To the Babson Institute Class ’39:

For some years I have spent much of my winters with the cattlemen in the saddle. This year let me tell you some of the things “cow hunting” has taught me:

1) The great importance of breeding and feeding. When I first came to Florida, we had terribly scrubby and thin cattle which sold for about ten dollars apiece. Gradually, we have been getting good stock from the north and, by careful selection, have now fine-looking herds, so that the yearlings sell for about thirty-five dollars. I believe in education, but no education can take the place of good breeding.

Next to mating with good stock, I am impressed by the importance of good feeding, — that is, the right kind of feeding. All we must come from the food we eat, the milk and water we drink, and the air we breathe — just as efficiency of a boiler depends largely upon the character of the coal it burns and the care taken to keep the grates free of ashes.

2) Developing ourselves for usefulness. People who go to cattle shows think that cattle are graded by their looks, quality of the horns, and the shape of their legs. These things are considered, however, only as they are barometers of physical condition. A steer is really judged by his usefulness, — that is, his ability to produce meat; a cow is judged by her ability to produce milk; and a bull is judged by his ability to produce healthy useful calves.

I hope that you men are getting a useful education. Once a college diploma was very helpful in getting one a job; today it does not mean so much. This is very important for you men to consider because you are going out in a different world than faced your fathers. Competition is to be much severer and conditions are to be much harder. Hence the great importance of following up your business education with technical knowledge.

3) The safety of our herd depends upon improving our neighbor’s herd. Some cattlemen are selfish to start out with and consider only their own herd, giving their neighbors no help. The first thing they know, their neighbors’ herds are getting “ticks” or screw worms and these are beginning to infect their own herd. They then form an association to build up their neighbors’ herds.

Here also is a lesson for you men. It shows why you should want to get other men interested in church work and civic organizations. Our own children are safe only as other children are safe. We all are brothers together whether we like it or not.

4) The importance of worship. Institute men will wonder how the cattle teach us this lesson; but I will explain. A tenderfoot, during his first month on the range, thinks that the cows can be made to follow one another and “cooperate” with one another. After he has been on the range some months, however, he learns that this is not true. The fact is that every group of cows has a leader and they follow this leader. They really “worship” this leader. This applies to horses, sheep, and even wild animals.

We hear much today about the need of more cooperation between capital and labor, farmers and city folks, and especially between nations. The ranch has taught me that people cannot be forced to cooperate one with another. True cooperation comes about only as we all worship the same God. This is why I say that only a revival of sane religion will save America.

5) The strong survive and the weak perish. Notwithstanding the above four important facts, I still find that the laws of rewards and punishments really determine the life and health of the individual cattle, and also of the herd as a whole. Every cattle owner is a firm believer in eugenics. He knows that all the cattle are better off if the weak die and the strong breed.

This is very important to remember in these days when the tendency is for the government to give more attention to the weak than to the strong. There is danger in farm aid, price fixing, tariffs, and all other artificial props to business and so-called “general welfare.” Only the competitive system develops and maintains a strong nation.

R. W. B.
Carl D. Smith
President, Babson Institute

Composite American. Has the daring and energy of the Great Plains where he was born; the conservatism and caution of New England where he was trained. An iconoclast, when idols need breaking; a preserver of tradition, when tradition's loss would becloud the future. A straight shooter; a hard shooter; a square shooter. Has decided opinions, but a scientific attitude of mind. Places spiritual and intellectual values above materialistic forces. A builder of teaching efficiency and quality of curriculum. Monument to his zeal, tool of effective instruction, stands the new library.