

# Mr. Coaker's Speech on Morris's Agricultural Policy.

## Shows That the Reports of Societies Prove it a Failure---No Increase in Cattle or Sheep Decrease in Pigs--Challenges Minister's Figures Fixing \$5,000,000 as Value of Agricultural Products Last Year.

**MR. COAKER**—I wish to say a few words in connection with this matter. I am very pleased to find that the Minister claims that \$5,136,000 worth of agricultural produce raised in this country during the year 1915. Now, if that was the case I wish to convey my congratulations to the Government upon its agricultural policy, but I am very much afraid that the estimate is exaggerated. This is certainly a large amount. It really means half the value of the whole fishery exports for the year 1915. I notice that the Minister of Agriculture and Mines, in ending up his report, states that:

"The magnificent total value reached in the past year of over \$5,000,000, a matter that warrants the Agricultural Board in assuming that the Government's agricultural policy has been a sound one, and that its own efforts—arduous as they have always been, and unpleasant as they have sometimes been made—have mainly contributed to such result and will justify the Government at the earliest possible moment in restoring the Board's grant to its original amount."

The Minister of Agriculture and Mines gives the credit for this to the agricultural policy inaugurated by the present Government. The reason why I have my doubts is because when I turn to the reports from the different societies, I find that they are very conflicting with regard to the success of the agricultural policy.

**Flat Island, P.B.**—No cattle; no bull; Musgrave town—Very little increase in cattle.

**Princeton**—No increase in cattle.

**Wesleyville**—No increase in pigs.

My friend, Mr. Winsor, might explain how it is that agriculture and stock-raising in particular are doing so well in this district; and the information he gives might be utilized by Mr. Devereaux for the benefit of the country generally. The question is why is it that there is no increase in pigs in this section.

**Salvage Bay**—No increase in cattle.

**Port Blandford**—Sheep slight increase. (This is a fine place for sheep-raising, still there is only a slight increase.)

**Brooklyn**—Dealing with sheep, the report says: "No increase, as there were a lot killed this Fall for mutton." I do not know what sheep are raised for if they are not to be killed.

**Freshwater**—Sheep, some increase; pigs, no increase.

**Old Perlican**—Some increase in sheep.

**Broad Cove, B.D.V.**—Pigs, a decrease.

**Carbonar**—Want thorough-bred heifers, as well as bulls; thorough-bred cows, as well as rams; and thorough-bred sows. Why do they ask for these? I venture to say that you might keep on sending thorough-bred animals to the outports for the next fifty years and there would still be no improvement in the stock if they are not fed and treated properly. Improvement in stock only comes from good feeding and proper treatment; and if you start raising cattle and feed them on hay only, and give them only one-third of the quantity they require, you will have no increase in size. If you want to get good cattle raised you will have to get the people to feed them properly. They must feed them on something similar to that used by the farmers around St. John's. You cannot hope for improvement in pigs, sheep or cattle under the present methods of feeding them, as is in vogue in the outports; and I venture to place that statement against anyone else's in this country.

**Joe Batt's Arm**—Cattle and sheep, increase 3 per cent; pigs a failure.

**Fogo**—Cattle and sheep, no increase.

**Musgrave Pt.**—Sheep, very little increase; pigs, no increase.

**Change Islands**—Cattle, no increase.

**Bellefleur**—No increase in cattle; past few years; pigs, all sent perished.

**Spaniard's Bay**—Cattle increase 5 per cent.

**Bay Roberts**—The report from this place, under the head "Suggestions," reads: "The members of our society would like to see the bonus on new land continued, believing it would be a stimulus to agriculture in general, and an encouragement to all concerned; very few pigs kept; cattle, increase 5 per cent."

**MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS**—I may say, Mr. Chairman, that I think the reason these people ask for the continuation of the bonus on new land is that it is thought that in this way greater facilities for cattle-raising will be afforded and the industry benefited.

