

Are Light Tractors Wanted?

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except mechanical power. The time factor in cultivation together with deeper tillage and more thorough methods of cultivation are coming more and more to be realized as essential to crop production. Good seed and soil fertility have been preached to the farmers of this country for a number of years and they are essential, but proper tillage is equally important.

One of the great tractor companies has been gathering data during the past year on this subject of tillage with especial regard to the use of the tractor and has received hundreds of reports from users of tractors showing that deeper tillage and more seasonal tillage has invariably resulted in larger yields. Some of these reports, which the writer examined, appear so favorable that he would be inclined to doubt their accuracy if they were not substantiated from so many separate sources and if he did not have evidence that they were the honest expression of the opinions of those who submitted them.

Some of the above reasons are very familiar to all farmers, coming as they do naturally from all implement salesmen's lips; the opinion, too, that horses would be dearer is a somewhat questionable one since agricultural horses, i. e., 1,500 to 1,800 pound horses, are not the class called for in warfare, but at the same time other factors, such as shortage of labor, the time factor in cultivation and greater efficiency in tillage operations, are sufficiently important to give farmers ample cause for reflection.

As was mentioned at the commencement, the present day requirement calls for small, comparatively light machines and the writer goes on to point out some of the characteristics of the small tractor in its present day development.

Proper Standard Lacking

It is pointed out that one of the most outstanding features of these engines is the extreme diversity in shape and size. Speaking of an exhibition recently held at Fremont the writer says:

"Almost every possible combination was shown, ranging from the little, special two-plow outfits that weigh only about 3,000 pounds up to the four and six-plow, general-purpose machines that weigh from 10,000 to 12,000 pounds. There were tractors with two wheels, with three wheels and with four. Some had only a single driver running in the furrows and others two drivers running on the sod. There were wide drivers and narrow drivers and almost every type of motor. The diversity in design was only equalled

by the divergence in price which ranged from \$395 to \$2,000.

Undoubtedly there were a number of freak machines on display. At least every one, even to the owners and designers of each of the twenty-five different types, said there was. This being the case, it is evident that there is a wide divergence of opinion as to what constitutes a freak. After all, one man's opinion is as good as another's until the vicissitudes of service have weeded out the unfit, so the writer will not burden the reader with an opinion at this time on what constitutes correct design.

So much diversity, however, is one of the unfortunate elements in the situation and this applies not only to design, but to price also. The writer is convinced that the rate of depreciation on some of the outfits would be excessive. They were built too lightly and sold at too low a price to admit of either the best material, enough material or the best workmanship. There is a demand, among farmers, for a small two or three-plow tractor that can be bought for five or six hundred dollars. They are looking for a tractor that will be a fit companion and running mate for the Ford automobile, but they seem to overlook the fact that in the beginning Ford cars sold for \$1,000. It was not until the annual production got up to over 100,000 that the price dropped to what they are now willing to pay for a tractor. Moreover, the weight of a tractor, in any event, must be from two and one-half to three times that of a Ford and its cost of manufacture, even in large lots, will be more. These are facts of production that the average farmer does not know, or if he does know, rarely stops to consider.

Sales Methods Increase Cost

Then there is the method of selling. Automobiles are sold for cash, but thanks to the advent of the thrasher companies in the tractor field, tractors are sold on long time. This single factor, while it may seem a great accommodation to the purchaser, is one of the principal factors that has retarded the development of the tractor and set back the time when it can be sold at a low price. Moreover, the expensive methods of selling, with a large crop of travellers and the maintenance of branch houses, precludes low prices for high grade outfits until new methods have been adopted. The light weight tractor before it comes fully into its own must be sold for cash on delivery or cash within six months. Tractors ought to be sold just like automobiles are sold. The sooner the thrasher companies realize this situation and change their methods the sooner the light tractor will be developed and power farming become established.

Some of the light tractors now on the market are special plowing outfits which are so designed that they are of very little value for anything but plowing. They are not large enough to run the large ensilage cutters, nor are they very well adapted either for general belt work or for hauling seeders or harrows or other loads. Machines of this class, even at a comparatively low price, will never be able to compete with the general purpose tractor, so far as economy is concerned, tho they may have a large sale. What the farmers desire, and what the writer believes will eventually prove the most satisfactory, is a tractor that will pull four plows under ordinary conditions and two under any conditions. It will have enough power to run any farm machine and can be used for any purpose to which a five-horse team can be applied. In other words, it should displace eight or ten horses.

When we consider that ten horses will cost upwards of \$1,500 and their harness \$200 more, and that their annual maintenance will amount to nearly \$1,200, it is evident that there is a wide enough margin to enable the manufacturer to turn out a high grade product and still compete with horses. A farmer working 200 acres or more can afford to pay even as high as \$2,000 if he can get the right kind of a machine. What the honest manufacturer should strive for, therefore, is not so much for low prices as good design, strength and general reliability. These are the qualities that will make and hold the market.

The market is almost limitless. There are, in the Mississippi valley alone, upwards of 800,000 farms containing more than 200 acres each and considerably more than 1,000,000 such farms in the United States. All of these farms can probably not make profitable use of a tractor under their present system of

cultivation nor in the hands of the men who own or manage them. Conditions must be favorable for tractor farming to make it profitable and, after that, the tractor must be handled by a man who is something of a mechanic. In a recent canvas made by Prof. Davidson in Iowa he discovered that all those farmers who owned farm shops reported success with their tractors, while a small proportion who do not own shops had trouble. This indicates that farmers should study conditions and their own abilities carefully before investing, and the sales agents should likewise exercise care in making sales. For no sale is a good sale that is not profitable alike to both seller and buyer.

