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MAY 8 1917
Int. Agr. Inst.
Government of the Province of Saskatchewan

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Why the Appointment of an Agricultural Secretary is a Solution to the Weed Question

When speaking of a solution to a question it is understood that the so-called solution is a system of outline of work that will accomplish maximum results in a minimum amount of time. All will agree that the weed question is a good farming proposition. Numberless suggestions and schemes have been put forth, but each is inadequate. Consider some of them.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

People say, "Enforce The Weed Act." Suppose we do; it will not be a solution to the weed question. You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink. Farming is a personal equation; weed control is a personal matter between a farmer and his fields. Law enforcement will never make good farmers out of poor ones any more than you can legislate to make men Methodists or Mormons. Law will help, but it will not cure.

EXTENSION WORK

People say, "do educational work." How are you going to do it? In the first place no man can tell me through a book or from a platform how to till my fields so well as that same man out in my fields with me can. Again, although there is a vast amount of knowledge that can be gleaned from literature, a great proportion of our people do not read. Farm papers do not reach them, and government literature they do not use or seem to demand. There is no adequate connection between the man on the farm

and the experimental farms and agricultural colleges. Many of these men will not come out to institute meetings, short courses, etc. Education will help, but it will not cure.

ORGANISATION

People say, "organise." Well and good, but who is going to do this organisation work. The margin of profit is too small to permit of people giving to this work the amount of time that the needs of the country demand. We will not get the organisation work done as it ought to be done until we are prepared to pay a man to do the work. Organisation will help, but it will not cure.

THE PROBLEM IS GOOD FARMING

The phrase "weed question" is incorrect. It is not comprehensive enough, but in using it we do so realising that it refers to a condition of affairs that in some parts reduces the salary per family to starvation wages, and bids fair to do the same in the newer parts of the province, unless some means can be found to handle the question. As stated before, it is the problem of good farming, using the term in its widest sense. If we are to suggest a solution this must be borne in mind, and the scheme proposed must fit every phase of the question. Let us not over-estimate the importance of single phases such as Weed Act enforcement, extension work, demonstration farms, agricultural co-operation, mixed farming, etc. These things are all good, all necessary, but they must be taken up side by side.

The appointment of a qualified agricultural secretary is an important step in the direction of the proper development of the lines of work requiring attention in Saskatchewan. The term "qualified" is used advisedly. The common criticism is that the plan may be all right, provided the right man can be secured. This is not a valid reason for objecting to a plan. All uplift movements depend upon the kind of man, but our province would be less progressive than darkest Mexico if the forces working for development refused to use any but ideal men. The agricultural secretary will enforce the Weed Act, attend to the educational matters and do the necessary organisation work, and aside from all this will be a medium through which the municipality will be enabled to take advantage of whatever assistance may be available from Federal or Provincial sources.

WEED CONTROL A BIG TASK

In stating that the agricultural secretary could enforce The Weed Act, we should bear in mind what is involved. In enforcing the Act, we

are putting into effect legislation to prevent the spread of weeds by winds, machinery, seeds, feeds, fodders and by careless and indifferent farmers. Canada thistle and perennial sow thistle must be cut before they go to seed, Russian thistle and tumbling mustard destroyed on vacant lands—threshing machines cleaned, careless and indifferent farmers compelled to pay attention to their weeds, and absentee landowners taught their responsibilities. Weeds come in to the country in chicken feed, poisoned grain, packing material with new settlers and in dozens of other ways. It is not the first few weeds that do the harm, but the fact that these few are not attended to.

We must recognise that to do all this is a man's job; not a job for a town loafer, nor for an incompetent man whose winter board bill is generally paid by the municipality; nor is it work for a few sunshiny days in June just to drive around to see if there are weeds in your fields or mine. It is work that requires constant attention by the biggest and best man that the municipality can find. We can get that kind of a man, provided we are willing to pay for his services. Paying small salaries for short periods as was done in the past meant that the only kind of men who could afford to take on the work were men whose time on their own farm had no particular cash value. If we subscribe good money for this work, we will get a good man, because he will be willing to leave his farm work to do this work the way it ought to be done.

