

AGRICULTURE IN NOVA SCOTIA SINCE 1870

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THE wide-spread attention that the problems of the farmer are receiving in the Maritime Provinces is no local peculiarity. In every advanced country, the press, legislative bodies, and various national and international organizations are displaying deep concern for the farmer's welfare. Much of this discussion is very helpful; much also extremely superficial.

Among the few who have given serious thought to rural conditions in these provinces, three views as to causation are prevalent. Some ascribe these conditions directly to unfavorable tariffs; others find the chief source of difficulties in certain great economic changes that have occurred in recent years, and that have profoundly influenced human affairs everywhere. A third group regard the explanation as primarily psychological. This last view has been given wide circulation by its incorporation in the report of the Royal Commission on Maritime Claims. According to that report, the primary cause of the troubles our rural communities are experiencing is a pessimistic outlook with regard to the future of agriculture in these provinces. That attitude of mind they ascribe principally to a definite economic situation—"the state of stagnation into which agriculture has fallen in the Maritimes."

The weight of authority which this report carries has given great prominence to its interpretation of rural conditions. To many, however, the brief section on agriculture seems entirely inadequate for so weighty a subject, and popular rather than scientific in its treatment. The purpose of this paper is to test the validity of the conclusions reached by the facts of agricultural history.

That notable changes have taken place in methods of agriculture and in rural conditions in the Maritime Provinces since 1870, is a familiar fact. But the degree to which these changes represent intelligent successful solution of the farmer's problems is not easy to determine by observation. Some measure of the results of these changes is necessary, some means for comparing the efficiency of effort in agriculture to-day with its efficiency at the beginning of the period we are studying. Such a comparison would show

definitely whether agriculture has been decadent or progressive, for economic progress in the final analysis means increasing efficiency in coping with one's environment. Valuable information on this question of relative efficiency is available in the agricultural statistics contained in census returns and other official documents. A summary of a study of these documents is given below.

In attempting to trace historically the trend of agriculture in the Maritime Provinces since 1870, great care must be taken to avoid fallacious reasoning. The statistics most frequently quoted to show that something is radically wrong are those relating to the decreasing rural population, to the number of vacant farms, and to the importation into these provinces of large quantities of certain agricultural products. While it may be admitted that these facts demand serious consideration, they do not in themselves prove that the farmer has failed in his job, or that agriculture is in a rut. Decreasing numbers may mean the substitution of machinery for human effort, and therefore greater efficiency, increasing farm incomes, and higher standards of living. It is certainly more logical to contend that rapid migration indicates alertness of outlook, and ability to evaluate strongly competitive opportunities, than that it reflects dull pessimism, or the inertia born of stagnation. Vacant farms may mean nothing more than the abandonment of land too poor to be profitably worked. Prosperous Ontario had two and one half times as many abandoned farms in 1911 as the three maritime provinces combined.¹ Importation of agricultural commodities is simply an instance of the general process of exchange based on geographical specialization, and the burden of proof always rests with those who contend that any particular instance of such specialization is disadvantageous. More definite information is essential if one is to judge the success of our agriculturists in adjusting their efforts to the great basic trends in the economic life of to-day, with its capitalistic methods, its specialization and its intricate and difficult problems connected with marketing products under conditions of world-wide competition.

It is essential to keep in mind that the rural exodus, the most frequently quoted evidence of unsatisfactory conditions, is no new phenomenon. Popular discussions frequently refer to this movement as though it were of recent origin, or at least as though the outflow were intermittent. But this population movement has characterized the Maritime Provinces continuously for fifty years. In times of depression the stream of emigration has swollen, and

(1) Census 1911, Vol. IV, Introduction.

in times of expansion it has somewhat abated. But in season and out of season, in good times as well as in bad times, this exodus has gone steadily on. With the single exception of the province of New Brunswick for the last decade, the three maritime provinces have each shown a decrease of rural population in every census return since 1881. The exact figures for the first decade are not available, but the decrease since 1891 has been 76,604 for Nova Scotia, 25,271 for Prince Edward Island, and 8,930 for New Brunswick.² This means that from our rural communities have gone the entire natural increase, all increase that should have resulted from immigration, and an additional number equal to more than one hundred thousand of those who were here in 1881. These facts show conclusively that the real cause or causes of our rural difficulties must be found in conditions which were developing before 1880 and which have exerted a powerful influence continuously since that date. If a state of stagnation in agriculture is the principal cause, then agriculture in these provinces must have been at a standstill through all this period. Is that true?

