

## Appendix 7

This interesting document, from *The New Northwest* of Deer Lodge, Montana, 10 September 1886, revealing a conversation with Con Kohrs on the eve of the hard winter of 1886-1887, merits careful consideration. Kohrs was quite optimistic, in this report at least, on the chances for a mild winter and pushed the point strongly. Yet his autobiography infers that he and John were quite worried about the range condition by the fall of 1886. Possibly Con's public statements in this article were those of a business and community leader trying to maintain public confidence in the cattle business. Another possibility is that he was, indeed, as confident as this article indicates he was, but by 1913, when he wrote his autobiography, he had only a somewhat blurred memory of the event to rely on.

From a different perspective, too, the article is valuable, showing one cattleman's approach to the overall market and financing system of the booming cattle business.

Montana Historical Society.

## "CATTLE TALK

"Points Picked Up in a Casual Conversation With A Well-Informed Grower

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### The Northwest Territory Leases and Facilities

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"'I see it stated that D.A.G. Floweree says he would give \$250,000 to have his cattle insured over the coming winter; what do you think of it?'

The above question was put to our friend Conrad Kohrs Monday afternoon as he sat happily smoking his first cigar in three days - his physicians counseling abstinence therefrom on account of bronchial troubles.

"'I think he is too apprehensive. Floweree & Lowery have probably 24,000 or 25,000 head of cattle on the range. At an estimate of \$35 per head they would aggregate nearly \$900,000. Floweree thinks it likely he will lose 25 per cent., if we have a hard winter, and the idea seems to be out that it will be a hard one. I don't know just why it is-probably because I never borrow much trouble out of the future-but I do not apprehend a hard winter on cattle. It may be cold, but it is the heavy snow storms we have to fear, and I don't think we will have them. Beside, despite the dry season, our cattle are fat and strong-in better condition than they were last year.'

"'I understand you have leased areas of land in the Northwest Territory during your recent visit there. Is this so; if so, what is the object?'

"'I did lease 237,000 acres for the Pioneer Cattle Co. and Kohrs & Bielenberg. I also leased 200,000 acres for Mr. Floweree. The leases run 21 years; the rate is two cents per acre per annum. The import duty on cattle to Canada is 20 per cent, but the government to encourage importation from the United States has issued an order waiving the duty until September 15th and admitting them free. I think an order will be issued extending the time until next year. The Northwest Territory is in the peculiar condition of having more marketable cattle than is needed for home use and not enough to warrant export. Its surplus this year is 2,000 or 2,500 head. Canada ships about 80,000 head of live cattle annually to England, but if the Northwest Territory should ship its cattle on the hoof across the continent and ocean as Canadians do, the transportation there by car and vessel would bruise the cattle so they would not be marketable. It cannot ship to Chicago because of the 20 per cent duty of the United States. Therefore its only market for its surplus is England, and to reach this profitably great slaughtering establishments will have to be built at home and lines of refrigerating cars established to convey it dressed to the sea board. The surplus of cattle is not yet sufficient to warrant this so the government is, doubtless at the instance of the graziers, offering inducements that will bring in cattle sufficient to create a great enough surplus to warrant facilities for marketing it.'

"'Are many cattle being taken over the line this year?'

"'I do not think over 20,000 head will be sent over. We are sending only female cattle. They are probably on the new range by this time. By the time their calves are ready to market the facilities for the shipment of dressed beef will be established.'

"'Why do you send them at all?'

"'Our range is very dry this year and the ranges are getting crowded. There is a large calf crop this year, probably 300,000 and 200,000 head of imported cattle have come in while only about 110,000 head will be marketed. The consumption of the Territory does not exceed 35,000 or 40,000 head annually, so our increase this year will approximate 350,000 head. There are now about 1,600,000 head of cattle in Montana and 1,500,000 head of them are grazed east of a line drawn north and south through Helena. We must therefore look a little ahead. Our Northwest leases give us a right against all except homesteaders and pre-emptors for 21 years. We have one lease within 12 miles of the line, which is a quarantine belt, and another within 50 miles. Mich Oxerart rode them for me, and reports they are well watered, with deep coulies for shelter and that they are new and well grassed where not burnt off. It is colder then here but the snow fall is about the same.'

"'How about the round ups and taxes?'

"'There have never been any taxes levied on cattle there, but probably there will be hereafter. The Mounted Police have been the government there and levied no taxes on cattle. Their range rules are very good, something similar to the round up rules of Montana. Fences cannot be built lest cattle drift against them and perish. But at the annual round up each owner takes his cattle to his own range, brands them and keeps them there as much as possible.'

"'You say about 110,000 head of cattle will be marketed from Montana this year. How many of them will be shipped by you and the Pioneer Company?'

"'Probably not exceeding 2,000 head. While the average condition of cattle is good, there are not so many well fatted cattle as usual, and we ship only in that condition. Ordinarily, we would have had 4,000 of prime marketable cattle. Last year nearly all the cattle sold by us, John T. Murphy and Floweree were slaughtered in Chicago, and shipped to England, which gets all the best beef of the Chicago market.'

"'Do you expect to remain here this winter?'

"'I will try it. I have been feeling better recently than for a year past. If I continue so I will remain here; if not, I will try the California climate awhile.'

"'About this time, Dr. Mitchell, who was sitting by, said 'I think, Con., if I were you I would throw away the remaining half of that cigar.' Knowing that only the solace of the fragrant weed had alleviated the irritation of this volley of questions at even as good a natured and companionable a semi-invalid as Mr. Kohrs, the reporter said 'Thank you' and departed."