CONTINUITY NEEDED

To carry out legislation is not work that can be taken up and dropped again at a moment's notice. If orders are given they must be carried out, and action taken against persons refusing to comply with the orders. This is where experience counts; a man with experience will do more in a day than an inexperienced man will do in a week. Some councils appoint John Jones as weed inspector for a division for ten days' inspection; the fourth day out Mr. Jones finds a field full of bad weeds, but doesn't quite know how to act, so he drives ten or twelve miles across country to see his councillor, and the two drive another ten or fifteen miles to see the reeve; the three of them go to the field, come to some decision, and an order is given and cordially received by the owner of the land in question, because he well knows that this is the end of the matter. He knows that the weed inspector has only about ten days to do his work, and that there is no chance of his ever getting back to see the field again. A qualified man would know at once what to do. In fact, the farmer in question would have been ready to do the necessary work, because he would know that what an agricultural secretary ordered would have to be carried out.

There prevails in all municipalities employing such a man the feeling that the agricultural secretary is always as good as his word, that he knows his business and this eliminates 99 per cent. of the so-called hard cases. The appointment of voluntary game guardians has been of immense assistance in preserving Saskatchewan's wild fowl. The presence of a qualified man in a municipality will develop wonderfully people's moral responsibility regarding weeds.

OTHER PHASES OF WEED CONTROL

The attention of the agricultural secretary to the indifferent and careless farmer is but a part of the work. There is seed grain to be found for men who would use clean seed if they knew just where to obtain it. All new seed imported into a municipality must be inspected. Many new weeds are brought in by new settlers and by the importation of feeding stuffs for use in the working up of new lands.

An important part of the secretary's work is to attend to the weeds on waste and vacant lands. A great deal of this work can be done in February and March much better than in August. The short time inspector coming to a piece of waste land in midsummer is unable to deal with it properly, because he does not know who owns the land, nor what complaints, if any, have been made regarding its care. He does not know where he can get the necessary help, and he is at a loss to know how to proceed. The qualified man can get in touch with this particular case in February or March and take the matter up with the owner, and in a great many cases will be able to arrange by the permission of the owner to have these lands summerfallowed or otherwise cared for. Again, in practically every municipality a man acquainted with the districts knows of a number of pieces of land that will require going over, or perhaps ploughing, and he knows in March just as well as he would know in June that it is up to him to find some one to do his work. A neighbouring farmer can plan in March to do some extra work in July ten times as easily as he can plan on the first of July to do a little extra work, and for this reason alone attention early in the season makes it much easier and much cheaper to get necessary work undertaken.

The objection is sometimes raised that it is physically impossible for one man to handle all the work of the municipality, but the experience of agricultural secretaries has proven that the number of bad cases requiring personal attention in midsummer is not too many for the attention of one man, for the simple reason that the work he has carried out during February, March, April and May has eliminated practically all of the cases which under the old system would require attention during the growing season. As stated above the knowledge that proper attention is going to be given to all questions makes fewer questions for the attention of the agricultural secretary. Each farmer will be his own weed inspector from choice or necessity.

WEEDS IN GRASS SEEDS

Due to the propaganda being carried on through the agricultural press, a great number of farmers are sowing small patches of alfalfa, clover and grass. This is the surest possible source of supply for new weeds. Through proper development of the agricultural secretarial work every sample can be examined before being sown. Many farmers have this spring sown alfalfa seed infested with Russian thistle, brome grass seed infested with quack grass; they are sowing stink weed in rye grass and night flowering catchfly in alsike clover, and Canada thistle and perennial sow thistle in fodder mixtures, simply because there is no ready means of

having these seeds examined by a qualified man previous to their being sown. The agricultural secretary can enforce The Weed Act. This will help, but it will not cure.

