

(November 16, 1908.)

The Agricultural Problem of Ontario.

BY MR. C. C. JAMES, DEPUTY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE.

ADDRESSING the Canadian Club on "The Agricultural Problem of Ontario," Mr. C. C. James, M.A., Deputy Minister of Agriculture, said:—

Mr. President and Gentlemen, Members of the Canadian Club,—The subject of my remarks to-day, as stated by the President, is "The Agricultural Problem of Ontario." At the present time there are taking place in Canada movements which are bound to determine great events. Numbers of immigrants from the east and the States are coming into Canada. There is a movement of the population westward, so much so that some prophets have predicted the ultimate removal of the capital from the shores of the Ottawa river and its location on the great prairies of the west. The bulk of the population, we are told, must lie west of the lakes and the future of our country be determined by the people in the west.

In most regards Ontario is the premier Province of Canada. We would all like it to continue so. It is well for us then to note the influences which may take from us the predominance which we have now, and to realize what forces determine predominance. It is to the interest of all city dwellers to maintain our Province in its premier position.

Ontario will further develop its great mineral resources, and yet no country has become populous through its mineral resources. Ontario forest resources are indeterminable, but one can never determine the future wealth and prosperity from the present forest resources. Manufacturing may be developed on a larger scale, but for the absence of coal, which the development of our water power resources may do much to obviate. But there is no question about it, the agricultural resources of Ontario have possibilities of development beyond the most sanguine calculations.

What is the agricultural problem? The improvement of the farmer, intellectually and morally, and his ability to increase his products, both in quality and quantity. Not many years ago the town and the country were opposed one to the other. They had divergent views in the consideration of great national questions. The relations which rule now, I am happy to say,

are larger interdependent. The farmer is interested in city life and work. The city purchases his surplus products. He secures from the city the latest and most improved machinery. He looks to the city for modern improvements in social life. He has the telephone, electric light, free rural mail delivery. These things are working a revolution in country life, and it is impossible to draw the line. What may happen when cheap electrical power is extended to the rural communities remains to be seen. The happy date may yet come when the farmer will welcome the automobile.

The farmer is more interested in the town and city to-day than ever before. The city should also take a larger interest in the farm. In the first place farming is our greatest national industry. It is necessary to draw no comparisons. We all admit that farming still consists and persists as our greatest national industry. In the Province of Ontario there are 175,000 farms with an investment of \$1,200,000,000 and an annual product of \$200,000,000. It is difficult to determine the last named amount, but \$200,000,000 is believed to be fairly accurate.

Farming is our greatest industry, yet out of the total members elected at the recent Dominion Parliamentary elections to represent Ontario, only seven farmers were elected to represent that interest at Ottawa—and one of them was the member for South York. I am not saying that to disadvantage him, but to show that one-sixth farmers were returned, while there were eight merchants, eighteen manufacturers and twenty-five lawyers.

The second point I want to bring out are that the farms are becoming the great and unfailing supply of raw material. You draw the raw material from the country and transform it into the finished product.

The third point is that the farm is a cash purchaser of city goods. In the old days the farmer went to the city to exchange his products. It is a question now of producing articles for money and paying for those he requires. The city baker, the butcher, the coal merchant were all regular callers. The farmer has got his work on a business basis. He is buying and selling for cash.

In the fourth place we should be interested in the producer of food to provide the necessities of life, because he is the regulator of the times.

Fifth: the farmer is a producer of surplus cash. He is behind much of the banking development of the country.

Bank branches are multiplying and a great many are located in small towns and villages and some in communities not dignified by the name of villages.

Why? Because in the country the farmer is operating on a cash and business basis. He is a supplier. Manufacturing industry is to some extent carried on on the farm producer's surplus cash.

Lastly, there is the moral effect or influence that the farming community has upon the country. The source of danger to a country is in the congested districts. The development of a strong, healthy, contented rural community is one of the most important assets in the future of the nation. It cannot be over-estimated.

The advantage of an adjacent rural community has never been fully considered by county towns. The great cry of Ontario's small towns is to induce manufacturing industries to settle among them. To this end they offer free land, exemption from taxes and often a bonus. Such improvement is only temporary. If instead they looked to the development of the country surrounding them, the effect would be permanent.

