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The Mail Bag

AN OPEN FORUM

This page is maintained to allow a free discussion of all questions vital to western farmers. Up to the limit of space letters will be published giving both sides of all such questions. It is not possible to publish all letters received, but an effort will be made to select those most fairly representing different views. Short letters will be given preference. All letters must be accompanied by name and address of writer, the not necessarily for publication. Unused letters will be returned if accompanied by postage.

DISAGREES WITH MRS. MCCLUNG

Editor, Guide:—I have read with some surprise and regret the article in The Guide of the 20th inst., headed "Franchise for Women," wherein it records a delegation of several representative bodies of women calling on Premier Borden, and at the close of the interview Mrs. McClung speaking for them, or as an individual, asked for the vote for British and Canadian women only. I have always valued and respected Mrs. McClung, but this request is so manifestly unfair I can't let it pass without comment. They say it is a poor rule that won't work both ways, and we will take it for granted that Mrs. McClung is a believer in the golden rule. We will suppose that she was born in Canada, but that her parents and grandparents had been born in the United States, and after accumulating a fair share of this world's goods she moves to the States and casts her lot with them, devoting her time, talent and property in developing American institutions. Her adopted country becomes involved in a world's war, near relatives and friends are at the front helping to fight its battles, she is doing her bit at home. An election is coming on and she discovers that while they have universal suffrage, it is for American born women only. Would Mrs. McClung be satisfied with that kind of a law, knowing full well that they and their people had brought in the greatest amount of wealth per capita of any class of immigrants and that they were as valuable as any class of people in the country to the country? I think she would be one of the first to raise her voice and pen against a law of that kind, and that the declaration of the early forefathers that "Taxation without representation was tyranny" would find an echo in Mrs. McClung. The Americans, on the other hand, have invited all the nations of the world—except the Orient—to their shores, and have treated them as equals and extended to them every right they claim for themselves. And the world knows of her progress and institutions.

E. P. ST. JOHN.

Kisbey, Sask.

MUNICIPAL TAXATION

Editor, Guide:—Since you have asked for letters on the subject of Municipal Taxation, I would like to express an opinion on this subject. In the first case mentioned by Mr. E. J. Blaquier in his letter in your issue of January 3, the assessment works out at \$1,500 per quarter section, which is altogether too high for land of the value he states and doubtless not proportionate to the assessed values of the better lands in the municipality, but in the case of his Pipestone property the reverse seems to be the case or he has no school facilities and his municipality is under non-progressive management.

As a matter of fact in Manitoba there is wide diversity in municipal assessment, altho the Assessment Act calls for the assessment of all farm lands on a wild land basis without valuation of buildings or personal property. In some cases almost a flat rate prevails which works out to the detriment of the owners of poor land or land with but few municipal improvements and to the great advantage of the better lands and those located along good roads, while in other municipalities an effort is made to assess the land on a basis proportionate to its value. In my opinion one of the first things necessary in the way of reform of our municipal system is to institute an equitable system of assessment taking into consideration in addition to the physical value of the land its proximity to railway facilities and its accessibility to those facilities—in other words increasing the assessment when the land is located close to a station or upon a good road leading to it. Such a system would automatically end the expenditure of too large a proportion

of public funds in the vicinity of favored localities. The only portion of the taxes collected by a rural municipality over which the council exercises discretionary power are those for general municipal affairs and for public works, and it is in the last mentioned that the most waste usually occurs as in some municipalities I believe the antiquated Statute Labor System still persists, while in others where it is nominally abolished, residents are encouraged to believe that they have the right to work with their teams a specified time for each quarter section assessed, with equally disastrous effect to the farmers themselves—whose whole time during the open season should be spent on their land—and to the municipality, owing to the fact that a succession of unskilled boys and teams are employed on the roads where experienced workers are required.

Whether new construction should be done by day labor or by contract may be debatable, but there is no question but that more attention must be paid to maintenance which must be attended to at all periods of the open season and not merely during a few weeks in the middle of the summer as is the present custom, and this work could be much more efficiently done under the supervision of one overseer for the whole municipality with a staff engaged for the whole season (threshing perhaps excepted) than can be done under the usual township system.

With such an officer under an annual agreement there might with advantage be a reduction in the number of councillors as a large proportion of the work usually devolving upon these officials would be performed by the overseer, and two, or three at the most—councillors with the reeve would do the work more economically and as efficiently as under the present system. The existing ward system which has resulted in the worst form of parochialism, should be abolished and the councillors elected by the whole municipality for a period of two or three years, as the case may be. The time has arrived when the construction of the main roads should be of a permanent character, and the expense of which should be met by the issue of long term debentures under the sanction of the Department and with the guarantee of the Province. With the probable introduction of added responsibilities under the new Rural Credits Bill more care will need to be exercised in the future in many municipalities in the selection of councillors, and the very best men available must be secured and adequate recompense must be made for their services.

F. J. COLLYER.

Welwyn, Sask.

FREE TRADE LEAGUE SLOW

Editor, Guide:—As the tariff has been a very interesting discussion for some time, I would like to say a few words along that line.

I might say a great many of our Free Traders are working on a reduction of the tariff on a sliding scale. Even the Free Trade League has framed a platform something like the following:—

First—"That we have the Reciprocal agreement of 1911 with the United States come into force at once."

Second—"That we lower the duty with the Mother Country twenty per cent. each year until it is extinct."

Now, altho I am a member of the Free Trade League I cannot agree with any such platform. I might say the first part is a very good suggestion, but the second is too slow to ever accomplish anything. Why, Sir Wilfrid Laurier's policy was along that line. What did it amount to? It just kept the people looking forward with expectations, which I might say died with hunger. Laurier's free trade policy at the rate he was going would have taken him over 200 years to give us a Free Trade country. Such a policy is too slow for this age. Such a policy was too slow in England when they were trying to repeal the corn laws. Why then should our Free Trade League