

It is a matter of regret to us, Sir, that the Highway Bill introduced at the last session met an adverse fate in the Upper House. It is an old maxim that a chain is no stronger than its weakest link, and if I may change the wording somewhat, I may say that a road is no better than its worst mile. For reasons perhaps that are not altogether an advantage to the country, such a Bill may not become law this session; but I have reason to believe that those who live in the rural parts of the province of Ontario are not unmindful of the fact that the benefits they might derive from such a measure are not being withheld by the Conservative party.

It may perhaps be a considerable jump, Mr. Speaker, from agriculture to penitentiaries, but it is a jump I am going to try to take. As I study the reports in reference to penitentiaries I am struck with the fact that we have a large mass of unproductive labour confined in these institutions. The problem that confronts the Minister of Justice is great. It is a well-recognized maxim of political wisdom that it is unwise to bring prison labour into competition with free labour; and I may say that I concur in that principle. It is only just and fair that the man who earns his living by the sweat of his brow should not have the fruits of his labour brought into competition with the products of the penitentiaries. But, Sir, there is another side to the question. While we may have the right to take from a man his liberty because he has broken the laws of society, I doubt very much whether we have the right to allow a man to rot, if I may use the term, in idleness. Something must be done to find employment for these men. The penitentiaries as they are administered to-day, are really homes of idleness. Why should not the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Justice get their heads together, and elaborate a scheme by which every penitentiary in this country would be a farm of demonstration? It may be said, that this will cost money, but everything that is worth doing costs money. Surely it is well worth while doing something to uplift and reform our prison population. I have not the statistics before me, but I was amazed a day or two ago to see the large proportion of men incarcerated in the penitentiaries who were under the age of thirty. Indeed there are persons who are practically children in these institutions, and there is no segregation. A boy under twenty, sometimes only fifteen or sixteen, through an ill-advised judgment of a thoughtless magistrate, is sent to penitentiary when he should have gone to a reformatory. He associates with the most defiled and

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based criminals, and yet we expect him to leave the penitentiary a better man than he was when he entered it. Sir, we must look forward to a better day—to a day when our penitentiaries shall not be mere punitive institutions, but shall be, in the full sense of the word, reformatory. I would like to take advantage of this opportunity, Sir, to urge on the ministry the necessity of doing something that will make the men in these institutions more fit when they leave them to earn their living. On a Sunday afternoon I have spoken in the Kingston Penitentiary to 600 men whose faces showed nothing but sullen despair and hopeless sorrow. I believe that something can be done to improve the condition of these men, and I want to urge upon the Minister of Justice, whose humanitarian principles I well know, and on the Minister of Agriculture, who will I know recognize the necessity in this matter, that such steps be taken as will make each penitentiary a demonstrative and reformatory institution. There is no reason why cheap land should not be bought and be so developed that the farmers who live in the adjacent municipalities and districts may come and see what is being done, and how they may best improve their own condition. In following out these principles a benefit will be conferred upon the prisoner, because when he leaves the penitentiary he will not be obliged to enter again the city slum with all its temptations, and a benefit will be conferred on the agricultural classes, because from one end of this country to the other the cry goes up for farm help. A benefit will likewise be conferred on the state by freeing it from what must always be a burdensome load.

Perhaps in speaking on the subject of agriculture it is only right that I should say something in regard to immigration. The Speech from the Throne touches upon the welcome and copious flow of immigration that is coming to our shores. Perhaps we are paying more attention to the size of the stream than to the purity of the waters that compose it. The statistics in regard to immigration are amazing. We find that from 1902 to 1912 two million immigrants have come to this country, that we have rejected at ocean ports 8,500 men, that there were held for inspection 41,000, and that 5,600 of those who passed the officers of inspection were deported. I know that statistics are not as a rule welcome to the House, but there is no other way in which I can impress on hon. members the necessity for more rigorous inspection than by drawing their attention to the statistics in this regard. During the above mentioned period there were deported for criminality, 749; vagrancy, 253; insanity,