WHAT'S AHEAD FOR THE RANGE SOCIETY?—

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JOSEPH F. PECHEANE

433 U. S. Court House, Portland, Oregon

WITH this, the Second Annual Meeting, it is not too early to examine what the future may hold for the American Society of Range Management. Since what the future holds largely upon us as members, we must determine what we want the Society to be, lay plans to that end, and then see that these plans are carried out.

What do we want the Society to be? We have two alternatives. First, we can ride along on our laurels and become a society of paper-readers, and technique-perfecters forever doomed to mediocrity. Or second, we can accept the challenges presented by the objectives of our Society, so ably stated in our Constitution, and become a constructive force in molding the management of the grassland resource and in shaping the future of this country.

It would be easy to follow the first alternative, and would require but little effort on our part. On the other hand, to accept the challenges presented by our objectives will require considerable personal effort, imagination, leadership and participation by all members. Which shall it be? If each of you were asked this question, I am sure you would unhesitatingly say, "Let's make something worth while out of our Society. Let's fulfill our objectives."

Accordingly, let us review our objectives, examine how well we are achieving them, and plan our course for the future. Our Constitution states "The objectives of the Society shall be to foster advancement in the science and art of grazing land management, to promote progress in the conservation and greatest sustained use of forage and soil resources, to stimulate discussion and understanding of scientific and practical range and pasture problems, to provide a medium for the exchange of ideas and facts among Society members and with allied technologists, and to encourage professional improvement of its members." These objectives map a course that requires aggressive action.

It is too much to expect that we can report complete attainment of the objectives within the one short year of our existence. We can, however, report notable progress. You have now seen two issues of our Journal, we are starting our second annual meeting, one Section is organized, we have cooperated with the American Society of Agronomy in presenting a joint session on range at their annual meeting, and our organization is beginning to function rather smoothly. From
these achievements it can be seen that we have progressed farthest in providing a medium for the exchange of ideas and facts among Society members and with allied technologists, and in encouraging professional improvement of our members. Now where are we going?

Humbly, and I hope without being presumptuous, I would like to suggest several goals toward which we might work. The attainment of these will carry us a long way toward fully satisfying the objectives of our Society.

We must strive to make our Society a smoothly functioning, business-like organization, worthy of respect.

We must build the Journal into the stature it justly deserves. We have made a magnificent start, but it will require constant vigilance and never-ending care on the part of all of us to bring it to maturity, to make it a tool no range man can afford to be without.

One of the greatest challenges we have is to determine how by research, and to prove by practice that grazing livestock and big game in our forests and on our grasslands need not necessarily be damaging to the land, ruinous to the watersheds, and destructive of civilizations.

One cannot, in reading Fairfield Osborn's book "Our Plundered Planet" escape the realization that in the history of the world grazing by livestock has played an important part in the destruction of many ancient civilizations. In Palestine, in northern Syria, and in northern Africa nomadic herds of sheep and goats assisted in the almost complete destruction of civilizations that thrived there.

Not only the ancient civilizations have suffered; within the last century, or even a shorter period havoc has been wrought by grazing in Australia, New Zealand, Africa, South America, Mexico, and in places in our own country.

The inference that grazing by livestock is destructive need not be. It is a reflection, not on grazing by livestock, but on the consequences of lack of intelligent management. It is a tragic testimonial to the fact that in grazing native vegetation we must work with and not against Nature. It is convincing proof that considerable knowledge is needed regarding growth requirements of plants and maintenance requirements of soils in correctly managing native ranges.

We know that utilization of forage by livestock and big game can be and is compatible with conservation of soil and water, and can contribute materially to an enduring civilization. We have numerous examples covering a short period of time showing that this is true. Unfortunately, the use of grazing practices which are compatible with conservation is far from universal. In most instances the proper methods are known, but have not been used. In other instances more knowledge is needed. It is a worthy challenge to our Society and to you as members to develop by research the needed procedures and encourage by education and practice use of the proper methods.

We must take every opportunity to point out what good range management on half of our land area means to the Nation. The range livestock industry, the welfare of hundreds of communities dependent upon the livestock industry, the maintenance of satisfactory watershed conditions, the maintenance of satisfactory big game habitat and a huntable population of big game animals, all these are dependent upon how well we achieve this goal.

