

# ELECTRIC ROADS INTO FARM DISTRICTS NEEDED

Soil of Territory Surrounding This City Declared to Be All That Can Be Desired for Raising Crops of All Kinds—Important Facts Developed at Meeting of Business Men and Agriculturists. Freight Question Must Be Solved and Honest Market Provided.

That the territory immediately surrounding Duluth has vast possibilities as an agricultural, fruit raising, dairying and stock raising country which will be of infinite importance in determining the future of the city, was demonstrated last evening at an informal meeting at the Commercial club of a number of leading business men and agriculturists who have interested themselves in this question.

To develop this section it was shown that an electric line which will enable the farmers to bring their produce to market at a reasonable cost must be extended to the many small towns tributary to Duluth; that good roads must be secured; that the best of cattle must be purchased; that an honest market must be provided; and that educated farmers raised in a farming country must be employed from the start.

## Land the Very Best.

All were unanimous in expressing the opinion that the land is the best in the northwest or the United States for the purposes mentioned. It is fertile, with a high productive percentage; it may be secured in large quantities at a reasonable cost; and the summer is long enough for all practical purposes. Nearly all of those who were present are men who have made a careful study of the conditions from a business standpoint.

If Duluth is to take a front rank among the coming great American cities the general view was that it is

absolutely essential that the surrounding country be built up by these diversified farming interests. Statements were made to the effect that several large manufacturing concerns, with their plans all but completed, had not been established here because of the high cost of living, which can only be remedied by a large agricultural and dairying settlement in the near vicinity.

## Cost Is Reasonable.

Much of this land can be cleared at a reasonable cost. It was said, ranging from \$7 to \$25 an acre. The most economical method of doing this was found to be either by the use of a steam stump-pulling machine or by dynamite. When cleared it can be put to hay without plowing and a substantial revenue derived, as it is a well known fact that the price of hay varies from \$10 to \$20 a ton and has a ready market.

Once the ground is tilled it can be truck farmed. Several gave it as their experience that straight farming can be done to advantage. The opinions on cattle raising varied, some having found it unprofitable, while others had met with fair success. In the majority of instances those who had tried dairying stated that it is profitable, provided a ready market is at hand. Considerable surprise resulted when one of those present said that the same fruits that are raised within a radius of 20 or 40 miles of the Twin

# ELECTRIC ROADS FOR THE FARMERS

They Must Be Built, Business Men  
Say, If Duluth Is to  
Grow.

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Cities can be raised as well around Duluth.

## Rail Rates Too High.

The chief obstacle at present is the transportation facilities and the exorbitant rates that are charged by the railroads. It takes three or four days to get goods to Duluth after they are put on the cars, which frequently means a total loss in the case of perishable goods.

The great necessity, and what will be made one of the chief aims of the men who were present at last evening's meeting will be to secure passenger and freight electric lines running into the surrounding country. Considerable doubt existed as to whether this can be done under the existing laws, and if this is found to be true a determined effort will be put forth to have legislation to this end enacted this winter.

G. G. Hartley, who acted as chairman, appointed a committee of three, consisting of Luther Mendenhall, W. B. Silvey and Edward Hazen, to investigate the conditions. If it is found that the existing laws prevent such electric lines they are requested to draw a bill embodying the necessary provisions and put it in the hands of the legislators from this district.

Another objection which was put forward is that there is not a ready market here for crops that are now produced, with discourages the farmer and causes him to turn his attention to other lines, and frequently drives him to other fields. The commission men were censured for this state of affairs, and it was said that the best remedy is for the farmers to supply their own market, which could readily be accomplished if they had electric lines for transportation and a large market house at their terminus.

Much stress was laid upon the necessity for good roads. Upon them, to a great extent, also depends the development of the entire northern country. With this matter was allied the drainage question, one of necessity going hand and hand with the other. Luther B. Arnold gave it as his opinion that a great deal ought to be accomplished in St. Louis county next year with the appropriation, \$25,000, that has been allowed.

## The Cost of Roads.

He gave an example of a road he had supervised which had been constructed at considerably less than \$1,000 a mile, adding that the Good Roads association of the county is preparing to see that as much benefit as possible is derived from the funds available. He suggested there should be a county road commission and that a capable civil engineer whose tenure of office should not be dependent upon politics, be appointed as superintendent of roads. He added that the Good Roads association intends to conduct its campaign along organized lines.

That dairying can be made profitable was demonstrated by C. P. Craig, who said that to begin with land can be cleared for practical purposes as low as \$7 per acre. "But we must foster and put in creameries," he continued. "Five cows are good for \$1.25 a day net. In Jefferson county, Wisconsin, 36 creameries pay \$2,000,000 annually to the farmers, and receive in return for their products \$3,000,000. That county is only 24 miles square and does not produce as good clover as we do."

