

BACK TO THE LAND IS THE SOLUTION

Mayor Waugh's View on Pressing Problem—Immigrants Had Intended Going on Farms.

"In speaking of the unemployed question, now so prominently before the people of Winnipeg and other cities of the Dominion, it may be a surprise to a good many people to learn that of the great majority for whom something must be done only 6 per cent. ever earned their living at any other pursuit than that of agriculture prior to reaching this country." So said Mayor R. D. Waugh yesterday, when asked as to whether or not the "back-to-the-land" movement would be the best permanent method of settling for all time the problem of employment for the large number who can now find no work to do, either in the cities or in railroad construction throughout the country.

"I don't think," he continued, "that anyone realizes more fully the gravity of the situation, and also the potential possibilities for good of the situation with which we are now confronted. It is not, as many people think, directly attributable to the war, but it arises largely because the western portion of the Dominion has passed from the constructive to the productive era. There are few towns and cities west of the Great Lakes where local improvements are not already considerably in advance of the times. Railway companies have literally thousands of miles of lines built, and in many cases hundreds of miles at present unproductive, as far as revenue is concerned. They must bring these into the revenue bearing class before any further extensions of any magnitude can be considered, and therefore work of this nature has come to a halt.

Country Needs Farmers.

"Now take into consideration that what this country really requires is the cultivation of its land, for without cultivation and the consequent activity there is nothing for the dwellers in the city to do, and there is no commerce for the railways to haul. Men are required to cultivate land, and we have them by the thousand, literally clamoring for something to do to earn a living. It seems, therefore, the logical thing to do to make conditions possible for them to take up the land, and thus become a most valuable asset to the country, instead of a burden.

"One other question of importance arises, and that is whether these men, if put on the land, understand farming sufficiently to make a success of it. I think the statistics which we have gathered will sufficiently dispose of this question.

"For instance, the Associated Charities has made some investigation along this line, and this is the result:

"Information relative to 255 families was obtained, and out of these 179, or 70.2 per cent., were the owners of land in their native country and earned their living from the land. Cases in which the head of the family was an agricultural laborer numbered 43, or 16.8 per cent.; cases in which the head of the family was a tenant farmer were 18, or 7 per cent.; and the number in which the head of the family earned a living from any other source was only 15, or 6 per cent.

"Taking 50 representative cases, it was found that 9 came to the city with no capital; 16 had under \$25; 18 had from \$25 to \$100; and 8 had over \$100.

"Out of 50 families now in the city, 7 have an equity of under \$700; 12 have an equity between \$700 and \$1,000; and 31 have an equity of over \$1,000.

Should Take Up Land.

"Those statistics are illuminating, and seem to point conclusively to the presumption that the great majority of these people did not carry out their original intention, which undoubtedly was to take up land. Instead of this, lured by the prospect of plenty of work, the great majority of these people remained in the city, and in many cases purchased homes, still with the idea that when the property increased sufficiently in value they would sell and take up land. Property of this kind is now somewhat of a drug on the market, and it seems to be now that it should be the duty of the federal government to make it possible for these people to carry out their original intention.

"I am in great hopes that some feasible suggestion may be the outcome of the conference of mayors to be held in Ottawa in the near future.

"It appears to me that the federal government's propaganda of 'patriotism and production more than usual' will fit into this scheme, and there seems to me no better place for them to begin than by caring for the stranger already within our gates."