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AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY

A Speech delivered by Sir John Willison before the Board of Trade of Woodstock, on October 8, 1920

For various reasons it is a pleasure to me to come to Woodstock. There was a time when Oxford, to my mind, represented all that was sound in political tradition, faith, and practice, and when the returns in successive general elections were singularly satisfactory and comforting. If I have not held with complete fidelity to the old relations, possibly Oxford also has become more doubtful in its political judgments. Again, Oxford has an intimate historical relation to great figures in Canadian history. Hon. George Brown, and Hon. William McDougall, and Sir Oliver Mowat, and Sir Richard Cartwright were among the chief architects of Confederation, and seldom indeed has this county been represented in the Legislature or the House of Commons by men who did not give distinction to the public councils. Oxford, too, has the old tradition of economy, of thrift, of love of learning, of patriotic devotion to the Commonwealth which are the natural heritage of Scotsmen, their great gifts to the land from which they come and all lands to which they go, and their peculiar titles to the goodwill and respect of mankind. One who was born in Huron cannot fully admit that this is the banner county of Ontario as the literature of the Board of Trade contends, but, with a reservation in favor of Huron only, the claim is not contested. Finally, in Oxford, in its prosperous industrial communities and in its rich fields, herds and dairies, there is that happy union of agriculture and manufacture which, as I believe,

ensures a high general average of contentment and prosperity, which fills my conception of a strong, virile and independent nation, and which expresses my ideal of what Canada may become across all its broad expanse, as its resources are developed and conserved for the common benefit of its people and to the ever increasing strength and security of the national structure.

RURAL DEPOPULATION

There is no natural quarrel between industry and agriculture. Co-operation between these two great primary interests is essential if a nation is to become populous and prosperous. We hear much on the subject of "rural depopulation," but I am bound to think that the whole controversy is distinguished by singular want of information and lack of candor. A great variety of causes explains the decline in rural population and the movement of people into towns and cities. The experience of free trade England was not different from that of protectionist America. The history of New South Wales under low tariff was not different from that of the protectionist states of Australia. Much necessary farm labor of forty or fifty years ago has been displaced by machinery. The binder has dispossessed the cradle. The plough is yielding its ascendancy to the tractor. Even in the household, in the dairy, and in the farmyard, mechanical inventions displace much hand labor. To contend that as many people should be engaged in general farming on a thousand acres