**MR. COAKER**—Kelligrews—in his report it is stated that "The Society has no bull in its possession at present, as Mr. Albert Rideout received permission to kill the bull that he had belonging to the society, as the animal had become vicious." I am very sorry indeed to hear about the viciousness of that bull. I think, however, you ought to go over to Kelligrews and enquire why there is no increase in sheep over there. It is a funny thing that no increase in sheep is noticeable here; the locality is ideally situated for the carrying on of this industry; and there should be no difficulty in raising sheep in this district.

**Harbor Mah**—Dealing with "Pigs," the report says: "No increase whatever, as the pigs the past years supplied by the Board did not give satisfaction." I am surprised to find the Minister of Public Works did not pick out the best pigs and send them out to this place.

**Placentia**—Sheep and pigs, no increase; cattle, slight increase.

**Haystack**—No pigs left in our part of the section whatever. Sheep are much more valuable than pigs to us.

**MR. HON. PRIME MINISTER**—The idea there is that sheep are valuable in the sense that they crop the grass and fertilize the fields; pigs do not eat hay. That, however, only applies to HAYSTACK.

**MR. COAKER**—I know pigs do not want hay. If sheep are valuable because they eat the grass, I hope they will come across some of the "two-bladed" quality, sometime ago referred to by Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister. Why does not the Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister say: "You ought to forget that two blades of grass?"

**Branch**—There is not a single pig in this section. During the past year, pigs were repeatedly asked for, but none could be procured. I hope you will be able to send some pigs to Branch.

**Trepassey**—Pigs, decreased.

**St. Joseph's, Salmoner**—Pigs decreased; would like sheep and pigs, if good breed.

**Salmoner (North)**—Under the head "Suggestions," this report suggests: "that a class of rams be supplied." That would be a good idea and would no doubt prove satisfactory.

**St. Mary's**—Sows sent, not very good.

**Argenta**—Pigs are unprofitable; no increase.

**Merashen**—Pigs decreased. Those sent by Board perished.

**Riverhead, St. Mary's**—Seed and potatoes sent out not beneficial.

**St. Bride's**—Pigs supplied all perished; better stock sent.

**Brigus**—Sheep, no increase; want better stock sent.

**Seal Cove, W.B.**—Pigs a failure.

**St. John's East and West**—I note that the sheep increased in St. John's East, and that dogs increased in St. John's West. One of the things that often astonish me is why so many dogs are allowed to roam around St. John's. I understand that there is a law dealing with licensing them. If the Board of Agriculture could come forward with some recommendation relative to this matter, and the doing away of some of these dogs, it would be doing something good. I should imagine that there are as many as 5,000 dogs in St. John's. Every one goes, he sees swarms of them. No wonder the society says that sheep have increased in St. John's East and dogs have increased in St. John's West.

**Port Rexton**—This is quite a lengthy report; but I see that pig-raising is a failure there. It suggests the importation of thorough-bred bulls and rams by continued, if cattle raising is to be carried on successfully, and great care should be exercised in their selection. I cannot understand why suggestions of that kind are necessary, because I understand that the Board has been sending out thorough-bred cattle to this place; and I cannot understand why so many complaints come in from there.

**Heart's Content**—I see that there is trouble there about the dogs. I should imagine that under the Local Affairs Act they could deal with the dogs in this place.

**Catalina**—Cattle very little increase; sheep slight increase.

**Hant's Pt.**—Cattle, no increase; fourball sent, three perished.

**Britannia Cove**—Cattle, increase 5 per cent.

**St. George's**—Very poor report concerning cattle. I cannot understand why that reflection on the Board should be contained herein. It says that the young animals are very poor because the kind of male animals furnished by the Board are almost valueless. I should say that my friend, the Honourable Member for St. George's, Mr. Downey, ought to know something about cattle and should not send anything inferior to his own district.

