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LIBERAL GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO SETTLE THE WEST.

**They Have Been Eminently Successful,
Because They Were Designed to
Assist the Settler in Every
..... Possible Way**

One of the outstanding features of Canada's progress under the Liberal Government has been the phenomenal settlement of the plains of the West. The success in this connection has been due to two causes:

First, the inauguration by the Hon. Clifford Sifton of an energetic and up-to-date immigration policy.

Second, the repeal of oppressive legislation which bore heavily on the settler and the enactment of laws calculated to help the settler along and make everything as convenient and easy for him as possible.

Under the Conservatives, not only was the immigration work in other countries neglected, but absolute indifference was shown with respect to those immigrants who did come to Canada. Moreover, Canadians from Eastern Canada found conditions of settlement in the West so difficult that they, in common with arrivals from foreign countries, left the Canadian West and its wealth of natural resources, for the United States. In the words of a Western Conservative paper which was describing conditions as they then existed:—"The trails from Manitoba to the States were beaten bare and brown by the waggon wheels of departing settlers." That is a picture of the West as it was in Tory days. Under the Liberal party the West looms big in the eyes of

the world. Its wheat is the standard of the world and its crops materially affect the world's markets.

To-day thousands of native Canadians from the East and thousands of immigrants are moving into the West and making homes for themselves. New towns are springing up all over the prairies, new districts are being opened up; wherever one may go he will find life and activity. The people are happy and have absolute faith in the country and its future. Everywhere there is a spirit of confidence and buoyancy. People are pouring into the West and they are staying there because they are taking up homesteads and buying land as well. And they are producing so much and buying so much that for several years the railways have not been able to handle the traffic offered them. This phenomenal expansion began with the inauguration of Liberal rule. The same land was there during the Conservative regime; there were just as great yields of grain per acre then as to-day, but the country made practically no progress. As soon as the Liberals began an energetic immigration policy and enacted reasonable legislation regarding homesteading and settlement a change took place. The only conditions that exist to-day that did not exist under the Conservatives are those of legislation and administration just referred to. It follows then that they must have been the new conditions that brought about the development that has taken place.

The newspapers are constantly so full of items respecting the progress of the West that it is needless to submit any evidence thereof. Everyone knows it. But it is worth while giving figures as to land sales by land-owning railways and as to homesteads taken up by new settlers. The homesteads show that the development is not of a temporary character, but is one that contains the essential elements of permanency. The land sales give an idea as to how great the development really is. And the figures in both cases show that it was not until the Liberals came into power that expansion began.

Take the homestead figures first:—

CONSERVATIVE REGIME.

| Year. | No. of Homestead Entries. |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| 1889-90..... | 3,165 |
| 1890-91..... | 2,676 |
| 1891-92..... | 4,571 |
| 1892-93..... | 4,131 |
| 1893-94..... | 3,568 |
| 1894-95..... | 3,030 |
| 1895-96..... | 1,888 |

Total..... 23,029

LIBERAL REGIME.

| Year. | No. of Homestead Entries. |
|----------------|---------------------------|
| 1896-97..... | 2,155 |
| 1897-98..... | 3,514 |
| 1898-99..... | 5,912 |
| 1899-1900..... | 7,426 |

| | |
|---------------|--------|
| 1900-01 | 8,162 |
| 1901-02 | 14,633 |
| 1902-03 | 31,383 |

Total 73,185

The totals are:—

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Seven years Liberal rule | 73,185 |
| Seven years Conservative rule | 23,029 |

Increase under Liberals 50,156

Thus the increase alone under the Liberals is more than twice as large as the total entries under the Conservatives during the periods dealt with. The land sales by the Hudson Bay Company and the railway companies owning land in the West show a similar state of affairs. These sales total as follows:—

UNDER LIBERALS.

| | |
|---|-----------|
| | Acres. |
| 1897 to 1903, both inclusive | 8,833,554 |
| 1893 to 1896, both inclusive, under Conservatives | 411,608 |

Increase under Liberals... .. 8,421,946

No returns were made to the Government previous to 1893, so it is presumed there were no sales to report.

CANADIANS NOW STAY IN CANADA.

