

# The Mail Bag

## Idle Lands Available

**O**PEN letter to the executives of the Dominion Council of Agriculture, the Grain Growers' Association of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and the United Farmers of Alberta.

Sirs:—I wish to draw your attention to the fact that accessible from existing railways there are, according to the figures supplied me by the Natural Resources Intelligence Branch of the Department of the Interior, the following acreages of agricultural lands at present unoccupied and uncultivated:—

| Patented or Disposed of   | Acre      |
|---|-----------|
| Manitoba  | 2,097,840 |
| Saskatchewan  | 8,178,378 |
| Alberta   | 8,831,400 |
| Undisposed of available Dominion lands within 20 miles of existing railways:— |           |
| Manitoba  | 2,667,936 |
| Saskatchewan  | 1,912,864 |
| Alberta   | 8,220,748 |

Total 21,819,166

Estimates do not include unsurveyed lands along the line of the Hudson Bay railway.

The total of patented or disposed of lands, and undisposed of Dominion lands within 20 miles of existing railways is thus 21,819,166 acres. There are no available figures as to how much of this could be plowed by tractors. The estimates given me by the departments of agriculture of Manitoba and Saskatchewan put the total well over 10,000,000 acres in those two provinces together, not counting Alberta, from which I received no estimate; so that 10,000,000 acres would be a conservative estimate of the total idle land of the three provinces which could be plowed by tractors.

Is not this idle accessible land a challenge to the patriotism of all Canada? But all Canada is not in possession of the facts? If we, who are on the spot, and know what those idle acres are capable of producing, keep our mouths shut about those possibilities, we cannot wonder if the members of the government at Ottawa take no action to make the potential productivity of these areas an actuality.

It must be admitted that the present force of western farmers cannot handle more land in the majority of cases. Therefore western farmers cannot be looked to to bring these idle acres under the plow. But the Hon. Frank Carroll reiterates most emphatically in the name of the Dominion Government that "there is an enormous quantity of labor available." In view of the extreme peril of the Allied cause in relation to food, why should not this "enormous quantity of labor available" be used in a Dominion government scheme for the cultivation of as much of 10,000,000 acres of now idle land as labor and tractors could be provided for? The scheme would of necessity be operated under what would be equivalent to military discipline.

A prominent western editor recently said to me, "If the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, the Canadian Council of Agriculture, spoke out on such a question the cities and towns would get behind them. It would be to the advantage of all."

Therefore I earnestly urge that the executive consider and "speak out" emphatically, and invite the various city and town Boards of Trade in the West to do likewise, and so put the matter before the Dominion government, that nation-wide public attention will be drawn to the situation.

The scheme should offer to those who would engage as laborers under it the inducement of an easy-term purchase of lands so brought under cultivation. This would largely solve the labor question in regard to the scheme, and would bring into the West a better class of people than would be brought in by resorting to compulsion. If physically fit women were given equal opportunity with men in the matter of employment in this work a number of desirable young women would undoubtedly undertake the work.

As to the money—taxation should provide this. If the government lacks the courage to get it that way it can be procured by loan. Our aggregate wealth has increased since the war at the rate of \$950,000,000 per year. In view of this fact, it would be little short of treason for the government to balk in executing the scheme for alleged lack of money. The Allied Cause demands the food, and the money must be got.

May I ask you to advise me what action you take, as I wish to keep in the closest touch with the question?—David Ross, Strassburg, Sask.

## Railways and People

To the Editor of The Grain Growers' Guide:—In reading over Lord Shugglessey's address to shareholders of the Canadian Pacific, one is almost forced to exclaim, "Who is who in Canada?" and in review of progress of industry one wonders, "Who killed the bear" anyway?

Now, conceding his logic is correct when he draws the inference that Canadian West was without value without railroads, could we not go one step further and infer that Canada West was without value with railroads and without people? Now, using both factors as a basis of value to Canada—railroads or people—the question is, which constitutes greater value as value is estimated under present emergency?

After coming to a fair conclusion as to which is of most value to Canada, we can then seek to conclude what constitutes a fair treatment of the two factors in question. Now, Lord Shugglessey considers that \$1.72 per acre of the money received from sales of C. P. land a great and gracious expenditure of money to secure people for Canada and expect the Canadian people to credit it as a benevolent fund, more especially since it imposed a tax on land sold, and settler, but let me ask if that was all of actual value that the C.P.R. placed on immigrant people?

But the real question of justice is not left to the Canadian Pacific, but to the government working in co-operation with the Canadian Pacific in securing immigrants.

The foreign immigrant was led to believe that all direct taxes in Canada were self imposed, but many were in Saskatchewan but a short time when a super revenue tax of one cent per acre was imposed, but since it was an educational measure, it met no serious criticism but recently by allowing an advance of 15 per cent, in transportation rates the government has licensed the railroads of Canada to directly tax the people under condition that the Canadian Pacific return part of the money taken from the people, in the form of an income tax or tax on excess profits. In other words, the Canadian Pacific becomes a tax collector, while she herself is, in a great measure, untaxable. Is that justice to the people?

Again, the immigrants were led to believe that they and their children should be exempt from foreign military service, except as volunteers—yet the great majority feel that conscription of manpower under present emergency is just, but as an emergency measure, is it not equally just to tax Canadian Pacific land, wealth and resources as to tax people's lives, property, happiness and resources, since the fight protects incorporated wealth and safety as well as private? In other words, is it just to break an agreement with people which involves lives, property and security as a war emergency on the one hand, and hold sacred an agreement made with the C.P.R. nearly forty years ago, when no war clouds hung over Canada, and still maintain it is just to the people? And is the granting to them an advance in freight rates at the present time when the people are already taxed to their utmost and they—the Canadian Pacific—were already amassing great profits, any different, practically, than paying a war indemnity to incorporated wealth? If this course is just on part of government to the people, it would seem that the incorporated wealth of

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