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URBAN REFORM, MIDDLE-CLASS VALUES, AND AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY
IN ONTARIO, 1880-1914

by

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Honours Bachelor of Arts
University of Guelph, 1992

Cognate Essay
Submitted to the Department of History
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Master of Arts degree
Wilfrid Laurier University
1997

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HISTORY CELEBRATES THE BATTLEFIELDS WHEREON WE MEET OUR DEATH,
BUT SCORNS TO SPEAK OF THE PLOWED FIELDS WHEREBY WE THRIVE.

-J.H. Fabre

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INTRODUCTION

The 1880s inaugurated a dramatic change in Ontario's history. The cities experienced increased industrialization, the rise of monopoly capitalism, and the formation of an industrial working class. The urban population continued to rise, with immigration and rural-to-urban migration. Pollution and crime escalated and the living conditions of the poor rapidly deteriorated. Those who could, travelled from the city to escape the ills of urban society. The traditional lifestyle of the farmer was also undergoing wide-ranging changes. The rural population was declining, new ideas and technology were being introduced, and agriculture was shifting from a subsistence lifestyle to a business.

Even though Canadian history during the period 1880 to 1914 has been studied extensively by social and economic historians, there are aspects that have not been previously investigated. This study will concentrate on attempts by the urban middle classes during this period to persuade the rural agricultural classes to accept their social values. Urban middle-class values included whatever would further the progress of industrial capitalism, and their own place within it. For instance, an attractive, orderly, and healthy environment, the development of useful science and technology, as well as universal literacy and education, were necessary to promote these goals.

In the cities the middle classes urged the working classes to accept values that were evident in social reform movements during this period. One of the main tenets advocated by reformers was that contact with nature was essential for the health and character of urban inhabitants. The attempts of the middle classes to persuade the lower classes to increase their contact with nature can be witnessed in the City Beautiful movement (1890s-1914), and in the creation of public parks.¹

The situation of urban middle classes and farmers was in some ways quite different. Members of the urban middle classes believed that rural depopulation was the largest threat to the agricultural community during this period, and that this problem needed immediate attention. By the turn of the century, middle-class reformers were dedicated to solving the problem of rural depopulation.² They believed they possessed a solution and expanded their promotion of their ideal of country life to the agriculturalists.³ Evidence of this trend can be witnessed in middle-class efforts to persuade agriculturalists to modernize by implementing scientific methods and the latest technology in farming.

Generally speaking, prior to 1880 farmers believed that the forces of nature were beyond their control; many continued to plan breeding and shearing by the phases of the moon.⁴ After that, agricultural publications increasingly

encouraged them to harness nature by adopting more efficient and scientific farming and landscaping techniques, as well as machinery. A large proportion of the journal articles urged agriculturalists to improve various aspects of their farms. They tried to persuade farmers to give up their previous 'uneducated' practices and to adopt the latest innovations, to exert greater control over nature through the use of science and technology. The theme throughout these articles was that farmers could manage nature through scientific methods. It is evident that between 1880 and 1914 "experts" sought to persuade farmers not only that nature was to be explored, understood, managed, and controlled, but also that in doing so they could enjoy considerable profit.

Although there is nothing in the historical literature specifically on this topic, there are numerous works on its various aspects. For example, Mariana Valverde's The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925 (1991) provides context on the work and ideology of the middle-class reformers in the social purity movement. We also know that middle-class attitudes to nature in this period were changing and that they started to view the countryside as healthier than the city.⁵

These changing attitudes toward nature manifested themselves in tourism and art, as well as in the City Beautiful and park movements. Changes in urban attitudes

toward the wilderness and the growing urban appreciation of nature are traced in George Altmeyer, "Three Ideas of Nature in Canada, 1893-1914" (1976).⁶ Allan Smith, "Farms, Forests and Cities: The Image of the Land and the Rise of the Metropolis in Ontario 1860-1914" (1990) also discusses the changes in the urban perspective on nature and the growing belief that the countryside was healthier than the city.⁷

An overview of tourism during this period is provided by Roy Wolfe's articles, "The Summer Resorts of Ontario in the Nineteenth Century (1962)⁸ and "The Changing Patterns of Tourism in Ontario" (1967).⁹ Patricia Jasen expands Wolfe's research in her works, "Romanticism, Modernity, and the Evolution of Tourism on the Niagara Frontier, 1790-1850" (1991),¹⁰ "From Nature to Culture: The St. Lawrence River Panorama in Nineteenth-Century Ontario Tourism" (1993),¹¹ and Wild Things: Nature, Culture, and Tourism in Ontario, 1790-1914 (1995).¹² Especially in the last work, Jasen ties changing urban attitudes to nature to the growing tourist movement.

Early tourists often painted images of the landscapes that they travelled to see. As a result, the art of landscape painting became associated and evolved with tourism. Those attitudes of the urban middle classes toward the natural environment were reflected in changing ideas regarding landscape painting and the popular art of the

time, as shown by Douglas Cole in "Artists, Patrons, and Public: An Enquiry into the Success of the Group of Seven" (1978).¹³

Another manifestation of urban attitudes toward nature can be witnessed in the City Beautiful movement. Alan F. Artibise and Gilbert A. Stelter discuss the beginnings of this urban reform movement in their article "Conservation Planning and Urban Planning: The Canadian Commission of Conservation in Historical Perspective" (1981)¹⁴ and explain its demise in "The Fate of City Beautiful Thought in Canada, 1893-1930" (1984).¹⁵ Another manifestation of the urban attitude toward nature was in the creation of parks. One response to the increase in tourism and the demand for wilderness preservation was the creation of provincial parks, as shown by Gerald Killan in Protected Places: A History of Ontario's Provincial Parks System (1993).¹⁶

In order to understand the particular background for the rural situation, various works on Ontario agriculture were consulted. Robert L. Jones gives a detailed history of farming in his seminal work History of Agriculture in Ontario, 1613-1880 (1946).¹⁷ His book provides a thorough description of changes in agriculture to 1880. For changes in farming after 1880, Helen Abell's "Social Consequences of the Modernization of Agriculture" (1966)¹⁸ explains the process and forces behind modernization, and related

problems such as rural depopulation. The urban attempt to reform and modernize agricultural communities through education is discussed in Tom Nesmith's unpublished Ph.D. dissertation on 'The Philosophy of Agriculture: The Promise of the Intellect in Ontario Farming, 1835-1914' (1988),¹⁹ as well as in Jeff Taylor, Fashioning Farmers: Ideology, Agricultural Knowledge and the Manitoba Farm Movement, 1890-1925 (1994).²⁰ Other research deals with the effects of innovation in technology, including Alan Skeoch, "The Ontario Agricultural Implement Industry, 1850-1891" (1978)²¹ and Gordon M. Winder, "Technology Transfer in the Ontario Harvester Industry 1830-1900" (1994).²²

Although there is considerable literature on middle-class values, agriculture, and urban social reform movements as separate topics, historians have not yet analyzed the promotion of urban, middle-class values among rural inhabitants during this period. There is also a dearth of research on the impact of science, technology, industrialization and urbanization on the Ontario countryside. Even though there is information on changes in American agriculture as a result of increased mechanization during this period, these works do not consider the influence of the urban middle classes on agriculture.²³

While agricultural newspapers collected and disseminated information on the latest scientific developments during the early to mid-1800s,²⁴ the rise of

agricultural journals in later decades offered increasingly specialized information. Such journals form a rich primary source for this topic, since there were numerous examples published in Ontario during this period. In particular, the Canadian Farm (1909-1914), The Canadian Dairyman (1905-1909), and The Farmer's Advocate (1877-1919), were published in Toronto by The Farm Press Limited, in Hamilton by The Dairyman Publishing Co., Ltd., and in London by The William Weld Co., respectively. These specific journals were selected because they were published in three different cities in Ontario and were representative of the agricultural journals during this period. These agricultural newspapers were written in the city, for the rural population. They were intended to update farmers on the newest technology, the best farming methods, and the latest scientific innovations. Topics discussed at length in these journals provided focal points for this study.

The agricultural newspapers were written by a variety of people interested in the farming industry. For instance, individuals classified in this paper as "experts" in farming were the editors, professors at the Ontario Agricultural College, managers of government departments responsible for agriculture and forestry, and scientists who conducted research on specialized aspects of farming, such as breeding and pesticides. These experts represented the voice of the urban, professional middle class to farmers. The journals

through which they conveyed their ideas reflected the mindset of the urban middle classes through the suggestions they made to agriculturalists. There were also a limited number of articles, editorials and small tidbits written by farmers themselves, expressing opinions, giving advice, and sharing thoughts. There were even a few examples of rural children's poems, letters and sketches in these magazines.

Despite the abundance of primary material available, a heavy reliance on these sources can entail several problems. It is largely unknown how persuasive the urban middle-class urgings were in these agricultural journals, as several factors must be taken into consideration. First, the percentage of the rural population who could read, the circulation of these publications, and the extent of their dissemination are all unknown. The reaction of the agriculturalists who did read them is also difficult to determine. Except for the occasional excerpt in the farming journals, the degree of the agriculturalists' acceptance or rejection of the information is unknown.

A second problem is that one cannot always determine the authorship of articles, and whether the author is a farmer, a rural inhabitant who was not an agriculturalist, an urban dweller, or an expert. In addition, the editors, not the farmers, determined the subjects that appeared in the magazines, and it remains unclear how representative

these farm journals were of farmers' real concerns.

