

## TO PROMOTE AGRICULTURE IN THE WEST

### Many Novel Suggestions Made by Canadian Problems Club, of Winnipeg

Various regulations regarding the sale and taxation of agricultural lands in the West, have been discussed by the Canadian Problems Club, of Winnipeg. This organization is composed of some of the leading citizens of Winnipeg, including several members of the staff of Manitoba University, journalists and business and professional men.

Some of the recommendations have been outlined to *The Monetary Times* by Mr. E. J. Tarr, who is one of the active members, as follows:—

"The Canadian Problems Club of Winnipeg recommends that legislation be enacted by the legislature of each of the three prairie provinces. The general objects of the suggested legislation are: (a) the promotion of land settlement; (b) the encouragement of immigration by the introduction of a regulating influence in the selling price of land; (c) the consequent increase in production; (d) the formation of a reasonable basis for a more comprehensive land settlement scheme with possible government purchase and government aid as a result of close co-operation between the Dominion and provincial governments.

"1. The owner of each parcel of idle agricultural land shall be required, on or before June 30th, 1919, to fix a selling price for same, such price to be filed by the owner with the clerk of the municipality in which the land is situated. 'Idle agricultural land' would be defined in the statute and a uniform definition in the three provinces would be desirable, although not necessary.

"2. In the event of the owner failing to fix the price, the same shall be fixed by the government, through provincial assessors or municipal assessors, or in any other equitable manner. This assessment would be comparatively simple on account of the price level which would have been previously set by the owners not defaulting in the fixing of prices.

"3. The prices fixed under 1 and 2 shall be returned by the municipal clerks to the municipal commissioner who shall have same classified and printed in booklet form and ready for distribution not later than November 30th in each year. Knowledge that every parcel of land in Western Canada had a readily ascertainable fixed price attached thereto would undoubtedly influence a great many American farmers to come up and look over the offerings of land, who would not think of going to the trouble and expense of making the trip if such a ready means of investigating the situation were not provided. This list would, doubtless, also be made use of by the Department of the Interior in connection with its lists of available wild lands which it already has under preparation. These Dominion government lists would be of much greater value when accompanied with information as to fixed selling prices. The fixing of a selling price for a definite term would stimulate immigration and settlement generally. For example, an American settler could readily ascertain just what lands were available around him and would know that the price was fixed so that it could not be raised as soon as any interest was displayed by an intending purchaser, and such American settler would be free to correspond with friends in the vicinity of his former home setting forth the advantages of moving to Canada. The improved social conditions for himself would be ample incentive for such a man to do his best to have friends settle in his district around him.

"4. The wild land tax shall be levied on the selling price as fixed under 1 and 2 instead of on assessments as provided in present legislation. This would have a regulating influence on the fixing of the price by owners under 1. An owner even though desirous of avoiding taxation could not afford to risk naming a price lower than that at which he would be willing to sell. Some owners might name higher prices in order to avoid the possibility of an early sale, but would, as a result, increase their tax burden and consequently the provincial revenue, without nullifying the general objects of the legislation, because the number of such owners would not be sufficiently large to retard settlement. In general the tendency would likely be for an owner to fix a reasonable price.

"5. The price fixed under 1 and 2 shall hold from January 1st, 1920, until December 31st, 1921, and shall continue in force thereafter until changed by the owner. The price for any subsequent calendar year may be fixed by the owner

prior to June 30th of the preceding year. It is advisable to have notice of change given six months ahead, so as to give the government ample time to complete the lists of lands available under 3, and also desirable in order that intending purchasers for cultivation may have sufficient certainty as to the availability of the land.

"6. The Dominion government, the provincial government, or any individual or corporation, shall have the right to purchase any parcel of idle land at the fixed selling price, provided full payment be made in cash. Although the price would be an all cash price, there would be several methods by which a man could buy. He might have sufficient cash—if not, he might raise a loan on his farm adjoining the land which he proposed to purchase. The loan might cover both properties and result in enough money being raised to pay for the new property. The purchaser might have some cash and be able to borrow enough to pay the balance of the purchase price. Even though the owner of the land is not limited from charging a higher price when selling on terms, yet the fixing of an all cash price which would be readily ascertainable by anyone would have a regulating influence on the term price to be charged.

"7. Any purchaser shall have the right to purchase through the Land Titles Registrar in whose district the land is situate by paying to the registrar a deposit of ten (10) per cent. of the purchase price and filing an affidavit of intention to purchase. The balance of the price shall be paid to the registrar within sixty (60) days and, in the event of default the deposit shall be forfeited and paid to the consolidated revenue fund of the province. The registrar shall pay the purchase price to the owner or distribute it amongst the encumbrances entitled to it, and from the purchase price there shall be deducted by the registrar one (1) per cent. for assurance fund and expense purposes. It is necessary to make provision for the purchase of land through the registrar or some other government official so as to make it impossible for owners to unduly hamper the purchase of land and also to avoid delay in the event of non-resident owners and other owners not readily accessible. Such a provision would also be necessary for the protection of purchasers in the event of complicated titles.

"8. At any time before the filing by a purchaser of an affidavit under the provision of 7, the owner of any piece of idle land shall be entitled to withdraw the same from sale by filing with the registrar an affidavit of intention to improve, and no government, person or corporation shall have the right to purchase the said land under the terms of this legislation within a period of six months from the filing of such affidavit. The owner upon so filing an affidavit shall not be entitled to an increase in the price of the land for the next following calendar year. Provision of this nature is necessary for the protection of owners desiring to improve their land and the denial of the right to increase the price is necessary in order to prevent the filing of affidavits of intention to improve merely for the purpose of preventing the land from being sold. On the other hand, if the intention to improve is bona fide, the absence of the right to increase the price does not prejudice the owner.

"9. In the event of an owner defaulting in the making of the improvements he shall have the privilege of at any time applying to a judge for an order allowing him to again file an affidavit of intention to improve. The judge shall grant such an order only when satisfied as to the bona fides of the first affidavit as well as the bona fides of the intention to improve under the terms of the proposed second affidavit. If the order be granted, the second affidavit may be filed with the same effect as the first one, but in no event shall the owner be entitled to file a third affidavit with respect to the same parcel of land. This provision is intended as relief against hardship to an owner of land who, through circumstances for which he is not responsible is prevented from carrying out the improvements contemplated when the first affidavit was filed.

"10. If a corporation or individual shall make a purchase the same shall be subject to the selling price already fixed to the same extent as if the land remained in the hands of the prior owner. If, however, the purchaser shall file an affidavit of intention to improve, he shall be protected from any repurchase for six months from the filing of such affidavit. The purchaser so filing an affidavit of intention to improve shall not be entitled to an increase in the price of his land for the next following calendar year. In the event of the improvements not having been made within the six months' period, the owner from whom the land was pur-