

A Speech delivered at the session of June 3, 1892, of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Quebec, by the Hon. Louis Beaubien, Commissioner of Agriculture and Colonisation

MR. SPEAKER,

I postponed the discussion of this item of \$10,000 for the dairy industry until to-day for a set purpose. Several members had prayed me to wait, in order to give them an opportunity of taking part in the debate, and I thought it my duty to accede to their request.

In the Committee on Agriculture we had lately two such interesting sessions, that we determined to revive them in the early days of next session, at which time the members will not be very busy. This will give the specialists a fresh opportunity of addressing our farmers. The addresses will be published.

We heard Professor Robertson, who occupies an important position at the Experimental Farm at Ottawa, as well as the Assistant Commissioner, Mr. J. C. Chapais, and we were greatly interested by the addresses of both.

SILOS.

Since these two addresses I have made many reflections, which I now propose to communicate to this House.

First, I request the active, sincere cooperation of each member.

A member, in the county he represents, occupies of necessity an important position. I ask for his influence to help us to establish a silo in every parish where no silo exists at present.

Good advice has frequently great effect, and does a great deal more than any amount of offered prizes.

Were each member to devote himself seriously to this end, and push ahead one of the wealthiest of the farmers in each place, we should succeed indisputably in implanting the practice of ensilage over the whole province.

To encourage this practice, we intend, this year, to grant a prize of \$20 to the farmer who shall build a silo in a parish where there is none at present. There are, I believe, a thousand parishes in the province. We should have as many silos as a commencement. The same prizes cannot be offered every year, but this year, I hope we shall have to pay the greatest amount possible.

There is not one member who cannot promise us to devote himself to this task during one day in each parish. Every member follows, doubtless, the laudable custom of presenting himself before the electors after every session to render an account of his stewardship; the best speech he can make to them, after having justified his parliamentary conduct, is one explaining the real value of the silo.

FARM SCHOOLS.

Secondly, I ask the members to send a pupil from every parish to the farm-schools. We ought to have a thousand pupils next year. With the aid of the zealous curés and the chief inhabitants, this result can be obtained.

I spoke of the curés. They it is who can and who will be of the greatest assistance to us. We heard yesterday about the great work done by them in the country, what they had done for the higher education, for the diffusion and the progress of classical studies. They it is who have built the colleges and peopled them with students.

Now, we do not ask them to make such extensive sacrifices. Our farm-schools are nearly ready; it is only the pupils that are wanting, and they must be found.

What steps were taken to develop this state of the higher

education, the advantages of which are nowadays so highly valued that even the poorer farmers deprive themselves of everything so to speak, that they may send a son to college?

How often has not the curé sent his *protégé* to college? More than one has even had the merit of sending a dozen or more scholars of his parish at his own expense; and among them have sometimes been men who have distinguished themselves in the service of the State and of the Church. After building the college, the curé found the scholars. What we ask for to-day will not be so costly. The taste for the higher education is well developed, it has become part of our customs, it can stand alone. The curé can now exert his influence and his earnest desire to be useful in another direction. His advice will still be productive of good. Let him endow our farm-schools with an equally numerous band of agricultural students.

If, with the assistance of those distinguished agriculturists who will lend me their cooperation, I am supplied with one pupil from every parish, I will engage to make a good farmer of him. But I beg the members, as well as the other people of the country, to send me fit pupils. I will tell you what a lad ought to be, so that time and money may not be uselessly expended in obtaining pupils to instruct, who the moment they are free from the trammels of the school, will desert the interests of agriculture.

Our proposed pupil should be from 14 to 18 years old, possessed of a certain amount of education, and, in every sense of the word, a nice lad (*joli garçon*). He must be the son of a farmer and the heir presumptive of a farm.

The chief point is the judicious selection of the pupils.

Up to the present time, the results obtained by our schools of agriculture have not, it must be confessed, been in due proportion to the sums expended thereon. We have not been so successful as we hoped to be, because the selection of pupils has not been possible. We have been satisfied with creating the institution, but we have not employed the proper means of finding pupils to fill it; and as a certain number of students was necessary before the institution could receive its grant, any lad who presented himself, or could be picked up anywhere, was received, without much care being exercised in the selection. This must be entirely altered.

To repeat what I said just now: you know the steps that were taken to promote the diffusion of the higher education. Since our success has been so great in that, let us take the same means to promote the diffusion of sound agricultural studies. We said to ourselves: The country needs statesmen and churchmen; and statesmen and churchmen were found for it.

In this, success was obtained in an enterprise much more arduous than the enterprise I put before you to-day; for, indeed, the task then was not to search after the son of a farmer to convert him into a farmer, but, so to speak, to go to the very antipodes of things—to visit the abode of the farmer to find a man who one day might be called upon to govern the nation. The son of the *voyageur* who passed his life in the bush; the son of the peasant-soldier, who deserted the plough for the musket; the youth born in the humblest grade of society—all these were taken, educated, and then placed at the head of the nation; out of them was selected a distinguished prelate, a Cartier, a Papineau. (Cheers.) Thus, by going from one extremity of the social scale to the other, prodigies were accomplished. Out of a population composed in great part of *voyageurs* and poor peasants, means were found to form men highly educated, men who have worthily occupied the most elevated positions, men who have done honor to our country, as they would have done honor to any country in which they might have happened to have lived.

At the time when we were conquered, and reduced, alge-