

Compliments of the writer

Pamph
B
B

Land Settlement for Soldiers

By

Lieutenant-Colonel Walter James Brown, C.F.A.



(1873 -

THIS Memorandum re Land Settlement for Soldiers in the Eastern Provinces of Canada was first outlined in 1916 by the writer while he was in Flanders in command of the 4th Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery, and sent to the late Dr. C. C. James, C.M.G., Dominion Commissioner of Agriculture. Early in November, 1918, it was further outlined and forwarded to a Minister of the Crown, and transmitted to the Department concerned, while the completed scheme was submitted on 18-12-18.

PUBLISHED BY THE
LONDON CHAMBER of COMMERCE



Memorandum

RE LAND SETTLEMENT FOR SOLDIERS IN EASTERN PROVINCES.

Having listened to a number of discussions dealing with the question of land settlement for soldiers, and having been impressed with the necessity for some practical solution to the difficulties involved, I have prepared the following in the hope that the ideas presented may be of use to the Government and to the men:—

Scarcity of Food

During the Great War the importance of food production and conservation has been impressed as never before on the minds of all the allied people. The world's need for food products is very urgent. This fact is of great significance to this country. Owing to the character of the soil and climate of Canada, the production of food will probably be the chief business of the majority of our people for many years to come.

Soldiers' Settlement

It is gratifying to note that more than 43% of Canadian soldiers overseas have expressed their desire, on demobilization, to settle on the land. It is believed that a large number also of the men in the British Army, if given the opportunity, will migrate to Canada for the purpose of settling on the land.

Western Provinces

Owing to the lure of the Western Provinces, many of these returned soldiers will prefer to make their homes on the virgin soil and identify themselves with the progressive and freer community life that prevails in the west; but undoubtedly a large number, especially of those who have had little or no previous experience in farming, will prefer to settle in the older sections of the country, especially in southern Ontario and in the eastern provinces by the sea. Many of these men will become successful farmers if properly encouraged and instructed at the beginning of their careers on the land. Their settlement on the soil will obviate to some extent the tendency to crowd into the cities and congest the industrial centres and at the same time assist materially in relieving the food situation. Aside from our obligation to look after the men who have been fighting for Canada and the Empire, it is eminently worth while for the State to assist them because of their economic value and because of the world's pressing need for food supplies.

Unproductive Land in Ontario

Previous to the war, owing to a variety of causes, there was a strong exodus from the rural to the urban centres and large areas in the Eastern Provinces have been depleted of their population. The extensively advertised attractions of the cheap lands in the Western Provinces and in Northern Ontario have intensified this depletion. There are, I believe, thousands of farms, especially in the Province of Ontario, either in grass or occupied merely by elderly people. These farms are at best indifferently cultivated because of the absence of enterprise and efficient labour. Such conditions are proving a severe handicap not only in the production of food, but in the industrial and commercial development of the whole country.

Opportunity To Repopulate Rural Districts

Canada is primarily an agricultural country and it is essential to her future prosperity that all tillable land, especially in the long settled communities where churches, schools, roads, railways, etc., are established, should be kept in a high state of fertility and thoroughly and systematically cultivated. To do this requires a vigorous, numerous and contented rural population. Therefore, any economic or social tendencies which help to develop large industrial centres at the expense of the rural districts should be checked, as they are not conducive to permanence in agricultural progress or to industrial balance or national stability. Fortunately at this time farming is attractive as a business enterprise because of the prevailing high prices for food stuffs. While grain may become cheaper, it is improbable that agricultural conditions will be materially changed for several years. The reason for this is that there was a world shortage of meat, wool and other animal products before the war. During the last four years, notwithstanding the efforts to increase production, it has been impossible to maintain these commodities at the pre-war levels. If, in the years to come, facilities are given to distribute agricultural products and it is possible to avoid erecting or maintaining artificial barriers against the ebb and flow of the markets, there is certain to be a widely extended and intensified interest in agriculture. No country in the world is better situated than Canada to enjoy to the full the results of increased enterprise in cultivating her farm lands. The opportunity to repopulate the rural districts under extremely favorable conditions presents itself and should be grappled.

Suitable for Soldiers' Settlement

The soldier is pre-disposed to settle on the land. Having experienced the health and vigor that comes from living in the open, it is only natural that he should plan to make his permanent home in a rural community. The

examples of the French and Belgian small-farmers stimulated his interest and impressed upon his mind the possibilities of intensive tillage, as well as the personal comfort resulting from a small home in the country. As a national asset, his utility will be greater on the land than in the urban centre; but he should not be isolated, as it will require from one to two years at the very least to overcome the nervous fatigue and exhaustion of the battle field. In men who are apparently physically sound this condition prevails and it requires careful and sympathetic treatment. The important thing is to get these men immediately upon their return, interested in some special line of work where their intellectual and physical powers will be employed. Otherwise they are liable to become loafers and a source of trouble and expense to the country.

