

The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, November 17th, 1915

GRAIN GROWERS PROSPER

The annual meeting of The Grain Growers' Grain Company, held in Winnipeg last week, marked another milestone of progress in the history of the farmers' organizations in Western Canada. It was the most prosperous year from the standpoint of finances that the company has ever experienced and the 500 shareholders present expressed themselves well pleased at the result. The actual financial profits which the company earned, however, was not regarded by the shareholders as the greatest element of success in the Company's work. It was shown by the balance sheets that the company had used a part of its profits for the assistance of the farmers' organizations in the three provinces and also in educational work to assist farmers generally to secure better returns for what they had to sell, and to raise the standard of living in rural communities. It was generally felt by the shareholders that the company had successfully passed thru the dangerous period, and that it had developed men equal to the ablest in the commercial world who were quite capable of guiding the affairs of the company to future and greater successes. The great financial success of the Grain Growers' Export Company was extremely pleasing to the shareholders. This department of the company's activities in the past has not been successful. It was realized by the shareholders, however, that the chief market for their grain was on the other side of the Atlantic and that the farmers' company should be able to handle the grain from the time it left the farm until it reached the foreign consumer. With this in view and despite past failures, they had authorized the board of directors to use their own judgment in continuing in the export business. The very successful result of the export operations justified the shareholders in their decision and they were proud of the fact that their own company had become an important factor in this branch of the grain trade. One of the pleasant features was the presence of representatives of the organized farmers of Ontario. In that province, which, as one of the delegates said, "had been the graveyard of so many farmers' organizations," there was a promise of a bright future. Inspired by the example of the Western farmers the Ontario farmers had started an organization with headquarters at Toronto for the handling of their own business, and the past year had been a successful one. They were looking ahead to the development of a great farmers' organization in that province which would work in future hand in hand with the Grain Growers in the exchange of products. For the past two years there has been considerable discussion thruout the Prairie Provinces over the advisability of the farmers' business organizations getting together in their operations, so that all injurious rivalry might be eliminated and the joint power of the three companies be used for the greatest benefit of the farmers. There are now four farmers' trading organizations in the West; The Grain Growers' Grain Company, the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company, the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association and the Alberta Farmers' Co-operative Elevator Company. At the Grain Growers' banquet representatives of all these organizations were present and the sentiment expressed by one and all of them was the desire to bring about closer working arrangements. When this great work is consummated it will result in the greatest farmers' organization, considered from the standpoint of geographical area and also from magnitude of business operations, that the world has ever seen. Delegates expressed the view that when this work had been accom-

plished the organized farmers could go further afield in their operations and even engage in manufacturing. It is apparent to anyone who has closely watched the progress of the farmers' organizations in the West that there is no limit to their development if the farmers will stand by their own companies and select wise and able men to guide their operations, as they have done in the past.

COMMERCE AND AGRICULTURE

The meeting between the Canadian Council of Agriculture and the business interests of Winnipeg, reported on another page, is full of possibilities. For several years there has been more or less antagonism between the organized farmers and the organized business interests. The farmers have felt, and have had good reason to feel, that a great many of these business interests have been charging by far too high a price for the services which they render to the agricultural population, and there has been a determination on the part of the organized farmers that the cost of these services shall be reduced. As the farmers have gone into one after another of the various lines of business, they have proven, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that these services can be performed at a very much lower cost than they have been performed in the past. This very fact has been the chief cause of the antagonism developed on the side of the commercial interests.

It was a decided tribute to the strength and success of the organized farmers that the business interests of Winnipeg were prepared to meet them in conference. The invitation for the conference came from the business men and the farmers responded cordially, as they did with the manufacturers, and will undoubtedly do with any interests. When the organized farmers and the organized business interests finally got together in Winnipeg last week, the idea uppermost in the minds of the business men, and they were quite sincere, was that they would assist the farmers in producing larger crops. It had not occurred to them to assist the farmers in the other more important problems which enter into the cost of production and the comfort and prosperity of the people on the farm. At the very outset of the meeting, however, the farmers made it absolutely clear that unless the business men were prepared to go into these other questions without any restrictions whatever it was of no use to try to get together. The business men saw the point very clearly and realized that their view point was largely different from that of the farmers. They, however, declared themselves quite willing to discuss any and every problem of mutual interest and on that basis the farmers decided to go ahead and arrange for future conferences.

It is a matter of congratulation that the farmers and the business interests have been able to get together even to the point of discussing their mutual problems. The business interests have at last come to realize very clearly that their prosperity depends absolutely upon the prosperity of the farmers. There is probably no country on earth possessing greater natural riches than the Prairie Provinces, and there is no country where, under proper conditions, the farmers should be more prosperous. It is undoubtedly true that there are many farmers in this country who are inexperienced, but that is not by any means the chief cause of the lack of prosperity which has characterized the rural West up until the present year. Nearly every organized business interest in this country has taken heavy and unjust toll from the farmers. This is the chief cause of the lack of prosperity

and it is also the chief reason why the farmers are today organized for self protection.

It is not the desire nor the intention of the organized farmers to take any unfair advantage of the business interests, nor to ask them to perform any legitimate service without a fair margin of profit. It is, however, the fixed and unwavering determination of the organized farmers to bring about a readjustment of conditions by which they shall be able to have a fair margin of profit for themselves from the proceeds of their own labors. The organized farmers have never asked for any special privileges. They have never asked for any legislation which will enable them to charge other people higher than the market price for what they have to sell. They have always sold their products on the open markets of the world, and have never had any voice whatever in determining the price which they have received. The very reverse has been true of the great majority of the other business interests of this country. Today the farmers are organized and well organized. They have produced an enormous crop and the price is good. There never has been as much money in the hands of the farmers of this country as there is this year. It is owing to the accident of this unfortunate war that the farmers are in such a strong financial position. Had it not been for the war the price of grain this year would probably have fallen to 60 or 65 cents per bushel. As it is, however, the farmers have raised a big crop and have so far been able to sell it at a good profit. They will go ahead with their work of organization and they will continue to develop along business lines. But they will be glad to meet with the various business interests and discuss all these questions which have been the cause of strife. It will undoubtedly be necessary to compromise on both sides and it will certainly be possible to bring about a better mutual understanding. Each side can learn from the other. We are very hopeful of the outcome of this meeting between the farmers and the business interests.

CANADIAN COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURE

Representatives of the organized farmers of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta which comprise the Canadian Council of Agriculture met in Winnipeg last week. This is one of the most important organizations in the Dominion of Canada, representing, as it does, a larger class of people, a larger financial investment and containing greater future possibilities than any organization in the land. This is the only body which can speak for the farmers of Canada, and year by year it is speaking for a larger number of them. It is only to be regretted that owing to the 2,000 miles of territory which it covers that this body is not able to meet oftener, because it is working for the lasting good of the people of the whole country. It is to be hoped that some time in the future the Canadian Council of Agriculture may find it possible to establish a permanent headquarters, with its officers in charge, by which the interests of the farmers of all Canada may be closely watched and attended to all the time. As farmers learn the advantage of doing their own business and watching their own interests for their own benefit, the Canadian Council of Agriculture will grow in importance and the establishment of a permanent headquarters will become a necessity. There is a great deal in common among the farmers of every province in the Dominion, and if they do not learn to protect their own interests they will find, as they have in the past, that there is no other body to do that work for them. By doing their own work and developing their own organizations they