

Ten Years at the Front

Being a Short History of The Grain Growers' Guide and the part it has played in the Farmers' Movement

By GEORGE F. CHURMAN, EDITOR GRAIN GROWERS' GUIDE.

THE first number of The Grain Growers' Guide was published in June, 1908. Consequently, The Guide is ten years old. This being the tenth anniversary number, it is deemed fitting to give our readers a little of the history of the publication and the work it has been trying to do during these struggling years of the farmers' organization. The writer has been associated with The Guide for the past nine years and has been in intimate touch with the work of the publication during that period.

What is known as the Grain Growers' Movement was started in 1904 as a protest against the vicious practices and abuses in the grain trade. The movement made steady growth and progress. It received comparatively little publicity from the press of the country and even less sympathetic support. Outside of the Farmers' Tribune the organized farmers had few journalistic friends. The grain growers were misrepresented by the politicians, were bullied by the elevator combine and, as far as possible, ignored by the federal government. It rapidly became apparent to the leaders in the Grain Growers' Movement that they must have a journal owned and published by the organized farmers. In no other way was it possible to educate their members, unite their forces and fight their battles against misrepresentation and falsehood. After long consideration it was decided to launch a paper of their own. E. A. Partridge, the war horse of the Grain Growers' Movement, was selected as editor, and under his direction the first issue of The Grain Growers' Guide appeared in June, 1908. The Guide was started as a monthly publication. The aim and object was set forth in the first issue by Mr. Partridge as follows:

The purpose of The Guide's publication is to aid in the discussion of the economic and social problems which confront us, to assist in unifying opinion among our farmers and other workers as to what it is necessary to do in order that they and we may come to enjoy to the full the fruits of our labors, and, having thus unified us in opinion, to serve as a trumpet in marshalling our forces for the ac-

complishing of whatever has been decided is best to be done.

Starting the Paper

The new paper was welcomed by the rank and file of the grain growers with the utmost approval. But Mr. Partridge, at that time the outstanding leader in the Grain Growers' Movement, was too actively engaged otherwise to have time for conducting The Guide. As a result the July issue of the paper was never published and The Guide very nearly died in its infancy. However, the committee in charge sent out an S.O.S. call to Rodolick McKenzie, secretary of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association, then on his farm at Brandon. He was conscripted and placed in editorial harness. Without any previous journalistic training Mr. McKenzie, nevertheless, had been for years in the Grain Growers' Movement and had a wide knowledge of the evils from which the grain growers were suffering. He put on the editorial harness and buckled down to work in earnest and The Guide continued to appear regularly each month and carry its message and its challenge to the grain growers of the prairie provinces. Mr. McKenzie continued as editor for three years, until the work of the Manitoba association became so heavy as to require his entire attention.

At the very beginning The Grain Growers' Guide was published as the official organ of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association, and shortly after was adopted as the official organ of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association and the United Farmers of Alberta. Each of these associations has continued to employ The Guide as its official organ from the beginning until the present time.

Elevator Combine Beaten

From the very outset The Guide justified its existence and proved to be an important factor in the development of the whole grain growers' organization

in all its wide ramifications. The first real struggle in which The Guide participated was in the bitter fight between the grain growers and what was known as the elevator combine. In the early days the farmers of the West were plundered most shamefully by the elevator interests who enjoyed an absolute monopoly of the grain trade. Shortly after the publication of The Guide the elevator combine realized there was a new champion in the field. The Grain Growers' Grain Company had been in operation for two years and was handling a steadily increasing portion of the farmer's grain. Some of the elevator interest developed a scheme to undermine and, if possible, destroy the farmer's company, and create suspicion among the farmers against their own leaders.