British and Belgian Soldiers

When I was in France I was informed by British and Belgian soldiers alike that after the war they would seek homes in Canada and if they could make the necessary arrangements would prefer to settle on the land. It seems to me that Canada has the finest opportunity ever presented to this or any other country to procure in the immediate future a splendid class of immigrants. If the attractions are sufficient, these men, with their families, will settle in the older provinces and prove a potent factor in enriching and developing the whole country.

Soldiers' Children

I believe a plan can be worked out which will provide suitable homes for a very large number of returned soldiers who have already indicated their desire to settle on the land or who may hereafter be induced to take up farming as their life work. The one hundred thousand Canadian soldiers who have no jobs to go to should on their return be included in this class. It will be in the interest of the Nation, and of the Empire, if every possible inducement should be held out to the men in the British Army to bring their families and settle on the land in Canada. There are in Great Britain a large number of orphaned soldiers' children who are worthy of special consideration. Our own soldiers' children, where they are in need, should be provided for also. If homes were established in this country for these children and they could be absorbed into the population under proper supervision, they would prove invaluable to the rural districts of this country.

National Commission on Agricultural Education

It is suggested that a National Commission on Agricultural Education should work in conjunction with the Department of Soldiers' Civil Re-Establishment and that the maximum educational facilities for returned soldiers be provided. The work done overseas in the

Khaki University should be credited to those concerned. The Agricultural Colleges in the various provinces should be thrown open and systematic courses should be arranged to suit the needs of the men undergoing training. These courses should be supplemented by certain periods on the experimental farms where the value of good seed, pure bred live stock, clean tillage, etc., etc., could be illustrated and emphasized. It is necessary to make men enthusiastic about farming and rural home-making, as well as keen and intelligent in farm practice.

Co-Operation By Farmers

The Agricultural Representative of the various counties and districts throughout the country should be requested to furnish lists of the best farmers in their several communities who would be prepared to take returned soldiers and give them practical instruction in such matters as ploughing, etc., handling teams, running farm machinery, feeding live stock, etc., etc., and the men should be distributed as far as circumstances will permit among these farmers so they will become acquainted with local conditions. Unless men have farms of their own to go to, they should work for someone else on good farms for at least one year after they are demobilized. The second season some of them could rent farms and thus acquire in a few years the means to purchase farms of their own, while others should have farms purchased for them. In each Province a few intelligent farmers might be selected and trained to act as teachers and supervisors with a view to encouraging the men in their initial efforts and preventing them in the beginning from making serious mistakes.

Farms to Rent or Purchase

Two plans are suggested to anchor men to the land after they have had the preliminary instruction and experience outlined in the foregoing paragraph, viz:—

- (a) Rental of medium size farms of 100 to 150 acres, on a share basis; and
- (b) Purchase of small farms of 50 acres or less on easy terms through a Government commission.

To carry out these plans a commission on land settlement for soldiers is suggested for each province. Each commission should consist of a suitable returned officer, a trained business man and an educated farmer. Each commission should be empowered to employ the necessary technical advisers and practical assistants as may be required. The various staffs of the Dominion and Provincial Departments of Agriculture,

agricultural colleges and experimental farms and stations should co-operate with the commission as far as their facilities will permit.

**Provincial
Commission
on Land
Settlement**

The commission should be empowered to rent and purchase farm lands; to drain, clear, fence, fertilize and till such lands; to build or remodel dwelling houses and barns and other farm buildings where required; and to purchase farm implements and machinery, live stock, seed, etc., as may be needed. The cost in each case would be a first charge against the individual or land concerned, while the terms of payment should be easy and graduated according to an approved plan. The commission should be authorized to assist in establishing co-operative enterprises wherever opportunity offers. The commission should not seek to make a profit out of the returned soldier but should give him the benefit of their services and require him to repay only the proportionate actual cost with interest at current rates for each transaction.

**Profitable
Cultivation
of Land**

As this plan contemplates settling a large number of soldiers from the British Army, who may come to this country through immigration, as well as all the soldiers from the Canadian Army who may be induced to avail themselves of its advantages, it is probable that several hundred thousand families may be ultimately settled and that thousands of acres of what is at present only indifferently tilled lands of southern Ontario and the maritime provinces, will be brought under profitable cultivation.