**Clam Bank Cove**—Pigs, no increase.

**Port aux Forts**—Pigs a failure.

**Crabbes**—No increase in cattle; sheep slight increase; pigs decreased past three years.

**Curling**—Dogs increased to an alarming extent.

**Clam Bank Cove**, pigs no increase; Port aux Fort, cattle very little increase; Urabbe's, cattle no increase; sheep slight increase, the quality is improving, pigs decreasing the last 3 years; Curling, dogs increasing to an alarming extent. One instance children going to school were menaced. I hope that steps will be taken to control dogs in order to safeguard the children of the place. Lark Harbor, Pigs, none, all died, supposedly from want of knowing how to be fed and kept properly. Woods Island, cattle no increase; sheep no increase, as people kill the increase during the Fall; pigs none, kept for breeding purposes as they find it is not profitable to keep pigs all winter; Robinsons, cattle no increase owing to the shortage of hay; pigs no increase. Burlington district of Twillingate, cattle no increase; pigs no increase; Fortune Harbour, cattle no increase. Suggestions: It is evident that both our cattle and pigs

are both decreasing and deteriorating. I presume they have had an improved breed of cattle sent to them, as it is evident that the breed is deteriorating, instead of improving. That does not bear out what the Minister himself says in his report when he said that "this splendid showing justified the hope that the Board's full grant of \$40,000 would be restored again as soon as possible."

I would be very sorry to see the Government restore the grant for agricultural purposes from \$20,000 to \$40,000, has been spent the past few years, because I do not believe that the country is getting good returns from the expenditure. Here you have statements from your own societies, which shows that no substantial improvement has been made for the expenditure of \$300,000 made during the last seven years. If all the societies sent in favourable reports things would be quite different. Of course we do not expect favourable reports from all the societies, but we do expect that there would be favourable reports from most of them, instead of which the general report is that they have bad cattle, and no increase in pigs or sheep. It is about time for the board to get down to business to investigate the matter. I cannot understand why they cannot make the raising of pigs a success. There is nothing encouraging about this report. \$20,000 was spent last year and you got just as good a return as you got from the \$40,000 the year before. I do not agree with the Minister when he says that this policy is a success, or that the Government should add another \$20,000 as soon as possible. I am sure that Mr. Devereaux, one of the Commissioners, is very anxious that the country should get the best possible benefit from this policy, and I feel that no one can blame him for the results shown in this report. If he sends out the cattle and the seeds and looks after the work in the Office here, I cannot see how he can be blamed for what happens on the West Coast or to the North. If the societies do not look after the animals and do not take the precautions that they should, the commissioner cannot be blamed unless scrub animals are sent out instead of pure bred, but I do object to any more money being spent by the Board on this policy, and I do not approve of the suggestion of the Minister that the vote of \$40,000 should be restored.

Mr. Chairman, I am not worried over the remarks of the hon. member for Placentia and St. Mary's, because there is very little in them which calls for a reply. He accused me of insincerity in regard to this matter. Now, he knows my opinion in regard to this policy, because I have expressed it on three or four occasions, and I did not say this afternoon one-fifth of what I have said on former occasions. This afternoon I simply disputed the right of the Minister to say in his report that the agricultural policy of the Government, as we have seen it during the past six or seven years, has been responsible for the wonderful agricultural progress which is claimed to have taken place in the country during recent years. So as to make the thing clear, I quoted the Minister's exact words, and I shall repeat them. He says:

"The magnificent total value reached in the past year of over \$5,000,000, a matter that warrants the Agricultural Board in assuming that the Government's agricultural policy has been a sound one, and that its own efforts—arduous as they have always been, and unpleasant as they have

sometimes been made—have mainly contributed to such result and will justify the Government at the earliest possible moment in restoring the Board's grant to its original amount."

