



PRAIRIE PHILOSOPHER SEZ . . .

YA' CAN'T BEAT THE DAKOTAS!

By L.E. Buchholz

The writer of this article farms near Lehr, North Dakota. He tells about recreation, past and present, and what he likes about life in the Dakotas.

WHILE IT MAY NOT BE COMPLETELY TRUE, THERE IS A SAYING HERE to the effect that in our part of the country, people sleep for enjoyment, and then listen to the weather forecasts for entertainment!

Allowing for that to be as it may, we here on the farm never took a vacation or two-times-a-day coffee breaks as is common in job life.

It seems somewhat strange

(when one considers we have snow on the ground for many months of each year) that I have never seen people wearing snowshoes, skis, or anyone driving a team of dog sleds. Seems to me such practices should be much more prevalent in the Dakotas than they are.

I've attended barn dances, card parties, box socials, and have been lake bathing (we never called it 'swimming'—it was always 'lake bathing'). But even though 'lake bathing' has been popular for many years, probably because of our many inviting and both large and small bodies of water, I'm perplexed that ice skating is not more common. Our snow-covered hills are ever so proper for sled riders and tobogganers (I recall some of those trips being fast and long downhill, but the way back up proved ver-r-r-ry tiresome).

Yes, good and wholesome

recreation like fishing, boating, water skiing, outdoor picnicking, camping, trail riding, and hiking bring a lot of enjoyment in the Dakotas. We have such open country that sometimes when you're gazin' off into the horizons you seem to peek clear into another world!

I could watch forever the crops, wildlife, and livestock in our pure, uninterrupted settings.

And visiting! Visiting's a recreation too!

Visiting was a deep-seated custom of our older people. We would lunch, take much joy in sampling baked goods and laid-in store-meat products. Some had perfected the art of chewing sunflower seeds and even roasting pumpkin seeds. Then we'd join in singing a few of the best-going church hymns.

The Dakotas have no smog problems. And no long traffic jams. It

Prairie Philosopher Sez (continued)

is often claimed that our people are helpful and friendly. We have only a few very wealthy and very poor. Most are mild middle-of-the-roaders who live private lives. Many times they stay in the same location and occupation all their lives.

You bet your boots, I like the Dakotas. And I like a country with four seasons that are pronounced.

In the winter the land is covered with heavy snow and an occasional gigantic snowdrift to break the monotony. Some folks have suggested they may never thaw out again. But we always do. (At least we have so far!)

Spring is continually so refreshing and renewing, bringing a new mood of life and hope with it. I watch the gradual greening of the trees and grass. The newly plowed ground and newly cut hay have a wonderful smell that is clean and of the earth.

Summers are hot, but if moisture



conditions are favorable, the farmers enjoy long growing and working days. As the crops ripen, they take on a golden glow all their own.

Fall is ushered in with hard frosts. The scene changes from gold to gray. As the fly season passes the pasture, the cattle quiet down and relax. Soon summer pastures are vacated and local markets are flooded with cattle. Our people are perpetually careful to forever lay in store.

Nature never goes unnoticed. Our lakes that were filled with many different kinds of ducks and coots sometimes seem to turn bare overnight. They seem empty. But as ice forms, muskrats can be seen busily building winter huts.

Life, so rich and varied, never stops here. There is much to see and hear.

So if you live in the Dakotas, you can go on a vacation right at home. But if you read this from out-of-state, come on in and take a look around. You will enjoy yourself. □