

Coming to labor, the article says:

Where he paid \$1.50 per day five years ago, he now pays \$3.00. As a matter of fact, authentic statistics show he pays less than \$2.00, excluding board.

It would be interesting to know more about the sources of the figures used in the article in question, especially those "authentic statistics" of farm wages. There is not room here to go into that matter at length; we must be content merely to mention, in passing, the figures given by John Glambeck, of Milo, Alta., regarding machinery prices, wages, and other elements in the increased cost of production, which were set forth in The Guide of last week. To quote a few sentences:

In the district where I live, the lowest rate a farm hand will work for is \$40 per month and board, while quite a few are receiving \$100. Before the war you could buy a binder for \$190 on three years' payment. Today a binder costs from \$250 to \$300 and cash at that. You could buy the best seed drill on the market a few years ago for \$140. Today they cost from \$200 to \$300, and still going up. Plows, harrows, packers, mowers, rakes, wagons and every possible piece of machinery the farmer needs to raise his wheat have nearly doubled in price. Binder twine used to cost 10 cents per pound; this year it is between 25 and 30 cents.

But let us return to the article in The Monetary Times, which meanwhile, has hastened to this conclusion:

If he raises 1,000 bushels of wheat and nothing else, the additional cost for labor would be \$135, and for machinery \$120. That

would be equal to exactly 135 cents per bushel on account of labor and 12 cents per bushel on account of machinery, or 251 cents for both. It is an extravagant allowance; yet his situation is by no means distressing, inasmuch as he now receives at least \$1.20 more for his wheat than he did in 1914.

The same argument applies to oats. In other words, the advance in market price compensates him for his additional cost of production and leaves him with a margin of 94 cents per bushel of wheat to the good. If he raised 2,000 bushels of wheat his profit would be proportionately larger. Without going into the calculation as it applies to all other farm products let it be said at once that his betterment is in the same ratio. The consumer pays the whole of it.

Without at all questioning the entire honesty of the writer of the article in The Monetary Times, J. L. Payne, Comptroller of Statistics, Department of Railways and Canals, at Ottawa, it is to be pointed out that his method of making a per-bushel estimate of the cost of producing wheat is fallacious. It is a striking example of the manner in which a statistician can do his figuring in a vacuum, so to speak, and emerge from his ingenious and painstaking labors with conclusions which are more illusions than realities.

It is practically impossible to make a just and accurate per bushel estimate of the cost of growing wheat. How can any statistical estimate take into account the differences in conditions in different districts, and in different parts of the same district, including not alone differences in the soil, but drought,

hail, rust, excessive rain, frost, and other climatic mischances? Two farmers, a few miles apart, may have equal acreages in crop, at equal costs; one may get 30 bushels per acre, and the other's crop may amount to a total averaging only 10 bushels per acre. Even the elementary class in arithmetic can see that the cost per bushel of producing wheat on the latter farm is three times greater than the cost on the other farm. Of what use would it be to average the cost of the two?

The writer of the article in The Monetary Times spreads the machinery costs over 20 years, but takes no account whatever of the crop vicissitudes from year to year. If every grain grower could crop his whole acreage every year, instead of having to summerfallow one-third of it (and spend nearly as much labor on his acres in fallow as on his acres in crop), and if he got 25 bushels regularly every year from every acre, without fail, he would be abundantly prosperous. If he got 20 bushels, without ever a crop failure, he would be doing very well, indeed. But the only place such crops are grown is in the mind of the statistician or the eastern corner window investigator.

Curiously enough, there is in the same number of The Monetary Times another article, to which we would direct the attention of the writer of the article from which we have been quoting. The other article is by Neville Cumming, secretary of Agriculture in Nova Scotia and principal of the Agricultural College at Truro, and deals with the problem of putting farming on a better basis by means of "long-term farm loans with the smallest possible interest charges." Principal Cumming cites various surveys made in many parts of both Canada and the United States, with a view to ascertaining "the labor income—by which is meant the amount left after the farmer has paid interest on the investment and all business expenses." There is space here only to quote the fact that "the figures indicate that the average net annual labor income of farmers on this continent is between \$300 and \$400."

Conference Postponed

The project of a conference this fall between representatives of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association and the Canadian Council of Agriculture has been postponed indefinitely. When the suggestion was first made, the idea was that such a conference might be arranged to take place in Winnipeg towards the end of this month, or early next month. The indefinite postponement is the result of later interchanges of opinion which have made it plain that no outcome satisfactory and advantageous to the country as a whole could be looked for from another such meeting between the representatives of the farmers and the representatives of the manufacturers as took place four years ago.

There is now under discussion the suggestion made by the secretary of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association that there should be some preliminary exchange of visits between representatives of the Western farmers and representatives of the Eastern manufacturers.

The terms of two of the members of the Board of Railway Commissioners of Canada are soon to expire. Which reminds us that neither the farmers nor the labor interests are represented in the membership of that body. Surely the Canadians who provide most of the freight the railways carry and the Canadians who actually operate the railways should have representatives on the Board.



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