

**Farmers' Institutes in Ontario.**

Farmers' Institutes in Ontario were founded by Dr. James Mills in November, 1884. Ever since that time Mr. Mills has been the central figure around which all the workers have clustered.

In an able paper read before the last meeting of the Central Institute, Dr. Mills gave a concise history of Institute work in Ontario. In this paper is also given much good advice, which should be put into practice by those interested.

It is doubtless true that many farmers have been instructed and inspired by the work already done, and that the Province at large has been benefitted, for which Mr. Mills and his fellow-workers deserve much credit. The work heretofore accomplished has been almost altogether a sort of college extension. In other words, the Agricultural College and its teachers have been taken to the homes of the farmers; they and their sons have been instructed in scientific and advanced modes of agriculture. In some places the recipients have been willing to sit with their hands clasped, and virtually say to the lecturers: "Go ahead; let us see what you can do, and how you do it." In many districts little discussion has been provoked, and apparently little interest awakened. Frequently the attendance at these meetings is small—so small and so lukewarm that several of the best men engaged as lecturers have been disheartened.

In the issue of the FARMER'S ADVOCATE for Feb. 15th, page 67,

**MR. CHAS. RUTLEDGE**

writes as follows:—"From personal observation of a number of Farmers' Institute meetings held this winter, I have noticed a great lack of interest in them. At Drumbo, in North Oxford, there were three meetings held on January 3rd, 1894. The average attendance there was about twenty-five, the discussions of little interest; the farmers did not turn out and take an interest in them as they should have done. With such well-known and eminently successful and practical men to address them as Hon. Chas. Drury and Mr. Simpson Rennie, the farmers did not turn out; neither the president nor secretary of the institute was there, and I venture to say not a member of the institute was there either, but the meeting was not allowed to fall through for want of a chairman, as one was chosen.

"At Freeport the meeting was fair, but there was not that depth of interest that there should have been; the farmers did not enter into the discussions with a spirit which would show that they were alive to the importance of the occasion. The great majority were content to sit and listen to the few who tried to make the meeting interesting. And the meeting for the evening would not have been attended by half as many but for the music so ably rendered by the Harris family, which certainly was a drawing card.

"At Milton the meeting in the afternoon did not speak well for the farmers of Halton; they did not turn out in the numbers that they should have, with such an able man as John Dicken for president. It was hard work to keep up the interest. There are many institutes which require the greatest exertion on the part of a few heroic workers to keep alive. I might mention North Waterloo as one. This is one of the best farming districts in Western Ontario, yet North Waterloo Institute has only a membership of about fifty-four, and there is talk of disbanding it; but the heroes will not give up the ship without another struggle, and I see another Scot in harness struggling hard for the life of his institute. In other parts I find that institute meetings are not at all successful; the lecturers sent to them are very capable men, well qualified for the work, and it certainly must try the patience of these gentlemen to take the platform and address a small and half-interested crowd, when the hall should be packed with a live audience who would enter into the spirit of this good work with a will."

Most of the local institutes are visited but once a year, by a staff sent out by Dr. Mills. Enthusiasm, if awakened, soon dies for lack of food, as the attention of the director ceases as soon as this yearly meeting is over. This system does more to advertise the O. A. C. than to keep local institutes in vigorous life.

Mr. J. W. Wheaton, Secretary of the Western Dairymen's Association, and Mr. Robt. Robertson, a brother of Prof. J. W. Robertson, Dominion Dairy Commissioner, have recently been addressing meetings of dairymen in various parts of Western Ontario. After returning from Dunnville, in Monk Co., they reported that they had found their work impeded because the residents of the vicinity thought they were delegates sent to address Farmers' Institutes, which the residents informed the speakers were not successful in that district. Mr. Robertson and Mr. Wheaton found that the lack of interest in institute work had been an actual injury to their cause. These gentlemen report the same conditions existing in Shelburne, Grey Co. Similar reports from other districts reach us. We do not for a moment suppose that there are no institutes doing good work; there are many doing excellent work, yet there are many others simply existing.

**WHAT CAUSES THIS DIFFERENCE?**

Simply this: the local talent in one section has been developed, and the work has been kept alive throughout the year; in the other it has not. The development of home talent depends almost altogether upon the officers of the local institutes, especially upon the secretary. Lecturers sent from the college will do good; but the hearty co-operation of successful men, residents in the riding, will do more. The man who is a little in advance of his fellows is the one from whom the average farmer will learn most, and who will have the greatest influence over him—not only in instructing him, but in bringing him out. After he has been interested and awakened, then the work of the professor and scientist will tell. The practical man and the professor must go hand in hand; but successful farmers must be always in the majority as instructors, if we wish to interest and instruct the

rank and file, or if we wish to enjoy the support and co-operation of the masses. Unless we can interest the masses we cannot instruct them.

