

LAND SETTLEMENT PROBLEMS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

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been opened up by the new railroads. In Lillooet, Cariboo, Fort George, Fort Fraser, Skeena, Hazelton and Kamloops Districts, the railroads have given access to millions of acres of land available for purposes of agriculture. In these, and other land districts, large areas are shown on the pre-emptors' maps—a series of maps prepared by the Department of Lands covering 50,000,000 acres showing the lands open to settlement—available to settlers. During the past five years 16,000 pre-emptors have gone on the land; the number is steadily increasing each year.

Hon. Franklin K. Lane, Secretary for the Interior of the United States, writing in a recent issue of the National Geographical Magazine, said: "The old philosophy that 'land is land' was evidently unfitted to a country where land is sometimes timber and sometimes coal; indeed where land may mean water—water for tens of thousands of needy neighbouring acres; for the lands of the west differ as men do, in character and condition and degree of usefulness. We had not recognized this fact when we said that land is land.' Lands fitted for dry-farming and lands that must forever be unused without irrigation; lands that are worthless save for their timber; lands that are rich in grasses and lands that are poor in grasses; lands underlain with the non-precious minerals essential to industry or agriculture; lands that are invaluable for reservoir or dam sites—these varieties may be multiplied and each new variety emphasizes the fact that each kind of land has its own future and affords its own opportunity for contributing to the nation's wealth. So there has been slowly evolved in the public mind the conception of a new policy—that land should be used for that purpose for which it is best fitted, and it should be disposed of by the Government with respect to that use."

That is what the Department of Lands is endeavouring to do in British Columbia—to utilize the land for the purpose for which it is best fitted. If, in British Columbia, the physical conditions were of the same character as those of the Prairie Provinces, the problem of land settlement would be much easier of solution. In this Province the problems are many and varied. On the Coast there is a belt of mountains, with irregular physical contour, and three other main ranges run north and south toward the east; except in the larger valleys the agricultural land in these portions is in areas without any definite relation to each other. In the Central and North are immense plateaux. There are problems of irrigation, of the dry belt in which dry-farming will be practised, of the best utilization of the vast areas of grasslands capable of feeding great herds of livestock, and many other problems. Those of the Coast are bound up to a certain extent with that of the utilization of one of the important natural resources of the Province—the timber land. The forests of British Columbia cover about one hundred million acres, of which 65 million acres carry about 360 billion feet of timber, about half the stand of Canada. While it is true that, owing to climatic and topographic factors, the proportion of agricultural land is smaller than in the Prairie Provinces, it is nevertheless true that the agricultural possibilities of British Columbia are generally underestimated, and that when all the tillable lands are under cultivation, and when all the grazing lands are made use of for stock-raising, the agricultural industry will rank in importance with any in the Province. A great portion of the agricultural lands are, however, at the present time covered with a valuable growth of timber. In accordance with the highest practise of conservation, these timbered agricultural lands are withheld from settlement until the timber crop can be removed. At the same time, however, provision is made for the prompt removal of the timber crop from agricultural lands, and the tracts of logged-off lands are opened to settlement, ample notice being given of the opening, and on the appointed date the area, subdivided into homesteads, is allotted to those who apply in the order of their priority in

application. Some excellent agricultural tracts—the rich Fraser River Valley is a noteworthy example—have been developed on logged-off lands.

In the dry belt, in Nicola, Lillooet and Lower Cariboo, where the annual precipitation is light, the question of the best method of farming under these conditions has received the attention of the Department of Lands. Last year experimental farms were established in Lillooet and Nicola, the latter at an elevation of 3,900 feet above sea level, and there various crops are being grown with success under the principle of dry-farming, with results equal to those obtained on irrigated lands, despite the fact that there was an annual rainfall of from 12 to 14 inches. These experiments are fraught with the greatest consequence to the development of the large areas. Success means the possibility of profitable cultivation of some millions of acres of plateau lands and gently rolling uplands considered utilizable heretofore only as open range. The prospects seem bright, and the expectation is that ere long, as a result of this experimental work in scientific dry land farming of the now empty places of the great interior, will be filled with settlers who can develop the land advantageously along these lines.

Each and every problem is being dealt with in the broadest manner, so that the best utilization of the resources of the Province to the greatest benefit for the public weal may be secured, and there is a steady advance in land settlement and development under much better conditions than would be possible if the Government induced settlers to go on the further lands without preparing the way by means of surveys and transportation facilities, experimental work and aught else required to provide for settlement under conditions which offer greater chances for success than the pioneers had when they went to the frontier in advance of similar facilities and access to markets. Much good land awaits the settler in British Columbia, and more is being gradually opened up by the extension of railroad and other transportation facilities.

OF PERSONAL MENTION.

Mr. W. McRae, Inspector of the Bank of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, was in Vancouver during the week looking over the situation in this city and Province, with a view to extending the business of the bank here. He reported trade in a flourishing condition in Australia, with a great deal of building going on. The rise in the price of meats has brought a large increase of profit to the cattleman, while on the other hand raising the price to the Australian consumer. Sheep has shared the advance with cattle, and the exportation of meat products is now one of the largest items in the Australian trade. The steadily increasing demand for the high-grade Australian wool by the large European and American manufacturers is also a contributing feature to the export trade. The uniformly favorable crops have brought great wealth to the land owner, and the price of land has risen steadily for the past five years.

The great building activity, in the opinion of Mr. McRae, should present increased opportunity for the British Columbia mill operator equipped to handle export lumber business to enter this trade.

Mr. William Harvey, managing director of the Standard Trusts Company, head office Winnipeg, was in Vancouver and Victoria last week, looking over the company's affairs in this Province.

Thomas H. Ingram, of the Canadian National Investors, has returned to Vancouver after a twenty-two months' residence in Great Britain in connection with the affairs of his company.