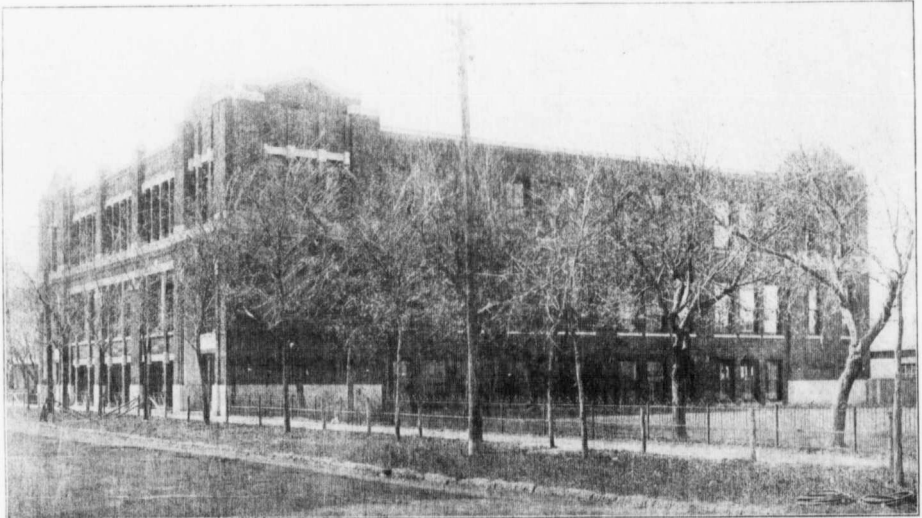
In order to do this they hired a press agent who posed as a financial broker. He wrote letters designed to create suspicion and distrust and they were published over the name "Observer," and paid for as advertisements in a number of farm journals and other newspapers circulating among the Western grain growers. The Guide immediately challenged these letters and the just played by these publications in publishing them without giving the true name of the author. The indignation among the grain growers was widespread and subscriptions to these journals were cancelled in such large numbers that they refused any longer to publish the "Observer" letters. Thus, in three weeks the scheme of the elevator interests was frustrated. A few months later The Guide had the satisfaction of publishing the whole inside story, together with the photographs of the men who employed Mr. Observer and the salary which was paid to him. From that day onward, the press of Western Canada had a more wholesome respect than ever for the Grain Growers' organizations. Had it not been for The Grain Growers' Guide in that crisis, it is quite possible the Grain Growers might have

been divided amongst themselves and their organization broken.

The next move in the fight between the Grain Growers and the elevator interests was the action of the Winnipeg Grain Exchange in cancelling the one cent commission rule. The design undoubtedly was to handle grain through the elevators at a small commission or at no commission at all in order to draw the farmers away from the support of their own company. Here again The Guide was able to expose the scheme to the Grain Growers all over the three provinces. The result was that they supported their own company more strongly than ever, and after only a year's experience the Grain Exchange restored the commission rule and has never since removed it. By this time the organized grain trade came also to have very considerable respect for the Grain Growers' Movement and to recognize the farmer's company as a real and permanent feature in the grain trade. This was another case where The Guide justified its existence in the support of the farmer's organizations.

The Guide Won Wide Favor

During those early years when the big fight between the Grain Growers and the elevator interests was being waged all over the country, the circulation of The Guide grew very rapidly. Friends of the paper canvassed the farmers in their own neighborhood and the subscription list jumped very fast. The farmers had great appreciation for a paper which published the facts without fear or favor and called a spade a spade every time. The Guide set out to deal fully with the grain trade from the standpoint of the farmer, and uncover the economic injustices from which the farmers suffered. The Guide entered a new field in journalism and steadily broke new ground. Scores of the problems and questions which were first agitated by The Guide and the grain growers have become common subjects of discussion in more recent years. It was, however, only after the farmer's organizations took up such questions and they had been given publicity by The Guide that they began to receive attention generally in the press.



The New Home of The Grain Growers' Guide, Vaughan Street, Winnipeg. Every Brick in It Belongs to the Organized Farmer.

Woodman & Cullidge, Architects, Winnipeg.