A third concern with these primary sources is that there is a relative absence of farm women throughout the journals. Women's Institutes were established in 1899 in Ontario and were considered an important force in educating farm women²⁵ but they do not receive a voice in the farm journals. Terry Crowley, in his article, "The Origins of Continuing Education for Women: The Ontario Women's Institutes" (1986) states that the agricultural press and the Ontario Agricultural College were male-dominated,²⁶ and provide a possible reason for the lack of a female voice in the journals.

This paper is divided into three chapters. Chapter One begins with a discussion of the urban social reform movement, with its links to ideas about the importance of human contact with nature. It focuses on the middle-class promotion of their values to the working classes, including the importance of contact with nature. The chapter has been divided into two periods: pre-1880 and 1880-1914. The pre-1880 section provides an overview of urban middle-class attitudes toward nature and its manifestations. The remaining section discusses the urban middle-class adoption and expansion of related ideas, and their attempted imposition of such values on the working classes. The urban experience in this period provides a frame of reference and comparison for the rural situation.

Chapters Two and Three discuss similar urban middle-class efforts to persuade agriculturalists to accept their values. In this case they hoped to persuade agriculturalists to adopt science and technology and to work toward controlling nature. Chapter Two starts by discussing one of the main agricultural problems identified in the journals during this period, rural depopulation. The remainder of Chapter Two and the bulk of Chapter Three trace the experts' information and advice to the farmers on a variety of topics from 1880 to 1914. Like the workers in the city, farmers in the countryside did not always share the concerns and priorities of their patrons.

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CHAPTER I

SOCIAL REFORM IN THE CITY, 1880-1914

Between 1880 and 1914 industrialization and urbanization dramatically altered both the landscape of Ontario and urban dwellers' perceptions of the natural environment, especially the growing contrast between the city and rural areas. From 1870 to 1900 the urban population in Ontario rose from 18% to 35%, and by 1911 approximately 50% of Ontario's population lived in urban centres. The rise in urban population was the result of the increasing number of both immigrants and farmers settling in the cities.¹

The greater portion of the influx became part of the working class as the economy industrialized, and with this increase came a host of problems.² For instance, the greater numbers resulted in a rise in noise levels. The expanding population added to the odours of the urban centres through increases in industrial pollution, industrial, animal and human wastes, and oozing drains in primitive sanitation systems. In addition to these unsanitary conditions, people were forced to live in overcrowded homes which usually housed more than one family. There were no bathing facilities and privy pits were dug into back yards.³ As Bettina Bradbury demonstrates, members of working-class families were all dependent on inconsistent wages. They worked long, hard hours mainly in

factories, sweatshops or home production.⁴

By the turn of the century the main focus of the economy had shifted from agriculture to corporate industrial capitalism. The growth of industry in turn meant that the number of individuals employed in factories and the amount of capital invested in factories increased. Wealth, material progress, and the maximization of profit margins for investors were considered paramount goals. Corporate capitalism was marked by its focus on 'scientific management'⁵ and its method of assembly-line production.⁶ These changes did not necessarily translate into improved conditions for the workers caught in this transition.⁷

Against the background of deteriorating material conditions for the working classes grew the social reform movement. The crusade consisted of members of the middle classes trying to rehabilitate poor families weakened by the pressures of industrialization and urbanization. Generally speaking, the reformers were white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, middle-class professionals and their spouses, who were trying to assimilate the immigrants and mould the lower classes' conduct into behaviour that the reformers deemed acceptable.⁸ The reformers were trying to maintain their improved lifestyle by reconstructing aspects of society that threatened their way of life.⁹ The earliest reformers were newspaper editors and businessmen¹⁰ who were joined by teachers, doctors and social or community workers.¹¹ By

the early 20th century various women's groups campaigned for urban change and became the driving force behind the social reform movement.¹² The majority of the clubs were led by upper- and middle-class women and composed of middle-class housewives.¹³ Carolyn Merchant, in her article "Women and Conservation" (1993) writes that women accepted their traditional roles assigned by society, that they were caretakers of the home, family and health. They expanded these assigned traditions to become 'municipal housekeepers' as a natural rationale for urban reform that included the conservation of natural resources.¹⁴

The movement for 'social reform' actually encompassed various overlapping factions and personnel. For instance, the social purity movement was concerned mainly with the moral and sexual dimensions of working-class life. The Social Gospel, the driving force behind reform in this time, focused on social and economic conditions that resulted from industrial production, and attempted to soften the effects of capitalism using the doctrines of Christianity.¹⁵ The Social Gospel maintained that marginal members of society who did not adhere to middle-class norms required moral and political maintenance. The middle classes feared immorality, race suicide, and the breakdown of the family.¹⁶ One principle of the Social Gospel movement was that people were fundamentally good and that if they made mistakes it was not because of any basic character flaw but

because of their environment.¹⁷ Thus the urban reformers believed that change must start with the city's environment. The physical structures and aesthetics of cities needed improvement in order to create a beautiful, liveable urban space.¹⁸

The popular belief that natural surroundings and contact with nature influenced people's behaviour and characteristics will be traced below through discussion of tourism, the City Beautiful and parks movements, and landscape painting. It is important to look at the 'trickle-down effect' of this belief, as it started with the urban elites and spread to the urban middle classes, who then attempted to persuade the working classes of its value. Reformers tried to alter the environment of the working classes through the creation of parks and open spaces in order to provide city-dwellers with some form of contact with nature.¹⁹ They believed that, by providing the working classes with places to appreciate the beauty of nature,²⁰ they could persuade them to accept other middle-class values, including the importance for society of healthy contact with nature.

Before 1880

Early attitudes toward the environment and their manifestation in tourism as an escape from industrialization form the focus of Patricia Jasen's article, "Romanticism,

Modernity, and the Evolution of Tourism on the Niagara Frontier, 1790-1850" (1991).²¹ Jasen shows that tourism actually began in the 18th century, when romanticism laid the cultural foundations for the modern tourist industry in Canada.²² One of the cardinal tenets of romanticism was nature's positive impact on the mind, including environmental influences upon human behaviour, especially that of children.²³ This belief was evident in Britain in the early 1860s, in the Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society's campaign to rejuvenate urban life through contact with nature. The Society advocated the conservation of the countryside as well as demanding better open environments inside city limits. These same kinds of ideas were also found in the United States in the decades before 1900.²⁴ Jasen argues that romantic notions of nature and travel provided the basis for tourism.²⁵ The elites had been educated to romanticize the wilderness, and to appreciate especially those aspects of nature that met the aesthetic standards of the picturesque.²⁶

Jasen analyzes tourism during the first half of the 19th century in three periods. The first was from the 1790s to 1812, when the number of elite visitors to Niagara Falls first increased. The second period was after 1812, when wealthy travellers began to anticipate vacations as part of their broader acculturation. The third period occurred after 1825, when the tourist experience became increasingly

commercialized.²⁷

Landscape painting also became very popular with the upper classes during the mid-1800s. When travelling from place to place the tourists tried to capture the view on canvas. For instance, it became a popular pastime with the wealthy British to travel to France to view and paint the landscape.²⁸ As early as the 1850s, steamships brought travellers from Holland, Germany, and England to paint and sketch the wild in North America.²⁹ In particular, the popular style of 'view painting', topographic painting which developed into landscape painting, focused on unspoiled nature. With the opening of the American west many paintings after the 1850s still focused on the raw scenery in images of progress and energy.³⁰

Meanwhile, Canadian landscape artists continued largely in the British pastoral tradition.³¹ Two examples were Paul Kane (1810-1871) and Cornelius Krieghoff (1815-1872).³² Yet by the late 1870s wealthy Canadians travelled north to the Muskokas to seek pleasure away from the cities.³³ The most noteworthy of the early northern painters to break away from the pastoral tradition was the Marquis of Lorne (1845-1914),³⁴ the Governor General of Canada, during the 1870s.³⁵

The 1870s also saw the very beginnings of what would later be called the City Beautiful movement in Canada. Although the wealthy appreciated the wild, it was widely

believed that civilization could not exist without planned, ornamental plantings in urban spaces. For instance, trees along roadways, hedges around houses and flower gardens. Since surroundings influenced human character, it seemed that the more manicured and orderly the environment, the more refined would be its inhabitants. Urban planning was approached on the private level by the upper classes and could be found in the populated areas beside industry where they resided.³⁶

1880-1914

The early 1880s marked the beginnings of organized urban reform movements among the middle classes, who began to believe that the ills associated with urbanization and industrialization needed immediate attention. In Toronto and Montreal, reform groups included the Fresh Air Fund, Playground Association, and the Kindergarten Movement to combat various urban problems.³⁷ The early 1880s also saw increasing urban middle-class efforts to escape the industrializing cities and rapid urban expansion. The middle classes envisioned the country as a resource for themselves, with the wilderness subordinated to the needs and values of the city. The traditional belief that contact with the wilderness would result in healthy minds and bodies developed into a wilderness 'ethos', the appreciation of the physical, aesthetic, and spiritual aspects of places

untouched by humankind. The wilderness seemed a source of primitive strength, of refreshment through strenuous living in nature, and of spiritual regeneration from close contact with the natural world.³⁸

During the late 19th century the urban middle classes began identifying themselves as those most in need of holidays as a cure for 'brain fag', resulting from the stress of urban life.³⁹ The natural world became a source of regeneration for the urban dwellers, so that they could return to their jobs in a healthier state. In some ways, it seemed, it was not the rural inhabitant but the urban vacationer in the wild who best understood and appreciated the land.⁴⁰ Manifestations of the wilderness ethos and the urban middle-class conviction that they needed the regenerative powers of nature were both reflected in the increasing popularity of travel and tourism after 1880.⁴¹

The growing interest in travelling was aided by increasing opportunities to explore Ontario further and further north. Technology helped, as the Grand Trunk Pacific line reached Huntsville from Toronto in 1885. This extension of the railroad into the northern countryside accommodated the expanding leisure activities of the upper and middle classes.⁴² In 1905 the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario (now Ontario Northland) Railway had laid down tracks to New Liskeard, providing access to Temagami. By 1908 the Canadian Northern Ontario Railway had a line from Toronto to

Nickel Centre, east of Sudbury. By 1913 northern Ontario was connected from east to west by rail.⁴³ The improved technology allowed city dwellers to travel to appreciate the environment and to paint it.