**Accessible to
Good Market**

Whether the land for soldier settlement is rented or purchased, it should be easy of access and not more than ten miles from a railway or market. Other conditions being equal, the closer farms are to good markets the better; but the land must not be too high in price. Rural mail delivery, rural telephones and reasonably good roads are indispensable.

**Hundreds
of Farms
Available**

There will be no difficulty in procuring suitable farm lands either for rent or purchase if the matter is gone into properly and handled on a business basis without publicity. There are in almost every county in old or southern Ontario, hundreds of farms aggregating thousands of acres available for the purpose suggested. In fact, there is so much land now in grass or under partial cultivation in western Ontario alone, that I believe this section of the province would absorb one hundred thousand families.

A Rental Agreement

To give effect to plan (a) i. e., renting farms for returned men, suitable places should be selected so that several soldiers' families would be in close proximity with a view to mutual assistance and companionship. Leases should be drawn between the parties concerned, that is, the owners and the soldiers, and should be on an approved plan. The Provincial Land Settlement Commission should supervise the selection of the land and assist in arranging the terms of the lease. The idea in renting farms on a share basis is that the landlord supplies the land and pays all or a portion of the taxes, provides and keeps in repair the necessary buildings, fences, etc., while the tenant does all the work on the farm and furnishes the horses, farm implements, etc., necessary to cultivate the farm in a proper manner. The landlord and tenant each supply half of the live stock, seed, fertilizers, etc., and the profits are divided equally; statements of receipts and expenses should be prepared, submitted and accepted monthly. A suitable rotation of crops should be prepared and agreed to between the parties, also the number and kind of live stock to be kept, while the details of the farm management should be worked out on an equitable basis.

Cash Outlay

This plan will prove satisfactory and profitable for dairy and stock farms that do not require a large capital for operating expenses. With proper supervision and with honesty and thrift, the tenant rapidly accumulates enough money to purchase a holding of his own. If the supervision be supplied by a Government commission and the soldier tenant be supported and directed, the landlord in each instance will find the arrangement far more profitable and satisfactory than renting for cash. To make the scheme workable for the tenant, the land should be in a fair state of fertility and reasonably clear of noxious weeds, while the buildings and fences should be adapted to the individual needs of the farm concerned. The cash outlay would probably average \$1,000 to \$1,200 for each soldier tenant. This could be repaid in easy instalments.

Government

With reference to the second plan, (b), **Purchase Land** that is, purchasing farms in localities convenient to market and where the soil and climatic conditions are suitable for more or less intensive agricultural practice; the carrying into execution of this plan involves considerable preliminary work. It is possible that the Government may decide to expropriate the land they require for this purpose; but by utilizing local agents who are familiar with the districts selected and avoiding publicity, options for periods of nine or twelve months may be secured for groups of

Europe - History - 20th Century - War - Peace & Reconstruction

farms at reasonable prices, i. e., from \$50 to \$60 an acre. The cost of the options will be nominal, while the commissions or salaries to the agents should be determined before the work is undertaken. It is not necessary that all farms in each block should be purchased. After the options have been approved the farms may be selected according to circumstances. They should then be so sub-divided that each new farm will approximate 50 acres. Landscape architects might be employed to lay out proper designs for these country homes and the buildings, fences, etc., adjusted to conform to the plan determined upon. Each farm should, as far as possible, include part of a wood lot, have good water and a suitable allotment of buildings. It should be well drained, front on a good road and be convenient to church, school and neighboring farm homes.

Intensive Farming

This plan is recommended for lands and localities adapted to vegetable and fruit growing, tobacco growing, intensified stock raising, etc. If the farms are smaller than 50 acres, they will have to be devoted to special crops and maintained at a high state of fertility, which will probably require too much capital and skill to make them inviting to the returned soldier. But with proper supervision and assistance by Government commissions a soldiers' family will find ample scope on 50 acres of average land to make a good income and to live in comfort.

Wise Selection of Land

The success of this plan depends to a very great extent on having the farms suitably located and making them attractive; on giving the soldiers advice as to proper rotation of crops; assisting them in purchasing their stock and seed and then helping them to make a good start. The total cash outlay for each equipped farm should not run higher than \$3,000 to \$3,500.

Knowing the agricultural conditions of this country, and having studied this whole problem from a practical point of view, I am convinced that the foregoing plans are feasible.

If this memorandum helps in some degree to solve one of the most important questions now before the Canadian people, I shall be amply repaid.

WALTER JAMES BROWN.

London, Ontario, 18-12-18.