

The Farmer's Advocate and Home Magazine

PERSEVERE
AND
SUCCEED

ESTABLISHED
1866

REGISTERED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COPYRIGHT ACT OF 1875

LII.

LONDON, ONTARIO, OCTOBER 18, 1917.

1308

EDITORIAL.

Canada needs a national spirit.

The careless plowman grows poor and dirty crops.

Get better acquainted with your neighbors—co-operate.

Let no man induce you to part with your best breeding stock.

The dominion of the sword can never establish permanent peace.

In saving this year's crop don't forget 1918 needs. Home-grown seed gives best results.

Do you vote a certain ticket because "Father did", or because you have reasoned out the merits of the case?

Professional politicians are not the kind the country needs. Real business men who have come up from the ranks are safer.

In the election campaign have you decided whether your candidates and their electioneers are of the win-the-war or win-the-election party?

They tell us that the election is coming in January. Now we are sure of a January thaw. No election could be considered a success without some mud to sling.

When the producer of any product of the farm gets only one-third of the price paid by the ultimate consumer for that product there is something radically wrong with the system of distribution.

Will the nations ever see that the only wealth is life, and that war is nothing but a great destroyer? Perhaps they will get their lesson before the present conflict ceases. If so, it will not have been in vain.

It is strange the amount of money promoters of questionable propositions collect so easily from the public at a time when money can be safely invested in war bonds with absolute security and free from taxation.

Up to date we haven't noticed any of those immaculately dressed people, who hold down comfortable, tilting chairs five or six hours a day and call it work, and who for pastime call the farmer the real profiteer—the only man making money to-day, etc.—discarding their silk shirts and creased trousers for the dark-colored print shirt and the stove-pipe legged overalls of the farmer. If there is 100 per cent. profit in growing No. 1 hard wheat and carrying big buckets of swill and chop to hungry hogs and feeding the dairy cow so that she produces an abundance of lacteal fluid, why not a bee line for the farm? The truth is that those who know so much that has no foundation in fact about the farmer's business, and write and talk about it as profiteering in food-stuffs, also know that growing wheat, pitching hay, feeding pigs, milking cows and all farm work is a real man's job, and the returns for that work, owing largely to the number of parasites with which our economic system has been laden, have not been high enough to be considered a respectable income for a man with ability to properly operate a farm. There is plenty of land in Canada. The farmer extends an invitation. If any there be who think the city dweller has the worst of the deal, to him the man on the land says: "Stop talking; come over and help us produce. We are willing to let you try your hand at making 100 per cent. profits on the farm."

Let us Reason Together.

City dwellers are beginning to call the farmer the "real food profiteer" and at the same time they are hoping deep down in their hearts that the man on the land will get a big acreage ready for crop next year, and will so plant that his acres yield abundantly. It is poor encouragement for the producer of food products to have consumers forever railing at him and we have noted that a few are beginning to show signs of souring on the whole production propaganda. It has reached the stage where some of the agricultural leaders in our Agricultural Departments should get busy and through a campaign of education in the daily press show farming in its true light to city readers. The farmer is blamed for everything in connection with high prices which are demanded for the produce of his land before it reaches the consumers.

Consider Distribution.

This brings up the main point for consideration in connection with food prices—the point upon which the Food Controller might profitably spend most of his time, viz., distribution. The Food Controller is primarily interested not in price fixing, but in equalizing and if possible regulating and improving distribution so that all may have enough and nothing will waste. We have heard consumers say this autumn that the price of \$1.25 per bag, which the Food Controller at time of writing seems to favor for potatoes, was altogether too high. Some of the retailers on the other hand have been arguing that the retailer should get at least 25 cents per bag for distributing the potatoes. Then the wholesaler wants 20 cents per bag, the loader and shipper 10 cents, and another 10 cents is allowed for shrinkage in transit. This means that if the consumer buys his potatoes from the retailer after they have gone through the usual channels on the way to the table, and he pays \$1.25 per bag, the grower will get 60 cents and the handlers 65 cents. And yet the farmer is called the profiteer, while in reality over fifty per cent. of the high price goes toward distribution.

In the fall of 1916 the farmers of Canada sold their wheat for an average of \$1.35 to \$1.40 per bushel, and afterwards it went up to over \$3 and the farmer was believed by those who had no opportunity of studying the question to be the food profiteer.

