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FARMERS AND HIGH FOOD PRICES

In any discussion that might arise as to the condition of the tiller of the soil, the townsmen will invariably point to the fat prices that farm produce brings in the city market—prices which the working man and his family must pay, and in all seriousness wants to know what more the farmer can possibly desire,—does he want to make the people pay MORE for the farm products they consume?

Another question that agitates the average city man is that when he has to pay so much for his beef, pork, butter, eggs and vegetables, why do the farmers of the Western Provinces not raise enough of these commodities to feed the people of the province, and stop the importing of food products which the country is so well adapted to produce?

Unfortunately the farmer does not bring his wares to the city man's door and get the price the city man has to pay. Between these two stands a line of middlemen who all take toll off the goods as they pass. The toll is paid partly by the producer and partly by the consumer, and is frequently out of all proportion to what they have to pay for the necessities of life. It is marvellous how much of the value of these articles of production the middlemen can manage to annex during the short time it is in their hands.

Mr. S. Benson, of Neepawa, writing recently to the Farmers' Advocate, mentioned the case of a farmer from that district who shipped a carload of potatoes to Winnipeg. A commission merchant sold the potatoes for \$230.00, retained \$100.00 commission and sent the farmer \$130.00.

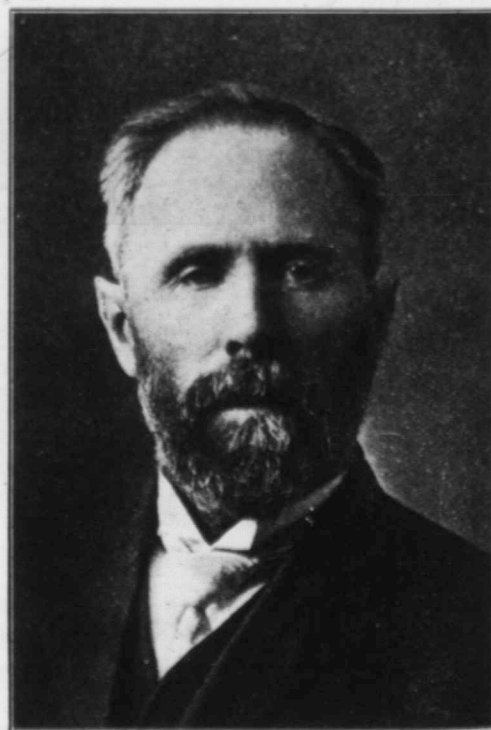
At a conference between the British Columbia Fruit Growers and F. W. Peters and W. B. Lanigan representing the C.P.R., J. A. Allcock, of Penticton, stated that settlers were leaving British Columbia because they were unable to make fruit growing pay. He claimed that there was a hold-up on the Winnipeg market whereby dealers and commission men, through excessive charges, made prices prohibitive. He stated that the dealers in many cases were getting 300 per cent profit where the grower was getting from one to two per cent.

berta to report on the pork packing business, after reviewing the terms of the commission and the evidence taken the various parts of the province, goes on to say: "The evidence is that not only has the farmer not received what he considers a fair price (five cents per lb. live weight) for his hogs, but that he has not in very many cases been able to receive any price at all. That is, he is able to overstock the market; that his energies have been curtailed on this account, and that he does not know where to turn for a market for what he can raise in the hog line, even at any price, and still 75 per cent. of the cured meat is imported.

These are the local conditions, or to put the matter more plainly, while 75 per cent. of the cured article is imported, and no kick made by the local packers, at least one-half of our more energetic farmers have been compelled to go out of the hog industry on account of no market at all, and not receiving a living price for his hogs during part of the year, to say nothing of what could be done by farmers who would become producers of hogs and farm products suitable for feeding them. This is a serious and distinct loss to the Province as a whole, and there should be some remedy."

Men have come to Alberta from the so-called hog states of the American Union because they want to better themselves. They have come from Eastern Canada for the same purpose, and TO HOLD THEM, ALBERTA MUST SOLVE FOR THEM THE DIFFICULTIES THEY HAVE RUN UP AGAINST IN THEIR FORMER HOMES AND ONE OF THESE IS THE LACK OF A STABLE MARKET FOR THEIR FARM PRODUCTS."

The above may be extreme cases, but they clearly establish how conditions operate to discourage production by unremunerative prices to the producer and curtail consumption by prohibitive prices to the consumer. It may easily be taken for granted that the Neepawa farmer mentioned by Mr. Benson will curb his enthusiasm for potato culture, excepting in so far as his household requirements are concerned, and in the face of his experience no amount of eloquence on the part of Agricultural professors and writers on the profits to farmers of raising roots and vegetables will induce him to continue sending potatoes to Winnipeg until conditions of marketing farm produce there are changed.



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