

commercial traffic as a contribution to highway expenditure (or to the public treasury) but also the transport question, what part is the truck and the bus to play in the immediate future, and to what extent should truck competition be restricted in the interests of the railway. Taxes may be levied, and duties imposed, solely to obtain a given revenue from motor users, and with no intent of affecting the relations between railway transport and motor users. But a tax system designed to resolve also the difficulties and inequities which beset competition between road and rail cannot be proposed until transport policy has been formulated. The equity and propriety of a given schedule of taxes cannot be judged

except in relation to the purposes which it is intended to serve. Functions must first be distinguished, and traffic divided upon general principles of transport policy. When that has been done, rates of tax can be settled which will help to confine truck and bus operators within their allotted sphere. No general policy, universally applicable, can be outlined here, for what is appropriate depends upon the fiscal and economic conditions of the country, province or state concerned. Space does not allow the case of any particular community to be examined in detail; but in another place, the writer has endeavoured to apply this argument to the particular circumstances of the Province of Nova Scotia.

"Agricola": A Pioneer in Adult Education

By J. S. MARTELL

"AGRICOLA" would probably feel quite at home among co-operative leaders in Nova Scotia to-day. He too in his time, more than a century ago, told Nova Scotians that they could pull themselves into prosperity. The program he advocated was much narrower than that now being urged by the adult educationists of St. F. X.; but he was not far behind them in many of his methods of arousing the people to action. His appeal to self-interest, his call to local patriotism coupled with an attempt to create confidence in the resources and prospects of the province, and his emphasis on the necessity of practical education and the importance of mutual aid, the worth of work, and the love of the land are the very approaches used by some of the modern masters of the mass mind. The parallel extends even further. "Agricola," like the men of Antigonish, driven in part at least by fear of a foreign

ideology, in his case the republicanism of the United States, came forward in a post-war period when an economic depression seemed to stimulate thinking in all fields, and, like them too, he was fortunate in finding a government ready to lend valuable support. His success also was spectacular, attracting the attention of people far beyond the borders of the province, while within the province his response likewise came mostly from the eastern counties and Cape Breton. Here the similarity ends, as well it might. "Agricola's" movement petered out in seven years, although the work was taken up by others in the decade after his death.

A detailed account of "Agricola" and his achievements having recently been published¹, little need be said about the man or what he did beyond the bare facts that he was a Scottish merchant named John Young of good education

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¹: Bulletin of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia Vol. II, No. 2, Halifax, 1940.

and with an intense interest in agriculture who came to Halifax in 1814, when he was forty-one years of age, and after a short period of obscurity emerged as the man who, under the pseudonym of "Agricola," had started a province-wide discussion of agricultural problems. This led to the creation of a Central Board of Agriculture, with himself as full-time Secretary, which before its charter ran out in 1825 encouraged the formation of twenty-eight agricultural societies and with them, aided by generous government grants, did much to introduce new ways of farming, to extend tillage, improve livestock, increase oat mills, facilitate marketing, and thus add to the prosperity of the province by making it less dependent on the United States for foodstuffs, for it was Young's firm conviction that "this Province can never thrive so long as American produce is indispensable for the feeding of the population."

How did Young manage to stir the people out of their inertia long enough to start the ball rolling? Unknown beyond a small circle of friends and without public organization or private influence behind him, he first played upon the popular love of mystery by writing letters about the sad state of agriculture and the deplorable dependence on the United States and sending them to the press under the assumed name of "Agricola." Not even his publisher, Anthony Holland of the *Acadian Recorder*, knew who he was; but so well written were his communications and so obviously full of good sense that Holland, like most of the readers of the *Recorder*, judged them to be from the hand of a learned and probably influential person. Public curiosity was further heightened by the fact that the writer was so outspoken. Brushing aside the belief held by "a certain gloomy class of declaimers," he asserted that "it will be found that our increasing poverty may be traced to ignorance and inactivity, not to the niggardliness of nature, nor to the want of physical capabilities." Further, many

Nova Scotians notwithstanding, he maintained that "the climate of Nova Scotia, such as it *now* exists, is superior, with regard to the genial influence and heat of its summers, to all the northern European kingdoms, and is much more capable of producing the farinaceous corns . . . We want industry, not a propitious climate, to make us rich in agricultural produce."

Such statements soon raised the ire of certain gentlemen, including the Vice-President of King's College, the Rev. Dr. William Cockeran, who was the President of the old and stationary Hants Agricultural Society. He and other conservatives of the day expressed contrary views in Edmund Ward's *Free Press*, and shortly there was a heated controversy between correspondents in the *Acadian Recorder* and the *Free Press* over the merits of "Agricola" and his radical and enthusiastic ideas. So long as Young remained anonymous, this was all to the good in giving his views wider publicity; but later, when he was Secretary of the Central Board and known under his own name, the personal pettiness to which his opponents often descended drove him more than once to the point of exasperation. In the meantime, however, he was attracting an ever-increasing number of readers and to them he unfolded his program in a positive, brilliant style.

While doing so he had to clear the way for his advanced thoughts by overcoming as best he could a very peculiar prejudice in the public mind. It came from the fact that the average farmer was ashamed of his job, and being ashamed, had lost the respect of the community. At least this was "Agricola's" accusation and there were not a few observers who bore him out. "The keeper of a tavern or a tipping-house, the retailer of rum, sugar and tea, the travelling chapman, the constable of the district, were far more important personages, whether in their own estimation or that of the public, than the farmer who cultivated his own lands . . . Farmers would blush to be

caught at the plough by their genteeler acquaintances . . . ” Both by his own words and by his success in rallying Lieutenant-Governor Dalhousie and other high-ranking officials of the Government to his side, Young did much to change the popular conception of agriculture and to raise farmers to a sense of the dignity of their labour. The testimony of John Starr at the annual meeting of the Central Board in 1821 was typical of that of Young's stout supporters: “On the establishment of the Central Board a new train of ideas arose and a sentiment of honour succeeded to this feeling of shame. Instead of saying to his servant ‘Go and do it,’ the farmer now says: ‘Come and do it,’ and he both holds the plough and performs other operations pleasantly because his profession has been rendered honourable.”

