

AGRICULTURE

Past, Present and Future

By J. A. Willoughby, Toronto

Following is an address delivered to the Toronto Real Estate Board at the monthly meeting in the Albany Club, Toronto, on Tuesday, April 11th, 1944, by J. A. Willoughby, former business man, and now summer resident of Georgetown at "Oscar Crest." Mr. Willoughby is Past President of the Toronto Real Estate Board and Past Chairman of the Farm Lands and Country Estates Division of the National Association of Real Estate Boards of the United States and Canada. He is a brother of the late Hon. W. B. Willoughby, former leader of the Senate in Canada.

Gentlemen: This evening I shall base my remarks on a topic of interest to all of us, Agriculture, past, present, and future.

FOUNDERS
In dealing with the past we must picture the condition of this country when our forefathers first arrived here. These men and women left their comfortable, although in some cases, humble homes, in the Old Country, to seek their fortune in a new and unknown land. They, who possessed great courage and dauntless foresight, began the foundation of Canada's greatest backbone, Agriculture. After a tedious ocean voyage they did not find farms ready to be tilled. The great forest primeval, staunch and beautiful, met their eyes. Great hardships had to be endured while clearings were made to plant their first crops. Were there discouragements? Yes, many. They suffered privation by way of food, clothing and money, but with firm determination they began their task. The winters in Canada were so different to what they had experienced in their own land that for some time they thought of this country as a land that, for the greater part of the year, was blanketed in snow, with ice-blocked rivers and lakes, and impossible of agricultural development. Such beliefs led to hunting and trapping, the establishing of the great fur trading companies and the gradual pushing back of the frontier as the agricultural possibilities of the country became better known.

II CALEDON BOY
We may all look back with pride to the undying spirit of these people. Regardless of their discouragements and privations they still found simple pleasures. For a few minutes I would like to base my remarks on the County of Peel, where my own forefathers settled 180 years ago. This county was similar to all the others—no roads, no schools, towns or even villages. Toronto was then known as Muddy York, a small village on the shores of Lake Ontario. These settlers, brave of heart, trailed back through the forest, following a blaze on the trees. Some, thinking the land near the lake was too low, went back to higher land, as my forebears did, to Caledon Township. The size was their chief goal for beginning their work. At first they had no means of transportation, but later the oxen, two wheel carts and the odd wagon assisted them in dispos-

ing of their produce, small though it was. They began their homesteads on farms of 100 acres or more, where Indians had frequented. They felled the trees for their first log cabins, and in some cases built a stone fireplace, where many a tasty meal was cooked in an iron pot which swung from the old crane over the fire. Many were these stoves which were sold around these fireplaces. Their time for work and pleasure was governed by themselves. They awakened by sunrise, not by the startling sound of an alarm clock. Neither could they reach for an electric switch to illuminate the darkness, but depended on the old tallow candles. I have often heard my father say that his father, Captain Willoughby, often felled a tree before breakfast.

After building the log cabin, they began their task of clearing the bush. Many logging bees were followed up by breaking up the virgin soil to plant their small crops among the stumps. Many listening to my voice will have heard from their fathers and mothers of the hardships of their grandparents, getting rid of the stumps and clearing the land. There were no bulldozers or tractors to push the trees down in those days, but the simple axe felled these great trees. Later came the cross-cut saw. The work was grueling and difficult but they were undaunted. They wished to have something to keep them alive. With an ox and a primitive plough they cleared the land, which, being fertile, produced abundant grain for their needs. On cold winter days the grain was flailed, and then taken many miles to the nearest grist mill. The cow came later and butter was made. These were thrilling days of the pioneers, and many happy hours were spent in logging bees in the daytime and laughter around a bright log fire in the evening.

III THE FIRST FARMER
The first real Canadian farmer was Louis Hebert, who, in 1617, began to clear land at a spot now in the middle of Upper Town, Quebec City. His tools were an axe and a spade, but he planted field crops and apple trees. So in other Provinces each had its small beginnings and early struggles.

IV GROWTH OF AGRICULTURE
It is in the principal grain crops, especially wheat, that agricultural progress has been most remarkable. For ten years after Confederation, in 1867, the wheat crop rarely exceeded 25 million bushels, and imports of wheat and flour exceeded exports by nearly nine million bushels. The home production of wheat in those times did not suffice for domestic requirements. Later a gradual increase in production became apparent and exports began to exceed imports, until, in 1941, Canada produced 551,290,000 bushels of wheat. By referring to Canadian statistics we may more clearly realize the growth and development in Canadian agriculture. In 1890 the area under field crops in Canada was less than 16,000,000 acres. In 1941 it was over 56 1/2 million. During these years a better variety of grain, fruit and dairy products and a decided improvement in

the methods of cultivation and production are worthy of our attention. (Canadian grain growers have taken top honors at the International Grain and Hay Show in Chicago.)

The Red Flie was the principal wheat in the West. Then Dr. Saunders produced the Marquis, which was grown much further north than the Red Flie. The losses from rust were very heavy because it was so susceptible to rust as it was a very heavy type of wheat. Then science went to work and development the following varieties of wheat which are more or less resistant to rust—Thatcher, Renown, Howard, Regent, Red Bobs and Coronation.

