

performed by men,—cultivating, plowing, and so forth. That is the spirit of the West, and that is the spirit that wins.

Notwithstanding the crop outlook, the general commercial and economic situation in Saskatchewan is good. Employment for all is available at good wages; retailers have had a splendid season's trade, and collections up to the present have been well maintained. Indeed, it may be said that the farmers and townspeople have indulged in much heavy spending during the past year, and there are those who believe that the check that is bound to come to such spending during the ensuing months will be all to the good. There has been overmuch speculation in farm lands at values based upon war prices. High prices for agricultural land undoubtedly benefit present holders and those who have no real intention of permanently staying with farming, but they benefit no one else. One does not need to labor the point that interest on the capital invested must count for all the years to come as an item in the cost of production; and high costs of production will handicap Western farmers who, in the future, must compete with the low-priced labor of Europe and the Argentine. Undoubtedly, the majority of Saskatchewan farmers have settled on the land for the purpose of establishing homes; but in some districts the land has changed hands many times over, and this is bad for scientific and effective agriculture. It has been demonstrated sufficiently in the history of the United States that speculation in farm lands is fatal to sound agriculture, and to community enterprise.

Western farmers know perfectly well that readjustment will follow upon the close of the war, during which prices and values will reach new levels. Notwithstanding that risk, they have thrown themselves with energy and resolution into the production of food for the Allies. No one who has met audiences of Saskatchewan farmers can fail to be impressed with the fact that their main object in extending acreage under cultivation, which was so largely done this year, was actuated by patriotic motives. This was made abundantly clear to the writer, if additional proof were needed, at the meeting of farmers held at Landis on Sunday, August 5th, to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the outbreak of war. Though many of these farmers had the prospect of securing nothing more than seed from this year's harvest, they, as well as their more fortunate neighbors of the Tramping Lake district, showed the firmest resolution to continue the struggle until victory is achieved—and that although many of them will be hard pressed to make ends meet during the coming winter. The simple fact is, no finer patriots are to be found in the Dominion than among these dwellers of the plains.

Productive Power of West is Maintained.

Nevertheless, the post-bellum readjustment will come slowly as far as the prices of Western farm products, and wheat in particular, are concerned. There will be no sudden fall, or sharp fall, in the price of wheat and other basic food products. The great wheat-producing areas of Europe are disorganized or devastated. Siberia, the granary of Russia, is the scene of civil strife; Roumania will take years to recover from its loss of farm buildings and agricultural implements; and Hungary, one of the greatest wheat-producing districts of Europe, has been practically depleted of its man power. The farm lands of France, and particularly of Germany, have been denuded of their fertility, owing to the destruction of stock, and poor cultivation by women and child labor. Up to the end of December, 1917, it is estimated that

the belligerent countries of continental Europe alone had lost some 140,000,000 head of livestock, and the destructive process has gone forward at an accelerating pace. True, Australia has a surplus stock of wheat on hand which may remain as a reserve to meet post-bellum conditions; but it will not go far to fill the gap in the world deficiency. Therefore, although prices of farm products will inevitably decline at the signing of peace, it is scarcely probable that there will be any sharp fall in values.

The writer found a general disposition, in coming in intimate contact on many occasions during the present summer with Saskatchewan farmers, to take a large view of national problems. In truth, there is more general discussion among the people of the prairies of vital problems of politics and economics than is usually found in the East. Nor, as has been said, are the farmers extreme in their views. At the last election, they sank all party differences and returned a solid delegation to Ottawa in support of Union Government. Many of them believe that the Union Government have been guilty of sins of omission and commission; but nevertheless, all this is impatiently flung aside in the eagerness to win the war. At the same time, Western farmers have quite definite opinions as to what should be accomplished in the fiscal sphere at the conclusion of hostilities.

It is impossible, of course, to say how widely some opinions are held, but there is a fair consensus of opinion as to the advisability of increasing provincial inheritance taxes and levying a heavy federal inheritance tax as well. The farmers would shift the burden of taxation from the tariff to the inheritance tax, the excess profits tax, and the income tax; believing that these latter most adequately meet the fiscal ideal in taxation—ability to pay. They are open-minded, however, on these and other issues, and are willing to meet those who hold opposite views more than half-way in an attempt to arrive at a programme that will appeal to the sound sense and good judgment of all elements in the Dominion.

Advanced Ideas on Property Ownership.

It is absurd to say that westerners, and western farmers in particular, are irreconcilable extremists, or that there is any tinge of Bolshevik doctrine among them. They are capitalists themselves, and in the main are land holders and not tenants. They respect the rights of private property and have no patience with the dogma that property should be held in general, irrespective of individual effort, capacity or enterprise. At the same time, it must be admitted that they believe that natural resources and great public enterprises should be controlled and owned by the nation, rather than exploited by private capital.

It is encouraging to be assured that the farmers of the West are not striving through their great associations to promote mere class interests. Again and again during the course of the past summer, the writer has heard leaders in the agricultural movement state that that movement menaces, in their judgment, no other legitimate interest and no other class in Canada; that what is required is not class-conscious groups of conflicting and hostile interests, but a genuine community of interests in which democratic and liberal ideals will be paramount. To that end, it is worthy of more than passing interest to realize that, through these great agricultural associations, the mind of western farmers can be interpreted to eastern manufacturers and other economic and social groups. Through these associations, East and West, a point of contact can be established, and neutral ground entered