A second worthy goal toward which we might strive is the establishment of a Grassland Society of America. Last year, you, as members of this Society, elected to keep this predominantly an organization for range men. This was a wise move for several reasons. Now,
with a Society crystallized representing our own profession, we might well consider striving toward an organization of all workers dealing with grass and grasslands.

One needs but to look over the 1948 Yearbook of Agriculture "Grass" to be forcibly impressed by the importance of grass to this country. Nearly 60 percent of the land area of the United States is used for hay and pasture. This area provides about half of the feed for all livestock, and nearly all of the forage for large numbers of big game animals. A resource of such magnitude needs a national society concerned with its preservation and use.

A move to develop a Grassland Society of America would be extremely timely. There has been a rapidly growing awareness of the importance of grass, either native or cultivated, as a crop. Several other societies have pasture sections dealing with the problems of grassland management as influencing their particular interests. Numerous conferences and demonstrations have been and are being held dealing with grass and grasslands.

In other countries there are several grassland societies, whose aim and purpose are the same as ours might be. But the manner of organization of a Grassland Society for America might be different. It might be, as suggested by Dr. Aamodt in his address to the American Society of Agronomy, "a coordinating organization of the specialized groups and regional interests in grassland agriculture." As such it would not replace the American Society of Range Management, or any of the pasture sections in existing societies. It would effectively serve as a common meeting ground.

As the major professional society whose objectives deal entirely with grassland problems, we should take the lead in the formation of a Grassland Society of America.

There are still other ways in which we can weld this Society of ours into a potent force, other goals we must set and reach. We must, in the future, take a stand on matters of national importance pertaining to range conservation and utilization and express our views. We have not done so up to the present time primarily because we were in the throes of getting our Society to functioning more smoothly and a Journal published. With these activities well advanced we can more nearly fill the obligation stated in the objectives of our Society "to promote progress in the conservation and greatest sustained use of forage and soil resources, (and) to stimulate discussion and understanding of scientific and practical range and pasture problems."

Another way in which we can improve our Society, especially as a medium for the interchange of ideas and to encourage professional improvement of our members, is to aggressively encourage the establishment of sections. At the present time we have only the Wyoming Section. It is obviously impossible for more than a small proportion of our members to attend the national meeting. All that can keep the Society together under these conditions is the Journal, and even the most superior publication can go only so far in this respect. The inability to take part in or attend the national meeting, and to meet with other workers in the field can be overcome by the formation of active local sections. We, as a Society, must encourage their establishment but you members in the field must carry the burden, form these Sections and weld them into closely knit units.

Still another way in which we can work toward professional improvement of our members is to take a direct interest in education of professional range men. In this respect we can suggest minimum requirements and in an advisory capacity
assist educational institutions in setting up curricula. Moreover, we can work with the Civil Service Commission in setting up standards for professional examinations. It does not, however, seem advisable to move so far as to set up a list of “accredited institutions” which meet the minimum requirements we set up.

We can continue to cooperate with closely allied societies in presenting joint sessions on range management and thereby extend a fuller realization of the importance of range and its interrelationships. This last summer we cooperated with the American Society of Agronomy, and preliminary contacts have been made with the Western Section of the American Society of Animal Production for a joint meeting next summer.

There are many other ways which would assist in developing the Society into an outstanding professional group, but the most important of all is to have an active, participating membership. Each of you, in taking out membership in the Society has assumed an obligation—an obligation to take an active interest in Society affairs, to work in committees or as individuals for the objectives, and to offer constructive criticism or suggestions to your officers.

If we do not have an active leadership, well-formulated plans, a far-reaching program, and an enthusiastic participating membership we are doomed to slip into the role of just another paper-reading society.

Are we headed for that? Emphatically, I would say NO! If I can judge the makeup of the average range man, he is aggressive, well trained in resource management in general, altruistic by nature, and willing to fight for his ideals. If we can get these attributes functioning for the Society, our place in the field of resource management is secure. We shall take our place shoulder to shoulder with other professional societies in keeping this land of ours abundant with natural resources—a basic requirement for the proper functioning of our Democracy. I leave these challenges, these goals, with you.