Take, for instance, a town with a circle of three to three and a half miles of which are located 200 farmers. By the improvement, instruction of and co-operation with these farmers it would be a comparatively easy thing to have their incomes increased by an average of \$100 per year. This would mean \$20,000 per year more to expend, the majority of it going to the town. Multiply this by two or three and you will see where you land.

The Provincial Government has nine agencies at work in the education and development of the farm. Each of these branches is under the supervision of a director or superintendent. Let me enumerate them:

1. The head office branch which looks after statistical work, issues reports and looks after all special work until it is allocated.
2. The agricultural and horticultural societies, which have been at work for 116 years under the old original parliament and the legislature.
3. The Live Stock branch, which has charge of exhibitions of poultry and directs the three big winter cattle shows.
4. The Farmers' Institute work, which carries to the farmers by special instruction the latest word about his business.

5. The Dairy branch, with 40 odd instructors in cheese factories and creameries who go into the homes to improve dairy conditions.

6. The Fruit Branch, for the supervising and instructing of fruit growers and their orchards.

7. The colonization bureau, to advertise agricultural conditions in England, Ireland and Scotland, to bring the right sort of immigrants to the farming communities and to supply labor to the farmer.

8. The Agricultural College at Guelph.

9. The Veterinary College in Toronto.

These nine branches touch the farm on all points of its work. They aim to aid in all departments concerned.

Now, if we can add ten per cent. annually to the production of the farms, we will gain an increase of \$20,000,000 annually. Better still, is it not possible to improve our agricultural possibilities by 10, 20 or 30 per cent.? I say this: If we can get the farmers of this country to put in operation what is known to be the best methods we will be able to double the output of the Province of Ontario. A drainage department is being created. It is in its infancy as yet, having been in existence only for three or four years. A plan for dealing with lands which are deforested and unfit for farming is being considered. Under it it is proposed to buy back the lands from those who now only eke out a miserable existence, and turn the lands back to the forest reserves. Four such tracts have already been secured in the counties of Lambton, Norfolk, Simcoe and Northumberland and Durham. The plan is to take the farms off unprofitable ground for growing crops and to aid by reforestation in preserving the sources of the streams. In the rear rocky townships of many counties, where the pine has all been removed, and the people are tied down, unable to get away and sinking lower and lower in the scale, it should be possible to devise some scheme for taking these people away and placing them on the clay belt, where there are fifteen to twenty million acres of clay land, and the northern limit of which is the same parallel as Winnipeg.

Pass now, for a moment, from soil to crops and note what is being done. The Agricultural College at Guelph has gathered grains and seeds from all parts of the world. It has tested them all, determining which were suitable and superior. If the improved seeds, developed in this way, were used by farmers all over the country, an increase of 25 per cent. would be quite possible.

We turn to live stock next, coming up the scale. It is the key to the solution of good times. In ten years the live stock trade has increased from thirty to sixty millions. That will help to a conclusion of what is possible during the next ten years. It occurs to me that if a prospectus were prepared of the farm industry of Ontario, showing the investment and the present revenue, and estimating the possible increases, ten per cent. on live stock, ten per cent. in dairying, ten per cent. in fruit, ten per cent. in each department, doubling the revenue, it would compare favorably with the most glowing Cobalt prospectus ever seen.

What are the difficulties in the way? Why has this not been done? Partly because of the want of the men, partly because of the want of the money. The Government is giving all the assistance the revenue will permit. I can only hope the revenue will increase.

One difficulty the farmer meets is with his labor. It is almost impossible for him to get just the labor that he wants. The Northwest has drained Ontario of its young men. Every where the farmer is crying out that he is crippled and cannot get his work done. The labor problem is acute. This must be remedied by bringing in good men, if no other solution offers.

The indifferent farmer is himself the most serious obstacle to progress in his calling. The question is how to get his attention. The Farmers' Institutes have done a great deal and the Women's Institutes are gradually inaugurating a revolution in the conditions of farm life.

The result of the opening of branch offices in the country towns, with live young men representing the Government departments, has been most encouraging, and if this new missionary movement could be started in thirty or forty centres it would bring a solution of the problem to be met.

From the men in professional and business life we ask hearty co-operation in the work. City and farm are interdependent. You are benefited as the farmer himself is benefited.