

THE FARMERS AT OTTAWA

Recent dispatches from Ottawa suggest the likelihood that the Dominion Parliament will adjourn on December 16 for that day, and give all the members and senators an opportunity to hear the organized farmers present their case. This is certainly the course that should be pursued because what the Western farmers have to say when they go to Ottawa is applicable to every member of the Dominion Parliament. The condition of affairs existing in the agricultural communities of Western Ontario and the Prairie Provinces are not a subject of interest to the government alone, but should be vitally important to every member of Parliament. The government is merely the executive committee of the Parliament, and it would be unfortunate if the presentation made by the farmers should reach the ears of only the members of the government. This is the first time the farmers of Canada, in representative capacity, have taken their grievances to Ottawa to demand redress. This fact in itself is of sufficient importance to demand the attention of any man who has any part to play in the making of the laws of Canada. The fact that the articulate voice of the agricultural class expresses strong disapproval of existing legislation on a number of national questions settles beyond a possibility of doubt the verdict that things are not what they should be. If the members of parliament will give close attention to the grievances presented by the farmers and make an honest effort during the present session to enact legislation that will give a square deal to every interest in the country they will be performing their proper function. There are far too few of our members at Ottawa animated by an honest and sincere desire to improve conditions. The majority of them give little heed to national affairs unless it be to add their voice in approval or condemnation of the actions of the party which happens to be in power. If the game of party politics (for the benefit of the parties or the friends of the parties) was not quite so faithfully followed the common people would secure much greater benefit from federal legislation than they do at the present time. Although it seems like an absurdity to suggest it, we nevertheless present it as a fair proposition that the Dominion Parliament should deal with the demands of the farmers upon their merits and not as political motives may prompt them.

THE COAL COMPANIES' LAMENT

A loud wail, in the shape of a sixty page pamphlet, is being sent throughout Canada by the coal companies of Nova Scotia in protest against any reciprocity treaty with United States. The prime mover among the coal companies is the Dominion Coal Company, of which Mr. J. H. Plummer is President. Mr. Plummer takes it for granted that the people of Canada have a great affection for him and his company, in fact so much so that they would not in any way interfere with his business. He presumes that in case of reciprocity in coal, that he would be expected to find his market so long as he is not privileged by the tariff to extort undue profits from the people. The people of Canada care as much about the Dominion Coal Company as that same company cared about the shareholders of the Dominion Iron and Steel Company, when it repudiated its contract and did its best to ruin those shareholders. Of course that was all right in Mr. Plummer's mind to squander the resources of his company and if possible cripple or ruin the steel company. The cost of the whole trouble came out of the pockets of the people, and Mr. Plummer wants them to keep on paying. The reason why the Nova Scotia coal

will not sell in New England market, Mr. Plummer explains it, that the American coals are "generally more desirable." If that is so then it is all the more reason why we should not have a tariff on coal, because we want in this country the best that can be secured at the cheapest price. Mr. Plummer also explains another trick which has frequently been suspected of on the part of Canadian manufacturers. He says that the Nova Scotia dealers in trying to sell their coal in the United States have made to the American "concessions in price equal to the amount of duty." It would seem a fair proposition that the Canadian consumer should receive the same "concessions" as does the American consumer, because it would not be considered for a moment that these concessions eliminate all the profit from the sale of the coal. This in itself should be a sufficient answer to the coal dealers and should remove the last objection against taking the duty off of coal-coming into Canada. Mr. Plummer's talk about combines, the revenue of the Nova Scotia government, the Intercolonial Railway and the Montreal Harvest Commissioners, amounts to nothing. The coal companies of the Maritime Provinces are capable of taking care of themselves and they should be made to do it and no longer perch themselves upon the backs of the Canadian consumers and assume a monopoly of loyalty and patriotism. Mr. Plummer is deserving of a great deal of commendation for the frankness with which he states his case. He answers his own arguments so completely that his whole case is really a good argument for taking the duty off of coal.