Energetic work on the part of the Immigration Department might of itself partially explain the big increase in the homestead entries and land sales. But it would not explain the extraordinary increase in the number of Canadians who have taken up homesteads in recent years. The improvements in the land laws and the efficiency shown in their administration alone explain the big movement of Canadians Westward. In the Conservative days the oppressive character of the land laws, and the maladministration there was in connection with them, kept the native Canadians away from the West. The young men who wanted to leave the East went to the United States instead of to our own West because they believed they had better chances there than in our own country, with its incapable Government. The amendment of the laws by the Liberals and the improvement in the administration synchronized with a big boom in homesteading by Canadians.

The following figures tell the tale:—

| | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| | Homestead Entries by Canadians. |
| 1896-97 | 677 |
| 1897-98 | 1,041 |
| 1898-99 | 1,809 |
| 1899-1900 | 2,647 |
| 1900-01 | 2,351 |
| 1901-02 | 4,080 |
| 1902-03 | 6,536 |

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In 1896, the last year of Conservative administration, the homesteads taken up by Canadians totalled 570; while in 1902-03, under the Liberals, the homestead entries by Canadian totalled 6,536, or nearly six thousand more than during the last year of Conservative rule.

THE LAWS THAT MADE THE CHANGE.

The changes made, in regard to the lands of the Dominion, by the Hon. Clifford Sifton when he became Minister of the Interior, involved many details. Mr. Sifton had lived in the West for many years and was familiar with the conditions prevailing there. He had been a witness of the injustices and hardships suffered by the settlers during the Conservative days and was thus in a position to know what remedies to apply.

At the very outset he took a notable step by stopping the promiscuous selling of public lands. He thus cut out the speculators who, under the Tories, bought the Government land for a trifle and then held it at such high prices that settlement was greatly interfered with. Since the Liberal party came into power Government land has been retained for the settler alone.

Among the many changes in the homestead laws to encourage settlement and help the settler in every way within the means of the Government, were the following:—

A settler who has acquired the right to a second homestead may perform the residence duties connected therewith by living on the first homestead. It was found to be rather an absurd condition to require a man who is given the privilege of making a second homestead entry—especially as many were allowed by the late Government to second homestead their pre-emptions—and in order to relieve the settler from the inconvenience and expense of erecting another house within perhaps less than half a mile of the house in which he was living, or even a longer distance, the Department decided that the residence condition of the second homestead would be considered as completed by living on the first homestead. This was provided by the amendments of 29th June, 1897, but afterwards this provision by amendment of 23rd May, 1901, was restricted to lands in the vicinity of the first homestead. A settler may perform the residence duties in connection with his homestead by living with his father or mother, if they occupy farm lands in the vicinity. This is also a change for the convenience of young men who live near the homes of their parents. It gives them the right to perform the homestead conditions by living with the father if he is living on a farm or, if the father is dead, with the mother if she is residing on a farm.

Of course, the other conditions to entitle the applicant to a free homestead must be complied with.

A similar privilege is allowed, whereby a settler may live on purchased land in the vicinity whilst performing homestead duties. In such cases the settler must cultivate 30 acres on homestead or substitute 20 head of stock, with buildings for their accommodation, and have 80 acres substantially fenced.

When a homesteader having made entry by agent or without seeing the land, or for other good reason desires to abandon and make fresh entry, he is now allowed to do so, and if, within three months, this is allowed without extra charge.

The official rate of interest has been reduced from six to five per cent. All charges for inspection and cancellation have been abolished.

Where a homestead entry is obtained for 80 acres or less, the entry fee is reduced to \$5, instead of \$10, as in ordinary cases.

Where a settler, who is entitled to a pre-emption takes it as a second homestead, the provision requiring 40 acres of cultivation has been abolished, and the ordinary duties are now accepted.

Cancelled time-sales have been made available for settlement, and are held exclusively for homestead entry, or if the applicant is not entitled to a homestead, he may purchase the land at \$1.00 per acre, subject to homestead conditions.

