



The Grain Growers' Guide

ADDRESSED TO THE FARMERS OF



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SASKATCHEWAN ELEVATOR SITUATION

In the evidence which has been heard by the elevator commission in Saskatchewan there seems to be a number of different schemes recommended by various witnesses. After reading over a summary of the evidence we see that the chief recommendations simmer down to three. There is first a scheme for public ownership of the internal elevators in the province with sample market facilities much similar to that advocated and urged upon their government by the Grain Growers of Manitoba; then there is some support in favor of a system of farmers' elevators assisted to a greater or less extent from the public treasury, and, thirdly, (and this scheme has been spoken of quite frequently) it is urged in some quarters that the government should appoint a commission which should not only have control of the public elevators but should also go into the grain business and take full charge of the farmers' grain from the time it leaves the separator until it is delivered to the ultimate consumer.

After a careful study of the three proposed systems it does not seem to us that the three are equally feasible, or if they were that they would be equally satisfactory in results to the producer. Any contemplated system of public storage which in its ultimate aim falls short of providing a system so satisfactory that it will sooner or later result in a practical monopoly, we think would not give the required relief to the farmers. Frankly, we confess that the first scheme above mentioned is the one which appeals to us as the most feasible. It is the general principle as laid down by the Grain Growers all over the West for some years back. Saskatchewan is a province containing a vast grain growing territory and the future will shortly see several hundred million bushels exported annually from that province. If the results of the enquiry now being made by the elevator commission shows the demands for public elevators to be general then the government would be justified in taking hold of the matter with the intention of placing elevators throughout the province under public control and under an independent commission. With a sample market which would probably be established in Winnipeg, Saskatchewan grain would then be sold in open competition. No doubt there would be some in favor of a sample market in Saskatchewan, but it is generally conceded that a centralized market affords more real competition. Millers

would not care to have expert buyers both at Winnipeg, and, say, at Moose Jaw, when the same work could be done at one point at a minimum of expense. A sample market at Winnipeg could not militate against a milling industry in Saskatchewan. In fact it would benefit it. A farmer ten miles from Moose Jaw would place his grain in the public elevator and a sample of it would be exposed on the sample market. The representative of the Moose Jaw miller would be able to pick from the entire grain shipments of the West and if he liked the sample near at home he could have the wheat sent to his mill at once without having it shipped east and then back again. This same system of a centralized market would obviate the necessity of the milling companies retaining their own internal elevators. If one expert in Winnipeg could buy all the necessary wheat for the mills, then the milling companies would not care to keep a large number of less capable buyers at their elevators. It would be poor business. One fully competent expert would perform for the milling company a much more valuable function than would a large staff of much less competent men. The milling companies would be glad to sell their elevators.

In Saskatchewan the Grain Growers' Association as yet has made no formal presentation of a case to the commission. But we understand that it is to be done before the commission reports. Judging from the action of the Saskatchewan Association in the past the executive will probably find that its members will be in support of the principles which we have outlined.

THE PROPER COURSE

At a regular meeting of the Empire branch of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association on June 7th the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

"That, we, the members of the Empire branch of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association, protest against the government holding a general election this summer, as it is in our interest as Grain Growers to see the system of government owned elevators put into operation before being called upon to cast our ballot."

This is a very commendable action on the part of this association, and it shows that they are not making any political question out of the elevator problem. We believe that they are asking what is only fair and right, that no election should be called until the elevator commission has been given an opportunity to provide elevators in Manitoba. We have voiced our sentiments upon this very clearly, and will leave it to our readers.

