

## FARM LABOR

To the Editor of the Tribune.

Sir:—The past week several articles have appeared in the city press regarding a predicted shortage of farm labor this coming spring. Mr. Kon, the commissioner of immigration for the Province of Manitoba, is the authority quoted in the articles, which give conscription as the cause of the anticipated shortage. These articles are the latest of many which have appeared from time to time in the press of this city at different seasons, prophesying a shortage of farm labor.

Having been an employer of labor for some years and in close touch with conditions, I am puzzled at this continued harping about shortage of farm labor, which shortage has not yet materialized notwithstanding the large number of men sent overseas. It is, of course, well known that there has been a shortage of labor of different kinds and at different seasons of the year, but can Mr. Kon, or anyone else tell me of any spring of the last fifteen years when there has been a serious shortage of farm labor? Before seeding this last spring there was a big agitation because of a supposed shortage of farm labor. A meeting was called in the city and representatives of the dominion and provincial governments met, including Mr. Kon and many prominent men of affairs. Although many suggestions were made nothing practical was done, except by the Dominion government, who sent agents to the south to induce men to come here, but the number secured was very small indeed. However, the available men in the province went on the farms of their own accord, and, as there were enough and to spare, the crop was put in as easily as in former years, and at a fair wage, too. Later this summer, before harvest time, Mr. Kon, through the press, predicted a great shortage of farm help. It was stated that from reports secured, few men, if any, could be secured from the east and south, as had been in previous years, but when harvest time arrived they came in thousands, and the crop has been taken off and threshed, and more easily than in some years before the war. There may have been a shortage for a few days in a few localities, but that was because all the men did not arrive at one time.

As a matter of fact, the farmer of the Canadian west is favored by practically unchangeable conditions which have always provided his spring labor. The thousands of men engaged during the winter in logging, tie and cordwood camps, etc., are released in the early spring, and with the exception of a few railroad extra gangs required, there is practically no other demand for common labor outside of farm work until seeding is well under way, so the majority of the men go on the farm.

In regard to there being a shortage of farm labor this coming spring due

to conscription or any other cause, I do not think Mr. Kon needs to worry. There will be men from the winter camps and there will be the large number of aliens who have been utilized as farm hands more and more every year, and they are not eligible for military service. Furthermore, I think it will be found that the percentage of farm labor conscripted will be very small indeed, even without any exemption for men of this class, and again, we have glorious weather this fall, and the farmer is sure doing his plowing in great shape.

I am sure no one will object to Mr. Kon perfecting any machinery he may have to supply labor to the farmer, but this continued predicting of the supposed shortage of farm labor for every season of the year (when there has been no real reason for the same as has been shown by past events) has, and will do harm. It will tend to make farmers reduce their acreage instead of increase it, and altogether will please and help anti-conscriptionists and the enemy.

Respectfully,

CONTRACTOR.

Winnipeg, Oct. 15, 1917.