By the late 19th century middle-class vacations had become commonplace⁴⁴ and during the 1890s they focused on the Muskokas and the Thousand Islands for recreation.⁴⁵ Instead of staying in resorts as the upper classes did, the middle classes rented or built cottages.⁴⁶ Short day excursions also became available to the middle classes. For instance, Torontonians travelled to Toronto Island for the afternoon.⁴⁷ A holiday away from the city, even to a place that could be reached in one day, was considered to be therapeutic as nature would restore health and vitality.⁴⁸ The importance of nature contact and sporting activities associated with countryside adventures were discussed in newly created journals such as Athletic Life (Toronto, 1895), and Rod and Gun (Montreal, 1899).⁴⁹

Finally, the notion of creating provincial parks started in Canada during the 1890s and expanded after 1900. There was no single reason for the creation of the provincial parks.⁵⁰ Provincial reserves constituted a response to a blend of conflicting commercial, recreational, and conservationist demands. Business interests desired natural resources from the areas and profits from tourists; the urban upper and middle classes wanted to experience the

wilderness and 'go back to nature'; and conservationists demanded the preservation of wilderness areas for future generations.⁵¹ For instance, Algonquin Park was created in 1893 as a public recreational area game reserve. Simultaneously, lumber was the main source of revenue for the preserve during the late 1800s.⁵² The 'back to nature' trend represented an attempt by urban elites to preserve the wilderness as a sanctuary from the ills of urban society.⁵³ They looked to the wilderness preserve for spiritual regeneration.⁵⁴

The extent of working-class tourism is difficult to determine for the late 19th century. The working classes were more constrained than the middle classes, as most did not have paid holidays during this time. Most labourers had only Sunday off from work, which did not leave enough time for travel. Those who did manage to migrate to the northlands stayed in boarding houses or tents.⁵⁵

The middle-class desire for contact with nature and the belief in its regenerative properties also affected the urban centres. The middle class expanded on earlier ideas of adding planned vegetation to the cities. The idea that gained popularity was that nature needed assistance in order to optimize its beauty. Planned and planted trees seemed superior to naturally occurring foliage because their growth, water, and soil had been controlled. One result was that a movement for the preservation of naturally occurring

timber did not arise at that time.⁵⁶ As the concept of planned nature in urban centres gained acceptance and momentum, the City Beautiful movement (1890s-1914) was born. The main goal of this urban crusade was to introduce and establish planned nature inside the urban environment, in an attempt to solve some of the ills of urban society.⁵⁷ This movement was considered part of the "science of modern city-making."⁵⁸

In 1897 the Toronto Guild of Civic Art was formed to promote urban planning and similar improvements. The Guild was created to bring together the businessmen of the 1890s with Canadian artists. The basic premise of the Guild resembled those of early reform groups, that the ills of urban society could be rectified with planning and the introduction of nature into the city. The Guild looked to the United States for examples of reforms and then devised a city park system, a playground system for working-class children, and plans for the beautification of the Toronto waterfront. The Guild believed that such aesthetic alterations of the Toronto environment would benefit all of the city's inhabitants.⁵⁹

After the turn of the century, tourism and day-tripping continued to grow in popularity with the urban upper and middle classes. Travel to the northlands, especially one-day excursions, also gained acceptance with the working classes. Toronto Island and Niagara became the two spots

most frequented by labourers.⁶⁰ These trips were possible because by 1900 white-collar workers gained paid holidays and the majority of the working classes got half of Saturday and all of Sunday off.⁶¹ Travel to enjoy nature became popular at the turn of the century as part of the growing 'back-to-nature' movement.⁶²

A similar crusade that gained popularity in the early 1900s was the 'back-to-the-land' movement. Sponsored by members of the urban middle classes, including businessmen, financiers, lawyers, and editors, they urged the unemployed working-classes and recent immigrants to move to rural areas. The promoters believed that the migration to the countryside would reduce urban problems and save the city for the middle classes.⁶³

In the early 1900s, after a period of rapid expansion, a concern with the waste of resources and the evils of industrialization and urbanization arose among the urban middle-class. Other cities followed Toronto's lead and, as a result, the City Beautiful movement expanded to combine conservation and urban planning.⁶⁴ The planning focused on convenience, beauty, and the idea that gardens should complement the buildings they surrounded. Public gardens and parks became an intricate part of the surroundings of urban living.⁶⁵ The creation of green spaces was intended both to bring regenerative properties of the natural world into the city so that those who could not leave the urban

centre could be refreshed, and to make the city aesthetically pleasing.⁶⁶ These improvements were supposed to generate better health in city dwellers and create more productive, efficient and law-abiding citizens.⁶⁷ The aspect of the City Beautiful movement that received the most attention and endured the longest was urban parks.

The roots of urban parks can be traced to cemeteries in the United States. During the 1800s cemeteries were places far from the city filled with naturalistic scenery, spaces for quiet contemplation. However, they were too far for city dwellers to enjoy these natural surroundings. The creation of parks in American cities was an attempt to emulate the open, quiet, naturalistic space of the cemeteries⁶⁸ as an art form. Although the park movement in the United States succeeded the English park movement, the former rejected the idea of English pastoralism and turned instead toward a more rugged and natural design. For instance, Frederick Olmstead (1822-1903) designed Central Park in New York (1851-1871) to create a wild, natural space that was also cultivated and calm.⁶⁹

Parks were planned or 'scientifically' designed to bring nature to urban dwellers, to compensate for the failure of the city to provide environmental and natural beauty to its inhabitants.⁷⁰ Parks were to represent the countryside with its moral and regenerative properties.⁷¹ Ironically, they soon became an extension of the city

instead.⁷²

During the early 1900s, touring for landscape painting remained popular among the upper classes in Ontario. The North Canadian Pacific Railway gave free passes to landscape painters.⁷³ Painters, such as Lucius R. O'Brien (1832-1899), focused on the topography and maintained the British academic tradition of the romantic image of the landscape.⁷⁴ However, during this time, several Toronto artists moved away from the British tradition and focused on the characteristics of the rugged Canadian landscape. W.W. Alexander (1824-1911) and Robert Holmes (1861-1930) had both painted Algonquin Park in this vein by 1903.⁷⁵

The railroad companies' practice of offering free tickets to landscape painters ended in the 1910s because of financial troubles.⁷⁶ After 1910 Tom Thomson (1877-1917), Lawren Harris (1885-1970), J.E.H. MacDonald (1873-1932), Arthur Lismer (1885-1969), A.Y. Jackson (1882-1974), Frederick H. Varley (1881-1969), Franklin Carmichael (1890-1945), and Frank Johnston (1888-1949), who went on to form the Group of Seven (except Thomson), brought dramatic change to Canadian landscaping painting as they broke with the European romantic tradition.⁷⁷ The painters rejected European pastoral images of the land and focused instead on raw nature as viewed on the Canadian Shield.⁷⁸ They praised the northern wilderness at a time when most saw it as a barren wasteland.⁷⁹ This emphasis on the uniqueness

of the northern Canadian landscape brought a new view of the forest represented in the work of these artists.⁸⁰ From 1912 to 1917, the group was getting in touch with the wilderness as its members spent time at cottages painting the scenery.⁸¹ Their promotion of the north as the identity of Canada has been seen as the first true Canadian art. The Group believed that their new style of art celebrated their new country in a moral and spiritual way.⁸²

There were several reasons for the success of these Canadian artists. Their eventual fame was the result of their painting of the wilderness at a time when the urban middle class was fascinated with it, in turn forging a bond between the artists and their influential patrons. The work of the Group responded to urban middle-class efforts to re-establish a connection to the wilderness.⁸³ They provided a spiritual association with the land that replaced actual contact with the land, as the contemplation of the image was believed to have the same rejuvenating effect.⁸⁴

From 1880 to 1914, then, there was a growing appreciation of nature in Ontario society, manifested in increased interest in tourism, urban planning, wilderness preservation, and art. Science played a significant role in the middle-class belief in the value of nature and their attempt to persuade the lower classes of the importance of wilderness contact. The return to nature could be viewed as

a reaction to Charles Darwin's (1809-1894) scientific theory of The Origin of the Species (1859). Gerald Killan and Lisa Mighetto both state that Darwin's challenge to religious beliefs turned people back to nature.⁸⁵ Carol Bacchi adds that prior to Darwin there was a popular theory that tried to explain social evolution. Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck (1744-1829), claimed that modification of the environment produced visible physical and mental changes which were transmitted to the next generation.⁸⁶ Lamarck named this transformation the inheritance of acquired characteristics.⁸⁷ Lamarck's theory was adapted by reformers as the foundation for their advocacy of green space for the working classes. The middle classes were trying to help the lower classes to evolve in response to their improved environment, and to build a nation that reflected the values of the white, Protestant middle class.⁸⁸

After looking at the urban situation it is evident that the city dwellers' attitudes toward nature and the city itself changed after 1880. The following two chapters will consider the extension of the social reformers' attitudes from the city into the countryside.

