

CANADA'S OUTLOOK FOR 1909

MR. ROBERT S. GOURLAY

MR. A. D. DAVIDSON

MR. G. W. McLAUGHLIN

MR. ROBERT MUNRO

HON. D. DERBYSHIRE

MR. W. S. FISHER

MR. J. O. THORN

MR. W. M. GARTSHORE

THIS is the third and last series of letters from the leading business men of Canada as to probable conditions during the present year. The prevailing note is conservative optimism. There will be steady, if not marvellous progress.

FROM MR. ROBERT S. GOURLAY, MANAGER GOURLAY, WINTER & LEEMING, MANUFACTURERS OF PIANOS AND ORGANS, TORONTO.

Editor *Canadian Courier*:

Sir,—Answering your recent communication, I am optimistic as to the continual growth of Canada's trade, domestic and foreign, although I do not think 1909 will rank as one of Canada's big years. In my judgment, we will do well if it can be classed as an ordinarily good year.

There is yet considerable to do in collecting settlements for overdue obligations; also in closing out unprofitable accounts that during 1908 were carried because of bad market for bankrupt or other stocks; also in adjusting, re-organising and managing manufacturing and selling conditions so as to secure the best results at lowest cost, 1908 reductions in margins rendering this a necessary factor for a profitable, big business. These three conditions, with others, will necessarily act as a brake on trade during 1909.

I look for a steady and healthy development in business conditions during 1909 and if we are blest with a good, average crop this year, a much larger business in 1910.

I dread the stock speculation now so common in Canada, because it breeds a feverish, excitable business condition or atmosphere, and is often the precursor of the panics that nowadays are such a menace to steady business progress and prosperity.

Sincerely yours,

ROBT. S. GOURLAY.

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FROM MR. A. D. DAVIDSON, GENERAL AGENT, THE CANADIAN NORTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY, LAND IMMIGRATION AND INDUSTRIAL DEPARTMENTS, TORONTO.

Editor *Canadian Courier*:

Sir,—I acknowledge your recent favour. An answer was delayed on account of my absence from the city, as during the latter half of January and nearly all of February up to this moment, I spent the greater part of the time in middle Western Canada and British Columbia.

In the prairie provinces more fall ploughing was done last fall than in any prior year, consequently there will be a larger acreage sown to crops this year than ever before. The winter up to this time has been favourable, hence we have every reason to look for a large immigration from the United States during this season. This immigration brings in a lot of new money into the country. With a large immigration this year and a good fair crop business conditions ought to reach a normal stage by next fall. While the crop of 1908 was a fairly good one and prices very satisfactory, owing to the rather light crop of 1907, most of the crop of 1908 was required for liquidation purposes. In the province of British Columbia the lumber business is looking up. The demand for lumber for export has improved considerably in the past ninety days and is now selling at a price that warrants the manufacture of the same. On the whole I regard general conditions in Canada better than they were twelve months ago, but as it usually takes three years' time to recover from a panic I apprehend that it will take the greater part of 1909 before we reach normal conditions again.

Yours truly,

A. D. DAVIDSON.

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FROM MR. G. W. McLAUGHLIN, VICE-PRESIDENT, McLAUGHLIN CARRIAGE CO., OSHAWA, ONT.

Editor *Canadian Courier*:

Sir,—In reference to business prospects for 1909, in our line, that of carriage manufacturing, they are certainly much brighter than last year, and judging from reports by our various travellers and agencies from coast to coast we are of the opinion

that the year 1909 will be a first-class business year, and much better than the average for the last ten years. While trade may be somewhat spotty, owing to local conditions, over all I can see nothing whatever of a pessimistic nature confronting our country as a whole.

A very pleasing feature of the present financial situation is the ready sale that Canadian securities have met with in the old land, and it is to be hoped that our governments and authorities having these securities to market in the future will continue the policy of placing them abroad, thereby bringing into Canada money which is so much required for the further development of our vast resources.

Our business experience as a firm has extended over forty years, and I consider that conditions in our country to-day for legitimate business enterprises of all kinds are much brighter than they have ever been at any time in the past.

Yours truly,

G. W. McLAUGHLIN.

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FROM MR. ROBERT MUNRO, MANAGING DIRECTOR, THE CANADA PAINT COMPANY, MONTREAL.

Editor *Canadian Courier*:

Sir,—The year 1908 opened with a decided feeling of depression and anxiety among the industrial corporations, which led to very cautious buying. Now that the year is over, my belief is that the business done has been greater than manufacturers provided for. That sales have been larger in proportion than purchases.

The result, of course, is that stocks both of materials and manufactured goods are very much lower than a year ago. My enquiries lead me to believe that the decrease in business done has been much less than that represented by the decrease in the Dominion imports.

The consequence is that with the increased confidence existing to-day, and the reduced stocks on hand, manufacturers are already buying in a hurry, and the conditions are as different from February, 1908, as sunshine from shadow.

