions. It is interesting to see how the scale of manufacturing of cheese and butter is growing. As the new hard surfaced roads are spreading over the state, milk can be hauled longer distances in larger trucks. The result is that larger creameries and cheese
factories are going up and many of the smaller ones are disappearing. This is only one of many recent changes. Perhaps the most interesting of all is the one of which we have spoken before; the recognition of forestry as a farm problem.

One of the most important problems connected with farming is the problem of educating the young people. The fact that farmers live farther apart than city people makes it more difficult to provide good schools and more expensive to send the young people to school. In communities where the farmers are not prosperous it is often a
heavy burden upon them to try to provide their children with opportunities equal to those of children in the city. If improvements are suggested or required by the state, the taxpayers are often annoyed because they feel that they are already doing all they can. On the other hand, it is against their own interest and the public interest that their children should receive poor training in bad quarters, and should be unable to keep up with the children from better schools if they enter a college or their own state university.

Here is a real problem for future generations to solve. We have taken some commendable steps in dealing with it in Wisconsin, but we still have far to go.

The establishment of the College of Agriculture in the University of Wisconsin was one of the first steps toward insuring an intelligent and prosperous farm population. The establishment within this college of short courses of all sorts lasting from a few days to two years was a decided step in advance. The sending out by the University of Farm Institute leaders and Extension lecturers has helped some. The encouragement by the University of the employment of county agents to become the permanent teacher and adviser, business manager, salesman and organizer for the farmer was another step in advance. The putting of agricultural courses into the high schools attended by farm children has helped greatly. Project work, supervised by the teachers, has become popular. A few counties have established schools known as County Schools of Agriculture and Domestic Economy where farm boys and girls of high school age can receive their secondary instruction in two and three year courses which are based on their own rural environment rather than on city conditions.

With all these schools, there are thousands of farm boys and girls in Wisconsin who stopped going to school and went to work on the farms as soon as they were permitted by the school law, but who are poorly trained for the difficult tasks and problems of modern farm life.

To help this group and to help the men and women who have grown up without the training they need, short courses in both day and evening classes are being organized throughout the state as fast as money can be obtained for it from federal, state and
local funds. Some of these short courses teach farming; others teach English, Economics, Science and other general subjects. Training in home-making is now being developed.

Wisconsin has probably done as much as any state in the union to help its farmers solve their problems and to prepare them to solve their own problems. There is still much to be done.

*Practice in the selection of beef cattle.*
*(Farm near West Salem)*

*Courtesy State Board of Vocational Education*

*A school boy and his home project.*

YOUTHFUL WISCONSIN FARMERS DOING THEIR SCHOOL WORK