This action was taken with a view of making available for settlement a large area of land which had been sold between 1880 and 1883, upon which only one or two payments had been made by purchasers, and the Government had taken no action towards compelling payment. These lands, were, of course, simply held for speculation. Many of them have now been taken up by actual settlers who have become homesteaders. Under the law one person is entitled to one homestead only, and it was found that a number of people in the district where these lands were situated had exhausted thier right to homestead by having a previous entry, and for various reasons had lost their homesteads, who desired to settle on other lands. Such persons were given the right to purchase the lands at the minimum price of \$1.00 per acre, subject to homestead conditions, practically placing them in the same position as homesteaders and bringing the land under cultivation. The policy adopted did not permit the sale of these lands to persons other than such settlers who intended to build houses and establish their homes on the lands. The result of this action has been the settlement of a large area of land which otherwise would have been vacant.

Homestead patents are no longer withheld until the seed grain liability is paid, but are issued after the registration with the local registrar of a certificate of the indebtedness, thus permitting the settler, if he so desires, to get his certificate of ownership subject to the seed grain liability.

SEED GRAIN LIABILITY.

Legislation was passed on the suggestion of the Hon. Clifford Sifton to relieve the bondsmen in the case of the seed grain advances which were made to many settlers in the Northwest Territories since 1885.

When the grants of seed grain were made the Conservative Government not only took the personal security of the applicant for seed, but also compelled him to furnish two bondsmen as security. These liens were at once made a charge against the lands, not only of the person who got the seed, but also of those who acted as bondsmen, and have been for years a source of great inconvenience to the bondsmen from the fact that they have been unable to get the patents for their lands without first paying the seed grain indebtedness of the neighbors for whom they were surety. The result of the change is that only the lands of those who secured the seed are to be held for the debt, the land of the bondsmen being relieved in all cases. By this action hundreds of settlers will be relieved of a charge against their lands and will be in a position

to obtain a clear title and thus deal with their properties, whereas they could not do so under the former condition of affairs without paying the indebtedness of others.

Local agents of Dominion lands may now issue the necessary authority to the person appointed by an intending settler to make homestead entry on his behalf, instead of having to apply to head office for such authority, thus saving much inconvenience and delay compared with previous regulations.

To meet the convenience of settlers living at a distance from the land office, sub-agents have been appointed at various districts, who are empowered to receive applications for homestead entry, homestead patent, hay permits, timber permits, etc., thus saving the settler the time and expense involved in a trip to the office.

These agents are appointed and paid by the Government, and the work performed by them is for the convenience, without expense, of the settlers who may be living at a distance from the Land Office where the entry is to be made. This action has been found to be most satisfactory to settlers in remote districts and is appreciated by those having to do business with the Government in connection with their entries for lands and other matters with which the Dominion Land Agents usually deal.

Under the law as it previously stood School Lands were sold by public auction on the following terms:—One-fifth down and the balance in four annual instalments, with interest at six per cent.

This law has been amended on the suggestion of the Minister of the Interior to give more liberal terms to settlers who wish to buy School Lands and provides for ten instalments instead of five. This will enable many settlers who would not be in a position to pay down a very large amount of money to acquire these lands without difficulty.

The amendments to the Dominion Lands Act passed in 1897 also contains provisions which permitted of the closing out of several hundreds of claims for lands in Manitoba and the Territories which for years had caused trouble and annoyance to those interested in or entitled to such lands. Amongst these amendments may be particularly noted the amendment which provide for the issue of patents for lands taken up as homesteads by settlers who had subsequently become insane; the amendment which permits the Minister to decide whether a woman is the sole head of a family and entitled to a homestead entry or not and the amendment which passes title to the heirs or other legal representatives of a deceased person in whose name a patent may issue after his death.

Amendments of 1900 recognize as residence on homestead time on active service in South Africa, protecting entry whilst the settler is away and allowing patent if disabled.

The amount collected for improvements on abandoned or cancelled places is now paid to the party who made the improvements.

TIMBER.

Settlers who have not a supply of timber of their own have been granted the right to obtain a permit to cut upon Dominion lands as much dry timber, of any diameter, as they may require for their own use on their farms for fuel

and fencing. Provision was made for the issue of permits to cut, free of dues, timber for the construction of public works, public institutions and the buildings in connection therewith, and the quantity of building timber which a homesteader is allowed to cut, free of dues, has been increased from 1,800 to 3,000 lineal feet.

Homesteaders on Dominion Lands in the Railway Belt in the Province of British Columbia have been granted all the timber on their homesteads, excepting in cases where such timber has been disposed of under license or permit.