EASTERN OPINIONS ON ELEVATORS

The Daily Toronto World under the caption of "Government Ownership of Terminal Elevators" published the following editorial statement on June 4th:

"Fortunately for themselves the Western wheat farmers have early learned the value of acting together in defense of their common interests. More particularly in the case of the terminal elevator has co-operative action for the detection of wrongful methods, both directly and indirectly prejudicial to the pocket and credit of the Grain Growers been productive of good result. For some considerable time there has been grave reason to believe that the elevator companies have not been giving the farmers a square deal. As a result of the agitation and in consequence of information supplied by the inspection department of the federal department of trade and commerce, an official investigation was instituted by Mr. C. C. Castle, warehouse commissioner, and his report appears in full in last week's issue of THE GRAIN GROWERS' GUIDE.

"The immediate charge was that there were serious discrepancies in returns of terminal elevator companies' reports as compared with those of the inspection department covering the same periods. No satisfactory explanation was given by the companies except in the case of the C. P. R., who had their records carefully checked with those of the department. Only clerical errors were found, and the matter so far as the C. P. R. was concerned was dropped. The investigation, however, proceeded against the other three companies, and it warranted the laying of informations against them,

the police proceedings resulting in the infliction of fines, one of \$50, another of \$2500 and the third of \$3000. In substance the charges involved over-shipments of No. 1 grade, the inference being that mixing of grades had occurred, thus injuring the reputation of choice Canadian wheat in the Liverpool market.

"These revelations and the general dissatisfaction prevailing over private running of the terminal elevators have instigated a demand for their being taken over by the Dominion government and operated under a commission that will be free from political control. The World is entirely favorable to that contention, which is in line with the policy calling for public ownership and control of common utilities and the means of carrying out what are really national responsibilities. Experience all over this continent has shown that private parties cannot be trusted to give a square deal except under such a measure of supervision as amounts to in effect public operation. It is of national importance that the grading of wheat be thoroughly reliable, and that the grain exported be exactly what it is represented to be. In this connection it is significant that the elevator interests attempted to kill the movement for government ownership by securing the publication in the press, at advertising rates, of a series of letters signed "Observer," written to their order by a salaried press agent. This kind of thing has been done in Ontario by public service companies, but the people everywhere are getting wise to the trick. Manitoba has already provided for provincially-owned elevators, and the other wheat-growing provinces will do well to follow its example."

The Toronto World sees the disadvantage of private ownership and the need of the government taking action. The cause of Western farmers is gaining favor.

FAVOR MEETING LAURIER

The plan arranged for presenting the problems of the Western Grain Growers to Sir Wilfrid Laurier on his Western trip, is meeting with general favor. Suggestions are reaching us from all parts of the West that the directors in meeting Sir Wilfrid should be backed up by a strong delegation. This is certainly a good scheme, and if the directors of each province were supported by a delegation from other parts of the province it would lend strength to them in presenting their case to Sir Wilfrid. It is to be hoped that Sir Wilfrid will be able to give some definite reply to the demands of the Western farmers. Generally when a delegation meets a government the reply given to them is, that their recommendation will "receive careful consideration."

The Western farmers are not so anxious that Sir Wilfrid will give "careful" consideration, but they want to see him give their requests "active" consideration. The Western farmers will gain nothing unless they will go after it in earnest, and give Sir Wilfrid to understand that they mean business. If he fully understands this then the farmers will get something besides the ordinary "careful consideration."

EARL GREY'S TRIP

Our retiring governor-general is making plans for an overland trip to Hudson's Bay and thence by water to Newfoundland. This will afford Earl Grey an opportunity to see the great northern country about which so much is heard and written but so little known. It will give English public opinion a start to know that our northland is so mild in climate and so easy of access that a governor-general and suite can make the trip without discomfort. There is one great feature about the trip. The party will not be handicapped by piles of material that have not yet been taken up for the Hudson Bay Road. Probably Sir Wilfrid had this in mind when he failed to make good his pre-election promise. He may have known how inconvenient it would be for the vice-regal party to clamber over construction material. His Excellency will appreciate this thoughtfulness on the part of the premier. However, as soon as the trip is over there seems to be no reason why the government should not get busy and secure at least several more "mountains of information" about the road to the Bay.