
THE MEN BEHIND THE PLOW

Canada, this vast and bountiful country of ours contains a population of some fourteen million people. These people earn their daily bread in a great variety of ways. Some are professional men; some are employees in the many branches of industry; and some develop the natural resources of the nation. This latter group is composed largely of farmers, fishermen, miners, and lumbermen who provide the country with essential commodities. At the present time there are six hundred thousand farmers in Canada. This is a shocking figure when one realizes that there are approximately five hundred and fifty thousand square miles of arable land in this country.

In the light of these facts, one cannot help but wonder why there is so much arable land, yet so few farmers. There is but one answer: the farmers, and especially their sons and daughters are leaving the rural areas and migrating to the urban centres. Everyone fully agrees that this exodus is regrettable. For it is an established fact that the farmer is the back-bone of the nation. This being the case, it is rather surprising that no one seems especially interested in his welfare. He is often regarded by his fellow citizens as an uncultured, conservative, narrow-minded individual whose occupation is best suited to those possessing a strong back and a weak mind.

This indeed is a very false concept of an individual engaged in such a noble work. True, the farmer may not be as well educated, as the term is formally used, as many of his urban brethren, but he is by no means the illiterate peasant he is often considered to be. He is one of the few people living in this terror-stricken age who takes a genuine interest in his work, whether it be repairing a building, mending a fence, or improving the quality of his livestock. He draws his philosophy from the soil and sees the wonderful works of his Creator in the growth and development of his crops. He is blessed with a keen appreciation of and a true solicitude for his fellow farmers.

The tiller of the soil is his own employer and employee. He is free to come and go as he pleases. His servants are the sun, the wind, and the rain. His musicians are the birds; his poets, the brooks, his artists, the frost and snow. He is never worried by housing shortages, un-

employment, gangsters, or the feeling of insecurity. He revels in a quiet peaceful solitude not found in the city life; he breathes pure, fresh air, untainted by man-made gases; he is removed from the constant hustle and bustle with which many of his less fortunate countrymen must contend.

Why, then, are so many of our farmers and potential farmers leaving the land? Certainly there must be some explanation for the mass exodus. As a matter of fact there are several very good reasons for the undesirable migration. Possibly, it is due to the long hours of hard work a farmer must endure in order to make his enterprise a paying proposition. Perhaps it may be due to the lack of modern conveniences such as electricity and running water which are easily obtainable in the cities. Then again, it may be due to the unreliable income derived from farm produce.

Such reasons would seem sufficient if it were not for the fact that they never bothered the good farmer in other days less prosperous than our own. The real reason it would seem why so many people are being drawn to the bright lights is lack of appreciation for the farmer and for his work. The farmer today is not getting the recognition he truly deserves. This is clearly illustrated by the current prices of farm produce. Farmers are being paid deplorably low prices for their produce while the cost of living steadily continues to rise. In the metropolitan areas, as the cost of living increases, the wages of the people increase proportionately. This unfortunately is not true in the case of the farmer. Indeed, since 1946, the very opposite is true.

It is time that a concerted, determined effort was made to improve this existing state of affairs. It is very evident that if this condition is not corrected soon, this prosperous nation, instead of fulfilling the expectations of its enthusiastic well-wishers, will decline both in prestige and in wealth. Let us hope, therefore, that those on whom the responsibility of seeing to it that the farmer receives his just due, will recognize the seriousness of the matter for what it is and take steps to put "the men behind the plow" in a position where they can successfully carry on their way of life.

—STAN MOONEY '52

There is but one sadness—not to be a saint.

—Leon Bloy.