THE NEEDED CONNECTING LINK

The agricultural secretary can attend to the agricultural educational work of the municipality. The great need in Saskatchewan today is general primary information. Only a very small percentage require detailed scientific information. The masses do not read agricultural journals effectively; very little of what is written ever reaches them. It would be foolish to mail all kinds of bulletins to every farmer, for the simple reason that most of it would be wasted. There is no use sending a bulletin on poultry to a sheep man, or a bulletin on wheat growing to a man trying to make a specialty of hogs. The great mass of the people today are not in touch with the sources of information of agricultural subjects, but by keeping the agricultural secretary posted on all new agricultural publications he can act as the direct connecting link between the educational institutions and the man on the farm who requires particular information.

The agricultural secretary will meet every man on his own farm two or three times a year, and will meet most men at meetings and in organisation work a good many times. He will carry the experience of one man to another and will himself become an agricultural expert, because of what he will learn from the experience of other men. He will be in a position to help with all of the cultural questions in his district and will learn the nature of the information required by his people, and will undertake to supply that information. He will be able to arrange for short courses, institute meetings, etc., where no agricultural society exists, and can arrange for competitions along various lines, such as potato clubs in the schools, pig feeding competitions, acre yield contests, etc. He can do any or all of these things.

DEMONSTRATION WORK

Certain lines of co-operative demonstration work can be instituted. Most of our agricultural information applies only to particular districts of the province, but it is not necessary to cover the province with experimental farms. The place for demonstration work is on the farm of every farmer. The agricultural secretary can arrange small demonstrations to illustrate principles of agriculture, and by so doing will teach more truths than can be taught by installing a government demonstration farm in every township, simply because the man by doing the work himself, through studying his own work, will naturally derive greater benefit from this work than he would derive if the work were undertaken by somebody else and he be merely a spectator. It is a comparatively simple matter to carry out demonstrations along lines of soil study, moisture conservation, stock improvement, etc. The agricultural secretary will do these things and thereby raise the standard of efficiency, not so much because of his own

fund of information, but because of his influence in getting men to mix brains with their work. The amount of hard work on the farm is often in inverse proportion to the amount of thinking done, and, after all, scientific information is of little benefit to any man until he himself undertakes to study its application to his work. It is the personal work of the agricultural secretary that counts; a little personal advice, personal influence and sympathetic interest is the medium through which educational matter can be distributed to best advantage. Education will help to solve our question, but it will not cure.

AGRICULTURAL ORGANISATION

We need The Weed Act enforced, we need agricultural education, but we need also agricultural organisation. The salary per family is too small, largely through a poor economic system. Our rural social life is practically nil, simply because we have not yet learned to work together. We seem powerless to remedy this condition, because the margin of profit is too narrow to permit of a sufficient number of men giving of their time free to carry into effect the organisations required for the proper handling of rural problems. Putting into the field a salaried man will make possible the organisations necessary for rural welfare. We need rural mail, telephone, buying and selling associations, literary and social societies, travelling libraries, reading circles, etc. Each and every one has not only a social and moral value, but also an actual cash value. An agricultural secretary can bring these things to pass. Being a municipal officer he can undertake work and carry it through to completion, because that is his business. He will be able to command assistance that is beyond the reach of the volunteer worker. This is what is happening today, and this is what is being done in municipalities employing an agricultural secretary.

LIVE STOCK MARKETING

There is another phase of the subject not yet before the attention of our people. Our wheat trade was unsatisfactory until grades and regulations were introduced. So, also, will be the market for our live stock products. It is admitted that no good can be accomplished by the grading system until the supply equals the demand, but Saskatchewan will soon be in a position to command part of the export trade in live stock products. The agricultural secretary will be a valuable factor in standardising these products. The agricultural secretary will be a busy man, but that is what he draws his salary for.