The question this study of official documents will attempt to answer is this: is the average annual real income of those engaged in agriculture in the Maritime Provinces greater or less to-day than it was fifty years ago? If incomes have decreased, then our farmers have failed to keep pace with the times. If, on the other hand, farmers are better off in spite of the great difficulties imposed on them by the rapidly changing conditions of the last fifty years, then no more unsuitable word than "stagnant" could be imagined with which to describe their activities.

In attempting to determine the income trend among our farmers it will be necessary to enquire, on the one hand, as to the numbers engaged in agriculture in each census period, and, on the other hand, concerning the total production of agricultural commodities. Although great improvements have taken place in compiling returns since 1870, the exact statistics required are not available in full. Moreover, in effecting improvements changes have been made in the methods of collection and of classification which sometimes make exact comparisons difficult. However, from statistics that are available, it is possible to estimate results with sufficient accuracy to show clearly what the general income trend has been. For brevity we shall limit this inquiry to Nova Scotia. While a similar study for New Brunswick or Prince Edward Island would show variations in particular items, the general conclusion reached would be identical.

(2) *The Canada Year Book*, 1925, Table 33.

NUMBER ENGAGED IN AGRICULTURE.³

1871.....	49,769
1881.....	63,684
1891.....	61,403
1901.....	55,000
1911.....	48,765
1921.....	49,000
1924.....	49,246

This table shows that the number engaged in agriculture declined steadily until 1911. Since that date there has been a slight increase, but the number so occupied is still 22% smaller than the number for 1881. Has there been a corresponding decrease in production?

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION.

Comparable statistics with regard to all major farm products are fairly complete for each census period since Confederation. A convenient approach to a study of the volume of production is suggested by the statistics of principal agricultural products for Nova Scotia compiled by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics under the heading "Gross Agricultural Revenue." The chief items listed in order of their value for 1925 are Field Crops, Dairy Products, Fruits and Vegetables, Farm Animals, Poultry and Eggs, Wool and Fur Farming. It will prove instructive to compare all of these items for the several census periods with regard both to quantities and values. The value comparison will be made by interpreting quantities in terms of a common price level.

FIELD CROPS—AREA UNDER CULTIVATION.⁴

	Acres
1871.....	790,155
1881.....	942,000
1891.....	969,548 (723,825)
1901.....	730,146
1911.....	717,468
1921.....	646,848

FIELD CROPS—(000's omitted).

	Hay and Clover	Potatoes	Roots	Oats	Wheat	Barley	Buckwheat
	Tons	Bus.	Bus.	Bus.	Bus.	Bus.	Bus.
1871.....	443	5,560	619	2,190	224	296	234
1881.....	598	7,378	1,332	1,873	529	228	339
1891.....	632	5,113	1,349	1,560	165	227	184
1901.....	658	4,394	2,075	2,347	248	181	196
1911.....	724	3,531	3,540	2,974	223	142	206
1921.....	603	4,389	3,114	2,731	221	152	90

³ The first three censuses give an occupational classification for each province. Since that date the statistics of occupations have been for Canada as a whole. Mr. Godfree, Chief of the Division of Agricultural Statistics, Ottawa, has kindly supplied the figures for 1924. The return for 1911 is compiled from Tables 2 and 4. "Occupations of the People", *The Canada Year Book* for 1924. The figures for 1901 and 1921 are estimates based on Table XXVII, *The Maritime Provinces since Confederation*.

⁴ These and further statistics quoted, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the census returns 1871-1921.

