

# Farmer's Advocate

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### EDITORIAL

#### Comparative Crop Estimates.

A request comes to us to give some data for comparisons between the cost of raising farm crops in the States and in Western Canada. To do this accurately would be too big a task for the publishers of this paper, for the reason that the statistics for very much of the tables would have to be collected at first hand. In a broad general way, however, the advantage is with Western Canada on account of land being lower priced, newer and more fertile here than in the States, so much so in fact as to leave an advantage after the handicap of higher priced labor has been overcome. This is of course, upon the assumption that the general average of land values in Canada is lower than in the States, a perfectly sound assumption. But there may be individual farms and localities in the States where land is lower priced and more fertile than certain farms and certain districts in Canada, and as a consequence farm crops could be produced cheaper than in Canada.

The comparative cost of producing a crop must be arrived at by making comparisons of those items in the cost that can be directly charged to it, leaving out of consideration the returns from the crop which in actual estimates would have to be considered in arriving at the profit. These direct charges are labor, including the operations of all machinery with its depreciation, and handling the crop, seed, twine, and the rental charge of the land. Upon such a basis it will be seen at once that the lower rental charge against the land is the only advantage that Canada can have against older districts, unless it is the case that our land requires less cultivating than that in older districts, and this as a matter of fact is quite often true.

The man who has purchased land for \$10 an acre is slow to realize that when land values have appreciated to \$50 an acre the value of the product above the cost of production must be nearly five times as great to yield the same rate of profit. Fifteen bushels of wheat per acre at 70 cents per bushel on \$10 land will return a profit of 60 per cent. on the investment, but the profit is diminished to 6 per cent. on the \$50 land.

Statistics have been gathered of the cost of producing a crop of wheat in the state of Minnesota, the items of which are as follows:

Seed.....	.80
Cleaning seed.....	.03
Plowing.....	1.06
Harrowing.....	.27
Seeding.....	.27
Weeding.....	.08
Cutting.....	.33
Twine.....	.18
Shocking.....	.12
Stacking.....	.44
Threshing (labor).....	.20
Threshing (cash).....	.34
Machinery rental.....	.34
Land rental.....	.80
Total, per acre.....	\$6.26

These are about the average figures for the American wheat growers.

So far no official statistics have been collected for Western Canada, and in view of the significance of rental charges in the cost of production it is doubtful if such data would be of much value in this enquiry, since land varies with us from ten to fifty dollars per acre within a radius of forty miles, depending not upon its productive power, but upon its location in respect to markets.

We have, however, Mr. Benson's memorable estimate for the tariff commission, which when published in these columns, though challenged, had many an endorsement from practical lifelong wheat raisers. This estimate placed the growing of wheat upon such a low basis that there was scarcely a profit to be found in it. Others will place all charges against a crop of wheat as grown in Western Canada about equal to those against States grown wheat quoted above, with the exception of the rental charge, which is probably on an average nearer one dollar than one eighty as given above.

These estimates are for a crop averaging about fifteen bushels to the acre. A heavier crop would cost but little more for the labor of handling and threshing, but the profit would be considerably greater as the first charges must be set down against an acre whether it yields fifteen or fifty bushels. In this principle lies the secret of success in crop growing; namely, to increase the returns of a crop very considerably over the cost of production, for beyond a certain point the returns from a crop are always out of proportion to the increased cost of handling it.

#### How the Laborer's Position Compares.

In discussing this problem recently, we stated that church, school, platform and press had tended, by broadening the individual citizen's outlook and stirring humanitarian impulses, toward an ultimate betterment of the laborer's position, while hand in hand with these agencies had gone invention, which intellectualized labor and stimulated it to organize and obtain increasing remuneration for its toil. Well that such influences have been at work, for, on the other hand, modern industry and finance, by centralizing and monopolizing manufacture, and fleecing the gullible public by floating watered stock and by various other forms of organized extortion, aided by protective tariffs and unjust taxation, have unquestionably brought about the concentration of much wealth into a few hands, especially on the American continent. It is these few and the middle classes who set our standards of living, dictate the expensiveness of our fashion, and are responsible for the heavy economic loss which results from the frequent changing of styles in every thing, from boots to millinery.

