

INTRODUCTION.

My first public utterance concerning the Everglades of Florida was an address delivered in Miami, Fla., Feb. 26, 1908. At this meeting I gave it as my opinion the Everglades would be drained, but the land would not be permanently settled without the introduction and growth of some staple crop of a high commercial value, and suggested rice and sugar cane as the crops that would most likely be found best suited to the climate and soil.

After having completed my investigation for the U. S. Department of Agriculture, in a report prepared by me June 25, 1909, I used the following language:

"It is believed by agriculturists and chemists who have studied the situation, and from evidence afforded by the demonstrations that have been made, that sugar cane can be grown successfully on these muck lands. The writer saw in numerous places, visited many patches of sugar cane, the stalks as large and heavy as those grown in Louisiana and thick enough on the ground to yield a big tonnage per acre.

"It requires much capital to grow and manufacture sugar cane profitably. Owners of small areas cannot engage successfully in this work unless modern central factories are provided, to convert the cane into sugar. Another serious drawback is harvesting the cane and transporting it to the factory. Owing to the soft condition of the ground this will have to be done by means of tram-roads and cars or canals and barges.

"If adequate facilities for handling the crop economically were provided, there seems to be but little doubt in the minds of those who have given the matter careful consideration that sugar cane is THE staple crop that can be grown safely and profitably in the Everglades.

"The amount of sugar produced in the United States has but little influence on the price, as we are compelled to import large quantities from other countries to supply our needs. At the present time the price of sugar is high enough to make the growing of cane a profitable business. In Louisiana the price of cane at the mill is about \$3.00 per ton, varying somewhat with the price of sugar.

"Although cane is an expensive crop to grow, a yield of thirty tons per acre, which is not at all uncommon, would show a profit much greater than can be secured from any field crop in the Mississippi Valley.

"There may be other staple field crops that can be grown successfully on these muck lands, but the fact has not yet been demonstrated. At the present time sugar cane seems to be the most promising crop that can be raised extensively on these lands. It is true that many other crops may be grown, but they are of a perishable nature, the demand for them is limited, and the cost of transportation so great that to undertake their production on a large scale does not seem warranted."

The object of this publication is to set forth my views somewhat at length, after a more thorough and systematic study of this subject. The facts stated in support of my arguments are all well authenticated, and the conclusions reached conservative and reasonable.

Tallahassee, Fla., Dec. 1, 1912.

J. O. WRIGHT.