

THE ILLUSTRATED JOURNAL OF AGRICULTURE

PUBLISHED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOR THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC.

Vol. I.

MONTREAL, AUGUST 1879.

No. 4.

What are the best means to be taken to improve the Agriculture of this Province? (1)

No one will expect to find, in this essay, a treatise on the art of farming with profit. This would be utterly out of place, and not at all what was intended by the rules laid down, for the regulation of this competition, by the "Institut Canadien de Québec." It will be my duty, then, in this part of my work, to point out the best means of improving the system of farming pursued in this Province. At first sight, they may appear a little subversive of old established ideas, but, looked at carefully, they will be found easy to be put into operation.

As long ago as 1850 the Legislature of Canada officially described, in a precise and well digested report, the defects of the cultivation existing in the Province of Quebec. As the consequence of this report the grants in aid of Agriculture were doubled; Agricultural societies were encouraged; schools of Agriculture were established; and at Quebec after Confederation, a special department, having, as its head, a Minister of Agriculture and Public Works, was instituted. In 1869, the "Council of Agriculture" was created, to replace the old "Board of Agriculture" of Lower Canada. For the last 40 years, the publication of Journals of Agriculture has been assisted, and, latterly a few lectures on the subject of farming have been given in different districts. The annual expenditure for these, and other purposes connected with cultivation, has exceeded \$70,000, and the total sum spent, during the last 30 years, amounts to more than \$2,000,000.

Let us now see what is the actual state of our agricultural organisation, and try to point out its weak side.

The Agricultural Act of this Province gives to the "Commissioner of Agriculture and Public Works" the complete direction of the Council, of the schools, and of the societies of agriculture, and it is he who is responsible for their proper functioning.

Nevertheless, it appears from the official reports published by the commissioner's authority, that, up to the year 1875, the laws governing agriculture had remained inoperative, particularly as regards the state of the agricultural societies. The sums expended would seem to have been expended almost uselessly, and one might almost say that, what progress has been made would have been made without the aid afforded so liberally by Government.

What says the Commissioner in his report for 1874? "Beyond the usual administrative routine, our department exercises very little direct influence on the organisation of agriculture, this seems to be the business of the Council of Agriculture."

Observe; the *Minister of Agriculture and Public Works* declares that he does not pretend to direct that branch of his department which, at least, is not the more unimportant of

(1) Third part of Ed. A. Barnard's prize essay on *Agriculture*, translated from the french by A. R. Jenner Fust.

the two, he leaves that to the Council of Agriculture, a direct infraction of the law! (1)

Thus, it clearly appears that the Commissioner ought to guide the Council of Agriculture, as well as the societies, and that no act of the Council should be put into operation without his approval.

Nevertheless, as we see by p. 29 of the general report of the department for 1875, during the six first years of the existence of the council of agriculture not one act of theirs has been officially approved. Lands have been bought; buildings have been erected; rules for the guidance of agricultural societies have been laid down, and all without the sanction of the authority declared necessary by law!

What says Mr. Browning, late President of the Council of Agriculture, in one of his reports?

"Deliberations of the Council.—It is my duty to call the attention of the council to a matter of the greatest importance connected with the 39th clause of the act regulating agricultural which reads as follows:

"Every regulation, rule, or measure, passed by the Council of Agriculture shall be submitted to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council for his approval before it is put into operation.

Now, when I have informed the Council that, in spite of all the pains taken to conform to the law, and, after copies of the resolutions passed at each meeting of the council have been sent to Quebec, not one of their rules or acts have been approved by the proper authority, I leave it to them to decide if it would not be wise to try and get the clause abolished, since it is clear that we are acting in a most irregular fashion, as we may, perhaps, find out some day to our cost, by the entire disallowance of all our acts and deeds."

Signed: J. M. BROWNING, Pres. C. A. P. Q.

As regards the working of the Agricultural Societies, M. Lesage, assistant commissioner, says (see the report of 1874) to his principal:

"According to your instructions we have not inserted the financial reports of the agricultural societies on account of the irregularities they contain." He says further on: "It is a pity that the farmers do not take more interest in the ploughing matches and in the competitions for prizes for the

(1) Sec. 32 Vict, c. 15, cl. 40. "All the duties and powers belonging to the direction and control of the societies and schools of Agriculture are assigned by the present act to the Commissioner who shall receive their annual report, pay them their yearly grants, give them proper instructions to insure the entire and thorough accomplishment of the rules, general or special, adopted for their guidance by the council of agriculture; and he shall have the power, in case of any infringement of these rules, to suspend the payments of the grants, and, the authority of the Lieutenant-Governor in Council being first had, to withhold them altogether.

The preceding clause says: "Every regulation, rule or measure, passed by the Council of Agriculture shall be submitted to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council for his approval before it is put into operation."