Aside from this work, there are certain lines of outside assistance that will be available to the municipality, because there would then be an avenue through which municipalities could keep in close touch with college and dept. We referred above to the fact that there is at present little demand for detailed scientific information, but whatever is required

can be furnished through the agricultural secretary. If he has a dozen or fifteen men who require special information on pork production, it is a comparatively simple matter for him to secure a specialist on this kind of work and take him personally to the men who require this information. We have outbreaks of hog cholera, blackleg, glanders, etc.; these will be more easily controlled in a municipality employing an agricultural secretary, simply because the department will have an agent through which to work, making it possible for the department to work with four or five hundred farmers as a municipal unit rather than with miscellaneous individuals as at present. More literature from institutes, more money for competitions, more attention to agricultural work can be given by the department and the college to the farmers in a municipality employing an agricultural secretary, because in such a municipality there will be no waste effort, no literature wasted, no institute meetings where speakers talk to empty benches, no competitions without entries.

The subject is too wide and deep for full discussion. We have pointed out that the need in Saskatchewan today is better farming and that we will not achieve it by riding to death one or two pet hobbies. The question must be treated from a viewpoint as wide and comprehensive as the question itself. Further, we believe that the appointment of an agricultural secretary is a solution to the weed question, because thereby The Weed Act will be enforced, educational work attended to, the people organised, outside assistance taken advantage of and the standard of efficiency raised, thereby giving us as a province a domain of happy farm homes and a self-sufficient rural life.

THE WORK IS STARTED ELSEWHERE

Ontario has her District Representatives of the Department of Agriculture. The various states of the Union to the south have their County Agents. In these States a large part of the funds for the support of this work is subscribed by railroad men, bankers, merchants, etc. Why? Because increased acre returns mean more freight, more business and more money in circulation! These business men are not forming charity associations. Not at all; they consider it a good investment. If it is a good investment for men in such lines of work, surely it is an even better investment for the men on the farms. The business men in Saskatchewan will do the same if we ask them, but why not do it on our own account? If it would be good business for them, it is more so for us.

INCREASED YIELDS ARE OBTAINABLE

Saskatchewan contains at present, 297 Rural Municipalities, each approximately 18 miles square, and resident in each are between 350 and 450 farmers. The average yield of wheat for the last ten years was 18.4

bushels; of oats 37.5 bushels; of barley 25.6 bushels. The averages at Brandon Experimental Farm were as follows:

Wheat.	1894	1898	35 1-2 bu.	Oats.	1894	1898	93 bu.
	1907	1912	45 bu.		1907	1912	103 bu.
Barley.	1894	1898	50 bu.				
	1907	1912	67 bu.				

At Indian Head the averages are as good:

Wheat.	1901	1905	40 bu.	Oats.	1901	1905	102 bu.
	1907	1912	40 bu.		1907	1911	88 bu.
Barley.	1901	1905	59 bu.				
	1906	1911	56 bu.				

The average yield of the best farmers in a given district is twice the average for that district.

In 22 years the Better Farming propaganda in West Flanders increased the grain yields 46 per cent. In Saskatchewan it is possible, with the advantage we can take of the experience of other countries, to raise the average yields 50 per cent. in ten years. All the profit lies above the average yields.

It is with this in mind that municipalities are discussing the advisability of placing on the municipal pay roll an officer corresponding to the county agent under the title of Municipal Agricultural Secretary. To further this movement, and enable it to take the place it ought to take, accomplish what it ought to accomplish in the time at our disposal for maximum results, will require the active support of every intelligent man in the province. We must remember that a vast number of the people on Saskatchewan farms are without much agricultural education and are hungry for it; many are without experience and first-hand knowledge of the rudiments of successful farming. Many of these people find it hard to understand how any movement of this kind is going to help. In the Agricultural Secretary movement, people are being asked to contribute directly for their own redemption. It is a volunteer movement. The progressive men in all communities must get behind and push. A community is prosperous and a good place to be in only in proportion to its average efficiency.