A very able article, written by Mr. Richard Gibson, Delaware, Ont., is published in the issue of the FARMER'S ADVOCATE for March 1st, page 84. The writer fearlessly contrasts institutes in Wisconsin and Ontario, and sums up as follows:—

"On the whole, they beat us, because better organized; are accomplishing more, because they employ men specially fitted for the purpose. They also appear to interest the people locally better than we, or at any rate they succeed better in getting out a larger attendance.

"We depend upon our Principal at Guelph College to arrange our programme and attend to all details, when he has already quite sufficient to do. We also practically close the college at Guelph just when students from the country could most profitably occupy themselves and learn the lessons of most value. Again, the young men sent from college have no weight, and more than one is a drawback.

"To sum up, I would say, that in Wisconsin they are doing a better work than we, for the following reasons:—

"1st. They succeed in bringing out a much better audience.

"2nd. They do this without stopping any of the college machinery.

"3rd. They employ and will pay men specially adapted to the work, fully endorsing what I always maintain, that a low-priced man is always a dear one.

"4th. Better organization, the commander of each corps being assigned to the district to which he is specially adapted—a dairyman to a dairy district, etc.

"I like our system of making members, as it only costs 25 cents; it works no hardship, but at the same time I think the local president ought to make way for the expert."

As conducted at present the Ontario Institute system resembles a cow fed on starvation rations, given enough to keep her alive, but not enough to return to her owner a handsome profit.

The following are the REGULATIONS GOVERNING INSTITUTES AND INSTRUCTIONS TO INSTITUTE PROMOTERS.

"The Ontario Legislature has voted an appropriation of \$2,125 for Farmers' Institutes, for a grant of \$25 to one institute in each electoral district, on condition that an equal sum be granted by the county council, or the municipality in which the institute is organized, and on such further conditions as may be imposed by regulations of the Minister of Agriculture. The grant to each institute is payable subject to the following conditions and regulations approved by the Minister:—

"1. That one institute may be organized in each electoral district of the province, exclusive of cities.

"2. That each institute shall be composed of not less than fifty members, who shall each pay a fee of not less than twenty-five cents annually.

"3. That there shall be an Executive, or Board of Management, consisting of a President, a Vice-President, a Secretary and a Treasurer, and five or more Directors, and the majority of the Board shall be practical farmers.

"4. That the institute shall hold at least two meetings each year, in different municipalities of the electoral district, for the discussion of agricultural subjects.

"5. That a sum not less than the Government grant shall be voted to each institute by the council of the county, or by the municipalities in which the electoral district is situated.

"6. That the institute year shall begin July 1st, and end June 30th.

"7. That a list of officers elected, a list of all paid-up members, with their occupations and post office addresses, and a detailed financial statement, shall be furnished each year to the Department of Agriculture in such form as the Minister of Agriculture may prescribe.

"8. That a written or printed report of all meetings held by the institutes shall be furnished each year to the Department of Agriculture; and also, when so desired, copies of any papers read before the institute, which may be published as the Minister of Agriculture or judges appointed by him may decide.

"The number of meetings of an institute may be as many as the officers and members may see fit to hold during the year, but in order to secure the grant there shall be held at least two meetings for the discussion of agricultural subjects. Communications requesting the attendance of Professors of the Agricultural College at meetings of institutes should be addressed to Dr. James Mills, President, Agricultural College, Guelph.

"The secretaries are particularly requested to send to the Department the names and post office addresses of all members immediately upon receiving their subscriptions. Any changes of address or any failure to receive the bulletins and reports of the Agricultural Department should be immediately reported. The names of all officers and directors should be included in the list of members, and the names should be arranged alphabetically. The list of members may be sent in at any time, the financial statement and reports of meetings at the end of the year (June 30th). In making out reports of meetings, please keep reports of different meetings on separate sheets.

"Blanks for reports of meetings, financial statements, and lists of members, may be had from C. C. James, M. D., Deputy Minister, Toronto, to whom prompt notice of the organization of an institute should be forwarded by the secretary."

**PRESENT GOVERNMENT GRANTS TO INSTITUTES.**

Grants to eighty-five institutes (\$25 each)	\$ 2,125 00
Grants to Central Institute	1,200 00
Services of lecturers	1,336 05
Travelling expenses of lecturers	1,854 47
Miscellaneous	166 21
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 6,681 73</b>

To the above should be added the County grants to eighty-five institutes (\$25 each) 2,125 00

Which shows the total amount given last year by the Government and County Councils in aid of this work to be \$ 8,806 73

According to the Regulations and Instructions printed in this article last year, there must have been at least 4,250 members of institutes who paid a yearly fee of 25c. each. This would give \$1,062.50 collected from the people and devoted to institute work; but basing our calculations on the financial statement given in the last Annual Report of Farmers' Institutes of the Province of Ontario, there were last year 21,275 members, whose fees amounted to 5,318 75

