

# Letters to the Editor

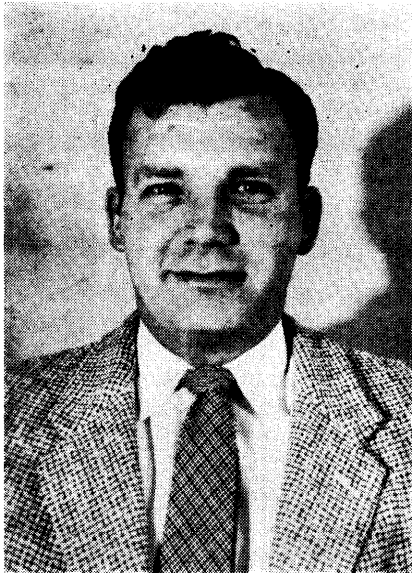
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## I'm Not Satisfied with the Journal . . . !

Our librarian, one day, asked me, "What has happened to the Range Journal? Not a single article is worth indexing. It's almost like the *Farm Journal*." Apologetically, I explained that this was true only of the November issue, that in the next five issues there would be at least some articles worth indexing. (The January issue bears this out.) Of course, I shouldn't have been embarrassed as I didn't have anything to do with the policy which begat the "November issue." Up to now, passiveness has been my only mistake.

Criticism of the rancher issue is not discrimination against a minority group of contributors. Like the late "student issue", this collection of papers says in effect that these articles cannot stand by themselves when sandwiched between the offerings of researchers and experienced writers. Therefore, they must be grouped in the minor leagues so no reader could make the error of comparing a paper by a rancher or a student with one by a professional range manager. The student session held at the tail end of the past annual meetings reflects the same caste-system thinking. More recent annual meetings have heightened the prestige of the Range Society considerably by holding a "technical session"—also stuck on the tail end of the convention.

Now, if the rancher articles were sprinkled evenly throughout the volume, they would not, in fact, compare favorably with the technical articles. This statement is true only when made by persons interested in nothing but technical articles. I am told that



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there are range technicians who read rancher articles avidly. Some even write them. On the other hand, I know of no reasons why ranchers who read only rancher articles would spend any money on buying the *Journal of Range Management* when the *Western Livestock Journal*, *National Woolgrower*, *Sheep and Goat Raiser* and many others present such fare without so much technical dilution. Those who write the articles would find a bigger reading audience in the popular magazines than they find in the Range Journal. Most technical people have access to the popular magazines—through libraries and routing services—whether they are subscribers or not, so the kind of audience is not an issue.

I am not deprecating the quality of the "rancher" articles in the Journal. Most of them are well written, objective, and easily

read—more than can be said of many of the technical articles. I assume that the rancher writing the article likes to ranch and also likes to write, while many a range technician likes to do research but hates to write it up. So the argument is not whether such articles should be written but whether they should be published in the *Journal of Range Management*, since there are already many publications devoted to this type of article while there is only one which could be devoted entirely to professional papers on range management.

It's a matter of space. Technical journals are limited, for financial reasons, to a certain maximum number of pages per volume. This naturally limits the number of articles and pages per article that can be published in a volume. What other pure medium—devoted entirely to range management—do our range scientists have in which to disseminate the results of their research and expound their theories? I have gotten the impression that the chief purpose in forming the American Society of Range Management was to provide this medium. A group—all scientists, I believe—who were not satisfied with the attention given to range by two other societies (Society of American Foresters and American Society of Agronomy) initiated the ASRM. Thereafter came the thirst for big membership. And although the noble objectives are restated on the inside cover of each issue, the Journal's policy is considerably watered down to satisfy the thirst.

I have heard many comments that some of the articles in the Journal are *too technical*. The comment is seldom made by

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ranchers! Perennial rancher members, as against the one-year-turnovers who were sold "subscriptions" by hucksters in overzealous section membership drives, enjoy reading and evaluating the technical articles written by the scientists or administrators. The comments about being too technical, when made for themselves, are usually made by people who want everything to come in readily soluble capsules, the uninquisitive, the non-discerning, and the gullible. But more often, the comments are made "altruistically" by semi-technical men turned administrators who feel the need to "talk down" to the rancher and other lay members of the Society. They find the Journal a convenient tract for this purpose.

As to the question whether the Journal is too technical, let us compare it with publications in allied fields: *Ecology*, *Agronomy Journal*, *Journal of Animal Science*, and *Journal of Forestry*. The latter carries four or five good technical articles per issue, but the real high-powered ones have recently been siphoned off into *Forest Science*. The other three journals have only technical papers involving original research, and review type articles which are scientific, to be sure. Only a few of the papers in these four pertain to range; the others are, in general, no more or no less profound than those on range, and all are significant contributions to the particular disciplines or professions. The *Journal of the British Grassland Society*, which comes closer to our Range Journal than any other publication in subject matter and purpose, is certainly a

scholarly periodical compared to ours.

While I was editor of the Current Literature section of the Range Journal, I had the pleasure of reading all the periodicals which carried articles pertaining to range management published over the period 1954-1957. I was induced to read many interesting papers only remotely connected with range management. The journals which impressed me the most were those which achieved uniformity of quality in their contents. Those that disgusted me most had achieved a mixture of evangelistic preachments about conservation, testimonials on "how I make it pay back home," pep rallies for GRASS, and a few technical papers that probably were rejects from the scientific journals.

For the reader not acquainted with the following, I suggest perusing some recent issues of the *Journal of Wildlife Management*, *Journal of Farm Economics*, *Proceedings of the Soil Science Society of America*, *Forest Science*, *Canadian Journal of Botany*, and others. All of these have carried papers which would have been not only appropriate but good for the Range Journal. The reasons why excellent research and progressive theories are reported in these professional journals are many; to us the most important thing is, why weren't they offered to the *Journal of Range Management*?

More and more members should enjoy the technical aspects of range management as time goes on. Almost every college in the West teaches a course or has a curriculum in this field.

Several offer a Ph. D. degree. This must mean that there is a deep, philosophical side to range management. The courses required for such a degree are in science. None are art courses.

In conclusion, I am firing some bullets as suggestions to improve the Journal. The last one can remain in the chamber unless the first five don't hit their mark.

1. Journal policy should recognize the objectives of the society and realize that the "art" of range management is based only on science. The Journal should reflect this no matter what groups comprise the membership of the Society.

2. All the technical articles should be upgraded. The good papers coming out in other periodicals are being sent there because the Range Journal is thought to be too "popular."

3. The rancher issue should be cut out—if the articles are good enough to be in the Journal they are good enough to be in any issue. There's no room for second class articles.

4. Authors should swamp the editor with lots of manuscripts so that he can choose and reject. Remove the stigma of being the *Journal of Skimmed Milk*.

5. Members should ask themselves why they joined the society: to improve the understanding of range management principles, or to revel in how well we have taken care of the range? OR ELSE:

6. A new journal, *The Journal of Range Science*.—Arnold M. Schultz, Specialist, School of Forestry, University of California, Berkeley, California.