Our British Columbia Letter

(From our own Correspondent)

The first shock of the war is over, and the farmers of British Columbia have pretty well adapted themselves to the financial and other changes accompanying war. The fruit growers seem to be the ones hardest hit. The tightening of money has quite generally led to a falling off in the demand, while the high prices ruling for sugar on the prairies have deterred the usual large purchase of preserving fruits.

The enhanced cost of grain has led to a general reduction of flocks, particularly in the Fraser Valley. The supplies of live fowl the past six weeks at the New Westminster public market have been abnormally large. Still the retail price of eggs is rather high for the season—fifty cents a dozen.

Assistance to Farmers

The Fraser Valley Development League recently passed a resolution asking the provincial government to put into operation the recommendations of the agricultural commission. These included financial aid for farmers and assistance in land clearing. Alex. Lucas, M.P., a member of the commission, declared before the league, "The government should lend money to farmers on first mortgages, instead of giving it to the banks. Ranchers are often put back through lack of capital, and every cent put in their hands would be productive. Money given to banks is very often not put to productive uses."

The league appointed a committee to arrange for a deputation to wait on the provincial government. Another matter considered by the meeting was the organization of a central selling agency for the Fraser Valley. A report in this connection was submitted by Mr. R. C. Abbott, the Valley market commissioner. The sentiment in favor of cooperation is generally understood to be stronger than ever before in this district.

Novel Clearing Methods

Somewhat unique clearing agents have been working for certain Fraser Valley farmers this fall. They are peat fires. For weeks they have obstinately burned, as a result of continued dry weather, in Chilliwack and Richmond municipalities. The smoke has been disagreeable, covering many square miles; in a few instances crops have been endangered, even a little damage done; but the good work accomplished by fires, certainly in the Chilliwack district, has far outweighed any harm.

Much of the peat land burned was covered by an undergrowth expensive to clear in the ordinary way. Undermined by the peat fire, running six to eighteen inches below the surface, this growth topples over. The few portions unburned were easily gathered up and destroyed. Messrs. Gahan, Fitzgerald, Fulton, Salter, Robinson and McLeod are Chilliwack farmers who benefitted in this way. An entire Indian reserve in East Chilliwack was thus cleared.

The peat fires in Richmond attacked the immense tract of undrained and untilled land in the eastern end of the municipality, near the New Westminster city limits. Drainage plans, somewhat indefinite as yet, are proposed for this area, which is within easy access of New Westminster and Vancouver. If these are carried out, in the not far future the benefits of the peat fires will be realized. Otherwise a new growth will spring up and the process will simply be repeated.

Amalgamation Proposed

Cooperation at Chilliwack is calculated to receive a stimulus following the prospective amalgamation of the Chilliwack Creamery Association and the Chilliwack Producers' Exchange. One organization has been handling vegetables and related products. Amalgamation has been considered for some time, but only recently were definite steps taken. At a recent meeting of the Creamery Association, presided over by Mr. E. D. Barrow, a scheme was brought forward, fully discussed, and passed by a vote of 29 to 15.

Casual Mention

One of the sights worth seeing at the Vancouver Fair was the stock from the Colony Farm at Coquitlam. There were 13 head of cattle, mostly Clydesdales, and 16 head of Holstein cattle. The animals, many of which had won prizes at national exhibitions were not entered in competition.

Potatoes were $16 to $18 a ton at the last New Westminster market. Poultry was 15c live weight, and the supplies were still very large.

The Department of Agriculture officials are considering the advisability of forbidding the use of the familiar false-bottom box. The proposal is to make compulsory the use of a box holding a full pint.

B. C. tomato growers have not fared particularly well this season. The price on the prairies has been around 50c for the four box crate.

Professor Wesbrook, president of the University of British Columbia, and Professor L. H. Klinck, head of the agricultural branch, are now touring the fruit district of the province in order to get in touch with conditions. They accompany Fruit Inspector Cunningham.

Low prices are predicted for the year's apple crops.

One hears many stories of rich men turned farmers who prove unsuccessful. Here is one that came to my ears the other day: "Mr. So-and-so had £13,000 when he bought his farm in this country ten years ago. He hasn't a cent now and owes his hired men wages."

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