In compiling the census returns for 1901 the enumerators discovered a notable error in the area under cultivation as given in the census for 1891. The corrected acreage was 723,825 as against 969, 548 reported. While sufficient data was not available to test and correct the returns for 1871 and 1881, it is stated that "There is no doubt that in 1871 and in 1881 the area of land under crops was computed in the same manner as in 1891... it appears to be almost certain... that the area of land under crops given in 1871 and in 1881 was much too great".² Allowing for the error in these earlier reports it appears that the area under cultivation remained approximately the same from 1881 to 1911. For 1921 a decline of 70,000 acres was reported. This consisted entirely in a decrease in area of hay lands. Apparently this was a peculiarity of that year, and is not to be interpreted as indicating any general tendency for reduction of acreage. In view of the rapidly decreasing number engaged in agriculture following 1881, and the further fact that the hours of labour were being reduced, the maintenance of a uniform area under crops is significant. Important labour saving devices must have been introduced to make this possible.

Although doubtless the variations in quantities produced are in some instances to be ascribed in part to seasonal conditions, the statistics of particular crops reveal some interesting tendencies. Particularly significant are the decreases for 1921 as compared with 1881 of about 3,000,000 bus. in the potato crop and of some 600,000 bus. in the combined yield of wheat, barley and buckwheat, and the increases of about 1,000,000 bus. each in the yield of roots and oats. The decreases were clearly due to smaller acreage. The area planted in potatoes, for example, in 1911 was only half that so planted thirty years earlier. The increases, however, bear evidence of more scientific culture. Oats show approximately the same acreage planted, and the root crop increased two and one half fold from a fifty per cent. greater acreage.

Some reasons for the shifting of effort which these statistics indicate are not difficult to ascertain. The opening up of the Canadian West as a strong competing producer of cereals affected materially the possibilities of profitable production of those crops in the Maritime Provinces. A weighty influence bearing on the production of potatoes was the import duty of 15 cents per bushel placed on that product in 1874 by the United States, at that time the one great market for our surplus crop. Moreover, mechanical improvements, scientific agriculture, experimentation and experience have all tended to make some degree of specialization in agricultural produc-

2 Census 1901, Vol. II: note at bottom of page XIII.

tion economically advantageous. In part, the above changes in production but reflect these changes in conditions.

DAIRY PRODUCTS.

	Butter (lbs.)		Cheese (lbs.)
	Dairy	Creamery	
1871.....	7,161,867 ¹	884,853 ¹
1881.....	7,465,285 ¹	908,225 ¹
1891.....	9,011,118	7,940	1,046,013 ¹
1901.....	9,060,742	334,211	568,143 ¹
1911.....	10,978,911	354,785	463,493
1921.....	8,746,067	2,503,188	142,415
1927.....	(?)	5,108,110 ²	
	Milk (lbs.)		Milch Cows
1910.....	426,118,651	1871.....	122,688
1920.....	467,460,651	1881.....	137,639
	(No earlier records)	1891.....	141,648
		1901.....	138,817
		1911.....	129,274
		1921.....	121,460 ³

The important item in dairy production in Nova Scotia is butter, which shows an increase of nearly 50% since 1880. A decreased production of cheese provides an offset to this gain equivalent to less than 500,000 pounds of butter. On the other hand, competing uses of milk for direct consumption as milk and cream, and for the manufacture of ice cream, etc., have increased enormously in recent years, owing to the growth of urban population, greater appreciation of the food value of milk, and the development of more expensive standards of living. These are now large items in dairy revenue. The census returns show that 12.9% of the milk production for 1920 was sold as milk and cream by measure. This percentage was only 2.5 less than the percentage sold on a butter fat basis. The milk so consumed was sufficient to produce more than 2,250,000 pounds of butter or 5,000,000 pounds of cheese. The creameries of Nova Scotia alone sold 369,198 quarts of sweet cream in 1926⁴ for an amount considerably in excess of that received by our farmers for cheese any year in the history of this province. The same year these institutions produced more than 1,000,000 quarts of ice cream,¹ which sold for an amount sufficient to purchase twice over the entire cheese production of 1881 at 1926 price for that commodity. Exact comparison of these items for each census year is impossible, but the fact that the

