

In the Western Provinces, where the statistics are somewhat more recent, we find, notwithstanding the vast agricultural areas, the same alarming tendencies. In 1901, slightly over seventy-five per cent. of the population was rural and slightly less than twenty-four per cent. was urban. In 1916, instead of the rural population holding its own with the urban, something over only sixty-four per cent. of the population was rural and something slightly over thirty-five per cent. was urban. By the census of 1911 the urban population of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta is shown to have increased ninety-two per cent. in ten years; whereas in the same period of time the rural population increased by only fifty-two per cent. The census of 1916 reveals a furtherance of this tendency toward the expansion of the cities and towns at the expense of the country or rural areas. In the one Province of Saskatchewan, where rural population had been the largest relatively, the rural population decreased from something over eighty-four per cent. of the total, to something over seventy-two per cent. in the five years from 1911 to 1916.

*Necessity to foster agricultural
development*

When we stop to consider these figures, and what they signify in their bearing upon such a problem as the high cost of living, it will be seen that it is impossible to exaggerate their significance. In the light of evidence of the kind, the endeavor to regulate prices in a manner which will benefit consumers generally, by such expedients as Boards of Commerce, however useful investigating bodies of the kind may prove in helping to check individual abuses here and there, is the merest pretence. It is, as one humorist has said, like shooting woodpeckers as the most effective means of conserving the forests; like attempting to remedy some serious disease by examining its surface indications. The trouble is not on the surface; it is an internal disorder of the gravest character, one which, if permitted to go on, will sooner or later bring the city-dwellers and the whole country into desperate plights.