

HANNA SPEAKS ON ONTARIO PROGRESS IN PRISON REFORM

Provincial Institutions Benefited by Systems Worked at Guelph and Port Arthur.

CANADIAN CLUB APPLAUDS SPEAKER

Big Work Has Been Done and Benefits Result from Reforms Now Under Way.

Toronto, Jan. 16.—"Prison Reform" was the topic on which Hon. W. J. Hanna addressed a large gathering of members of the Canadian Club at McCahey's today. The great audience expected a fine deliberation on this interesting phase of human affairs. The expectation was realized, and the points hammered home with a force that will give prison reform in Ontario, which has been one of Mr. Hanna's life works substantial assistance on the part of every man who heard the address.

Mr. Hanna began by outlining the difficulties that were at all times present in connection with the problem of prison labor and the work of the Commission appointed in 1910 to work out some new policy to obviate the work of the prison coming into competition with that of the honest toiler. The purchase of the Guelph farm and the construction of new buildings for prison purposes on the lines most adapted to modern reforms was the outcome.

In April, 1910, the first lot of prisoners was sent up to Guelph, numbering 18 or 20. In the fall of the same year 180 men were there, and these were educated in studies neglected in their school days. In 1911 there were 250 men at work, and this past summer, 325.

Prisoners had been employed in the preliminary preparation for the advent of different prison conditions in the "construction of our lime kiln, the installation of our lime hydrater, the building of our brick and tile plant, the opening of our sand and gravel pit, the construction of our tramway for the transferring of our bulk material, the putting in of our temporary sewerage system, followed by the putting in of our permanent system — the effluent from which will be as harmless as modern science can make it, the putting in of our waterworks, the taking of stone from the quarries for lime and for building purposes, and for crushing for concrete and crushing for roads, the rough dressing of our building stone, and all this as far as possible with our own material, and there is still more work than men.

"And this says nothing of the field crops, the hoe crops, the vegetable garden, the dairy, the hogs and the hens. There is a lot of useful work in growing 6,000 bushels of potatoes, as we did this year, 8,000 bushels of grain, 300 tons of ensilage, with 20 acres of mangels and turnips for upwards of 100 cattle, and enough table vegetables to meet not only our own requirements, but with considerable to spare for other institutions as well.

"The dairy is one of the interesting departments of the place, where 80 cows entail the labor of seven or eight men all the time."

"They are not a bad lot of fellows. They are physically fit." This statement was heartily applauded as Hon. Mr. Hanna began to present the ease with which men make mistakes, and the necessity for kindly treatment for the reformation of many. The work of establishing confidence in himself was one of the great efforts of the reform idea. He told of the 7,000 acres lying north of Port Arthur, where 65 men were clearing up the land, which would, he was assured, have a value of at least \$100 an acre. Describing the work of the men, Mr. Hanna said:

"The men set to work with a will, and in the course of five or six days, they not only chopped, but stumped and cleaned up some five or six acres, which were immediately planted in turnips and potatoes with the result that this year we grew some several hundred bushels of roots of splendid quality for our own use.

"This done they proceeded to chop and windrow the forest, and to burn and clear it up. In the last six months they have chopped and windrowed — and as to much of it, have burned — in the neighborhood of three hundred acres. They have cut roads all around and through that thousand acres where roads were surveyed; they have built for themselves what we call permanent quarters, but which are, in fact, a cheap, comfortable, commodious camp, capable of accommodating, say fifty men. They have put down their wells and have their little water supply. They have put in the proper drainage to the sewage of the camp because all the time we have tried to be careful of the sanitary conditions."

Interesting, and heartily applauded was the description of the prison camp.

"The men have worked on with an interest that is most encouraging," said Mr. Hanna. "It has more than once happened in that camp that a prisoner whose time was up on Saturday morning would ask the man in charge if he would be permitted to remain until Monday morning, as he did not care to go back to Port Arthur or Port William during the Saturday, but would like to make a clean start on Monday morning. And shortly before Christmas a prisoner whose time was up on the 30th came to the assistant warden and said: 'If I work like the devil until my time is up will you let me stay until after Christmas? It is a pretty hard life, but I would like to stay here until after Christmas and I have better chance.'"

"We have today at Fort William, working in the open 50 men, at Whitby 70 men. We have today working in the open 440 men, giving us a full percentage of efficiency in return, every one of them four years ago would have been confined in the old time prison with all that it entailed.

"What are we doing at Guelph with those 320 men? We have our construction going on for Whitby, we have our brick and tile yards, our sash and door shops, our stone quarries, our stone crushers, our concrete block construction, all busy manufacturing and preparing material for the asylum construction at Whitby at the opening of spring.

"We have our tracks into our yards at Guelph, where we can load direct on to the car there without tearing horses and harness and wagons to pieces, and we unload at the point of use at Whitby.

"We have learned a great deal from the men themselves, a good deal with regard to prison construction. When we started into this prison construction our one thought was security. We had not gone far in our experience with the men before there came to us the thought that our construction is dangerously secure. We have, from time to time, altered and changed our plans as the stage of construction would permit, but always in the direction of wider liberty.

"The problem today — one that no one could have raised as a problem four years ago—a problem that has been the subject of discussion between Dr. Gilmour and myself is, how far should we go in the direction of prison walls, how far may we be able to dispense with them entirely? I don't say for a moment that we can—but I do say that the rest of our construction will be fairly complete before we commence the prison walls.

"One comfort we have, and that is that while there have been breaches of discipline, while men have done wrong, while men have attempted to escape, while some have escaped — in not one single instance, so far as we have been able to trace, had that wrong done been the result of concerted action on the part of the prisoners, and I say this particularly with regard to the past two years.

"In conclusion, let me say another word. While our experience has carried us away beyond what we could possibly have dreamed of when we started out, we must not make the mistake of claiming too much. We must not assume that this result is the outcome of any system devised or of any plan thought out. It is, I am confident, a gradual development in the institution itself—the result of an atmosphere that has gone through the whole proposition from the outset, an atmosphere that would be impossible without Warden Gilmour, Mr. Armstrong and the deputies and assistants under them, including the men in charge at Fort William." (Loud applause).

"You ask me how many men we have in charge. Let me tell you that we have four paid men, all told. One is a sort of assistant warden, the second, a man in charge of field operations, such as clearing the land, planting, stumping, etc., the third fellow is a guard, and the fourth is the paid cook. We have but one man as guard over the whole lot of forty five or fifty men who form our average population and who frequently operate over an area of 200 or 250 acres of land. We have a watchman at night to see that there is no accident by way of fire or otherwise. That watchman is himself a prisoner. Never have we had a paid watchman at that institution.

"A year ago we purchased in the neighborhood of Whitby some 700 acres of land for the transfer of the Toronto Asylum, excellent land just bordering on the town of Whitby, and fronting on Lake Ontario, the best site we know.

"The site of our new institution, a big institution, covering, as you can well understand, many acres of land was laid out. With that done there was drainage ahead, there were railroad sidings to be carried from Whitby Station on to our premises (the grading on which we were doing our selves), there were sewers to be constructed, there were foundations to be dug. And we set these 15 prisoners at that work. The 15 population has increased until today there are 77. We have carried from early spring to the present time at Whitby an average population of about 65, all out in the wide open, all doing work subject to rules, regulations and discipline, but all working without lock or key.

"These men have given in return for the confidence that we have accorded in them a full efficiency in work, just as full as we could have purchased it for yesterday, and up to this moment from that average population of upwards of sixty we have yet to have the first attempt at breach of discipline or violation of the rules and regulations, the first attempt at escape."