

Reflections on an era past. Submitted by Stan Gratte.

HORSES V TRACTORS.

At a meeting of the Yandanooka Primary Producers a debate on Horses versus Tractors was opened by Mr. H. Chivers in favour of horses. His main point was horses were more reliable, did not demand spare parts, were not so severe on machinery, were undeniably cheaper for wheat carting, that only one man was required for drilling, as against two for a tractor. That finally tractors by doing so much work, thereby increasing the area sown, tended to lower the price of wheat by causing over production, Mr Chivers address was delivered in his usual whimsical fashion, was punctuated with laughter and cheers, but his arguments were keen and well thought out, and much appreciated by his audience.

Mr. Kevin Carr succeeded him as advocate for tractors, and his experience and views were listened to with respect.

He pointed out it was a matter of conditions and area and any one taking up virgin land, and attempting to develop it with horses, would be up against the problems of food and water. It was entirely a question of conditions and area.

On an ordinary farm of say 700 acres, a tractor was a luxury, but for larger areas, horses were a long way behind.

He considered a tractor was equal to three teams of horses. ^{ing} Instancy a local farmer, who was cropping 2000 acres with one tractor and 40 horses, he considered it would be more economical, to dispose of the horses, and work another tractor. The stuff necessary for chaff-cutting, looking after and driving the horses, would be more expensive than running another tractor. As to the upkeep of tractors, it was difficult to compare costs, appending the use of the tractor.

It was true that breakdowns occurred, but neither were immune, and as a rule breakdowns could soon be remedied and the enormous difference between the work accomplished by a tractor, as compared with horses compensated for same.

Mr. Quartermaine said a tractor meant an extra hour in bed. Mr. White pointed out fuel consumed by a tractor was money leaving the country, a first class team of horses and equipment cost £300-00 being 4 years old, would be worth the full amount in 4 years time whereas a tractor would be scrap.

At the same time he had 400 acres of sand plain, which could only be dealt with by a tractor owing to the difficulty of supplying food and water for horses.

Mr. Brown said a tractor in 4 years would do the work of horses in 12 years.

Mr. Lynch said horses could fallow 300 acres in slack time, at low cost, while tractors used a large amount of expensive fuel. Mr. Buweller said tractors should not be used on farms, as they had there own class of work, a tractor was not justified under 1200 acres but was the right thing for anything bigger.

Mr. Chairman Mr P. T. Neville summarised the pros and cons, conceded that, horses, if they did not require "spare parts" were subject to several ailments, accidents and mortality. Some of the farmers have had unfortunate experiences in backing the "wrong horse" by buying unsuitable tractors. The result of the debate on a show of hands was in favour of horses.

From the Geraldton Guardian Saturday June 15th 1929.

The Kevin Carr who spoke for tractors in this paper was Marion Carr's (nee Hamersley) husband. She was a member of our Historical Society and is well known to members.

Kevin (now deceased) was a pilot in World War 1.