1 Department of Agriculture, Bulletin No. 28, 1911, "The Dairy Industry in Canada."

2 Report of Dairy Superintendent for Nova Scotia.

3 See Note Census 1921, Vol. V, page XCI.

4 Report, Department of Natural Resources 1927, p. 44.

production of both butter and cheese decreased slightly between 1911 and 1921, while milk production increased 10%, is suggestive of the rapidity with which these new demands are extending, and of the large place they now fill in the income of dairy farmers.

No consideration of butter production would be complete which did not take account of improved quality as well as increased quantity. The fine quality of our creamery product has been repeatedly demonstrated in open competition. Familiarity with the superior creamery product has created a demand for a better quality of dairy butter as well, so that the large increase in the output of Nova Scotia creameries since 1910 has tended to raise the average quality both directly and indirectly. Even more important has been the influence of the various educational agencies, which through many channels have been impressing on the farmers that quality is the key to profits.

It must further be borne in mind that methods of packing and shipping have so greatly improved since 1880 that the enormous loss through deterioration of quality has been materially reduced. Formerly the local merchants would collect tons of butter during the hot summer months to be sold during the fall and winter. These goods, poorly packed and badly cared for, were in wretched condition by the time they reached the consumer. Fortunately this is, in large part, a thing of the past. The great increase in local demand makes possible the prompt marketing of what formerly accumulated as a surplus. Then, too, the farmer has learned that it is more profitable to sell his cream to the creamery than to glut the market with an unsaleable product.

Another striking indication of the progress made in this branch of farming is the fact that the increase in dairy production has been attained entirely by improving the dairy herds and by more scientific feeding and care of the animals. The statistics quoted above show a steady decrease in the number of milch cows since 1891. In 1921 there were nearly 12% fewer milch cows than in 1881 and 6% fewer than in 1911; nevertheless production continued to mount upwards through the entire period. These facts show that the labours of the dairy experts have not been in vain. Our farmers are becoming convinced that a dairy herd must be measured, not by counting heads, but by calculating pounds of milk, and butter fat content. Progress must of necessity be gradual, but the results attained are encouraging and full of promise for the future.

So much has been written of late concerning the shortcomings of our dairy farmers, and of their failure to supply the needs of the home market, that it may surprise the uninformed to learn that

this branch of agriculture has, in reality, shown splendid progress. The reason for the importation of butter during recent years is clear. In part it is due to the rapid growth of the alternate uses of the milk supply noted above. Perhaps more important has been the increase in *per capita* consumption during the recent years, due primarily to the improved quality of the product. Salt is cheaper than butter fat, but it is not nearly so palatable. To-day the home market absorbs the entire twenty per cent. increase since 1900 and calls for more. That the deficiency is temporary, and that the supply will be adjusted to the increasing demand, may be confidently predicted.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES.

Apples—Annual average exported from Nova Scotia.

1880-85	30,320 barrels
1885-90	83,356 "
1890-95	118,552 "
1895-1900	261,879 "
1900-05	377,225 "
1905-10	496,655 "
1910-15	786,633 "
1915-20	932,957 "
1920-26	1,268,172 "

The great item under the heading "Fruits and Vegetables" so far as Nova Scotia is concerned is apples. This crop varies so greatly from year to year that the census returns are useless for purposes of comparison. But the above table quoted from the report of the "Apple Marketing Enquiry Committee", which investigated this industry for the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources, gives exactly the information required. That report also points out that the 24,000 acres of bearing orchard in 1901 had increased to 40,000 by 1921, and that the yield per acre jumped from 16 barrels for the period 1900-05 to 30 barrels for the period 1920-26.

The culture of the apple in Nova Scotia dates back almost to the beginning of the French colonization, but it is only during recent years that fruit growing has achieved a place among the major agricultural products of this province. Its great development has occurred since 1880, although for many years prior to that date a small number of progressive farmers were experimenting in orcharding on a considerable scale, thus laying the foundation for future expansion.

