

Our Land Laws

By Alex. Philip.

The Editor Fruit and Farm.

Sir,—My attention has been called to your article in last issue on this subject and to your invitation for suggestions. In the same issue I see a brief report of statements recently made by the Deputy Minister of Agriculture as to the urgent need to keep money in the province. He calls attention to the fact that we have been sending away annually over \$25,000,000 for agricultural produce which could have been raised here. If Mr. Scott were to sum up the amounts of money so exported by us during the last 25 years I think he will get a grand total of more than \$300,000,000. But that is not all. Because we sent all that money away we have had to bring in money on loan or on shares of companies at a cost to us ranging from 4 per cent. to 10 per cent. Hence we are now actually sending away from \$15,000,000 to \$18,000,000 annually by way of interest on money we should never have had to borrow. We are, therefore, burning the candle at both ends, and yet we wonder why we have hard times. If our province were not immensely rich in natural resources and possibilities it would have been bankrupt long ago through sheer folly.

We need not waste time on recriminations. It does not need much skill to diagnose the trouble. Let us try to find a cure for it. There is no good reason for this ruinous leakage being continued. The Fraser Valley alone has land of the finest quality now untilled to fill the bill if it can be utilized. It is estimated by some that only about 5 per cent. of the whole Fraser Valley is now producing crops. There is certainly not more than 10 per cent. of it so used. It has been well said that a large area of the Fraser Valley is as fertile as any land existing, and some men have been very successful as cultivators of it. Why is so much of it lying waste. After 24 years' observation I venture to give the following reasons:

mental strain palled upon him by the time he obtained title to the land, and he could not see returns to maintain a healthy family. It paid him better to sell out to the absent speculator than to cultivate it, and the land passing into that groove came to be held by owners all over the world. Some fought the battle through and made a success, but it will be found that these are mostly in groups and they have been able to form helpful combinations. Many even of these have had a very hard row to hoe. Ali honor to them.

I venture to suggest that the cure of our trouble is to be found by a larger application of the principle of combination among our farmers with the co-operation also of the Provincial Government along lines that have been fairly well proved. The following is an outline:

1. The Government must apply a measure of compulsion to cultivate, to awaken the land owners to their responsibilities. This could take the form of a special wild land tax at an acreage rate over and above the regular land tax; and it should be a higher rate on the absent owner than on the resident owner, who is gradually reclaiming and cultivating his property.

2. Compulsion to cultivate must in equity be accompanied by some reasonable assistance to comply. Here comes in the chief value and reason for the recent Government measure not yet brought into force. My suggestion is that the farmers themselves in effect carry it out. This they might do by forming in each district a Mutual Securities Corporation with a total subscribed capital of not less than \$1,000,000, of which only one-fifth need be paid up. This corporation could be managed by a board of directors appointed by the shareholders, together with one Government representative, who would have a veto power under certain conditions.

3. Vest in these directors not only powers to loan to farmers funds entrusted to



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There was neither encouragement nor compulsion to cultivate, and for the ordinary man the task was too great and the outlay necessary was greater than he had means for. The physical, aye, and the

them, but also to exercise a general supervision over farming interests in their district, with a view to better cultivation, better care of stock and better transportation and marketing facilities. They could also



Synopsis of Coal Mining Regulations

Coal mining rights of the Dominion in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, the Yukon Territory, the North-West Territory and in a portion of the Province of British Columbia, may be leased for a term of twenty-one years at an annual rental of \$1 an acre. Not more than 2,560 acres will be leased to one applicant.

Applications for a lease must be made by the applicant in person to the agent or sub-agent of the district in which the rights applied for are situated.

In surveyed territory the land must be described by sections or legal subdivisions of sections, and in unsurveyed territory the tract applied for shall be staked out by the applicant himself.

Each application must be accompanied by a fee of \$5, which will be refunded if the rights applied for are not available, but not otherwise. A royalty shall be paid on the merchantable output of the mine at the rate of five cents per ton.

The person operating the mine shall furnish the agent with sworn returns accounting for the full quantity of merchantable coal mined and pay the royalty thereon. If the coal mining rights are not being operated, such returns should be furnished at least once a year.

The lease will include the coal mining rights only, but the lessee may be permitted to purchase whatever available surface rights may be considered necessary for the working of the mine at the rate of \$10 an acre.

For full information application should be made to the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, Ottawa, or to any agent or sub-agent of Dominion lands.

W. W. CORY,

Deputy Minister of the Interior.

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