

# The Work of the Faculty of Agriculture University of British Columbia

By F. M. CLEMENT, Dean of Agriculture

Even to-day we often hear the statement expressed or implied that anyone can farm. In the main that is true, but it is seldom held, except by the inexperienced, that anyone can farm successfully. The figures illustrating the migrations of the people of Canada would seem to indicate that few can farm successfully. The figures of the Rural Life Committee of the Social Service Council of Canada seem to indicate that few are prepared to attempt farm life in Canada, as compared to other occupations. Over the last census period, approximately for every three persons born or placed on the land, one remained there and two went elsewhere. (During the last census period the farms received from natural increase and immigration, a total of 1,400,000 persons and lost by emigration, 920,000. The cities received approximately the same number and lost 368,000. Canada's total loss by emigration was 1,297,000. During the same period she received by immigration, 1,728,000). Is it not possible to make farm life more remunerative and more attractive in Canada?

Farming methods and farming conditions have changed rapidly. During the last hundred years we have made farms and subdued half a continent. The days of making farms are, in part, with us still, but in the main we are farming, as compared to making farms. We have passed largely from a self-sufficing economy to a commercial economy in fifty years and during the last twenty, and particularly during the last ten years, agriculture has been thrown into a maelstrom of commercialism based on a world economy. Whereas three generations ago the farmer produced for himself and his community primarily, today he is producing primarily for a market and for people he does not know and in whom he is not interested, except in a commercial, and possibly patriotic, sense. He is also competing with his products in the open markets of the world and because this is so, his costs of production must be as low as those of the most efficient of his competitors. He must have standard grades and qualities equal to the best and all must be merchandised in a business-like manner. He sells his products for money, usual products three or four in number, one of them his

specialty, and with the net amount of money received, purchases goods, commodities and services which go to make up his standard of living.

The farmer is doing business as a laborer, manager, capitalist and salesman (personally or through his co-operative) and as such presents a condition somewhat different from that of business, capital or labor organized separately.

The distance factor alone in agriculture, the distance from farm to farm, from neighbour to neighbour, from homestead to community centre, is such that relative isolation is the rule. Leadership must be provided and in the main the Faculty of Agriculture is attempting to do this; by personal contacts with local leaders, by addresses, press articles and bulletins and through the medium of its students, graduates, men who do work in the Faculty but do not graduate, short-course students and all others with whom the Faculty comes in contact.

The general principle of organization in the Faculty is based on a three-fold division of work: (1) experimental, research and improvement work with plants and animals; (2) teaching work with four-year students who are working toward a degree in agriculture and short-course classes made up largely of men and women with experience who wish to improve their knowledge of farming; (3) economic investigations on farms scattered throughout the Province, where farmers are co-operating with the Faculty in the attack on the main economic problems. Each farm is a field laboratory.

In the main something has been accomplished. The results of this improvement, experimental and research work have been highly gratifying; the results of extension work on the farms have been equally gratifying; the short-course work has also been satisfactory. The student attendance phase, or total registration in agriculture leading to a degree, where the public in the main has been led to look for results, has been somewhat less gratifying. The quality of the student and his accomplishments on graduation have in part made up for shortage in numbers. The student phase is one that is now receiving some careful consideration and it is felt that the situation will be met in due course

by a modification of courses that will meet the rapidly changing economic conditions in agriculture.

As indicated above, the investigational phase has already more than justified the policy. Ontario Farmers, as an example, are using strains of grains and grasses produced by the Ontario Agricultural College, to the extent of ninety per cent. of the total number of the farmers of the Province. The work in the Department of Agronomy in the Faculty of Agriculture is relatively new, but yet the improved strains are being used by increasing numbers of farmers annually. Should the farmers of this Province use the improved U. B. C. strains to as great a degree as the Ontario Farmers are using the Ontario strains, the increased value of crops, without any increased expenditure or effort, would be approximately \$480,000 per annum; an amount about equal to the Provincial appropriation for the whole University. This figure is based on an estimated increase of five per cent. only, whereas the seed referred to give increases from ten to thirty-five per cent. under experimental conditions. The work with the Kingston and Camosun Cheese in the Department of Dairying, the breeding and improvement work in Poultry and Animal Husbandry and Horticulture, as in the Department of Agronomy, are outlined with the specific intent of improving productions, efficiency and lowering the unit cost. Therein lies the main economic value of the experimental work.

The farm survey work is an economic study of farm organization and farm income extending over a period of years. What factors in farm organization should be emphasized in the interest of economy, of production, improvement of quality or for increased production of given commodities? Five years ago it was with difficulty that the co-operation of fifty-eight farmers was secured. Co-operation meant the keeping of books and records and naturally the question was asked, "What good can all this do us?" The first and second reports have been published, the number of farmers co-operating has increased to five hundred and the problem is not now to get new farmers, but to take care of the numbers who fully realize the value of the work.