Traction farming in the West has been practiced quite extensively. The general impression left has been unfavorable to this method of farming. In view of the remarks in the foregoing article it would be interesting to know just what is the opinion of those farmers thruout the West who have had experience with both systems. To this end The Guide would be glad to receive and publish opinions from farmers who have had experience along these lines. As a guide to arriving at the relative economy between horsepower and engine-power, a note on Horses vs. Tractors, which will appear in the next issue of The Guide, may be found to be of service.

How Socialism Came to England

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hoarding. It must be said to the credit of most of the storekeepers that they refused to fill panic orders and insisted in supplying only the usual quantity to each customer. The government, however, decided that it was up to an administration whose only concern was the welfare of the people and not political advantage, to deal with the situation. It began by announcing that it would insure all food cargoes coming from abroad to England against capture by the enemy's ships at a rate lower than that which prevails in normal times, and then it decided that it must take a hand in fixing the retail prices of food, so that no unscrupulous dealer should be able to make a fortune out of necessities of the poor. It called together all the principal merchants in food, both retail and wholesale in the kingdom, and said to them: "Now we want your help. We are going to constitute you a government board. We put you on your honor. Your job will be to take all factors into consideration and to fix from day to day the lowest price at which the various staple articles of food may be sold with a fair profit to the dealers and without hardship to the consumer."

This board is now sitting continuously in Whitehall, London. It receives daily the figures showing the quantities of food arriving, the prices which were paid for the various articles, the visible supply and so on, and as often as occasion requires—about twice a week—a rule—it issues a list of maximum retail prices for food. The public are requested to report any retailer charging more than these prices to the board of trade which will deal with him. If this is not quite socialism it is very much like William Morris's idea of a state that would deal hardly with "forestallers and regraters."

Work for Everyone

Having dealt with the three great essentials of transportation, finance and food, the government turned itself to the still more important one of work for everyone, and in this, too, it has had the enthusiastic support of employers of all kinds. It was intimated first of all that mere price would not be the controlling factor in the awarding of contracts for war supplies, and that no bidder would receive more work than he could conveniently do by employing his usual staff and plant at full time. The work is to be spread around as much as possible, the government's idea being to give work to the greatest possible number of individuals, and to avoid overtime in one district while in another men are unemployed. But war supplies alone are not enough to keep the mills and factories of England working. Something else had to be done. New markets must be found at once to replace those lost by the stoppage of continental trade and

the government sent out a hurry call to its consular and trade representatives all over the world, for information about trade—and particularly trade which had heretofore been done by Germany which could be obtained for Britain. Samples and price lists and orders as well are now beginning to pour into the offices of the board of trade and the information is being distributed by it by telegraph to manufacturers all over the country who have the plant and organization to deal with them.

How Banks Assisted

Even orders, however, are not much good without money to pay wages and meet other establishment expenses while the goods are being manufactured and until they are paid for, and here the government stepped in again. The banking system of England has not been particularly favorable for the financing of manufacturers, and British bankers have practically barred loans to business men unless on first class security. The government called together a representative meeting of bankers and manufacturers and told them to thresh the matter out. The result was that the bankers reported that they thought if the government would give them some guarantee during the experimental stages at least they could see their way to financing manufacturers who had orders to be filled, or even who wished to manufacture staple goods for stock. The government promptly called in the governors of the Bank of England and instructed them to see that arrangements were made to help any bank that was willing to take on the work of helping to keep the workers working in England.

Public Works Kept Up

The government, however, went further and decided that in spite of all this there was bound to be some unemployment because of the dislocation of trade which was sure to follow the war. A special committee was appointed with John Burns, who resigned the presidency of the board of trade, as chairman, to consider what could be done all over the country to keep the people working. This committee decided that now is obviously the time for the various local authorities to carry out the public improvements that they are contemplating, but which may have been held up for lack of money or other reasons. The committee thereupon called on the county councils, boards of aldermen and city councils all over the country to form special committees to consider what could be done and report at once to the central committee. Everybody called on, except the councils of one or two agricultural counties which will not be affected in any way, has fallen in with the suggestion and is busy formulating plans for necessary public works. The government has announced that in cases where the cost would fall hardly on the inhabitants of a district it will supply the funds for approved schemes from the national exchequer. The government committee itself is preparing large schemes of work, including the reafforesting of great tracts of country, the building of thousands of cottages for agricultural laborers to replace the present insanitary hovels and the construction of a number of new roads which are sorely needed to carry the increasing motor traffic of the country.

Pushing Public Works

Among the schemes already begun are that of the Metropolitan Asylum board, which has charge of the charities of the London area to spend \$1,000,000 on building work at once, and that of the Middlesex county council to spend \$2,000,000 on a new road for the western approach to London.

The work of the government has also been supplemented splendidly by both private employers and workmen. In almost every case where it was possible men have been retained at work even altho their employment entailed a loss. In many cases agreements have been made between employers and men for half wages or half time; in other cases single men have voluntarily laid off so that married men could continue at work. So it goes thru every phase of English life. This war has brought Englishmen together in a way that never has been known before and has taught them how unessential were many of their differences and many of their cherished beliefs.

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