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WHY GIVE LAND AWAY.

J. E. MARTIN.

There is no need whatever at the present day and age for Canada to be giving away her valuable farm lands. Out of the 116,000,000 acres in the three Prairie Provinces that have passed out of the hands of the Government, less than 20 per cent is under cultivation (this in accordance with your own figures). The homestead lands are gone, the Government got no money consideration for them and very little in the way of cultivation, and a large number of the people who got land for nothing are not even living on it.

It would mean practically nothing to Canada to bring in settlers and let them take up land way back from the railroad, where they could not farm to advantage and then compel the railroads to build into these outlying districts. Your railroads have more than they can do now; they should be given a chance to give service on the lines they have already built. There are districts where part of the 1915 crop is not yet hauled out.

Why continue giving land away? The Dominion Government has been spending hundreds of thousands of dollars yearly (over eight hundred thousand dollars in 1916 alone) to give land away — and in the past three years Canada has lost five hundred thousand people (and the greater number of these native-born Canadians).

By giving lands away you are depreciating credit — a man appreciates a thing exactly in proportion to what it costs him. You give him a piece of land and he immediately figures it is not worth much — he has nothing to work it with, gets no income from it, and as soon as he proves up, he throws it on the market for little or nothing. You are depreciating your own land values, depreciating land credits and consequently the general credit of the country.

Would it not be better to sell these lands, thereby insuring money and credit to the Dominion and the Provinces, appreciating land values and general credit and doing away with the necessity for any penalty taxes and duties which are keeping out people and capital? It is suggested that instead of continuing your policy of giving away farm lands, that they be set aside to be sold. You are selling your school lands and there is no reason why you could not sell all your lands; they need not all be sold now or at any one time — they could be set aside for this purpose and sold at such time as might work out to the best advantage; they could be sold the same as school lands, accepting a small payment down and giving the settler long terms of payment (even up to forty years) at a reasonable rate of interest. The Dominion and the Provinces need money and credit; the war debt will be heavy and it will be necessary to arrange some way to take care of it. These lands could be sold by the Dominion Government and a certain percent of the proceeds turned over to such provinces as do not have their natural resources. Why not sell these lands — you would do away with the harmful talk of "aCanadian War Taxes" in the States; the Dominion and the Provinces would be getting a fair price for the land and an annual income thereafter; you would get a better class of settlers, who, paying a price for their land, would have something at stake and would therefore stick and make good; they would put the land under cultivation and expect to pay for it out of the products raised thereon. True, it is right and proper that ample provision should be made for taking care of the returning soldier, but to continue to give away your valuable lands to outsiders in this day and age is an economic mistake. The whole of your legislation and effort heretofore, has been along the lines of giving your lands away—now that you should sell your lands and bid for a better class of settlers, the need of a change in this policy is very apparent.

In setting aside lands to be sold, provision should, of course be made for such of the returned soldiers, as wish to go on the land — as has been suggested, they could be given 160 acres, with assistance in the way of a loan. And such as cannot or do not care to go on the land, should have an equal consideration on a cash basis — this, of course, is no more than justice. The Government should be in position to handle this for them, so that they will get what they should out of it — not be forced to take land or scrip and sell it for anything they can get, as has heretofore been the case.

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