That is the statement which I am criticising. I simply challenge that statement, and I cited returns from your own agricultural boards to show that the policy of the Government has not been either successful or satisfactory in many places, and that in some places it has been a failure. I did not comment very much on any of these reports; I simply read them. I cited from fifty societies to show that no progress had been made, in fact, that the opposite has happened in some cases, because it appears from some of the reports that there has been no increase in cattle, that cattle have died, that sheep have died, and all that sort of thing. And yet the hon. member accuses me of insincerity because I stated the facts. If I had commented on them, if I had

reviewed the whole situation, and given my own idea as to what should have been done, he might be excused for thinking that I was not sincere and that I was getting up merely for the purpose of hearing myself talk; but I simply challenged the statement of the Minister in his report to the Government, and I am justified in doing so. If I have any rights at all in this House, I certainly have the right to criticise the report of a Minister. Now, I have not the slightest hesitation in repeating my own opinion on the matter once more. The agricultural policy of the Government is a mere farce, and I say that as a man who has had eighteen or twenty years' experience in agriculture. With regard to cattle, I took that matter up because I believe I know something about stock-raising. I am very much interested in stock-raising, especially in sheep-breeding, and I find nothing whatever of an encouraging nature in the reports in that connection. If there were anything there that would lead me to believe that this policy would eventually, say in four or five years, be improving conditions, I would be only too glad to give it my support. I have my own ideas of what ought to be done. Don't think that because I am finding fault with this policy, and endeavoring to show that these reports are not encouraging, that I have no wish to see agriculture progress in Newfoundland. I don't claim that Newfoundland is an agricultural country. It is not and never will be. But some thing can be done to assist the people in this direction; there is not the slightest doubt about that; but I doubt your figures when you say that the value of produce last year amounted to over \$5,000,000. I want to get something reliable to substantiate these figures before I am prepared to accept them. Statements taken from Reid's agents along the line, and people of that sort, are not sufficient to convince us. We want some evidence that we can have confidence in. In the past you have made up your statistics in that way, but you cannot expect us to swallow them, if, however, the value of agricultural produce in this country is anything like \$5,000,000, then I say that we ought to congratulate ourselves. I don't say that we ought to give you credit for having done very much to improve conditions. Take the North for instance. I have gone through it because I stated the facts. If I had commented on them, if I had

sent out, and all sorts of complaints, I don't know half a dozen places that have been satisfied with what has been done. Last year I met men at Lewisporte, who were in a row with the Board. These men are as much interested in agriculture as any men in the country, and they were simply disgusted with the procedure of the Board. Why such dissatisfaction? There may have been faults on both sides, but the fact remains that the Boards and the societies have not been working in harmony. The Board, I suppose, tries to do the best it can, and that the people have not been able to work in harmony with it is a great pity, especially in view of the fact that I don't know of any people in the whole North who take more interest in agriculture than the residents of that same section.

Now, with regard to the potato canker: The Commissioner has gone as far as to say that the Board has exterminated this germ that got into the potato known as the "Canker." Now, the very report of the Minister contradicts this. Here is what the Minister says:

"In my Report for 1912 I expressed the opinion reached by the Board that Potato Canker would never assume serious proportions in Newfoundland—as it was unlikely the germs could live through our severe winters. The intense frosts of the 1914-15 winter, in conjunction with a scarcity of snow, have evidently been fatal to the canker germs. Such a combination is somewhat injurious to hay lands, but by its subjecting the canker germs to the full rigor of the low temperatures it is evident such have been effectually killed out, as in the past year places that had been badly infected had been absolutely free from the disease."

Now, there is proof that the frost killed the canker, and the hon. member actually went as far as to lead us to believe that it was the efforts of the Board that had destroyed it.

With regard to seed potatoes, I know that you have sent out some seed potatoes, and paid fancy prices for them. You probably did what you thought was the right and proper thing to do for the encouragement of agriculture so far as the growth of potatoes is concerned, but the policy has been anything but a success. In the North those potatoes have been thrown to the pigs; people won't eat them; they have gone back to the old seeds that they sowed years ago.



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