PRINCIPAL OBJECTIONS MET

Following are some of the chief objections one meets with:—

MUNICIPALITY TOO LARGE A UNIT

1. It is objected to that one man cannot handle a municipality. People raising this objection have in mind weed inspection of the kind that is pure police work; looking into your fields and mine to see if we have any weeds. What success attends the efforts of a minister of the gospel who goes about fault finding? We have been sending around, season after season, men as weed inspectors, too often not the best of farmers, to point out to us our faults in farming. The wonder is that some of these men have not been shot. I think that we will all agree that better farming is the solution, and that every farmer must be encouraged to be his own weed inspector. We are not going to develop that attitude while we are sending men around in mid-summer to aggravate us by such remarks as: "behind in your summerfallow, Eh, John! Better push it along," or "why do you let those weeds grow, Jim? Afraid I'll have to give you an order to get them cut!" or "Mack, if you don't get at the field across the road inside of five days, I'll have the law on you." Evidence in support of better cultivation can be given just as effectively and with far better grace in January than in July. One man acquainted with the municipality working on uniform lines in each division, knowing how to handle the weed act, will accomplish ten times as much as is possible by the short-time weed inspector. The Secretaries of the following rural municipalities will give evidence to support the statement that one man can handle the weed question in a municipality:

Rural Municipalities of Frontier No. 19; Mankota No. 45; Reno No. 51; Pinto Creek No. 75; Auvergne No. 76; Chester No. 125; Baildon No. 31; Coulee No. 136; Swift Current No. 137; Webb No. 138; Saskatchewan Landing No. 167; Riverside No. 168; Sarnia No. 221; Craik No. 222; Mount Hope No. 279; Wreford No. 280; Rudy No. 284; Fertile Valley No. 285; Mariposa No. 350; St. Louis No. 431; Douglas No. 436; Mervin No. 499.

CANNOT AFFORD IT

2. Some raise the objection that a municipality can ill afford to devote the money to this work and that administration expenses are already too high. The best reply to this will be the answers of Reeves. The Reeve of Sarnia said: "The Agricultural Secretary saved his salary in effecting organization of the road work in the municipality by seeing that roads were placed where most needed, and then with the aid of an inexpensive level, ascertaining the amount of dirt to be moved which enabled the council to intelligently consider tenders for road work." In too many municipalities enough money is wasted each year in fixing roads adjacent to the homes of the councillors to pay for the services of an agricultural secretary. In too many cases it is not so much the amount expended, but the amount wasted that is holding down the municipal finances.

The Agricultural Secretary is proposed because there is evidence to prove that such an appointment is good management and good economy. In every municipality there are two main divisions of the work, the inside clerical work and the outside executive work. The former is, on the whole being handled efficiently, but the latter very much the reverse. Four or five hundred dollars are expended annually for gopher poison and nothing

done to see whether it gets any further than a dark corner of the cupboard, or whether it is placed out in April or in August. All the information that an assessor needs in his work is information that the Agricultural Secretary requires in his. There are municipalities today paying \$400 to \$600 for an assessor and three or four hundred dollars besides to other men for weed inspecting. There is no reason why the two offices cannot be combined. A great deal of executive work that falls upon the reeves and councillors could be handled by the agricultural secretary, such as arbitrating disputes over road diversions, taking care of the right-of-way, investigating complaints; looking into demands for relief, assisting in collecting seed grain liens, and much else, all of which calls for more time than men like to give. Ask any progressive, efficient reeves or councillors, and they will say that the demand on their time is far in excess of what they are able to give. The agricultural secretary cannot take up all these things at once, but he will grow into the work, and in the course of two or three years, will be able to handle the municipal work as outlined. It means that when a start is made with an agricultural secretary, the municipality will get somewhere, but with the old type of weed work, little will be accomplished.

CANNOT FIND THE MAN

3. Some answer "The plan is alright if you get the right kind of a man." Would Saskatchewan today be in the front rank of agricultural states and provinces, if the forces working for her development had refused to use any but ideal men? They secured the best men available and went ahead. Certainly a good man is needed for this work, but there are plenty of good men if one goes after them. Men for this work will not be found on the municipal pension-list nor will they be hanging around pulling strings for an appointment. Business enterprises get men for their work; so can municipalities, if they try.