This will be a great source of great satisfaction to the settlers in British Columbia, as it will give them an interest in clearing their lands which they otherwise did not have, and puts them in possession of a large amount of timber.

HAY.

Provision has been made that no permits to cut hay are to be issued to persons who are not actual farmers until after the latter have been supplied.

COAL.

The regulations for the granting of permits to mine coal for domestic purposes were made to extend to School Lands as well as Dominion Lands.

TO FACILITATE ISSUE OF PATENTS.

The amendments to the Act in 1902 are calculated to facilitate the issue of a patent in certain cases, and also improve the conditions under which homestead duties may be performed.

It will not be necessary now for the personal representative of a settler who completed his homestead duties, but died before becoming a British subject, to obtain a certificate of naturalization before receiving a patent for land.

A RECENT STEP.

Amongst the latest steps taken by the Liberal Government to facilitate the settlement of the West is the policy to be followed in connection with the disposal of the millions of acres of odd-numbered sections of land now under the control of the Government through the arrangement made which completes the selection of the C. P. R. land grant.

It is proposed to sell these lands, not to speculators, but to actual settlers who will go into residence upon them; and where there are settlers in residence on adjoining homesteads such homesteaders will have the first opportunity of purchasing 160 acres from an odd section adjoining them.

In connection with this subject may be mentioned the steps taken by the Liberal Government to relieve the Western settler from paying an unfair proportion of the local taxes through the railway lands being exempt from taxation. The Liberal Government reversed the Conservative policy of delaying the patenting of land grants. As long as the patents were not issued the land grants were not taxable. The Liberal Government rushed out the patents and so made the railway lands eligible for taxation. In the case of the C. P. R., which enjoys exemption from taxation under special legislation, the Liberal

Government entered actions in the courts to secure judgment as to whether the term of exemption has not terminated. The Government has also guarded the interests of the settler with respect to railway matters, the grain business and in fact has lost no opportunities to make conditions in the West contribute to the happiness, comfort and prosperity of the people. Thus have people been attracted to the West and kept there.

CHANGES RE. DOMINION LANDS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

The present Government have made certain changes in the regulations governing the disposal of lands in British Columbia, which very materially and advantageously affect the settlers living on Dominion Lands in that Province.

The land owned by the Dominion is known as the Railway Belt, and includes an area forty-two miles wide, through the centre of which the Canadian Pacific Railway is constructed. The regulation heretofore enforced with regard to settlers requires them before receiving their patent to reside on and cultivate their homestead for at least six months in each of three years, and also before patent can issue the payment of one dollar per acre for the homestead of one hundred and sixty acres.

The Government considered that the settler in British Columbia was at somewhat of a disadvantage in view of the fact that the clearing of the heavily timbered land in that Province was a slow and tedious, as well as expensive, operation, and that the building and maintenance of roads and bridges required a considerable outlay in time and money to the settler. In considering all these facts the Government decided to cancel that provision of the regulations which required the payment of \$160 for each homestead, and by an Order-in-Council dated the 17th April, 1900, practically threw open homestead lands in the Railway Belt to settlement upon the same conditions as apply to homesteads in Manitoba and the Northwest Territories. The Government provided that this exemption should apply equally to all lands in the Railway Belt already entered for, or for which payment has not been made, as well as lands hereafter entered for under homestead regulations. The Government also considered that this change was necessary in order to further encourage the taking up of lands by new settlers in that Province.

A further change, of great advantage to the settler in British Columbia, has been made by giving him the timber rights on his homestead. Heretofore, all the timber, in excess of 25 acres, on any lands entered for as homesteads, was reserved by the Government. An Order-in-Council carrying out this change was passed on the 5th of July, 1899. This entitles all persons having entry for lands within the Railway Belt to the timber, free of any dues.

The list of amendments made with respect to Dominion Lands is a long one. To see how they benefit and encourage the settler it is but necessary to read them. When it is remembered as well that the administration of these laws and all others affecting settlers has been carried on with the idea that the settler is a good friend of the country and not a victim to be exploited (as was the case under the Conservatives), it is easy to understand why the advent of the Liberals to power has been followed by a phenomenal development of the West.