## Must Have Good Cattle.

It was also shown that the best cattle on the market must be purchased if the highest success is to be attained, and that competent and educated help must be procured. The example set to the others who, come later would be of much value in influencing them to a similar course.

The ground was well covered by G. G. Hartley in his opening remarks. He said in part:

"No country can be considered truly great that must depend for its supplies upon other nations. The same is true of cities, which cannot become large commercial or industrial centers if they must be dependent upon distant localities for their food products.

"We have come together this evening for the purpose of exchanging ideas with a view to remedying this situation as regards Duluth. The trouble is that there are too many so-called farmers who go upon their land for a few years, eking out a bare existence without developing or clearing their holdings.

"The first important point to be considered this evening is whether the land will grow crops. A prejudice seems to exist against the crop raising possibilities of the land in this part of the country. It is a mistake. As soon as any part of the forest lands are cleared there immediately springs up an abundant growth of grass, and it is a fact that if the farmers of the Red River valley could raise natural grass

upon a quarter of their land it would double in value.

## Soil Is Productive.

"Therefore the first point has been determined, that crops and grass can be raised. And if the grass will grow other crops, such as wheat, rye, barley and other small grains can also be raised.

"The next thing is to clear the land, and with the value that is now attached to the inferior timber much of this expense is reduced. Then we must have roads to reach the market. The railroads are charging high rates, but there is no traffic given them by the farmers and no pressure to secure a reduction has been brought to bear. The rates could be reduced if good roads were built and electric lines run into the neighboring country.

## Is Poorly Equipped.

"No other city in the United States of the size of Duluth is so poorly equipped in the way of electrical transportation. Now that the water power has been almost completed we will be able to get reduced rates. If these lines are once established it will materially lessen the cost of living and at the same time put the farmer in a position where he will be able to make a profit. It may be necessary to get new legislation to make it possible to construct these lines, and if such is the case I think it can be done."

Mr. Hartley then suggested that it would be an excellent idea if a place were provided where samples of the many things that can be raised near Duluth could be exhibited. He spoke of the plan which is followed in the west, saying that there is scarcely a town between Portland and San Francisco where this is not done to good advantage.

John G. Williams, who with Mr. Hartley, invited the gentlemen for the purpose of discussing the matter, spoke somewhat along the same lines. He said that there is as good farming land about Duluth as can be found any place in the United States, either for truck farming, dairying or stock raising. He corrected an impression that is quite prevalent that the land on the ridges is better than that in the low lands and explained that it is all the same land, the only difference being in the drainage. He seconded the remarks of Mr. Hartley relative to the necessity of providing transportation facilities to enable the farmers to reach the markets.

A. C. Jones explained the method that he had pursued in clearing and draining his land, and said that he has put the larger part of it in hay, which he found to pay.

## Complaints of the Market.

H. S. Lord, of Barnum, complained that Duluth does not afford the farmers an honest market, saying that it is impossible for them to ship their goods there because they cannot secure fair treatment from the commission men. He also stated that the freight rates are so high that they knock out any possible profit. Mr. Lord went on to say that he has engaged in raising small fruits to advantage and that the country around this city affords excellent opportunities for this line of agriculture.

W. B. Silvey emphasized the necessity of securing manufacturing plants for the head of the lakes. S. F. Silvey said that only educated farmers should be employed, adding that the county at large must show the people what the country can do. John Sebenius urged producing the best stock that the market affords, saying that in that way only can dairying be made a success. Samuel Loeb told of his experience in clearing his land, which he had used for raising hay. He predicted that next year, despite the fact that he started work on the land two years ago, it will produce a crop sufficient to pay interest on the investment.

John Jenswold found that it does not pay to raise hay for the market, and also that raising horses is a better investment than raising cattle. W. L. McKay said that his chief difficulty has been with the transportation facilities, but he had found dairying profitable. He added that he had raised fodder corn, although it is generally believed that this cannot be done in this part of the state.

Hiram R. Elliott expressed himself to the effect that no better market than Duluth can be found, and that at present it pays better to raise stock further west than Minnesota. He thought that truck farming would be a good investment.

W. A. Cant also said that the transportation facilities are inadequate and hit the commission men for the policy which they have been pursuing. Judge Windom told of poultry raising, saying that it can be made to pay if conducted with some other line.

## Luther Mendenhall's Opinion.

Luther Mendenhall spoke lengthily upon the possibilities of an electric system running into the country from Duluth, mentioning the development which would inevitably result. He said that living must be cheaper before Duluth can become a manufacturing center. He suggested a permanent organization to work toward that end, and Mr. Hartley appointed Edward Hazen, C. F. Craig and John U. Sebenius a committee of three to arrange for the next meeting and report as to the advisability of an organization. Messrs. Craig and Jenswold were appointed a committee to provide for auditing the accounts of the township officers on a petition from the taxpayers, the object being to prevent the waste of the township's funds and to see that the roads appropriations are not squandered.