GOOD MAN WOULDN'T TAKE IT

4. How can a man qualified for this work afford to take it up? Why does he not go farming? This is a real criticism. Many exceptionally capable men are available who only want an opportunity to prove their worth. These men are willing to start work for a fair remuneration at anything that will give them a chance to show their mettle. All the capital that many men have is their education and training—young men of 23 to 25 years of age, who have spent four or five years at a College of Agriculture learning simplified (scientific) farming to supplement their practical knowledge. These men with their practical upbringing, training, initiative and energy can be secured at an initial salary of \$1,200 to \$1,400 a year. The Department of Agriculture would be glad to assist in finding men suitable for this work.

THE WHOLE PLAN A FRAME-UP

5. Some men hold forth that it is only a scheme to find positions

for useless College graduates. Who would be troubled finding positions for useless men? What would be the use? This criticism of agricultural colleges and men trained in such institutions is hard to understand. If a boy listens to his father's experiences, that is good. If he listens to the accounts of the experience of the neighbors as well, that is better still. But if these experiences are printed and put in book form and the boy reads them, then he is ruined! Is there any logic in such reasoning?

College education is simply the experience of thousands of practical men put in readable form. "John Jones went to College and he came back no good." Well, what good was he when he went? Some men after fifteen or twenty years of mismanagement send their boys to an Agricultural College instead of to an Industrial School! College education will help a man to be a better man, more capable, more useful. Good practical, energetic young men with training at college will make successful Agricultural Secretaries.

CAN GET ALONG FINE WITHOUT IT

6. "Let the country work out its own salvation. When men find the weeds reducing their yields they will begin to farm. There is a certain element that is no good, and the sooner it is eliminated the better." On the surface this appears to be a hard-hearted, selfish objection. So it is, but there is some truth in it. People in Old Ontario, and all through the States partially learned how to farm in days gone by, by being starved to it! If by organization we can help men into more productive ways, then we will save many people a lot of unnecessary hardship and maintain the business stability of the province.

NEED OTHER THINGS MORE

7. Men say: "Give us Cheap Money, Free Trade, Postal Savings, Bank, Government ownership, Demonstration Farms, etc., etc." This is all very well, but after all we must recognise that we need better farming methods more than any of these. If we can devise some ways of helping men help themselves, most of our problems will have been solved. A tactful, experienced, enthusiastic agricultural secretary in every municipality would be a great help.

HAVE EVERY HELP WE NEED

8. "We have Colleges of Agriculture, Short Course Institutes, Literature, etc., why do we need anything else?" The man who makes this criticism probably is using to good advantage all the sources of information mentioned above but what percentage of the people are taking full advantage of these agencies? In the world of big business the invention of a piece of equipment or a new way of doing something that leads to the saving of a few minutes or a few cents in the manufacture of a given article, will revolutionize a business. Every business of importance employs experts in an endeavor to cheapen production. In America today there are thous-

ands of men studying methods of agricultural production. Their findings are printed, but how many men know and take advantage of these latest findings? You would never guess, from a summer's trip over the province that in it are located three Experimental Farms, two Forestry Farms and a College of Agriculture! *There is no direct connection between these sources of information and the average man on the farm.* A qualified Agricultural Secretary would be the live wire that will form this connecting link.

CONTINUOUS SUPPORT NEEDED

There are other ways in which men can help this movement. Make yourself acquainted with similar movements in the States and Ontario. After the municipality goes so far as to consider such an appointment, there is still work to do. Care must be taken in selecting a man. Public opinion must call for a proper kind of a man. When this man steps into office, back him up, help him to decide on proper lines of work, criticise his work *to him*, not behind his back.

*Department of Agriculture,
Weeds and Seed Branch,
Regina, March, 1915.*