Add this last sum to the grants given by the Government and the County Councils, and we have the total sum received last year by officers of the Institute. \$11,125 48

We submit that the results might be materially increased for the money annually expended, and that a progressive step might now be taken. We do not intimate that Dr. Mills has not wrought well. Certainly he has done much good, and laid the foundation of a great future work. With his manifold duties, it is impossible for him to direct

the work better than he has done. Again we repeat: Mr. Mills has rendered noble service, but his time has been divided. The presidency of a college, such as the O. A. C., is enough for one man, to say nothing of the various departments of the Experimental Farm, the Dairy School and the Summer School for Teachers. The duties devolving on him at Guelph should absorb the Doctor's attention; he should not be asked to control other departments. Past experience at Guelph proves that the President's undivided attention is required there. All who have read the Provincial Press during the last year must be impressed with this fact. Any casual observer can see that Dr. Mills is overtaxed. He is too good a man to sacrifice to the demon overwork, even if he could control both college and institute work, but we are convinced that even he cannot do this. Since the inauguration of institutes, the college has been closed for a month at Christmas. It is true no Easter vacation is now granted. There never should have been one, nor should the college ever have been closed for more than a week at Christmas. It is hoped that the sons of Canadian farmers may continue to fill each room at Guelph. The time of such men is valuable; they can be best spared from home during the winter months. If their college studies occupy no more time than students now spend at Guelph, it would be infinitely better to close the college one month earlier in the spring and teach the entire winter period. In Minnesota and Wisconsin the institutes are more successfully conducted than in Ontario. In neither is the college staff weakened, nor a month of the student's time lost in winter. Heretofore Dr. Mills has been expected to look after the institutes on the score of economy. This has been false economy, for both the college and the institutes have suffered, and Dr. Mills has been overtaxed. We recognize the fact that the President is a master mind, yet we maintain that there is quite enough work at Guelph, or as a director of institutes, to occupy one man's attention. Under existing conditions, part of President Mills' salary is chargeable to institute work, though the college has been charged with it all. If the institutes were charged with their just share of his salary, the total cost to the country would be shown to be about \$14,725.48.

This sum, and probably more, could be wisely spent in developing these institutions in Ontario. But in order to make the system a success,

**A CAPABLE MAN SHOULD BE APPOINTED,**

who shall give his whole time to the work. There are three ways in which this can be done, viz.:—

1. An Assistant may be given Dr. Mills.
2. It can be handled by a permanent officer in the Department of Agriculture.
3. By the employment of a director, and the appointment of an advisory board, under whose directions he shall work.

With the first suggestion we have already dealt. Dr. Mills should be entirely released from this work, except as hereafter mentioned. By the second proposition it would be possible to develop the work to a considerable extent, especially at such times as the country enjoyed the services of a competent and practical Minister of Agriculture. But the time may come when the Minister of Agriculture at Toronto may know no more of Agriculture than the present incumbent at Ottawa; thus the institute work would be at the mercy of political exigencies. Again, we all know that there are many capital farmers throughout Ontario who will not join or work with the institutes, because they consider them Grit engines. We may say this is an absurd notion, yet it does not alter the fact that there are hundreds of men who stop away and ignore institutes or openly oppose them for no other reason. How much worse would this condition be if the director were a clerk in the Agricultural Department? For this reason, if for no other, the second proposition should be discarded.

No. 3 proposes that a director be appointed, and that he be controlled by a board. This plan has been adopted in several states across the line, and has been found to work admirably. The Western Dairymen's Association last year appointed

**A PERMANENT SECRETARY,**

who acts under the board of directors. The results have been most satisfactory. We have made full enquiries and have secured the following statements, which are endorsed by Mr. John Geary, ex-president, and one of the present directors, Mr. Andrew Pattullo, president, Mr. John S. Pearce and other officers:—

"We have much pleasure in testifying to the good work done by the Dairymen's Association of Western Ontario since the appointment of a secretary to devote his whole time to the interests of the Association. The new secretary, Mr. J. W. Wheaton, who is a practical dairyman, began his duties on October 20th, 1892. Since that time every department of the work has progressed very favorably. The special work mapped out for the new secretary was attending meetings of dairymen and giving addresses on the best methods of carrying on successful dairying, particular attention being given to information to patrons of cheese factories as would tend to develop and promote the dairy interests of Western Ontario. So important has this work become, that it is difficult during the winter months to supply the demand for speakers at such meetings. Some 120 meetings have been addressed by the secretary and others, under the auspices of the Association, since this new line of work began, and about 8,000 dairymen and farmers were reached in this way.

"The Association itself has become more widely known. A couple of years ago a great many of the dairymen in the outlying districts did not know what the Association was, though it had been in existence twenty-five years; but since the inauguration of this new department, the work of the Association has been kept prominently before the people through the medium of the press, and to-day there are comparatively few dairymen in Western Ontario who do not know of the Association and its work."