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CHAPTER II

REFORMING THE COUNTRYSIDE, 1880-1900

While the years between 1880 and 1914 in Ontario saw a rapid increase in the urban population, there was a simultaneous decrease in the rural population. The demographics for Canada from 1891 to 1911 demonstrate an overall steady decline in the proportion of people living on farmland. For instance, in 1891 the Canadian population was 68.2% rural, whereas in 1911 it had fallen to 54.6%.¹ Specifically, the province of Ontario mirrored this trend, with a rural population of 61% in 1891, 57% in 1901, and 47% in 1911. In other words, Ontario's rural population decreased by 14% from 1891 to 1911.² It seems that most counties of Ontario experienced a loss of farm residents during this period. For instance, the townships of Huron, Keppel, and Sarawak saw decreases of 32%, 34.3%, and 48% respectively. The counties of North Middlesex, Grenville, and South Bruce lost approximately 1/6 of their rural population.³

Depopulation had several serious consequences for the rural environment and its remaining inhabitants. The decrease in the number of farm dwellers resulted in a drop in local school attendance. Therefore, there was a lack of money to pay the teachers and consequently, numerous schools closed. For example, in Huron county in 1881 approximately 16,500 students attended county schools, whereas by 1913 the

number had dropped to 6,818.⁴ Similarly, the rural exodus caused a decline in the size of church congregations and a lack of contributors for the church coffers. As a result, many small churches also closed.⁵

Additionally, homes were abandoned and small plots were consolidated into large farms.⁶ It was usually younger individuals who migrated to the urban centres and, as a result, a large portion of the agriculturalists were middle-aged or older individuals who were left to look after their farms by themselves just when they needed the assistance of their children on the homestead. Many guardians viewed their offspring's preference for the city as personal abandonment and betrayal, which caused bitterness between family members.⁷ Overall, the depopulation of the rural environment undermined the institutions of education, religion, and family. It must have been truly disturbing for individuals to watch their children, neighbours, and members of their congregation move away while the remaining residents were left with the sight of abandoned homes, farms, schools, and churches. The psychological effects of those sights were probably the most detrimental consequence of rural-urban migration, and yet those results are not discussed by historians.

Depopulation became an issue in agricultural magazines in the 1890s and persisted until after the First World War, with many factors cited to explain the declining rural

populace. Generally speaking, the younger generation was leaving the farming communities, and women seemed to be migrating from rural areas to the city in greater numbers than men did.⁸ Alan A. Brooks and Catharine A. Wilson have investigated the migration of young women to the urban centres, and confirmed that a greater number of women than men left the Ontario countryside and moved to the cities. By 1914 there was an estimated surplus of 86,000 men in rural Ontario.⁹

Young women left the homestead because they felt there was no place for them on the farm anymore. Many goods and clothing could now be purchased, instead of having to be made at home. Women did not need to spend as much time cooking and sewing, the primary household responsibilities previously designated for them. However, this did not mean that girls were not busy with farm chores. They were assigned to outdoor jobs that required a great deal of physical exertion. The labour was hard on the appearance, and restricted women from pursuing their own activities, such as reading, as they were either too busy or too tired.¹⁰

Moreover, young women received neither money nor recognition for their work on the farm. Hence, another reason that prompted females to flee the agrarian realm for the city was the desire for economic independence. Women travelled to urban centres to enroll in colleges or business

schools, in order to receive training for careers, or in search of an immediate occupation. In either case, the result was that they had money of their own to purchase material items that would have been unavailable to them on the farm.¹¹

An aspect of the agrarian setting that influenced boys to leave the land was the lifestyle of farmers' sons on the homestead. They laboured long hours at hard work with no holidays and very little free time. Despite these efforts, young men received very little payment or appreciation for their accomplishments on the farm. In short, young men and their labour were taken for granted. Regardless of all the work they put into the land, sons had no say in the planning or management of the holding. They were not usually entrusted to buy and sell livestock or crops; instead they were only told what work to do.¹²

At this time young farmers also had opportunities to migrate to other provinces, especially in the West. Many young agriculturalists left Ontario and travelled to the prairies to take advantage of the availability of cheap land. The West was viewed as a place for a promising future because of the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railroad (CPR).¹³ After 1885 the CPR gave access to the soil of the prairies and provided a transportation route for both incoming people and outgoing crops.

Many young rural inhabitants also left the countryside

because of revolutionary advances in farm technology and mechanization. The drudgery of farm work was reduced by the development of steam power and modern machines. For instance, binders, threshers, silos, manure spreaders, and cream separators were introduced into the rural community in the mid-1880s. As a result of increased mechanization, the need for farm labourers was reduced. Therefore, many men who lived in rural areas were left unemployed and subsequently moved to the city in search of work.¹⁴

Advances in technology and mechanization affected the craftsman¹⁵ as well as the hired hand. Improvements led to cheaper, large-scale production by urban manufacturers, with which country craftsman could not compete successfully. Small country shops were no longer self-sufficient because agriculturalists travelled to the city for less expensive goods. As a result, craftspeople were forced to leave the countryside to seek employment in urban centres. Their disappearance affected other inhabitants of the farming areas because it meant an increasing homogeneity of the farming community. There was no longer much chance of social advancement for farmers' sons who could have apprenticed with craftspeople, or mobility for women who could have moved up the social hierarchy by marrying craftsmen.¹⁶

Another social factor cited in the agricultural journals blamed the decision of farmland occupants to

migrate to the city on the existing rural school system. The curriculum of the country schoolhouse included a variety of subjects but agriculture was not on the agenda. Therefore, farmers did not believe that an education was absolutely necessary because their boys were not learning anything that would help them in their careers as farmers. As a result, male students were often kept home from school to do chores during the busiest times of the year, including harvest time.¹⁷ Young males migrated to the city in order to gain an education that included more than the basics of reading and writing offered at the country level.¹⁸

The weakness of education in agricultural subjects contributed to depopulation because of the results of improper farming techniques. The initial dilemma was that the soil was originally forest land, and therefore needed special attention to make the earth suitable for farming. After trees were removed, the soil washed away to rock, sand blew away with the wind, and gravel failed to retain water. Thus the fertility of the soil was depleted by the loss of humus; inorganic elements such as nitrogen, potash, and phosphorus; and helpful bacteria. Farmers failed to replenish the fertility of their soil with fertilizers, crop rotation, and proper planting procedures.¹⁹ Land labourers were not using proper techniques to maximize crops and profits. Those with the least productive acres were often first to leave the countryside. If the farm had been

economically lucrative, the plot would not likely have been abandoned, for "few think of leaving the farm whose crops are increasing."²⁰

Another aspect of life on the farm that drove young men and women to the city, according to farm magazines, was the primitive nature of country living and the unattractiveness of the homestead. A lack of courtesy and social graces in the country made people feel ignorant and socially backward compared to city-dwellers. Associated with the concept of the primitive nature of country living was the absence of an attractive home.²¹ As a result, both men and women aspired to relocate in the city in order to acquire the same things that urban inhabitants possessed, namely, social graces and a beautiful house.

Before 1880

It is important to describe briefly agriculture before 1880 in order to provide a background for the period under study. Furthermore, the history of farming prior to 1880 will provide a fuller understanding of rural conditions that prompted the exodus and the reformers into action.

During the 1830s farming in Canada was considered primitive compared to that of England and Europe. In Canada the majority of farmers utilized only axes, spades, and hoes as implements. In addition to their crude tools, Canadians did not feel pressed to adopt the 'scientific' methods that

were popular in England and Europe, such as ploughing and crop rotation.²²

Farmers traditionally believed that the forces of the natural world were beyond their control. They held that the moon and its phases influenced agriculture and they planned their activities around its cycle. For instance, until well past the mid-19th century the times for shearing sheep, breeding stock, and planting were all determined by the phases of the moon.²³ If a farmer owned horses they were the only animal to be stabled; all of his other stock remained outdoors even during the winter. It was not easy to acquire many types of farm buildings, each with a specific function: a shed for tools, one for horses, one for grain.²⁴

The only crops grown during this time were corn, grain, and potatoes. Farmers did not apply fertilizers to the land and all the harvesting and haying were completed manually. The grain harvest was cut by hand with a cradle; as it took a man an entire day to cut an acre and a half, usually twenty to thirty men worked on each farm to complete the harvest.²⁵ Farming continued largely without the assistance of science, as agriculturalists traditionally believed that scientists could not teach them anything about farming.²⁶

By the 1870s farmers possessed a limited range of implements and machinery. For instance, most had a seeder

Commission in 1880.³² That same year, the Ontario School of Agriculture in Guelph became the Ontario Agricultural College (OAC). The OAC became the centre of provincial efforts to improve farming, as it tried to educate farmers³³ in the practical and ideological reorganization of country life. On the practical level, farmers could find the latest scientific and management information and apply it to their own farms. On the ideological plane, education would foster an appreciation for agriculture among the younger generation, thus protecting them from the lure of urban life.³⁴