When discussing the advantages of his scheme of a central agricultural board working with local agricultural societies, Young laid the most stress on the opportunities for education and co-operation. It is here that his Letters remind one most markedly of editorials in *The Maritime Co-operator* and speeches by Dr. Tompkins and Dr. Coady, although his language was far less restrained, as, for instance, in his very first letter when illustrating the connection between knowledge and economic advancement: “The ignorant and unlettered boor is no more capable of being an enterprising and successful farmer than the team which he drives.” Speaking of the books, pamphlets and magazines that would be made available through the societies—the library of the Central Board boasted over three hundred volumes in 1825—he declared that they would “rapidly dispel that total ignorance, which, like the gloom of midnight, has cast over us a darkening mantle.” The farmer, he insisted, could not remain ignorant of the ideas in this latest literature which described how agriculture in the old country was being transformed under the stimulus of the industrial revolution “without sacrificing both his own and the best interests of the public.” Other

knowledge would emerge from his association with fellow farmers. “His attendance upon their stated meetings would furnish him with materials for thinking, and with subjects for experiment. He would return home with his mind stored with new ideas, and stimulated to take his part in the progress of improvement.”

Co-operation among farmers, as he saw it, was a practical need in the province. “There is here an obvious want of bread corn. We have no regular and adequate supply either of flour, of oatmeal, or of shelled barley for the use of the inhabitants: and Halifax has to import these articles from England and the States. Even those products, such as hops and barley for malting, for which our climate is supposed to be peculiarly favourable, are reared in such inconsiderable quantities as to bring the conviction irresistibly home that a stupid and contented indolence lies at the bottom of our poverty, and that we could be richer and more independent of foreign supplies if we would resolutely shake off our supineness.” Co-operation was obviously necessary “to draw forth the utmost powers of fertility.” An agricultural society could import “those new models of agricultural instruments . . . and also . . . livestock . . . ” “A man hesitates, and the caution is warrantable, to embark his own capital in any hazardous speculation for the public good, while he would most cheerfully bear his share in a joint adventure.”

The response to “Agricola's” skilful appeals and promises was remarkable. Less than six months after the appearance of his first letter, in December, 1818, he happily announced a public meeting under the patronage of Lord Dalhousie for the formation of a Central Board. Even before this he had had the pleasure of hearing from four new local societies. “Men of all ranks and conditions, even females respectable for age and virtue, have caught the prevailing ferment, and written me in a tone of interest and ardent expectation.” One admirer wrote: “As faith without works is dead,

so praise without food is dead also. Do me the honour to accept this turkey at my hands." Praise alone, but handsome praise, poured in from the other colonies, in newspapers and letters, and from the United States and Great Britain, where his fame had spread. In Halifax he was the most discussed man of the day, yet still unknown even to Lord Dalhousie, with whom he had begun a private correspondence some months earlier.

"Agricola's" unique achievement ended with the adoption of his program. It is too much to expect that any man in like circumstances would be disinterested enough to forego the laurel wreath and whatever went with it; but if Young had remained anonymous and allowed others to carry out his plans, the move-

ment he began might have continued without interruption, for he unfortunately became a personal symbol for attack in the next seven years. Other reasons for the breakdown at the end of that time, however, may be found in factors that were more general and impersonal. These it is not possible to discuss in this space; but one in particular was illuminated in Young's shrewd fear expressed in 1823 that "the days of our adversity have not been of sufficiently long continuance to correct our faults, and make a serious and lasting impression." The farmers were beginning to feel the upswing of better times. To-day co-operative leaders watching the effect of war-time wages express a similar fear.

Municipal Government In Newfoundland

By H. B. MAYO

NEWFOUNDLAND has very little of the apparatus of local government. There is no widespread system of municipal, district and other local councils such as one finds in politically developed countries. The very term "local government" is not widely understood. I once gave a simple radio talk on the need for local government in the island. Next day a dear old soul remarked, "Ah, yes. You want us to get back our own responsible government. How nice!" She had confused local government with autonomy for the country as a whole.

Such local authorities as do exist are the Municipal Council of St. John's; the embryonic town council at Windsor (formerly Grand Falls Station); and, scattered around the country, various *ad hoc* authorities such as local Boards of Health, School Boards and Harbour Boards. Certain local affairs, normally

regarded as the duties of a town council, are looked after in St. Anthony by the International Grenfell Association and, in the paper mill towns of Corner Brook and Grand Falls, by the paper companies.

The St. John's Municipal Council—dating from 1888—now operates under the Act of 1921 and amendments thereto (the "City Charter"). There is a Mayor, a Deputy Mayor, and seven councillors. Elections occur every three years, and the franchise is open to all householders and to all male non-householders over 21 who pay a poll tax of \$5. (Very few do pay a poll tax). Party politics do not enter into municipal elections.

The Council's main responsibilities are streets and street lighting, water supply, sewerage and public parks. The usual utilities such as tramways, bus system, electricity, gas and telephone services are in private hands. The Council has nothing to do with elementary and secondary education, which is in charge of denominational school boards.

Power of the Council to raise loans

EDITOR'S NOTE: H. B. Mayo, a young Newfoundlander who studied at Dalhousie University and as a Rhodes scholar at Oxford, served for several years under the Commission of Government in Newfoundland and is at present on the staff of the Extension Department of the University of Alberta.