Commission of Conservation

CANADA

SIR CLIFFORD SIFTON
Chairman

JAMES WHITE
Assistant to Chairman and Deputy Head

CONSERVATION is published about the first of each month. Its object is the dissemination of information relative to the natural resources of Canada, their development and the proper conservation of the same, together with timely articles covering town-planning and public health.

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In time of war prepare for peace. This is Canada's duty at the present time.

The spreading of wood ashes upon land has beneficial effect upon the soil, the potash content being an excellent fertilizer.

The protection of the forest cover of the watersheds of Canadian waterways is so important as to affect the interests of every inhabitant of this country.

It is not too early to make plans for cultivating the vacant spaces and unoccupied land of our cities and towns. There will be need of all the produce that can be grown this year.

The terminal safety committee of the Intercolonial railway at Halifax, in their report of four months' operation, show that they have corrected 207 unsafe physical conditions and have warned against or corrected 73 unsafe practices. Safety work on the government railway is making rapid headway under an energetic safety engineer.

Exports of Canadian manufactures for the year 1913 were $43,966,733. It is an axiom in manufacturing that the larger the output the less the proportionate cost. If Canadians, by purchasing made-in-Canada goods, enable Canada's manufacturers to increase their output to the extent of 50% of her imports, it would permit such a reduction in their manufacturing costs as to give them a greater opportunity of meeting competition in the markets of the world. This would again call for the employment of more Canadians and the further use of Canada's raw material.

GOOD ROADS

The campaign for good roads being carried on throughout Canada is only part of the general awakening of the people to the causes which have led to the enormous increase in the prices of the necessaries of life. That the transportation problem is all-important for the farmer-producer is without question. That he may at all seasons reach his markets at a minimum of time and expense is a necessary factor in the making of reasonable prices for his products. For the consumer, good roads have an advantage in the fact that by enabling the farmers to reach the markets in greater numbers, the supplies of produce will be larger, and competition will be keener. A further consequence of this larger attendance will be that more attention will be paid to the condition of the produce offered by those displaying it for sale.

In the present campaign for increased production, good roads will play an important part. Motor transportation is being rapidly developed and utilized by the farmers. By this means greater distances can be covered and farmers at a considerable distance from markets, with the advent of better roads, will be able to bring their produce to the consumer in larger quantities and at less expense.

There are probably 10[illegible] boys and girls from 14 to 16 ye[illegible] of age, who, every year, enter some trade, such as manufacturing, agriculture, mining or transportation. Our present general scheme of education is not for these masses, but for the classes, and from every source of information we learn that the old apprentice has passed, so now education must take its place.—Rhys D. Fairbairn, President, Ontario Technical Education Association, at 1915 Annual Meeting of Commission of Conservation.

INTENSIVE CULTIVATION—ITS RELATION TO THE FARM LABOUR PROBLEM

The development of a more intensive cultivation must carry with it a much more careful consideration of the labour problem. The difficulty of getting and keeping labour on the farm is a commonplace. I think farmers have not faced the fact that this difficulty is due in the main to their own way of doing their business. Competent men will not stay at farm labour unless it offers them continuous employment as part of a well-ordered business concern; and this is not possible unless with a greatly improved husbandry.

To-day agriculture has to compete in the labour market against other, and to many men more attractive, industries, and a marked elevation in the whole standard of life in the rural world is the best insurance of a better supply of good farm labour. Only an intensive system of farming can afford any large amount of permanent employment at decent wages to the rural labourer, and only a good supply of competent labour can render intensive farming on any large scale practicable. But the intensive system of farming not only gives regular employment and good wages; it also fits the labourer of to-day—in a country where a man can strike out for himself—to be the successful farmer of to-morrow. Nor, in these days of impersonal industrial relations, should the fact be overlooked that under an intensive system of agriculture, we find still preserved the kindly personal relation between employer and employed which contributes both to the pleasantness of life and to economic progress and security.—*Sir Horace Plunkett in The Rural Life Problem of the United States.*

SAFETY LIGHTS

The use of matches and candles, etc., by repair men in making alterations or repairs in buildings is a dangerous practice. Numerous fires have been started by their use, and one of the most serious of recent fire losses is charged to the use of a candle to supply light while changing a gas meter. The gas pipe was broken, the gas caught fire from the lighted candle, and caused a loss to property of over $150,000. For work of the above nature, the use of the storage battery electric lamp is strongly advocated. It is portable, the light is ample, and it is safe even amidst dangerous gases.

Fresh vs. Stale Fish

Fresh fish is an exceedingly perishable food product. Even when reasonable care has been taken by the packers and dealers, such fish will frequently deteriorate rapidly.

It has been scientifically demonstrated that the toxic or poisonous elements formed in decomposing fish, greatly exceed those produced in the flesh of warm-blooded animals. Further, these are usually most dangerous in the early stages of decomposition. Consequently the need for extra precautions in the selection of fresh fish is plain. The following points are worth remembering when purchasing fish.

Dead fish are unfit for food:

(1) When the eyes have lost their sheen and have become cloudy.

(2) When the red gills have become pale.

(3) When the flesh has become soft so as to pit if pressed with the finger.

(4) When the scales are easily loosened.

(5) When the fish will float on water.

Obviously all these tests cannot be applied to all fish that are offered for sale in the market stalls, but some of them can, and the householder would do well to apply them before purchasing fish.—*A.D*

Production of Flax Fibre

Increased Growth and Improved Methods Required

The linen industry in Ireland and Scotland is in danger as a consequence of the war. Much of the raw material, flax fibre, has come from Belgium, France and Russia, and these sources of supply are, for the time being, closed. Representatives from the large mills of Great Britain have recently visited Canada in an endeavour to enlist the co-operation of farmers in a greater production of flax.

Here is an opportunity to develop the industry in this country, and by modern methods of production and handling, put it on a basis that will make it profitable under normal conditions and prices.

Flax for fibre can be grown in Canada wherever mixed farming can be carried on. In some parts of Quebec and in Western Ontario, from the days of early settlement, flax has been grown and home-made into linen. In only a few sections of Ontario in 1904 some 700 tons of fibre were produced, which sold for $201 per ton. This fibre was of a poor commercial grade, owing to antiquated methods of preparation for spinning. A shipment to Belfast produced by slightly improved methods sold for $240 per ton. The average price for Irish flax fibre during the last five years has been $325 per ton, while Belgian flax has averaged $405 per ton. It is obvious that Canadian flax should supply the present deficiency and future requirements of the Empire's raw material for linen production, and that more remunerative prices will be received if improved methods of production are employed.

The average acre of flax grown for fibre, under normal market conditions, and using the new process, would yield at least $45.00 worth of fibre and seed worth $13.00, making a total of $58.00. This is about three times the usual export value of an acre of wheat. It will be three years at least before normal conditions can again be expected, and during this time higher prices are likely to prevail. The area in flax (mainly for seed) in Canada, in 1913, was 1,552,800 acres and, in 1914, 1,084,000 acres. This shows a decided decrease and it also shows that what is needed in Canada is a practical method of producing fibre.

Information regarding the growing of flax for seed and fibre purposes is contained in bulletin No. 59 of the Central Experimental Farm which can be had by applying to the Department of Agriculture, Ottawa.

Thoughtlessness is the cause of a great proportion of the accidents which result in the personal injury or death of employees.