The federal government too demonstrated its interest in agriculture, appointing a House of Commons select committee in 1884 to investigate the promotion and development of farming in Canada. The committee believed that agricultural progress was hindered by improper and wasteful farming techniques, and suggested the creation of a Bureau of Information and a system of experimental farms.³⁵

Canadians looked to the United States and consciously copied American agricultural ideas before the turn of the century. For instance, the Canadian Department of Agriculture and its experimental farms were modelled after the U.S. Bureau of Agriculture and American model farms.³⁶ John Carling (1828-1911), Minister of Agriculture in 1885, sent William Saunders³⁷ (1836-1914) to the United States to study American ideas on 'practical' agriculture, and to

research the attributes of their experimental research farms.³⁸ As a result, the government established experimental farms nationally in 1886, after An Act Respecting Experimental Farm Stations was passed that year.³⁹ Five Dominion Experimental Farms were created: the Central Experimental Farm near Ottawa; with regional stations in Nappan, Nova Scotia; Brandon, Manitoba; Indian Head, North West Territories; and Agassiz, British Columbia.⁴⁰ These farms conducted experiments on horticulture, stock, dairying and forestry.⁴¹ They studied the major agricultural problems already identified by their counterparts in the United States.⁴² The results of the research and experimentation were made available in regular published reports.⁴³

It seems that as science was introduced into farming, attitudes regarding agriculture changed. As a result, attitudes regarding most facets of the farm also changed. First and foremost, urban reformers urged farmers to harness nature through power and machinery, farm buildings, and planting schemes.

The newest technology in farm implements was introduced during the late 1880s. In 1886, a technologically advanced binder was introduced. It had fingers that tied knots of string, an improvement over the old method of twisting wire. Later the same year, the gang-plow and the use of steam power in plowing arrived. Shortly thereafter, improved

barns with running water and trolley unloaders appeared, with a variety of new machinery such as the hay loader, potato digger, manure spreader, gas motor, and traction engine.⁴⁴

The journals' emphasis on providing the best possible housing for animals, with maximized efficiency, can be witnessed in their promotion of round barns. Although there were many such designs, most placed a silo in the middle of the structure with chutes at the bottom for easy feeding of livestock. The upper floor was for the storage of implements and feed, the main floor to house the stock, and the basement for manure.⁴⁵ The stable could be sectioned into compartments, with each area housing a different type of livestock.⁴⁶

During the 1880s concerns also arose over deforestation and the subsequent results of the latter on climate, soil erosion, flooding and droughts. While farmers still believed that treeless land was superior, government officials, professionals, and a few farmers now voiced concerns regarding the lack of trees in rural areas. The Department of Crown Lands began to compile information on the subject, and issued Forestry Reports and warning letters to rural inhabitants to preserve trees.⁴⁷

The topic that received the most coverage in agricultural journals during this period was farm beautification. Prior to 1888 they emphasized the

characteristics of various flowers, but without planting details or guides.⁴⁸ However, by 1888 the notion of planting flowers had broadened to embrace a fuller concept of rural beautification. Generally speaking, rural beautification included efforts to improve the farm environment aesthetically through both the utilization of flowers, trees, and shrubs as well as structural planning and organization. The topic appeared extensively and in great detail in agricultural magazines. In 1888 the beautification of the farmstead consisted of clearing rubbish from the house and tidying up the yard. Farmers were urged to repair loose boards on sheds and to replace gates on their hinges.⁴⁹ Plans that emerged a year later urged rural inhabitants to plant rows of trees (preferably evergreens) as windbreaks for their houses.⁵⁰

The rural beautification movement in many ways ran parallel to the City Beautiful movement, which flourished during the 1890s in urging the aesthetic quality of the cities by introducing landscaping, green space, flowers, and trees into urban areas.⁵¹ Both the urban and the rural beautification efforts were promoted by the same kinds of urban middle-class reformers.

One reason cited to beautify the rural environment was to keep children on the farm, thus helping to stem the tide of rural depopulation.⁵² In this way, it was suggested, the countryside took on some of the attractive features of

the city. Farmers were urged to make their homes beautiful residences similar to houses seen in urban centres, and thereby to instill in the young a sense of pride in their rural dwelling place.⁵³ If home was pleasant to the eyes, the journals suggested, children would "have no desire to leave."⁵⁴ They also proposed that a farmer's morality, intellect and character could be deduced from the appearance of the farm.⁵⁵

By 1894 the number and complexity of urban ideas for farm beautification had increased. Urban professionals decided that the aesthetics of the countryside posed a problem that called for immediate solutions. No longer content with the traditional appearance of the pastoral areas, urban reformers urged their own designs upon farmers.⁵⁶ In particular, reformers suggested that fences should be cleared away from the house, and barriers that must remain should be shorter than average and kept in good repair. Several varieties of trees should be planted in the yard, especially, apple, chestnut, butternut, and walnut. In addition, lawns should be large and well kept, with a few small flower beds dotting the perimeter next to the residence.⁵⁷

Several reasons were cited by experts for these aspects of rural beautification. First, the project had practical purposes. Aspects of beautification, such as planting evergreens alongside the house, were said not only to look

nice but also to act as a windbreak for the dwelling.⁵⁸ It was believed that trees increased the amount of rainfall, and reduced the effects of wind and the rate of evaporation, all beneficial for crop production. Trees could also provide shade for people and livestock, remove the feeling of isolation from the farm by surrounding it with lush foliage, and give fruit, nuts, or sap, depending on the type of tree.⁵⁹ Additionally, trees could be used for fuel and fencing needs.⁶⁰ Overall, the journals pointed out, beautification would also increase the commercial value of the farm.⁶¹ Less tangibly, beautification promised to make farming harmonious and happy, giving rural families "beautiful thoughts, and beautiful habits, and beautiful lives."⁶² The improvement of appearances would make farming a more respectable and honorable occupation.⁶³

During the 1890s agricultural journals continued to insist that beautifying agrarian homes would help to stem the tide of migration from the farm.⁶⁴ In fact, if the offspring developed an interest in the beautification of their own homes, then the chance of their abandoning the farm was thought to be diminished. To this end, it was suggested that each child be given a tree or two to nurture; by looking after the saplings the child would form an interest and an attachment to the farm at an early age.⁶⁵ While tree-planting continued to be considered especially important to the attractiveness of the home,⁶⁶

added domestic touches included a hedge of cedar around the lawn and a vine growing up the side of the house.⁶⁷

Crops too received increasing attention after 1890, as experts tried to persuade agriculturalists to exert increasing control over the various steps in the process of cultivation. At the request of farmers, the journals wrote about weeds, describing and sketching various types so that these nuisances could be identified and eradicated.⁶⁸ For the time being, hard labour was the recommended method for ridding the farm of weeds.⁶⁹ However, this soon changed.

Experts also emphasized the importance of fertilizers for improving crop yields and maintaining soil fertility. They condemned the traditional ill-treatment of the land as an unlimited resource, but disagreed over whether natural or artificial fertilizers should best be utilized. Before 1900, farmers were both sceptical about the benefits of artificial fertilizer and repelled by the cost; if they fertilized at all they utilized stock manure.⁷⁰

Insect pests, especially flies and weevils, posed an additional problem. Experts instructed farmers on the dangers of these pests and urged their extermination.⁷¹ More traditional methods included sponging walnut leaves and water on animals to reduce flies on livestock. Another method to reduce flies around the house was to use sugar to attract flies near live toads kept by the door.⁷²

The 1890s also witnessed technological debates about

the importance of harnessing wind power, and improving horse-drawn implements with steel replacement parts.⁷³ New machinery was in turn accompanied by changing attitudes to farm buildings needed to house it. During the 1890s the emphasis was on creating one large barn with adequate space, such as a loft or silo, to store feed for the stock. While wood remained preferable for construction, cement was starting to be considered as an option.⁷⁴ With the new emphasis on efficiency and saving labour,⁷⁵ the introduction of large barns signified the modernization of the rural environment and, with it, fundamental changes in agriculture.

By the end of the 19th century, experts writing in the agricultural journals were urging the modernization of the countryside, reflecting a growing relationship between agricultural and non-agricultural sectors of the economy. Key aspects of urban life were introduced into rural areas, with agriculturalists and townspeople sharing an increasingly congruent set of experiences.⁷⁶ Urbanization could be witnessed in the growing number of conveniences introduced into farm homes at this time, including the flush toilet. These improvements, however, only magnified existing problems in the farm communities. Rural areas began to lose their self-sufficiency as they become increasingly dependent on urban centres for supplies, and dissatisfaction with a stagnant church and inadequate school

system grew apace.⁷⁷

Intensified industrialization in the cities also emphasized the impact of science in increasing efficiency and productivity in factories through new methods, new technology and scientific management.⁷⁸ R. Douglas Hurt, in his book American Farm Tools: From Hand-Power to Steam Power (1982) discusses the parallel agricultural transformations that occurred in the United States as farming changed from a subsistence lifestyle to a business. He argues that farmers in the United States modernized and adopted new technology if they believed it would increase efficiency and profits, save time, ease labour, expand production, or decrease costs.⁷⁹ By the end of the 19th century experts similarly tried to convince the Ontario farmers to adopt the latest scientific techniques for many of the same reasons.

