

Land Settlement and Immigration

How Immigration in Western Canada May Be Stimulated Now That Valuable Lands Can No Longer Be Offered at Nominal Price—Price Fixing, Expropriation or Confiscatory Taxation is Unwise

By WM. PEARSON, Winnipeg, Man.

IN 1662 Raddison and Chouart reported to Prince Rupert on the great Eldorado in western British North America, and as the outcome of much negotiation Prince Rupert formed the company of "Gentlemen Adventurers," trading into Hudson's Bay. Land had not much value at that time, as all that this concern paid to the British government was an annual rental of the heads of one moose, one elk and one deer, payable whenever the king landed on the shores of Hudson's Bay. In 1869 the newly confederated government of Canada bought out the company of adventures paying them the sum of £300,000 sterling, and allowing the company to retain one-twentieth of all the land that might be surveyed for settlement for fifty years from that date.

In 1882 and 1883 there was somewhat of a wave of settlement to the homestead lands of Western Canada, and from that time on to about 1900, railway lands and even many thousands of acres of land within twenty or thirty miles of Winnipeg could be bought at prices ranging from \$2.50 to \$3.50 an acre, but the people of the world and of our Canadian towns did not seem to be much impressed with the opportunities.

In 1902, however, the first big step in immigration from United States to Canada was taken when the late Col. A. D. Davidson succeeded in buying from the government part of the Qu'Appelle Long Lake Railway land grant amounting to some 800,000 acres at a price in the neighborhood of \$2.50 an acre, and ran his celebrated trainload of United States bankers up the Prince Albert branch of railway to Davidson, Saskatchewan.

Davidson engaged the services and co-operation of many large American land operators and developed certain Canadian land and colonization companies to whom he entrusted large areas of land on attractive terms conditional upon them doing certain colonization work. The rush of settlement that was created by this move on Col. Davidson's part and by the very large amount of money spent for propaganda in the United States by the Dominion Government resulted in extremely heavy settlement for the next ten years. Prices of wild land moved up in the meantime from \$2.50 an acre to \$15 and \$30 an acre, according to location, development, etc.

In 1902, the Western Canada Immigration Association was formed, composed of bankers, wholesalers, railway companies, land and colonization companies, etc., with a view to co-operating on a heavy campaign of publicity in the United States, as it was recognized that it was imperative to the future success of this country that a large proportion of the better class of farmers who were accustomed to opening up the prairie lands of the northwestern states should be brought to Canada.

In 1902 settlement in Western Canada was concentrated largely in southern and central Manitoba and small settlements along the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway as far as Moose Jaw, also small settlements in the neighborhood of Edmonton and south of Prince Albert to Rosthern.

Senator Perley of Wolseley, Saskatchewan, said in a speech in the Dominion House that wheat could not be grown successfully north of the Qu'Appelle Valley, and Col. Davidson informed me that the Board of Trade in Winnipeg seriously considered in 1902 sending a delegation to Ottawa to prevent him from bringing settlers into the Davidson area in Saskatchewan as they considered that country was totally unfit for wheat raising and it would give Canada a black eye with Americans who were just starting to come in.

Since that time practically all the homesteads in the prairie area from Winnipeg to the Rocky Mountains have been taken up, and nearly all the prairie areas in the Peace River country have been taken up now and the only homesteads that are available are the lands located in the sandy or alkali areas, or bush lands in the extreme north and east.

It was estimated that immigration into Canada in the years 1897 to 1912, amounted to 2,240,000 people. The Wall Street Journal estimated that from 1906 to 1912, inclusive, 674,000 American settlers to Canada brought wealth amounting to \$775,000,000. The rapid development over this period is illustrated by the following comparative figures:—

Wheat inspected at Winnipeg, 1902, (bushels)	58,000,000
Wheat inspected at Winnipeg, 1911, (bushels)	101,000,000
Bank clearings at Winnipeg, 1902,	\$ 188,000,000
Bank clearings at Winnipeg, 1912,	1,537,000,000
Assessments at Winnipeg, 1902,	24,000,000
Assessments at Winnipeg, 1912,	214,000,000
Sask. yield of grain, 1900, (bushels).....	18,000,000
Sask. yield of grain, 1912 (bushels).....	228,000,000
Saskatchewan population, 1900,	91,000
Saskatchewan population, 1912,	492,000

The movement of people was exhausting itself by about 1913 for certain reasons, and since the outbreak of the war immigration from United States and certainly from Europe practically stopped and the development of Western Canada was largely arrested, except insofar as the settlers already on the land increased their holdings and took up more land. Even this buying of land by settlers did not very largely increase the net amount of grain that was raised, as settlers went in for a better class of farming and set aside large portions of their holdings, to enable them to start the summer-fallow system of setting aside one-third of their holdings each year for that purpose.

Present Situation

What is to be done? In order to start the wheels of development afresh now that the reconstruction period is upon us, our leading bankers in the east, also our governments, have been doing some serious thinking and investigating the matter of how best to start the flow of immigration into Western Canada. They have asserted publicly, and have urged in many directions privately, that it is absolutely necessary to have more primary producers, particularly in Western Canada. This together with an increased foreign trade are the two big items that present themselves for the serious consideration of all Canadian business men. The Dominion government needs more revenue and people to pay the war debt, but in contra-distinction to the early days of 1902 the business men of Winnipeg do not seem to have awakened to any extent to the vital bearing immigration has on their business. They have been so busy conserving what business they had and their attention has been so concentrated on the war that they have made no move in the direction of immigration.

It does not appear to be any use spending the large sums of money that were spent in the early part of this century advertising for homesteaders, as the open prairie homesteads which were one of the great attractions of the American farmers is no longer available, and even if the American settlers could be induced to go into the bush lands in the northwestern portions of our provinces very large expenditures for railways and other capital outlay would have to be made.