It must be admitted, to a large extent, that the standard of living varies with the age and the neighborhood in which one lives. The father who resists his son's appeal for 30 cents to join a baseball team, by telling him how little money he had to spend when a boy, is using an unfair argument. It is easy to do without things one never has had, particularly if his neighbors haven't them, either. It was no embarrassment to wear fresh-greased cow-hide top boots to school or church when all the other boys were doing the same, but it would sting the spirit of the least sensitive lad to be the only one wearing such foot-gear in public. The young couple who have come West to rough it on a homestead, think lightly of the deprivations, because their neighbors are in much the same straits. Had they remained in the East, they would have found it necessary to spend more for furniture and clothes. So it will not do to compare the working man's wages to-day with those he received ten or twenty years ago, and jump to the conclusion that he can have no possible cause for complaint. Rents have increased at a feverish rate, the cost of most staple lines of goods has risen considerably since then, besides which there are many new demands upon his purse. The working man of to-day aspires—and quite properly and worthily aspires—above the position of a mere clodhopper. His own self-respect and the interests of his family demand that he conform, in so far as his means allow, to the usages and amenities of civilization. The city laborer has his water rates to pay, his rent or taxes and interest, his electric-light or gas bill, his street-

car fare, and an occasional railroad trip, to say nothing of the hundreds of other items that bulk so large in the course of a year. He probably feels, also, that his home is incomplete without a musical instrument of some kind. And why shouldn't he be entitled to these things, when his employer is riding around in a five-thousand-dollar automobile, and sending his daughter on a trip to Europe? Fashion dictates the luxuries of the rich, and no one raises a hand of protest, no matter how dishonorably the money that buys the luxuries has been obtained. Yet there are plenty of people who dwell with horror on the "increasing extravagance" of the poor, and if they find a laborer who is profligate or drunk, how ready they are to point their cut-and-dried conclusion that prosperity, beyond a frugal living, is no benefit to the working man. By these same critics, the indulgences and misdeeds of the well-to-do are tolerantly condoned, especially if they happen to be liberal supporters of public benefactions. We talk considerably about equality and democratic privileges, but a great many of us who laud these things in the abstract do not think or act accordingly when it comes right down to the point in the form of a concrete instance.

The general conclusion to be drawn from the foregoing paragraphs is that, while the unmistakable tendency of modern times, especially in the New World, has been towards an improvement of the laborer's position, still the real betterment to date is not so great as commonly supposed, for, while the average of intelligence, comfort and culture in the laborer's family is undoubtedly advancing, the relative positions of the average working man and the average capitalist employer are about as far apart as ever they were, and the laborer who seeks to conform reasonably well to the demands of the present-day civilization must needs calculate about as closely as did his prototype of earlier times.

#### The Natural Way.

The globe-trotter is impressed with certain unvarying circumstances when he begins comparing conditions in different agricultural countries. These are, that where there is a natural proportion of males and females in the population, there will prevail neat, well-kept homesteads and where the relative proportion of men is greater than of women, there the farmsteads are less inviting, the borders of the fields are dotted with the flowers of weeds, and about the house and barns will be found hedges of weeds breast-high, rank and defiant. These circumstances are intimations of the direction in which to work to find a solution of the vexed labor problem and a remedy for dirty farms. Where there are wives to be had men and women usually marry and troupes of boys and girls gladden the days of their parents; the forces of humanity increase and humanity is ever by instinct the enemy of thorns and briars. These reflections lend color to Mr. McKellar's plea in last week's issue for the offering of more inducements to female immigrants. The only real cure for weeds is manual labor and in our country the opportunities for weeds to flourish have become out of all proportion to the labor to combat them. Added to this there is always present in every individual a desire to clean up the person and surroundings just as we all at about fourteen years of age begin to wash behind our ears and brush our matted, tangled heads. The influence of a woman upon the tastes of a man, even if it is only temporary, is most significant. Woman is the salvation of our farms.