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THE GRAIN GROWERS' GUIDE

"Equal Rights to All and Special Privileges to None"
A Weekly Journal for Progressive Farmers

Published under the auspices and employed as the Official Organ of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association, the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, and the United Farmers of Alberta.



The Guide is the only paper in Canada that is absolutely owned and controlled by the organized farmers—entirely independent, and not one dollar of political, capitalistic or special interest money is invested in it.

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Authorized by the Postmaster-General, Ottawa, Can., for transmission as second class mail matter.

VOL. IX. March 1 No. 9

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND ADVERTISING

Published every Wednesday. Subscriptions in the British Empire \$1.50 per year. Foreign subscriptions \$2.00 per year. Single copies 5 cents.

Advertising Rates
Commercial Display—18 cents per agate line.
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Our Ottawa Letter

The Free Wheat Debate—Dominion Prohibition Resolution This Week
(By The Guide's Special Correspondent)

Ottawa, Feb. 25.—That a deaf ear will be turned to all requests made for Free Wheat by the farmers of the West so long as the present parliament exists was made abundantly clear this week when J. G. Turriff's resolution was defeated. Not a single western member sitting behind the government, or within the ranks of the government, budged from the party lines. W. P. Maclean, Independent Conservative member for South York, alone lined up with the advocates of a wider market. The vote stood 77 to 44 against the motion, a majority of 33 for the government. The division was undoubtedly one which the government would have avoided had it been possible to do so, but the advocates of Free Wheat were determined to have a show-down. They will doubtless do the same thing next session with a similar result. After the clear-cut pronouncements from Sir Thomas White, Hon. Robert Rogers and Hon. Arthur Meighen during the debate, there can be no expectation of a change in the government's policy. They have decided to sink or swim with the millers and the big interests.

Meighen's Argument

Some of the arguments advanced against the Free Wheat proposals would be amusing if they were not pathetic. Towards the close of his speech Hon. Arthur Meighen quite obliviously, apparently, of the self-contradictory strain of his arguments, appealed against any action being taken which would do injury to any section of the community. Ignoring completely the self-evident fact that it is often in the national interest that a minor industry must sometimes be sacrificed to some extent to a major one, he pleaded in almost piteous strains for the three hundred "small" millers of Ontario, while complacently ignoring the incomparably greater interests of the tens of thousands of farmers of the West. Mr. Meighen made it plain that he does not give a hang if the farmers' prize ox is gored so long as nothing happens to his scrawny, bottle-fed calf. Just listen to his argument for a moment and be convinced of the truth of the foregoing assertion:

"We have 543 flour mills in this country, 303 in Ontario alone. The big millers are able to stand competition much better than the smaller ones, but is there a man in this house who would feel that he would be doing his duty who would vote for legislation which would be unfair to 303 small millers of Ontario? They pay duty on almost every article they use, they are bound to pay according to the policy of this country, accepted on both sides, and while they are bound to do that, are they entitled to some fair measure of protection or are they not?" And again: "The hon. member for Edmonton says that they are entitled in justice to a fair measure of protection, but because the interests of the millers and the farmers are not the same, you shall do what the farmers say and do an injustice to the other class. I cannot subscribe to that doctrine. I do not think it would be fair or just to the millers of

this country to take the duty off flour entirely."

Was there ever a worse case of special pleading for a minor industry against the immeasurably greater interests of a major industry? That such arguments should be advanced but illustrates the straits to which the opponents of Free Wheat were driven.

Rogers and the National Policy

Hon. Robert Rogers was equally emphatic in his opposition to the demands of the farmers. From a carefully prepared manuscript he read an essay on the desirability of bringing the policy of "Canada for the Canadians"—the "National policy of Sir John Macdonald up to date"—as he described it, in order to meet the new conditions arising out of the war. The picture presented to the mental eye provided for a great development of industrial enterprises in the West, hedged around of course by a high protective tariff, with the great natural industry of the province cramped, cabined and confined as it is at present. Mr. Rogers declared that if the resolution were adopted our wheat would go to the United States, where it would be mixed with the poorer wheat grown there and Canadian farmers would lose the advantage of the higher standard of wheat which has been established in Canada. Curiously enough, less than two hours later Mr. Meighen argued that there is very little market in the United States for Canadian wheat, the supply of the hard variety, particularly in the Minneapolis market being large.

Toronto Man for Free Wheat

A strong plea for Free Wheat was made by W. P. Maclean. He said that if the farmers of the West have not now a market sufficiently wide parliament, which represents the Canadian people, should not prevent them from securing this additional market. "They simply ask," he said, "for an opportunity to sell their surplus wheat in every possible market. Their doing this would not be against the interests of Canada; it would make these people richer and increase their ability to buy Canada's product, because they would sell their wheat at better prices than they get now."

Mr. Maclean also stated that he had gained the impression that the price of wheat in the United States has been better than the price in Canada, and that the millers of Canada have at times not given as much as they would have given for Canadian wheat if the Canadian farmers had been able to sell in other markets.

Levi Thompson, of Qu'Appelle, especially emphasized the idea that the farmers are asking for no favors. "Give us," he said, "a chance to deal freely and openly in the markets of the world. If legislation of this kind is passed, benefit will accrue not only to the farmers of the West, but to the consumers in the East as well—to every man who buys a pound of flour."

Robert Cruise, of Dauphin, in a half-hour's speech, dealt in a cap-

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