The promotion of scientific ideas and methods focused on the maximization of output and profit. For example, chemical sprays for crops and the elimination of weeds increased harvests and in turn gave farmers better seed for the following year. They also increased efficiency by saving farmers time and labour.⁸⁰ The experts emphasized further increased efficiency and productivity through time management, 'management in feeding', and 'stock management'.⁸¹ Farming was becoming a business, out to make agriculture a profitable enterprise.⁸²

Depopulation continued to be considered one of the largest problems facing the rural society. Agricultural journals cited a variety of reasons for the exodus from the agricultural communities and promoted a variety of solutions to depopulation. The government and the journals urged the urbanization of the farming areas and fostered a growing relationship between urban and rural sectors.

As the reformers' own attitudes toward nature and the city changed during this period, their notions regarding the countryside also evolved. Increasingly they advocated the management or control of nature. In short, the experts were trying to reform the countryside and its inhabitants by trying to convince them to accept their own middle-class values of efficiency and progress. This process intensified after the turn of the century, as urban experts continued to insist on the modernization of the countryside.

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CHAPTER III

MODERNIZING THE COUNTRYSIDE, 1900-1914

As the new century dawned, the relationship between science, urbanization, and industrialization became increasingly prevalent in the agricultural journals. The urban reformers stepped up their campaign to modernize agriculture.

Helen Abell, in "The Social Consequences of the Modernization of Agriculture" (1966) divides the forces behind farm modernization into four groups: government; business; successful examples in other countries; and the growing integration of agriculture and non-agricultural aspects of the economy.¹ The most prevalent in Canadian agricultural journals was the growth between the agricultural and non-agricultural economic sectors. Farm journals provided reformers with a vehicle to foster this lucrative relationship between two segments of society. For instance, in 1902 an article discussed the importance of science for agriculture and the necessity of practical but scientific knowledge for farming. Agriculturalists were told that to improve their farms, they needed to adopt the advancements and inventions fostered by science. "The Farmer and Science" (1902) summed up these notions best when it stated that "The farmer is beginning to know more about his farm, and to see that the scientist is his best friend... Agriculture cannot afford to be deprived of the

assistance to be gained from her powerful 'handmaid' science... and that science is only man's effort to accumulate and arrange those facts which explain nature's laws."²

The Ontario Agricultural College (OAC) also joined in supporting the modernization of farming. Many of the journals' experts or other members of the agrarian press were trained at the OAC, which has been called "the great national propaganda mill of the country life ideology."³ By this time, the OAC considered itself to be the principal custodian of the social reformers' vision for rural life, as disintegrating conditions threatened the Anglo-Saxon "race" in a strong Canadian nation.⁴ Agriculture was still considered a key driving force behind national progress, at least by agricultural reformers centred at the OAC. The OAC lamented that the majority of Ontario farmers were not even close to its own agricultural ideal.⁵ Farmers were expected to apply scientific methods to become efficient producers.⁶ Therefore, the College renewed its attack on superstition and the trial-and-error approach of the farmer to his craft. As the OAC intellectuals became increasingly professional, the school expanded its focus on regulated experiments and on the application of science to agriculture.⁷

Prevalent themes discussed in farm journals after the turn of the century embraced beautification, conservation

and productivity with increasing intensity. By this time, farmers also began to respond.

After 1900 farm journals continued to bombard readers with suggestions for rural beautification. Early proposals did not expand much beyond planting trees, fixing fences, manicuring lawns, and removing garbage from near the house.⁸ Trees, it was pointed out, should not be placed too close to the house because they block the light, and good drainage should be provided before constructing the home or seeding the lawn.⁹

From 1907, however, additional topics, such as painting, joined these discussions of beautification. Decorating the exterior of the home preserved wood surfaces and made the house look neat and clean.¹⁰ Painting also ensured that farm offspring developed habits of neatness, politeness, thrift, quick thinking, and strong moral values.¹¹

Writers continued to emphasize beautification as a remedy for depopulation, therefore an important reason for farmers to engage in beautifying the countryside.¹² But it too became more of a creative process. Vines, trees, and flowers were suggested to frame the lawn as though the latter were a lake.¹³ Hardy varieties of plants and trees would avoid the need for frequent replanting.¹⁴ Nature even offered a guide to farmers in selecting colours. Houses were to be painted or stained in tones of grey, dull

reds, deep yellows, browns, whites, or dark greens. White was thought to be most suitable for the farmhouse because it highlighted shrubs and vines that grew next to the residence.¹⁵

At this point farmers began to indicate that they were receptive to ideas found in the agricultural magazines. The attractions of plants and flowers were discussed by farm women and children, who agreed that flowers around the farm were important,¹⁶ and that the beautification of the countryside was essential.¹⁷

Annette Kolodny has argued that men and women have different ideas regarding nature. She contends that women are less willing than men to accept the debasement of nature into an object of wealth; instead, they admire its beauty. In short, women were more apt to beautify their surroundings through flower gardens. These activities also provided women with a connection to each other, as they shared cuttings, seeds and gardening ideas. Kolodny concluded that the garden was women's personal stamp on a landscape that was otherwise controlled by men.¹⁸ This might explain why so many of the articles on plants and flowers were written by and for women and children, and why many of the suggestions focused on the house and the surrounding yard. These two areas were the women's domain during this period, helping to keep women interested in the farm.

Articles on gardening also emphasized the application

of science, in order to maximize growth through the selection of good seeds and the provision of the proper environment.¹⁹ "Study Plant Life," written by the editor of Canadian Farm in 1911, called for a botanical text that was not written in scientific jargon, so that farmers could gain an even greater understanding of plant life and growth.²⁰ Furthermore, a writer urged, the "advance of science means that he [a plant] will be...safe from the many pests and diseases of the farm".²¹

The main landscaping concept presented by the magazines emphasized that farm essentials could be attractive, and that beautification was meant to highlight nature. For instance, in order to make the wood pile in the back yard "beautiful", farmers could plant vines around it.²² This practical emphasis was deliberately contrasted with the urban fad of cluttering front lawns with useless iron deer ornaments.²³

Meanwhile, beautification designs continued to increase in complexity. The main idea was that the entire yard should resemble a picture when planting and painting were finished. It should be landscaped so that every part of the grounds suited all other aspects of the area, while featuring the house.²⁴ The house and its surroundings were envisioned as a whole, as agriculturalists were urged to consider the overall effects of changing even one aspect.²⁵ This trend continued until simple beautification was

transformed into formal landscaping.

It is interesting to note that farmers were still being urged to build round barns. In addition to being more efficient, they were believed to be more aesthetically pleasing than multiple small sheds or large square or rectangular barns.²⁶ Round barns were viewed as attractive, unique buildings "of interest to all passerbys [sic] and pleasing to the eyes of himself [the owner] and his neighbors."²⁷

By 1919 the transition was complete. Making the area surrounding the house attractive required that the overall architecture of the home be taken into consideration.²⁸ Where buildings that dotted the countryside marred the natural beauty of the land, farmers were now coaxed to plant trees, shrubs, and flowers as a way of showing love for Mother Nature and the rural environment.²⁹

Plans for rural beautification were also part of the attempt to harness nature, and to control the aesthetic quality of the farm. Rural beautification could thus also be viewed as the landscape management of the homestead.³⁰

Yet another theme was conservation, including forestry and wildlife. In 1904 a forest nursery was established at the Ontario Agricultural College; the following year a Department of Forestry was also created at the College, which offered lectures in forest management.³¹ The provincial government formulated a strategy to rebuild the

rural landscape through reforestation, and in 1909 trees were provided by the Ontario government for planting on farms and along highways.³² Agricultural professionals believed that problems caused by deforestation, such as erosion, could be remedied by replanting farms that required windbreaks and woodlots.³³ However, agriculturalists remained unconvinced that replanting would benefit them in their lifetime,³⁴ and planted seedlings only in selected spots near the house and barn, and where the soil was poor and drifting.³⁵

The magazines depicted trees increasingly as something to be looked after, and they were concerned about damages caused by cattle and logging on farms.³⁶ In addition to demonstrating a concern for existing trees, they also suggested the reforestation of poorer farm land and the introduction of woodlots to areas where trees had previously been removed.³⁷ The journals encouraged agriculturalists to demonstrate a greater interest in their orchards, and they outlined successful tree planting methods.³⁸ The interest in trees is best explained by G.C.T. Ward's claim in 1911 that experimental farms and reports by government were beneficial, and that farmers should be putting this knowledge to 'practical use' by improving their land.³⁹ By 1914 a concern also arose over the damage to trees caused by wire fencing that interfered with tree growth.⁴⁰

Wildlife discussions rounded out the theme of

conservation. In 1911 animal stories and articles began to appear in the journals. These excerpts can be classified in three categories. The first group described wildlife and animal habits.⁴¹ The second category attributed human characteristics to the animals in stories.⁴² In both of these categories, the pieces were written either by or for young farm children.⁴³ Lisa Mighetto discusses this sympathy for the natural world and its preservation that was found in American literature during this same period.⁴⁴ She shows that animal stories generated a popular interest in nature and rallied public support for conservation, questioning the role of humankind in the natural world.⁴⁵ The third category demanded the preservation of the animals under discussion.⁴⁶ These articles were written mostly by the editors themselves. They dealt entirely with birds and stressed their beauty as well as their importance because they destroyed insect pests and because of the 'scientific worth' gained through knowledge of their habits.⁴⁷

