

CLEARING NORTHERN LANDS

The prime obstacle to settlement in Ontario's vast agricultural areas of the North is the bush covering the land. Uncleared land, even within reasonable distance of railway lines, is worth only a few dollars per acre. A section acquires market value, in an agricultural sense, only when enough of it has been cleared and ploughed to enable the raising of fairly big crops. The fertility of the land assures big yields per acre, much bigger than that of older land in Southern Ontario, but the early struggles to hew out a home frighten off many a man who would willingly settle himself in the new districts.

Since the problem of making Northern settlement inviting is primarily one of clearing the land, the experiments of Government officials at the Experimental Station at Fredericton, N.B., in commercial clearance of land have a direct interest in this province. The two methods used, on land covered with an average forest growth, were stump-pulling by power and removal by dynamite. The stump-puller has a lifting power of 25 tons with an ordinary team. The stumps numbered about 120 to an acre. For the removing of large stumps a team and driver and two men required about 20 minutes each and for smaller stumps about five minutes each. Figuring the cost of team and driver at 32 cents an hour and helpers at 18 cents an hour, the clearing-away of 120 stumps in one acre, including the piling of stumps, burning over the land, etc., cost \$101. By dynamite the cost was \$82. Considering that Northern Ontario bush-land is not marketable at a tenth of that cost, and cleared land sells at much less than half, obviously the experiment does not hold out much promise for the Northern Ontario bush-land. The reason British Columbia has made such slow progress agriculturally as compared with the Prairie provinces is the same. In the Coast province the stumps are gigantic, and can only be burned out.

Any vigorous settlement policy for the North after the war must provide some means of clearing land at a price not exceeding the productive value of the land after it is cleared. As long as homesteads almost "ready to work" are available on the prairie, we cannot hope for an extensive peopling of the Northern bush country, unless there is a sound economic method of clearing land

at a price not exceeding its value for agriculture. / The Government has adopted the wise policy of limiting homestead settlement to certain townships at a time. Facilities, such as roads and schools, can thus be provided, and a real community organized. Clearing work is conducted by co-operation largely, as are other heavy tasks. It may be that this method is the only practicable business system of handling the situation.