The most weighty reasons for the rapid growth of this industry were the success attained by the early experiments, the search for crops peculiarly suited to this province as a substitute for the potato, occasioned by the duty placed on potatoes by the United States referred to above, and, most important, the improvements in ocean transportation following the introduction of the steel steamer which provided access to the markets of Great Britain on a profitable basis. The transition is most interestingly described in a paper read before the Nova Scotia Fruit Growers Association in 1887 by the late Dr. Henry Chipman. He wrote in part as follows: "I can remember when potatoes were the staple crop for exportation in this county (King's), and successful farming meant in those days the raising of potatoes to the exclusion of almost every other crop. . . . But there was some grafted fruit in this county even then; a few far-seeing men, Mr. Prescott, the Starrs, John Bryne, and others were making a business of orcharding. . . . Very few farmers made any calculation of an income from fruit; whatever came from that source was considered a sort of donation from Providence, and if nothing was received it was counted no loss. The farmer of twenty years ago based all his calculations on his potato crop. Circumstances over which he had no control—the abrogation of the reciprocity treaty, a duty on potatoes, increased production in the United States—changed all this. By shutting our potatoes out of their market our neighbours forced us to amend our system of farming by raising a greater variety of crops, and potatoes were relegated to their proper place." The historian of the future will discover a similar adaptability to changing circumstances characteristic of our farmers to-day.

That there is still much room for improvement in the growing, packing and marketing of our fruit, no one asserts more emphatically than the leading fruit growers themselves. Let no one infer from this, however, that the results so far attained have been achieved by haphazard methods, or without strenuous effort. One who desires to get some conception of the time, thought and money that account for the remarkable progress in this industry should read the Reports of the N. S. F. G. A. which have been published annually since 1880. No other branch of economic endeavour in Canada can show a keener appreciation of practical difficulties, a more intelligent discussion of those difficulties, a wider measure of mutual aid, a more insistent call on the scientist to help, or greater readiness to accept the best that science had to offer. No word could be less apt as applied to this important branch of agriculture than "stagnant".

FARM ANIMALS.

Animals on Farms—(ooo's omitted).

	Cattle (other than milch cows)	Sheep	Swine	Horses
1871.....	151	398	54	49
1881.....	187	379	47	57
1891.....	183	331	48	65
1901.....	177	285	45	62
1911.....	158	221	63	61
1921.....	155	272	51	59

Animals slaughtered or sold from Farm.

	Cattle	Sheep	Swine
1870.....	42,815	130,631	52,788
1880.....	63,389	151,245	56,259
1890.....	59,882	152,340	58,012
1900.....	60,410	119,756	44,986
1910.....	54,938	84,373	48,493
1920.....	78,206	102,704	72,171

Neither of these tables shows with exactness the relative place of animals in the farmer's income. The first records only the numbers of animals on farms at the date of enumeration, while the second reports the number disposed of for one year out of each decade, with horses omitted. Both these tables would vary materially from year to year because the number of animals disposed of during any one year is greatly influenced by market prices, crop conditions, prices of feeds, etc. It would seem evident, however, that a steady decline in the number of animals raised occurred from about 1881 to about 1911, and that since that date a material improvement has taken place. The first of the above tables understates and the second overstates the extent of the gain, as an abnormally large number of both cattle and swine were sold in 1920. While exact comparison is impossible, it would seem fair to assume that, when the market improvement in quality of stock which unquestionably has been brought about since 1881 is taken into account, the significance of this item in gross agricultural revenue has not changed materially.

The decreasing number of cattle reported is indicative of two important developments that were taking place. The first is the reduced production of native meat supply, and the consequent growing dependence on importations, due primarily to the competition of Western products made possible by developments in transportation. The second is the substitution of mechanical power

for animal power, one phase of the remarkable transformation which has been wrought in agriculture during the last half century by science and invention. This is suggested by the decrease in horses as well as by the decrease in oxen. Had working cattle been listed separately in 1921, it is doubtful if the number reported would have been one half the 33,275 returned in 1881. Increased railway facilities, the automobile, the truck, the tractor and the gasoline engine have all lessened the farmer's dependence on beasts of burden.