Finally, agricultural journals emphasized the theme of productivity. Topics that reflected this theme included livestock, crop production, barns and machinery. The first topic was domesticated mammals, with articles appearing in 1905. Since there were numerous types of livestock that farmers could raise, cows have been selected here to investigate urban attitudes because they were discussed most often in the journals. The earliest articles discussed

different types of cows, such as Holstein. In the past, bovines were harshly treated and expensive breeds were not purchased.⁴⁸ These articles debated the proper treatment of livestock, with the use of kindness, affection, grooming, and proper feed. Good treatment was considered essential for increasing milk production from dairy cows.⁴⁹ In 1909 it was suggested that, in order to get boys to develop an interest in the rural world, they should be given a calf or a foal to raise and sell, a responsibility which would in turn both attach them to their work and give them spending money. As sons matured they should receive a greater share of the farm's capital and become at least partners in the management of the stock.⁵⁰

After 1910 the majority of the livestock literature expressed concerns for better breeding and factors that affected the quality of the stock. John MacDougall, a rural Ontario Presbyterian minister, in Rural Life In Canada: Its Trends and Tasks (1913) discussed the monetary losses to the farmers due to inferior stock.⁵¹ With the concern for continual improvement of the stock also came the suggestion that such important possessions should be insured, as they were a large capital investment. While it was first suggested that kindness toward animals would increase production, in a few short years the main method for advancing productivity became selective breeding. Once again, this change represented a desire to control nature in

order to increase profit.⁵²

Yet not all creatures on the farm were praised for their usefulness or beauty. Thomas R. Dunlap's book, Saving America's Wildlife (1988), outlines the changing attitudes of Americans toward predators, especially the wolf and the coyote; these animals were despised and exterminated accordingly until the mid-1900s.⁵³ Although agricultural journals did not mention these particular animals they did cite other pests that required extermination, including flies, rats, gophers, and birds.⁵⁴ A concern arose to control flies that bothered the livestock. Farmers were urged to utilize external methods, such as sprays, to exterminate such pests. By ridding the livestock, especially milking cows, of flies, farmers could increase production and therefore profitability.⁵⁵ The same was true for insects injurious to crops.⁵⁶ Generally speaking, birds were also considered to be destructive and writers called for the "destruction of this pest... [by raiding]... their roosts, destroying both birds and nest. This treatment, combined with free use of the gun, would rid any locality of these birds."⁵⁷

In calling for either preservation or extermination the experts were trying to control or manage the natural world of the farm. In both cases science played a role in the rationale for preservation or extermination, of animals or of particular characteristics.⁵⁸

Peter Bowler postulates that the tenets of Christianity were responsible for humankind's advocacy of the extermination or preservation of various species. He explains the general belief in a stable balance of nature. Since God made plants and animals for humans, we thus could multiply the species we desired and eradicate the ones we disliked.⁵⁹ In this view, humans were superior to nature, and could therefore utilize plants and animals for their own purposes. Science and technology grew out of these attitudes toward nature, and thus reinforced these notions of controlling the environment.⁶⁰

Agricultural magazines also focused increasingly on crop production. Weeds, for example were discussed in several categories. After 1906, articles described the various types of weeds and contained sketches to identify these plants. They provided agriculturalists with specialized information on weeds.⁶¹ After 1909, discussions included crop rotation and chemical sprays as suggestions for weed control.⁶² After 1911 the articles reminded farmers to keep up the fight against pests responsible for major financial losses.⁶³ The change to chemical sprays demonstrates the desire to harness nature by direct intervention, with science providing the proper method.

Closely associated with this topic was the literature on fertilizers in the agricultural magazines from 1907,

accompanied by general articles on the importance of soil fertility. The consensus at that time was to 'feed your land, and it will feed you'.⁶⁴ By 1909, the farmer was urged to become familiar with the types of fertilizer and to "do some experimental work in his own fields."⁶⁵

By 1911 experts highlighted the role of science in analyzing the soil of individual farms. Readers were urged to have their soil analyzed in order to plant the best crops for the highest yield, instead of 'working in the dark'. The later literature debated various systems of rotation based on the nutrients that crops required and returned to the soil. Similar to the discussions of chemical fertilizers, these later articles focused on the importance of phosphates and nitrates to the soil. They became increasingly technical, including reports on the latest findings of the experimental farms.⁶⁶

Related discussions of land drainage⁶⁷ support Kenneth Kelly's conclusions that while agriculturalists discussed the idea of drainage they would not adopt the recommended system until they had assurances from other farmers that drainage increased productivity and profit. However, Kelly's further claim that after 1900 drainage became popular was not substantiated in the journals consulted for this study.⁶⁸

Experts furthermore reprimanded farmers for buying and planting cheap seed. They told farmers that they needed to

spend more money on seed in order to gain quality, and thus a higher yield. Accompanying this advice, the writers also discussed the results of seed-testing and experimental growth plots on the experimental farms.⁶⁹

The underlying message of all of these articles on crop growth and cultivation was to convey the latest information to farmers. They also demonstrated that the earth needed to be cared for and respected in order to maximize output and, therefore, increase profit. In order to maximize yields the farmers had to take control of crops and weeds. As time progressed, the writers grew more concerned with maximizing production, increasing pressure on farmers to gain control by accepting the findings of scientific investigations.

John MacDougall in Rural Life in Canada (1913) discussed the results of the Lands Committee of the Conservation Commission from 1911.⁷⁰ Its survey discovered that, of 800 farms from the Maritimes, Quebec, and Ontario, only 25% utilized crop rotation. In Ontario apparently very few farmers surveyed even knew what the term meant. In addition, the survey discovered that farmers did not practise seed selection. Like the agricultural magazines, MacDougall also discussed the benefits and profits that could be made through rotation, seed selection, and the control of weeds.⁷¹ He stressed that maintenance of the soil was very important, and that fertility could be ensured by maintaining the proper levels of humus, nitrogen, potash,

phosphorus and bacteria in the soil. Improvement in agriculture depended on proper fertility, irrigation and drainage. MacDougall also reiterated that the primary reason behind the continued rural exodus was soil infertility.⁷² His main hope was that "Conservation of soils from erosion, conservation of the fertility of soils and of the means of enrichment of soils, ... The work of the wizards of agriculture in the development of grains, grasses, roots and fruits, shall go on until every vegetable product shall exceed present standards."⁷³

After 1910 the push for modernization in agriculture required a reorganization of the farm which resulted in the replacement of small buildings by one large structure to house all the livestock, harvests, and machinery.⁷⁴ Emphasis was placed on the organization of space and the management of duties. The transition to one barn was the result of the rise in mixed farming, and the expansion of the implement industry in Ontario, which provided greater accessibility to farm equipment. Therefore, farmers needed more space to store the implements.⁷⁵

By 1911 concrete was considered the superior material for building⁷⁶ as concern arose about the economic virtues of farm outbuildings and their sturdiness. The transition from many sheds to one large, multipurpose barn exemplified the belief that a large, strong structure was more economical than a multitude of little shacks because the

barn had many purposes and was an enduring form.⁷⁷

The emphasis on one large building brought other concerns, such as the need for proper ventilation, to the surface. Articles on ventilation were usually written to provide information on air circulation in barns. This interest in ventilation resulted from the discovery that stale air contributed to disease and animal sickness.⁷⁸ It was a popular belief that fresh air would keep livestock healthy and that sunlight would kill bacteria.⁷⁹ Ontarians were especially concerned with the sanitation of dairy barns, the quality of milk, and the contamination of milk products due to bacterial culture and germs in barns.⁸⁰ The ideal was that the typical dairy barn should have good lighting and ventilation, stable temperature, and ease of manure removal; it should be sanitary, convenient and efficient.⁸¹ Dairy cattle should be housed in such excellent conditions in order for the animals to produce to their maximum.⁸²

The concerns for proper ventilation and sanitation in barns reflected the urban concern with public health and disease. During this same time urban reformers also advocated proper ventilation and sanitation in public schools in an attempt to fight infectious diseases. This advocacy of preventative health care grew from the study of bacteriology.⁸³

In 1905 the emphasis turned increasingly to the

maximization of profits in crops and livestock production. Farm modernization in Canada occurred with the help of inventions and businesses from the United States and Europe.⁸⁴ The main business that promoted farm modernization was the implement industry. The implement industry was continuously introducing new technology and greater labour-saving machines. Since the agricultural literature encouraged farmers to adopt different methods to achieve that goal, power and machinery on the farm changed to meet the demands of increased yields and greater numbers of stock. Discussions turned to the benefits of water power and the hydraulic ram, and the introduction and benefits of the milking machine.⁸⁵ These improvements were considered the result of the "development of scientific farming...as the farmer has wisely demanded the best of labor-saving machinery."⁸⁶

The trend toward mechanization continued with the development of gasoline engines and tractor power to replace the horse after 1910. Experts extolled the importance of labour-saving machinery such as the tractor and the self-binder.⁸⁷ With the binder that was introduced in 1883 one man could cut and bind 10 acres a day⁸⁸ but by 1910 the same farmer could cut and bind 40 acres with the self-binder.⁸⁹ After 1910 agricultural journals were flooded with advertisements of such 'new' and 'improved' machinery. These advertisements emphasized efficiency, and savings in

time and labour.⁹⁰ Mechanization and the opportunity for the agriculturalist to purchase the latest innovation resulted in great changes to farming.