In the Northwest a year ago, men stood back from offering goods at most points, to-day the doubt has vanished and there is active business doing at all the main points.

Altogether Canada is better off financially than she has ever been, and while the last year of caution will continue to exercise its steadying effect, nothing can prevent 1909 being one of our best years.

Yours truly,

ROBT. MUNRO.

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FROM THE HON. DANIEL DERBYSHIRE, BROCKVILLE, AN AUTHORITY ON FARMING AND DAIRYING CONDITIONS.

Editor *Canadian Courier*:

Sir,—The farmers are the men who are developing this country. They are the people who co-operate with nature in producing products that make the people glad and that minister to their comforts. Successive years of prosperity, in which nature appeared to have done more than her share, was followed by the lean year of 1907. The pendulum appears to have swung the other way during this year, and the farmer, who is the first man hurt in hard times, is usually the last to recover when the pendulum swings back. About a year ago we were experiencing a world-wide financial depression, the stringency of the money market being almost without a parallel for many years past, yet the year 1908 just passed, caused the farmers to be more optimistic, notwithstanding the fact that their dairy products were short again as in the previous year, but for this they were in some degree compensated by better prices, and the growth of a sufficient quantity of fodder crops to feed their stock through the winter of 1907-8 without the outlay of large sums for feed as in the previous year. The lesson learned during those stringent times has been a blessing in disguise. There is now a feeling in Eastern Ontario that the panic is over and with the opening of spring a decided improvement in business will take place. There is nothing in the signs of the times at present to justify any gloomy forebodings for the present year.

Yours very truly,

D. DERBYSHIRE.

FROM MR. W. S. FISHER, OF EMERSON & FISHER, LIMITED, WHOLESALE HARDWARE, ST. JOHN, N.B.

Editor *Canadian Courier*:

Sir,—Replying to your inquiry with request for an opinion regarding the prospects for business during 1909, would say that I can see no good reason whatever to feel otherwise than very hopeful.

The business of the country is on a sound basis and steadily improving. The depression which began somewhere about a year and a half ago was the natural outcome of undue expansion and proved a wholesome check upon the wheels of industry and commerce, which were beginning to revolve too rapidly.

Since then there has been much necessary curtailment but evidences multiply that a steady improvement is going on.

No better evidence of the stability of business generally need be given than the comparatively limited list of failures and the remarkable way the stock market has advanced during the past few months.

Confidence has been restored; prices of all manufactured goods and the natural products are being well maintained; labour is becoming much more fully employed; and altogether the atmosphere has cleared to so great an extent that there would appear to be every reason on which to base a cheerful optimism as to the future.

Yours very truly,

W. S. FISHER.

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FROM MR. J. O. THORN, GENERAL MANAGER OF THE METALLIC ROOFING CO. OF CANADA, LIMITED, TORONTO.

Editor *Canadian Courier*:

Sir,—Replying to your favour of the 6th inst.: I do not know of any reason why we should not do well in Canada during 1909.

A great deal will depend upon the farm crops—no one can foresee what they will be—but even if poor in some parts of the country, they are not likely to be so in all parts, and in any event a short crop usually means higher prices.

The field crops of Canada last year were valued at over \$432,500,000.

The agricultural, mining and fishing communities generally have been and are doing well.

There will be very large expenditures for railway extensions and improvements.

The West will receive a large number of very desirable and well-to-do settlers.

Hundreds of new towns and villages are to be built.

The development of the natural resources of the country will be considerably extended.

Money is easier. Our credit is good. (We must be careful not to impair it.)

Our financial institutions have proven to be sound, well managed and have made good profits. Why should we not do well in 1909?

Yours truly,

J. O. THORN.

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FROM MR. W. M. GARTSHORE, VICE-PRESIDENT, THE M'CLARY MANUFACTURING CO., LONDON.

Editor *Canadian Courier*:

Sir,—While not desiring to set myself up as a prophet, I cannot see in the horizon any symptom of a continuance of depression in trade; quite the contrary, in my opinion, may be expected, perhaps deferred until the crop of 1909 may be assured.

For the past year, either from necessity or choice, the public have been as a rule, economical, buying only what they absolutely needed; merchants have been reducing their stocks, and making collections; manufacturers have been shortening sail, all of which indicates that as soon as purchasing commences, there should be a good demand all along the line, and merchants will be found not to be overstocked. The requirements will be reflected through the regular channels, making the wholesaler and manufacturer and mechanic busy in turn.

Money is easy where security is satisfactory; prices of farm products are good, and the farming community as a whole have had a good year, a great deal of money having been put into circulation, particularly in the West, so I see nothing but hopefulness in the situation, and improved conditions—slow perhaps, and somewhat deferred, but sure.

Yours truly,

W. M. GARTSHORE.