

NATURAL HISTORY AND FARMING

You will remember that the intention to present a brief to the Royal Commission on Agriculture and Rural Life was mentioned in the Blue Jay (Vol. XI, No. 1 and 2). Valuable suggestions were received from W. Fanchinski of Naicam, H. C. Weaver of Lloydminster, C. Stuart Francis of Torch River, Frank Baines of Saltcoats, R. F. Arnold of Prince Albert, Everett Baker of Shaunavon and A. C. Budd (Blue Jay, Vol. XI, No. 2) of Swift Current. Dr. St. Houston met with us in Regina and later sent in important information after one or more meetings in Yorkton. The brief committee in Regina consisted of Miss M. Belcher, J. L. Buckley, R. McKenzie, J. Taylor and G. F. Ledingham. We were helped in drafting the brief by Mrs. W. F. Cruikshank, Mrs. G. F. Ledingham, Fred Bard, W. A. Benson, Fred Robinson and R. Symonds.

The public hearing of the brief was on October 6th and the following supported the committee: W. A. Ross, J. H. Flock, W. A. Benson and Ralph Stueck. The commissioners, for the most part, asked questions which bore on practical aspects of our various suggestions. We were asked, for example, about the public's response to the Blue Jay's policy on conservation. Were the Natural History Societies in any way responsible, they asked, for the growth of the Museum and the decision of the Government to build a new Museum? Mr. Stueck, our new Provincial President, was asked about the interest which the people show in his sanctuary at Abernethy and about other similar projects in the province. Mr. Benson, our Regina President, was asked about study areas and the formation of a Conservation Research Council to allow co-operation of departments which might otherwise be working at cross purposes. We were also asked about the Provincial Game Laws and the need for stricter enforcement.

Our replies showed that the public was ready for a conservation program, but we doubted whether it could be brought about by legislation. We thought, rather, that a conservation program should include the setting up of "virgin unspoiled

areas," the co-ordination of conservation agencies and especially further conservation education. The real need, we feel, is for better understanding of conservation at home, on the farm and in the school. Naturally we would like to see the Blue Jay in every home and in every school, but that would be only a beginning. We, ourselves, need more understanding of the problems of conservation in this young province of Saskatchewan and this information needs to appear in the Blue Jay. Even with the Blue Jay better adapted to this end much will still depend on the teacher and older enthusiastic people of the community. Guidance in this work should be given by conservation education officers such as R. F. Arnold and other public-spirited people like Doug Gilroy and Ralph Stueck. Perhaps the school competition announced in this Blue Jay is the first step in the initiation of such a development.

The Royal Commission thanked us for our brief and complimented us on the cultural nature of our work. Those who worked on the brief were satisfied that they had gained new insight into the aims and functions of the Natural History Societies. There is much more work for us to do. Mimeographed copies of the brief are available; send for your copy, then tell us what to do next.

On behalf of the Natural History Societies I would like to thank all those who contributed to the success of our brief.

BIRD PETS

Mrs. J. Schuttler, Norwood, Man.

I am very much interested in birds. In our yard we have several bird pets. We had a robin who came back very early and became very tame because we fed him. A nest of cat-birds in some spot close by were special pets. I enticed them with currants—they ate five pounds altogether. The last of them to stay learned to call to me. He would come close to the kitchen door and call for food. I also have a house for swallows and we enjoy watching them and their endless quarrels with the sparrows.