



DAVE'S DAIRY

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I am so angry that I just haven't got time to mess around talking about the weather and things like that. I must get straight on to the thing that is worrying me.

You may remember last week how I accepted the responsibility from a meeting of wheat growers of telling Clarkson where his duty lay about this increased price of wheat.

I said I rang him up and that he didn't seem as excited about the prospect as I had imagined he would.

Well, I have been chewing it over during the week and getting more and more worked up about it; and when I went over to talk to Clarkson over the weekend, I must admit I was even a bit angry before I started.

When I got going, I remembered some of the things that the speaker at the meeting had told us and I put some of them in, too.

That made me more and more angry and by the time I had finished I was thumping the table good and proper.

I told Clarkson the poor wheat farmers had contributed to the Australian economy about £200 million and now, in their time of crisis, they were looking for a little bit of sympathy from their elected representative and instead of sympathy he seemed to adopt a very lukewarm attitude.

And then I got carried away with my own eloquence and started to point out that Members of Parliament, although they were quite friendly and submissive at election time, forget all about their election promises and started to have high and mighty ideas once they were elected.

I fairly shouted at him, "It's all right about you, Clarkson, you don't care what happens to us poor wheat farmers who are all plodding along the bread line. You've got your big, fat, unearned Parliamentary salary coming in each week, and what do you care about the ordinary wheat farmer?"

Then I really let my hair down and said I had often been dissatisfied with any Parliamentary representative in the past, and because of his unreasonable and uncharitable attitude on this matter I was seriously considering standing against him at the next plebiscite.

At hearing this, Clarkson behaved in what I must admit was a most unparliamentary manner.

He took off his coat and hung it on the chair and said to me, "Look here, Dave, I have stood just about enough from you.

"I can put up with you coming over and borrowing all my plant; I can put up with your weed seeds blowing into my paddock; I can put up with your incompetence as a farmer.

“I can even put up with having to read your wretched drivel in *The Stock Journal* each week.

“I have evidently got to put up with your wretched son hanging around my young Florence, but what I will not put up with is having you tell me that I’ve got to crawl to you just because I am your Member of Parliament.

“And what’s more,” says old Clarkson, “if I have any more of your unmannerly behaviour in my house, I will do what I used to be able to do quite thoroughly, and that is, take you out and give you a jolly good hiding.

“I may have a moustache, I may have a pot belly, but I am still able to handle you in the way I used to handle you many years ago.

“So unless you shut up and behave like an ordinary human being, I will do just that!”

Well, I must admit this was a very unreasonable and unparliamentary way to behave, but I could tell by the way his moustache was bristling, that the old boy meant what he said.

Of course I am not frightened of him, I can handle him quite easily, I guess.

But all the same, it seemed hardly fitting for me to be beating up young Harold’s prospective father-in-law.

And anyhow, the situation was saved by young Florence who heard our voices raised in anger, came hurrying in with a cup of tea, sat down and poured it out and chatted in a very friendly way until we had cooled down.

After she had gone, Clarkson put his coat on again and we started to talk it over in a reasonable manner. And I must admit that when he did this, it made me alter my opinion a bit and also made me glad I hadn’t thrashed the daylights out of him.

Clarkson said the queer thing was that he had been asked to support a case that had not yet been made out by the Wheatgrowers’ Association — or if it had been made out, Clarkson certainly hadn’t received it.

All he has received are eloquent resolutions telling him that he ought to support the case that the wheat farmers are submitting.

But he says it is a bit awkward to do that when you don’t know what the case is.

Then he went on to say that he had made further enquiries since I had rung him before, and had found out that because the average yield had risen in Australia, it was likely that the cost of production figure would fall.

But until the figure was finally determined it was not much good making a case to justify increasing the amount of wheat on which the cost of production was paid.

He said he had been in touch with the representatives of the Association and they had agreed that a proper case could not be made out until the figure was known.

Then Clarkson added, rather sourly I thought, that it was pretty hard being castigated about being lukewarm about a case that had yet to be made out.

Then he said something that made a bit of sense.

“I am a wheat farmer myself,” he said. “Most of my friends are wheat farmers. Most of my electors are wheat farmers. Do you really think I am silly enough to be cautious about a matter concerning wheat growers just for the fun of it?”

“Try to credit me with some sense, Dave, even if I am just a Member of Parliament.”

So there it is, for the moment. I suppose there is something in what the old goat says.

But I can't help wishing I had hit him on the nose, instead.