Going back to the potato question. We would have no quarrel with the food authorities if they set the price of potatoes at \$1.25 per bag this year, but the grower should get the bulk of this as those city folks who have worked vacant lots and planted them to potatoes this year well know. We know one man who paid \$4 for seed to plant a lot, \$3 for plowing and cultivating it before planting, and, to allow nothing for the labor of hoeing and use of land, he was out \$7, and his best estimate of yield was 10 bags. He spent at least two days hoeing and something like 60 cents for Paris green. Allow him \$1.50 per day for hoeing and 40 cents for use of land, and his potatoes cost him \$11. At \$1.25 per bag they would be worth \$12.50. They paid the city grower because he cultivated the lot for patriotic reasons—to increase production and help the Empire. He hoped to break even on cost and he did. But suppose he had to take 60 cents per bag for those potatoes and let them go through all the various hands to the consumer, would he feel much like increasing the size of his lot next year? Not likely. He grew potatoes in his spare time. They did not interfere with his regular work and wage. The farmer grows foodstuffs for a living and he has no spare time. He deserves more than 50 per cent. of what his products are worth when they reach the consumer and unless he gets it there will be increased trouble in maintaining production.

Milk is a case in point. The producer of milk very often gets less than 50 per cent. of the price the consumer pays for one of the most essential foods of the race.

Think of it; our elaborate yet bungling and expensive system of distribution costs more than the whole system of production, including land, cows, feed, labor, machinery, etc. Small wonder the farm boy would rather drive a delivery wagon in the city than pail cows on the farm. In some cities it has been found that the farmers only got 33 per cent. of the price the consumer paid for milk, and yet we hear that the farmer is the real food profiteer.

Producers and Others.

Food Controller Hanna found that in Toronto in 1910 there were 30,000 actual producers of goods, including producers of luxuries, while the balance of 100,000 wage earners were either servants, professional men, or middlemen—non-producers. This means that 30 out of every 130 were producers; three out of thirteen, or, in other words, of every thirteen men you meet on city streets three are producers and ten non-producers of goods. The ten live on the three and all on the farmer. At the present time you will find most of these city dwellers calling middlemen robbers and farmers food profiteers, when in reality the bulk of them live through the operations of middlemen and are directly or indirectly responsible for no inconsiderable portion of the high cost of living. Just as soon as a community carries too high a proportion of non-producers, just so soon must the cost of the necessities of life advance, for the bulk are merely handlers and distributors, each living on the "profit" made by handling, not by producing. And yet the majority of these call the farmer the real food profiteer.

Education Necessary.

The problem is one of education and distribution. The farmer must learn to co-operate and cut out the dealers on his end of the game. The city dwellers are a more difficult problem. They have become accustomed to being waited upon. They want everything handy and delivered in the best of order. Ten out of every thirteen of them are engaged in seeing that something that someone else produced reaches in good form someone who has use for it. It is a pretty stiff job to convince the majority of them that they are at the wrong job in the interests of national economics, but gradually a few will learn the lesson and every little will help. But in the meantime if they know what is best for themselves and the country they will stop their talk about the farmer—the man who has stepped into the breach and is doing his part to feed the world, both producers and others. Farmers have overlooked a great number of ill-advised statements and have taken more than their share of abuse. They cannot be expected to stand silently by and be imposed upon as a result of the claims of city people who do not or will not understand. The farmer farms as a business, not simply as a means of keeping other people in a good job and their tables well set. This must be remembered and the harder it is made for the farmer to make a reasonable profit on the farm, the harder it will be for the city dweller to get enough to give him a respectable living. Hard times for the farmer will be hard times all around and the man in town will then feel the pinch the worst.

To the producer then we say grow the best and turn off the finished product through a local organization, and sell as directly as possible. To the consumer the problem is a get-together one. Form organizations and buy from the producers' organizations direct. If necessary, as it will be if properly handled, both producers' and consumers' organizations should engage competent men as managers to handle the goods. This will reduce the amount of needless overlapping in distribution. Such a move would help. Consumers and producers dealing directly with one another would get better acquainted and would soon show a better feeling, which would be of mutual benefit.