An intensive educational campaign is now being carried on to convey to the farmer a clearer appreciation of the place such animals as sheep, swine, and the dairy cow should play in a well balanced system of mixed farming. Attempts are also being made to devise suitable systems of co-operative marketing. These efforts are deserving of the hearty support of the public, and the experience of the last half century is sufficient assurance that our farmers will not be unresponsive to constructive leadership. They will be critical in their attitude towards proposals for reform, but sound policies will receive increasing support and adoption.

POULTRY AND EGGS—(000's omitted).

	Poultry	Egg (doz.)
1871.....	Not given	Not given
1881.....	"	"
1891.....	792	"
1901.....	798	4,419
1911.....	954	5,183
1921.....	1,196	5,579

The rapid increase in this item provides further proof of the responsiveness of our farmers to price tendencies. Marketing conditions were steadily improving from 1900 on. The 1920 egg supply sold for nearly five times as much per dozen as was received in 1900, and the demand for chicken as a food delicacy increased more than in proportion to the expanding supply.

Marked improvements in the quality of product and in marketing organization have also taken place. The poultry is better bred and better cared for. Formerly thousands of dozens of eggs collected by local dealers spoiled and were destroyed; and the supply that did reach the consumer was of uncertain age. All this had its effect on prices and farmers' profits. Great improvements have been effected in quality of stock, and in grading, shipping and selling. The recent development of co-operative marketing through egg circles and exchanges is particularly promising.

WOOL.

1871.....	1,132,703 pounds
1881.....	1,142,440 "
1891.....	1,072,234 "
1901.....	872,544 "
1911.....	698,331 "
1921.....	734,871 "

A decrease in wool production is incidental to the decreasing number of sheep. The wool and the mutton (lamb) are joint products, and the farmer is influenced in his policy with regard to sheep raising by the combined receipts. The actual trend shown by the statistics was the result, in part, of unfavorable market conditions and, in part, of difficulties encountered in production.

Fur Farming, Maple Products and Seeds, the other items in Gross Agricultural Revenue, amount to less than one per cent. of the total. The production of Maple Products and of Seeds has decreased since 1881. Fur Farming, a new development since that date, is an interesting example of agricultural specialization which already constitutes a large item in Gross Revenue in Prince Edward Island and is rapidly increasing in Nova Scotia. The value of the product for this province in 1925 was estimated at \$200,000.

GROSS VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS 1881 AND 1921.

A comparison of the values of the principal products of agriculture as shown in the census returns for 1881 and 1921 will prove interesting. Difficulties arising from variations in the general level of prices will be avoided by using the same prices for both periods. The price list used will be that for 1925, the last year for which complete statistics are available, except that for fruit and for field crops a three-year price average 1924-26 will be taken.⁵ The following table shows the changes that have occurred calculated in this manner:

	Excess 1881	Excess 1921
Field Crops.....	\$1,758,823.00	
Dairy Products		
Dairy Butter.....		435,468
Creamery Butter.....		976,243
Milk, Cream, etc. (estimate).....		500,000
		————— \$1,911,711.00

⁵ Prices of apples are from Report, Apple Market Enquiry Committee, page 9. Field crop prices for 1924-25 are from the Canada Year Book for 1926. Prices for 1926 are from the 1927 Report of Department of Natural Resources.

