

What is commonly termed the "slump" may be not altogether without its redeeming features. It has checked the land boom with its excessive capitalization of farming property, has caused more land to be put under the plough for cropping, and has given an impetus to extended co-operation among the producing interests. In regard to the last item, important projects in co-operative marketing, &c., are now being formulated or studied. Greater efficiency, better farming, and co-operation on the part of the farming community can go a long way towards countering any vicissitudes in world trading.

A plea may be here made for a better mutual understanding between "town" and "country." Urban and rural interests are in reality interdependent, and frank discussion and study of respective viewpoints will go far to remove antagonisms. Contrary to much popular opinion, it may be fairly stated that during the war and immediate post-war period our farmers in general did not receive excessive returns from legitimate farming operations. The cause of the high cost of living, which has undoubtedly pressed on the urban population, must be looked for in other directions. As regards industry within the Dominion, while encouragement and proper support to secondary industries is desirable, it should be fully recognized that a strong maintenance of primary production must for many years to come be the leading factor in the ability of the Dominion to pay its way internationally.

An event worthy of mention is the establishment during the year of a fully organized State Forest Service, forestry being closely allied to agriculture. It is satisfactory to note that the new Department is recognizing the important auxiliary part which may be taken by private forestry and arboriculture, also the great benefit to be derived by the countryside generally from adequate shelter and wind-breaks. The dissemination of information to farmers on tree-planting and kindred operations by means of lectures, literature, &c., as well as the supply of trees at moderate rates, has been systematically undertaken by the Forest Service, and tangible beneficial results cannot fail to show themselves in the near future.

The Board of Agriculture has continued to render valuable service, many important matters having been referred to it for advice and recommendation. The joint matured experience of the Chairman and members of the Board brought to bear on difficult agricultural questions under consideration affords much assistance and support. As usual, the annual report of the Board is printed as a separate paper.

A committee, known as the Producers' Committee, was set up during the year for dealing specially with the shipping and wool questions, together with other matters affecting producers which required special attention for the time being. This committee has done good work, and its services are highly appreciated.

With reference to the activities of this Department in the wide field of agriculture during the period under review, a full presentation of the work will be found in the accompanying report of the Director-General and the various branch reports appended. I would specially endorse the remarks of the Director-General on the subject of the agricultural instruction service and practical farm-school courses. During the year a clear understanding was reached with my colleague the Minister of Education, defining the respective spheres of each of the two Departments in the matter of agricultural education. In regard to the question of experimental stations, my policy favours an extension of local subsidized farms of moderate size and well-defined scope, supervised by the Department, rather than the multiplication of necessarily more expensive full departmental establishments.

In conclusion, I may claim that the Department has set out to show the practically scientific way to success in agriculture, and I believe it is achieving its purpose. No better expression of appreciation of the work of the staff as a whole is needed on my part.

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Minister of Agriculture.