Information provided by other countries also affected farm modernization. Ontario consciously adopted American farming ideas and institutions. The harvester industry is an example of such influence, as Canadian firms built American machines. In fact, Ontario farmers harvested their crops with Canadian-made but American-designed implements. Ontario manufacturers bought the parts from the United States, paid American royalties for their patents, and helped establish American branch plants within Canada.⁹¹

Another modernizing force in farm productivity was the government. Since 1880 the government co-ordinated promotional and regulatory services for the eradication of crop and animal pests. Policies for crop and stock improvement were implemented, inspection and grading of produce began, and registration of eradication methods and chemicals enforced. The federal government also started a variety of assistance programs such as soil and water conservation, rural development, crop and income insurance and credit.⁹² The government was a large driving force behind scientific research and the induction of science and technology into agriculture. As a result, it encouraged the control of nature through science and technology by urging the agriculturalists to implement the latest innovations.⁹³

As John MacDougall recognized in 1913, the modernization of agriculture occurred by utilizing "scientific methods of production."⁹⁴ He saw that modernization could be attained by adopting ideas from urban industry. MacDougall claimed that "The efficiency of agriculture calls for organization and specialization corresponding to those which have made modern industry productive."⁹⁵ He also stated that "The problem of the farm, from the standpoint of agriculture ...is simply this: how to apply all the elements of modern efficiency as wrought out in the industrial world as a whole through invention and organization ...throughout its whole extent."⁹⁶ MacDougall called for the adoption of scientific farming as a 'cure' for rural ills including the population exodus.⁹⁷ The idea of modernizing agriculture came before the technology. The application of science to agriculture was evident in the technology that appeared on farms.⁹⁸

In looking at the larger picture for Ontario at this period a dramatic increase in industrialization in the urban centres can be witnessed. The rise in industrialization also emphasized the input of science in increasing efficiency and productivity in factories through new methods, new technology and scientific management.⁹⁹ Agriculturalists were urged to adopt those aspects of

industrialization that were practical and useful for the farm. The adoption of the scientific ideas focused on maximizing output and profit, as well as on leisure time.¹⁰⁰ From the 1880s the agricultural economy became increasingly transformed into a corporate one based on the increasing concentration of industry and finance in agriculture.¹⁰¹ This conclusion is supported by Anthony M. Fuller in Farming and the Rural Community in Ontario: An Introduction (1985) in which he states that the progress in implements and machinery changed farming into a technological and capital-intensive industry.¹⁰²

The adoption of ideas and new technology demonstrates the influence of urbanization on the farm community. Adopting labour- and time-saving ideas and attempting to increase profit could have been seen as ways to decrease the rural exodus as many of the younger agriculturalists were venturing into the cities for factory jobs because they wanted more leisure time and to earn more money.¹⁰³ It was also thought that providing the younger generation with a solid and well-rounded education (that included aspects of agriculture) would decrease the rural exodus. An education would allow the men to read farm journals and to understand the latest scientific farming techniques.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, children were to be encouraged to enjoy farm life and to see the beauty of the land that they took for granted.¹⁰⁵ However, the adoption of labour- and time-saving methods and

machinery decreased the number of labourers needed on the farm. The result was a further contributing factor to rural depopulation, instead of a solution.

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CONCLUSION

Agricultural journals after 1880 increasingly urged farmers to adopt the newest scientific approaches to their work. Yet despite all the encouragement farmers received to apply science and the latest technology to agriculture, farmers were stubbornly selective in what they adopted. In the areas where farmers' attitudes can be measured, it seems that they were reluctant to adopt the latest idea or innovation forwarded by the magazine writers and funded by the government. For instance, farmers were slow to believe that planting trees was beneficial for the farm, but they did eventually plant saplings in places where the soil drifted, and around the house. Farmers were also slow to adopt the various measures to ensure soil fertility.

One reason for their selectiveness was a general trend of conservatism throughout the province during the period from 1880 to 1914. New ideas were not adopted by the agriculturalists because they were so radically different from previous conceptions. The mindset of the rural inhabitants was demonstrated by one farmer who claimed in 1914 that "Most of us are conservative and inclined to believe that what always has been must be good or it would not be so common."¹ Farmers disliked outside interference from the government and scientists. Agriculturalists considered the 'real' experts in farming to be successful farmers.² Many farmers disdained 'book' farming and

followed the methods of their fathers. 'Book' farming was eventually adopted to some extent, but it was a slow process that took generations.³

Although farmers wanted scientific methods and machinery that were economical, practical and labour-saving, they hesitated to purchase or try the latest innovations because they were suspicious of fads that had not proven to be useful.⁴ They purchased machinery when they were convinced that it was a good investment, or tried a new idea when other farmers verified its value. For example, land drainage was discussed in the journals but it was not adopted until farmers had assurances from other agriculturalists that it was a worthwhile venture. This hesitancy could be due to the instability of the wheat market in the late 1880s and 1890s, as the dominant market moved from the United States overseas to Britain and elsewhere. During this time many farmers mortgaged their homesteads in order to purchase machinery. Owing to the fluctuation of the wheat market, many lost their farms.⁵ Selective adoption can be construed as farmers' attempts to control their own lives and their fate. The latest scientific innovations were expensive and selective adoption could reflect the lack of capital for investment. Agriculturalists were slowly improving their lifestyle and were interested in showing a profit, but they did not want to risk losing what they had gained. While experts were

promoting the ideal vision, conservatism was reality.⁶

It seems that there were many things going on in the urban and rural environments from 1880 to 1914. The cities were growing at a rapid rate as the population and industrialization increased in the urban centres. Simultaneously, the living conditions for the labouring class worsened. During this period the upper class fled the cities on vacations that brought them into direct contact with nature. The upper class demonstrated a growing appreciation for the wilderness and advocated the view that contact with nature was important for health and vitality. Such notions were increasingly adopted by the urban middle classes who started to venture into the wilderness, to seek regeneration and rejuvenation from the stress of urban life. As the middle classes recognized the importance of contact with nature and sought solace in the wilderness, they advocated the introduction of nature into the urban environment so that the working classes could benefit from such contact. In this way, they hoped to reform the working classes as upstanding and moral citizens.

From 1880 to 1914 the rural situation also underwent large changes. During this period the agricultural community suffered from depopulation. Over the period increasing numbers left the countryside for the urban centres. The reformers identified rural depopulation as a serious problem that needed an immediate solution. The

agricultural magazines were edited and authored mostly by members of the urban middle classes and thus expressed their views to the agricultural community. The journals reflected middle-class beliefs and acted as a vehicle for the middle classes to reach the farmers.⁷ The most prominent suggestion the reformers made in the agricultural journals was for the farmers to exert greater control over nature by increasing science and technology in farming.

Prior to 1880 farmers had believed that the forces of nature were largely beyond their control. They had very few farm implements to ease the hard manual labour.⁸ After 1880 the urban middle classes were attempting to reform the farm areas by trying to convince the agriculturalists to accept their ideas regarding country life. The urban reformers' agrarian idealism also tried to shape attitudes toward nature during this period.⁹ From 1880 to 1900 the urban "experts" tried to reform the countryside by urging farmers to harness nature as something to be explored and managed, and to utilize the latest scientific innovations toward this goal. They encouraged farmers to convert their farms into businesses. The emphasis during this period was on curbing the rural exodus by producing an environment in which farm children would want to remain as they grew older.

After the turn of the century the discussions by the experts centred on three main themes: beautification, conservation, and productivity, as they attempted to

modernize agriculture. These themes also characterized reform movements in the cities during this time. Urban reformers advocated beautification in the City Beautiful movement and the creation of urban parks. They sought the conservation of natural resources as they rallied to create provincial parks.

The concept of productivity was also important in urban centres. The principles of efficiency, increased production and profit reflected the ideology of scientific management that was coming to the fore in industry during this time. Experts on both scientific findings and new technologies encouraged farmers to adopt ideas that would enable them to exercise more control over nature. They continually urged agriculturalists to adopt scientific farming techniques, and to harness nature, especially in areas that could increase farm profits. The struggle to dominate the natural world was based on a capitalist rationale for maximizing efficiency and productivity in order to maximize profit. The latter emphasis was changing agriculture from a subsistence lifestyle into a business that made a profit.

The urban middle classes were trying to influence others to accept their values, and consequently to create a province that reflected these values overall. They believed that having others accept their values and adopt their suggestions would lead to a stronger, united country. The middle classes were trying to improve the nation through the

reform movement and by building a strong and scientifically advanced agricultural foundation. They believed that agricultural progress was the key to Canadian development¹⁰ as they worked to build a strong Canada that possessed the values of a white, Anglo-Saxon race.¹¹

The actual influence of the agricultural magazines and articles on the rural population will never be known. However, the writers did play a large role in fostering a growing relationship between the urban and rural sectors of society, which in turn increased modernization of the rural environment.

The agriculturalists were told to adopt scientific and urban ideas in an attempt to minimize the rural exodus. The city dwellers were also unsatisfied with their lives and were trying to escape the ills of urban society, the very place to which the rural inhabitants were moving. The country was adopting aspects of the urban areas and the city dwellers were expressing an increasing appreciation for nature. This notion is reminiscent of the relationship between city and hinterland, and of the dynamic interaction between them. Commodities and resources flow from the hinterland to the cities, the urban centres' growth in turn affects the hinterland. The flow of goods from the city to the country makes the latter reliant on manufactured goods, markets, and ideas and the result is rural exodus. While neither the country nor the city can survive independently,

the city cannot allow the country to stagnate.¹²

NOTES TO CONCLUSION

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