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Fruits and Vegetables—Apples.....			3,713,554.00
Animals—Sheep.....	225,000.00		
Poultry and Eggs			
Eggs.....		300,318	
Poultry.....		104,400	
Wool.....	101,892.00		414,718.00
		<hr/>	<hr/>
	\$2,085,715.00		\$6,039,983.00
Excess Value 1921 over 1881.....			\$3,954,268.00

Because data concerning some minor items is unavailable, the gross value of all agricultural products for 1881 cannot be exactly calculated, but it could scarcely have exceeded 26,000,000 on the basis of above prices. The increase as shown for 1921 was, therefore, about 15 per cent., although the number employed in agriculture decreased more than 22 per cent. in the meantime. According to this, the efficiency of labour in agriculture increased 48 per cent. between these dates. This doubtless greatly understates the progress made, for in the above calculation no account is taken of improved quality of the product, or of the better condition in which goods are placed on the markets, although great advance had taken place in both respects. Moreover, the field crop excess of nearly two million dollars for 1881 misrepresents the general trend, the last census year being decidedly unfavorable for purposes of comparison. If 1911 had been taken, value excess for 1881 would have been less than \$500,000, although a smaller number were employed in agriculture in 1911 than were so employed in 1921. If an accurate comparison could be made for five-year periods, it is probable the results would show no marked change in values of these crops.

This comparison of Gross Agricultural Revenue does not prove beyond question that the average net income of the farmers of the province has increased in like manner. It is, however, the best statistical index available. Certainly there is no reason for supposing that the margin between prices and costs has narrowed sufficiently to absorb the entire gain from the greater efficiency of labour. Strong confirmation of this view is supplied by the more expensive standard of living which now prevails. What would former generations have thought of the innumerable luxurious articles of food and clothing, of the papers and periodicals, of the toys and trinkets, of the puffs and powders, of the motors and movies, which, in sum, constitute so large a part of living expenses to-day? How many of the automobiles now owned by farmers could have been purchased and operated in 1880 even if these machines had been in existence? For better or for worse we are

to-day living on a scale that would have been impossible on the incomes of fifty years ago.

The more in detail one considers this record of progress, the more forcibly one is impressed with the absurdity of attempting to trace existing rural conditions to the unprogressiveness of our farmers or to a state of stagnation in agriculture. Revolutionary changes have taken place during the last half century in systems of transportation by land and by sea, in the mechanical and scientific aspects of agriculture, in methods of marketing, and in tariff control over market areas. To-day the consumers of the world are the farmers' customers; the producers of the world are their competitors. Our farmers have been compelled to work out adjustments to these changing conditions or fall by the wayside. Stagnation would have meant elimination. In the record of production of every major crop, evidence has been found of the farmer's efforts to work out satisfactory adaptations, and the statement of comparative values bears witness to the success of his efforts.

The contention that the facts of history prove the progressive-ness of our farmers as a class does not imply that every opportunity for advance has been employed, or that no mistakes have been made. It is easy for the expert to indicate failures in the past and to suggest improvements for the future. But the same can be said with regard to every other sphere of economic activity. Farmers, like those engaged in other occupations, differ greatly with regard to energy, ability and initiative. There are some—the marginal farmers—who, in these respects, rank with the unskilled laborers. But agriculture in Nova Scotia has its full quota of keen, wide-awake and aggressive men who lead the way in the adoption of those new ideas and devices on which advance depends.

The trying conditions under which farming is carried on in these provinces have been greatly aggravated during the last few years by the long drawn out period of post-war economic depression through which the world has just passed. Our farmers have been under a severe strain, and are now in a frame of mind where open appreciation of what they have accomplished will be more helpful than questionable accusations of laziness, ignorance, or undue pessimism. Criticism has its place in the development of individuals and of communities, but so has a proper meed of praise.

The discussion so far serves merely as an introduction to the many weighty questions concerning rural conditions that will arise in the minds of thoughtful readers. A clearer understanding of the influences which determine the selection of occupations and of locations by the young people of rural communities as they reach

the age of maturity is particularly desirable. What are the hopes and ambitions, the aims and desires, the ideas and ideals, that of¹ tariff these choices? What is the bearing on these decisions determine laws, of the great industrial and commercial developments of recent years, of changing standards of living, of the growth of large cities, and of the distinctive features of urban psychology with which the rural mind is in intimate contact to-day by so many different channels of communication? While such questions as these deserve the most careful consideration, a satisfactory discussion is beyond the limits of the present paper.