AN UNNATURAL MIGRATION

Every little while we receive a letter from a subscriber saying that as he has quit the farm and is moving into the city he will therefore have no further interest in The Guide nor in the associations. This shows an unfortunate condition of affairs in this country, and is a movement which has worked out in Ontario and the other Eastern provinces greatly to the detriment of the country as a whole. It is a clear proof that agricultural conditions are not as they should be or men would not be so anxious to leave the farm. This movement towards the city is due to a great many things; sometimes it is on account of failing age; sometimes to secure educational facilities for the children; sometimes to secure better financial returns for money invested; sometimes to secure freedom from isolation which frequently is a feature of farm life in the West. All these causes which drive the farmers from their farms and many other causes are due largely to unfair conditions which prevail on account of legislation placing undue burdens on the agricultural communities. As a rule the farmer who retires, from whatever cause, and takes up his residence in the city is not henceforth a contented man. The rush and whirl of city life is not congenial to one who has spent his lifetime in a rural community. Nature never intended that human beings should be huddled together as they are in our large cities. Rural life surrounded by proper conditions is the ideal. It is to secure these proper conditions that the organized farmers are fighting today. When proper facilities are placed at the command of the rural resident and he is not called upon to support other classes in the country, life on the farm will then afford good remuneration for the labor expended, sufficient time for study and thought, and an ideal environment in which to rear a family and equip them for a life of service, which is the proper function for every individual.

There is no doubt but that attempts will be made in all directions and by various interests to detract attention from the immense question of tariff reform, but it will

all be of no avail. The customs tariff of Canada has got to go down a great deal lower than it is today. Day by day this is becoming the determination of the ultimate consumers upon whose back the tariff burden rests. They will not be put aside from the task to which they have set themselves. The two parties in the House of Commons at the present time are largely sparring for wind on the tariff question. Both seem to be afraid to do anything that will be for the good of the people.

SOME TARIFF VAGARIES

In the tariff schedule of 1907 there are 711 items, 221 being free. Farmers get the benefit of free twine, cream separators, and barbed wire. Practically all the other free entries are for the benefit of the manufacturers. Since 1907 twenty items have been placed on the free list by order-in-council and thirteen other items have been reduced. It is surprising how the government finds out the requirements of the manufacturers, while they do not seem to be able to discover that there is any necessity of placing any articles on the free list for the benefit of the producers of food products, or the consumers of manufactured articles. Does the fact that the Manufacturers' Association retains a high salaried tariff agent explain this difference? The manufacturers of leather get their raw material, such as hides, free of duty, and get a drawback on stearine, caseine, hyposulphates, and other articles used in the production of leather. Of course they are protectionists when it comes to leather, and free traders when it comes to other commodities. The manufacturers of mowing machines, reapers, harvesters, binders, and attachments for binders get a drawback of 99 per cent. on all duty paid on rolled iron, rolled steel, and pig iron. The thousands of blacksmiths who make a pecunious living in our many towns and villages throughout Canada manufacturing bolts, mending chains and the thousand and one things that farmers require, do not get any drawback. They have to pay full duty. Truly we have a paternal government protecting the wealthy manufacturer at the expense of the artisan.

The announcement is made that Mr. J. E. Cyr, ex-M.P. of Provencher, Man., has been appointed superintendent of public works for the Dominion Government in Manitoba. Mr. Cyr has had considerable political experience and has been a valiant worker in support of the present administration. He is also a journalist of considerable experience, and of course this qualifies him eminently to be superintendent of public works. It is but another instance of rewarding the faithful.

The manufacturers and their supporters in Parliament lay very strong emphasis on "Vested Interests." This is certainly a wise precaution, and they should consider when dealing with this subject that for every dollar of manufacturers' "Vested Interests" the farmers have four or five. Of course there are more farmers and it does not look so big when taken individually.

Last week the council of the University of Manitoba by a vote of 29 to 6 decided that the new University should have power to give instruction in all branches of higher education. With this as an ideal, and generous public support, a provincial university will fill a great need in Manitoba.

The number of Ottawa delegates is growing rapidly. It is the most important move ever made by the organized farmers of Canada. No local association can afford to miss having a representative in the delegation. If each local cannot finance a delegate, two or three locals can combine and send one.



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