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## The New Minister of Agriculture

The selection of "Honest" John Oliver as the Minister of Agriculture in the new government of British Columbia will be most pleasing to the whole of the farming population of the province. He was the logical choice for the position. It was never doubted that he would get the portfolio. He is not the only farmer in the House, but, with the possible exception of Hon. Ralph Smith, there is no member of the present legislature on the Liberal side who has had the parliamentary experience he has, and, altogether outside his own department, it is admitted that his advice and experience will be of the greatest assistance to the new Premier and his conferees.

John Oliver is a "strong" man. He has courage and he has ideas. He is a farmer and a successful one, in spite of the tremendous amount of time he has given to public matters. He is in closer touch with the British Columbia farmer and knows his problems as perhaps no other man in the province does. It is not doubted that he will grip those problems with certainty and effectiveness. He has great natural capacity. Much will be expected of him, and everyone believes he will do the best that is in him to fulfill those expectations.

### Born in Old Country.

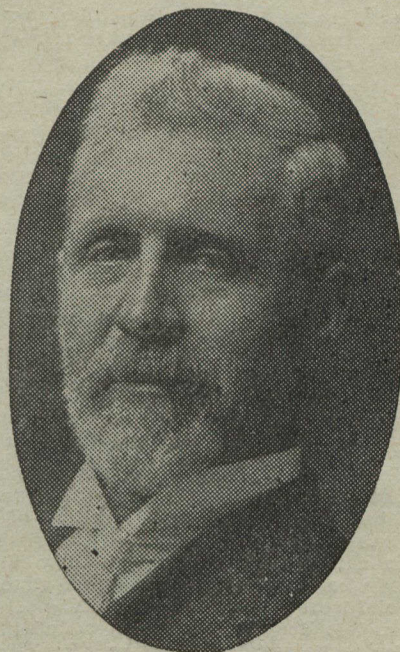
John Oliver was born in Hartington, Derbyshire, England, July 31, 1856, and is a son of Robert and Emma (Lomas) Oliver. His parents emigrated to America in 1870 and located in Ontario, where the father still resides.

His early advantages were limited, his schooling being terminated at the age of eleven years in order that he might become a wage earner. For three years thereafter he worked in the lead and iron mines of Derbyshire, and at the expiration of that time came to Canada. He located in the village of Maryboro, Wellington County, working on a farm in the summer and in the woods in the winter until the spring of 1877. In that year he continued his journey westward, with British Columbia as his goal. The railroad had not been extended beyond Winnipeg at that time, and the journey was a long and tiresome one. He came by way of Omaha to San Francisco, taking the boat at that point for Victoria, where he arrived on the 5th of May, 1877. Immediately thereafter he obtained employment with an engineering party who were making surveys for the government, now the Canadian Pacific.

### Homesteaded in Surrey.

In the autumn of the same year, Mr. Oliver took up a homestead in Surrey, his holding comprising 160 acres, and turned his attention to farming. He cleared about ten acres and engaged in its further development until about 1880, when he

secured his present farm in the Delta, which also contains 160 acres. This land was not only wild, but during at least half the year it was under water. In January, 1893, the home farm was covered to a depth of at least 3 1-2 feet with sea water, but by dyking and underdraining it was gradually reclaimed. Mr. Oliver was one of the very first to extensively introduce



HON. JOHN OLIVER,  
British Columbia's New Minister of  
Agriculture.

the system of underdraining in the Delta, using six-inch cedar boards placed in a triangular position about three feet below the surface and running to the dykes, these being put down from two to three rods apart. Such underdrains, it is stated, last from 12 to 15 years, and Mr. Oliver has about 37 miles of them on his farm.

Despite the fact that the preparation of his place for cultivation required years of labor and much expense, the effort was worth while, owing to the wonderful fertility of the soil. In those early years the improvement of his place moved slowly, as he was engaged for much of his time assisting other people with their dykes and underdraining, and also built one of the first roads crossing the main trunk road in Ladner. Those days were strenuous ones, not only for him, but for many of the farmers on the low lands, for they found that while their dykes would take care of the usual tides, there were occasions when they were quite inadequate, and their land

was repeatedly flooded, the loss frequently being serious. Experience brought knowledge, however, and through the united efforts of the settlers, conditions were remedied and in 1892 the municipal dyking system was installed. At that time Mr. Oliver re-dyked his own land, and continued his underdraining operations, until his whole acreage was thoroughly drained. The expense was very great, but the result more than repaid the whole outlay. Every year since that time excellent crops have been harvested, and John Oliver is today one of the most prosperous farmers in the Delta.

### Engaged in Threshing.

In 1888, Mr. Oliver purchased a threshing outfit, and as he found there was money in that business, he added two more threshers to his outfit, and has kept them steadily operating the greater part of the time since. Saw-milling on a large scale was also engaged in by Mr. Oliver. A large amount of municipal work has also been done by Mr. Oliver and his son, William Arthur Oliver.

On June 20, 1886, Mr. Oliver married Miss Elizabeth Woodward, of Cheshire, England, and they have eight children, as follows: Robert, William Arthur, John Thomas, Charles Edward, Joseph, Elizabeth Alice, at home; Sarah Ellen, a high-school student, and Mildred Emma, who is attending the common schools. William Arthur, the second boy, has chosen to remain on the farm. The other four boys were given their preliminary education by a private tutor at home, and have since received a thorough education in McGill.

Mr. Oliver has for years taken an active interest in politics, both local and federal. In 1900 he was elected to represent the Delta in the legislature, holding that position for nine years. He was defeated in the landslide which occurred in 1911.

His record in the House is an excellent one, and the nickname, "Honest John" Oliver, has been well earned. His standards of citizenship are of the highest, and his actions have always been free from the slightest suspicion. He has always insisted on anything with which he has been connected being conducted in the open, and in the execution of his official duties he has been as careful and painstaking as he has always been with his own affairs. He is a man of independent thought and does what he thinks is right regardless of consequences. A striking instance of his high sense of duty was seen in his insistence in 1903 of an investigation of certain government realty transactions of which he had grown suspicious. The investigation was held and confirmed his suspicions and as a result crown grants issued to the C. P. R. for nearly 700,000 acres of coal and oil lands, were cancelled