The big enemy of the wheat grower in the West is the saw fly. At Indian Head they experimented and developed a wheat with the hope of it being resistant to the saw fly. Then pounds of this wheat is now being grown and harvested in Southern California and seed from this will be planted in the West this spring. With this new strain of wheat they hope to combat the saw fly.

EFFECT OF WAR ON AGRICULTURE

The effects of the war on Canadian agriculture have been apparent. The value of farm output has been almost doubled—from \$226,000,000 in 1939 to \$1,570,000,000 in 1942. In Eastern Canada the type of agriculture has not been changed but emphasis has been placed on a greater production of those products that were normally produced there. In Western Canada, where wheat was a specialized production, the war has put more emphasis on a general type of agriculture, including hogs, dairy and poultry products, as well as the oil producing cereals, such as flax seed. Despite the fact that so many men and women have left the farms since the war began, the average farmer is producing more than ever before. This is a true fact in every farm product—grains, vegetables, dairy products, fruits, poultry, livestock, forest products sold off farms and the products of the fur farms. The war has, naturally, brought many problems to the farmer. Greater by far, however, are the opportunities which it has offered.

MARKET

Keeping pace with the increased production have been the efforts to market, to the best advantage, the increased volume of produce. Markets that were formerly highly competitive are now being supplied almost exclusively by Canadian produce. Not only in quantity but in quality has Canada been given the opportunity to familiarize Great Britain, Europe and Asia with the products. If we are able to convince these nations that the quality will remain the same in peacetime as well as wartime, and if we can co-operate in producing more than ever before, I feel assured that we shall always have a ready market for our surplus.

VII VALUE OF GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES

Many problems will result from this increased production, but the farmers will have within their own power, and with Government assistance, the ability to safeguard their security. The soil itself must be conserved. Irrigation where necessary would be worthy of encouragement if the financial results were assured. The best breeding stock is necessary. Losses through insect pests disease and other natural causes could be avoided by educating the farmer as to the proper practices

IMMIGRATION XI

It is most probable that postwar Canada will have many immigrants from already overcrowded nations. As we know there are eleven million people occupying our country which could accommodate so many more. Our population is too small in comparison with our resources. Canada needs people. Many of these immigrants will find their own occupation. Many will be attracted to the land. If Canada encourages immigration more land will become productive. There will be a greater consumption of food products, a greater amount of produce for exporting, and a lighter burden for each Canadian.

RETURNED MEN OF THE SERVICES XII

In speaking of post-war plans, much consideration must be given to our boys in the services. What can we do for these boys who have given up so much for our freedom? They have given their services, in some cases their lives, what can we do in return? Let each one of us do everything in our power to re-establish them to a normal peaceful life. The best we have to give is love too good for them. These are the boys that made it possible that we might live. Let us give them the encouragement and assistance they will need to overcome the nervous strain they have experienced. Some who were farmers sons will return to the farms. Others who previously had other vocations will be attracted to rural life if our farms offer the peace and security they seek. Every inducement should be made to restate these returned men and encourage them to find their place in life. Personally, after much thought, I have come to the conclusion that the government would be doing a splendid thing for these returned boys if they would establish them on farms of about ten acres each. I would suggest that these farms be situated in groups of say about fifty en bloc so that a community life could be enjoyed. These farms should have well-built houses with every possible convenience, as well as any other necessary buildings.

GOVERNMENT OWNED XIII

The Government should retain the ownership of all these farms and, by renting them to the boys at about \$12 a month, or 3 per cent on a five thousand dollar investment, would assist them in re-establishing themselves financially. The farm machinery, which we all realize is a tremendous expense to the average young farmer, should also be government property. This substantial assistance alone would be most encouraging.

IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS XIV

Daily problems will arise. Here the advice of two working farm foremen with practical experience and agricultural graduates would spend all their time in assisting these young farmers to get started properly, and such assistance at the necessary time would

KEEPING THE YOUNG PEOPLE ON THE LAND IX

"Prophecy is the most gratuitous form of error." Therefore, when I speak of the future of Canadian Agriculture I am not laying a pattern of post-war plans. I strongly believe that the opportunities which will be offered to the farmers after the War will be gladly accepted. Certainly this will require much thought. Agriculture must be recognized as a basic industry. The men who labour to produce the primary products which form the raw materials for urban industries are chiefly agriculturalists. Therefore, if urban communities are to thrive, more attention must be given our rural districts. Why has there been a much greater increase in the urban population than in the rural population during the past 20 years? Could it be that farm life has appeared less attractive than city life? Keeping young men and women with intelligence and energy in the rural districts is a problem which must be solved. If better working and living conditions are found on our farms and conveniences such as the city resident takes for granted, it would not be difficult to attract our young Canadians back to the farm.

FLOOR PRICES X

Much is being said about floor prices or minimum prices for farm products. The farmer will, no doubt, welcome this security, because never before has he had a strong floor at a reasonable level for his products. The purpose, however, would be defeated if the marketing of the products is not controlled.

PLEASURE XVII

"All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." This, I believe, is one of the chief causes of our young people deserting our farms. If a scope for entertainment were provided our farm youth would not have to seek elsewhere for pleasure. There is no reason why they should not have theatres, community halls, fields for sport need. The proper educational facilities should be close at hand for their children and libraries containing up-to-date reading material.

CONCLUSION XVIII

In closing my address may I express my sincerest hope that soon, very soon, this great conflict may be over, so that we all may enjoy peace and happiness on our own beloved Canadian soil.

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