

stimulus to increased production. The increased production we would get would justify very generous and sympathetic consideration of this question by the Government of this country. It is three years since I first brought this matter up. The Minister of Agriculture in his statement to the House last year said that he had listened with a very great deal of interest to my suggestion that demonstration mills should be placed in districts that were producing large quantities of fibre, but he was going to carry on experiments for another year at the mill at the Central Farm. I must say in all frankness and sincerity, so far as improved methods of retting are concerned we are not one whit further advanced to-day than we were a year ago. We knew just as much two years ago as we do at the present time, and no matter what information the mill may have gained, the people in the West have not got the benefit of it. It is unfortunate that at the present time there is not a proper appreciation of the value to the Civil Service and the country of technical men with scientific knowledge. I wanted a member of the Department of Agriculture the other day to attend a flax association meeting in London, and I called up Mr. Archibald at the Central Farm. I was told that Mr. Hutchinson, the Chief of the Fibre Department, had to be retained in Ottawa to attend a very important gathering last week of the deputy ministers of agriculture of the different provinces. I appreciated that it was more important that he should attend that meeting than the one at London, but nevertheless the London meeting was an important one too. Mr. Archibald told me that his assistant was leaving. I asked "What is the matter? Isn't he a good man?" "He is an A-1 man," he replied, "and has given good service." "Then why are you letting him go?" I asked. "We cannot hold him," he replied, "he has better inducements elsewhere." Here was an efficient man in this important department drawing a paltry salary of \$1,500 or \$1,600. He resigned his position to take employment in a little flax mill up in the town of Goderich, which mill had only 400 acres under cultivation, but was able to pay him a larger salary than his chief at the Farm was getting. How long shall we be able to hold our technical officers if this is to continue? These technical men are necessary to the development of the industries of this country, but the Civil Service Commission just fix what they think should be the maximum salary for the position, and I don't know but what the chances are that when

they advertise for a chemist they get a blacksmith. There is not a proper appreciation of the importance of the technical chiefs of departments. I am not referring to the Department of Agriculture alone, but to the Mines and other departments. Day by day and week by week valuable men are being lost to the public service because private industry can afford to pay a better salary than the Government offers these technical men. This is a serious situation. Men with their knowledge and experience are not made in a day. It takes years of experience and training, and men with this knowledge and training are of incalculable value to the country at the present time. I direct the attention of the Government to the seriousness of the situation and urge upon them, before it is too late, to put a check upon this waste of important skilled and technical experts in the department. We should hold these men if we desire to make any progress.

I must apologize to the House for the length of time it has taken me to present this subject to hon. members. I am persistent in pressing this matter from year to year, and it seems that by degrees a few crumbs are being thrown out as a result of representations that were made by the flax growers some four years ago. There has not been a step taken by the Government in the development of this industry that was not recommended in 1915 by the flax growers of Ontario. Step by step the value of their recommendations is being realized, but in my opinion if the whole subject had been vigorously prosecuted in the year 1915 and adequate steps taken to develop this industry the economic value to this country in fibre produced would have represented hundreds of millions of dollars. Now, Sir, I do appeal to the Minister of Agriculture to discuss the matter seriously with those in his department in whom he reposes confidence and who advise him in these matters. The flax growers at a meeting last week in London pressed for the same thing for which I am here urging. Mr. Fraleigh, President of the Flax Growers' Association, in 1915 asked for precisely what I am now demanding. Although I do not say that we should do away with the existing mill, I submit that when ninety-five per cent of the fibre produced in Canada to-day is four hundred miles away from this mill, and some more than that distance, it is obvious that either the mill should be put to work where it can serve the interests of all, or another one should be established which would be an aid as well as a demon-