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THE GRAIN GROWERS' GUIDE
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The Mail Bag

Drafting Farmers

Editor, Guide: Like a bomb from the clear sky comes the rumor that all category "A" men under 25 years will have their exemptions cancelled, farmers as well. Surely, surely such an injustice cannot be done.

Is not the increased production of food now a most vital factor in winning this war? Have we not been told to raise more crops and still more crops? How then can this be done if the few farmers and farmer boys that are left, shall be taken? Even now, the shortage of help (experienced help) is acute.

Did not the Western Provinces, such as Saskatchewan and Manitoba, respond most nobly when the call of men to the colors came? Did they not do more than their share even? Why then should there again be a drain on these provinces and take most of the farmers and farmer boys that are left? There must be some other, some better way of getting men.

There is going to be a "great difference in the crop of 1918 should this law go into effect. I know personally of instances where the farmers have been planning to do their utmost to put in an extra acreage this spring, even though they are short of help. By working earlier and later, and by working nights (tractors making this possible.) But should this draft go into effect, will work less land than last year. Can you blame them? No. Even though these boys should be spared until the crop is in, who should harvest it all? "Oh, but the government will see that this problem is met with," I hear some one say. Yes, by sending out inexperienced city men who are unable to harness a horse, much less to operate farm machinery, not to mention the running of tractors and engines. And if they can spare these city men for work on the farms, why not draft them instead.

Some farmers have their little boys of ten years of age in the fields rather than have inexperienced help—even though they could afford to pay these the unreasonably high wages they ask, which many of them can not.

One farmer I know, whose only son enlisted when the war started, and was killed in France over a year ago, has a hired man who has worked for him since his boy left, and should this man be taken from him now, will farm little or nothing, as he is too old to be in the fields himself.

Draft whom you will, but leave us our farmers and farmer boys. The hard-working, much needed, "Soldiers of the Soil"—A Farmer's Wife, Invermay, Sask.

Build C.N.R. Branch

Editor, Guide: In your issue of March 27, I notice a resolution from the Lone Butte local asking for the building of the C.N.R. branch from Bonar to Medicine Hat. I believe that there must have been a slight mistake, as this should have been "Hanna to Medicine Hat." As I have the honor to be president of a league of municipalities formed with the precise object of hastening the construction of this urgently needed line, I venture to give some facts in connection with the movement. This league was formed last February when delegates from Bulver Municipality (No. 215), Flowerdale Municipality (No. 244), Berry Creek Municipality (No. 214) met the Premier of Alberta and urged for the construction from Hanna to Steepleville, a distance of 67 miles.

We were informed the matter was in the hands of the federal authorities and that the provincial government could render no assistance. Now Mr. Editor there are 43 townships of land interested in this movement. This land is chocolate loam with heavy clay subsoil, and has repeatedly proved itself to be second to none as a wheat country. In 1915 over 60 bushels per acre was raised in several parts of this district, and hail is almost unknown. But we labor under great handicaps owing

to the absolute lack of railroad facilities.

The distance to market varies from 25 to 45 miles, and average cost of hauling wheat is 25 cents per bushel. We also pay 15 cents for thrashing and even at the present prices, much of the profit disappears in the thrashing and hauling. This is essentially a wheat country, for it only produces short grass, so we cannot go extensively into mixed farming. In order to respond to the repeated appeals of the government it will be necessary for us to break more land this year, but what guarantee have we as to 1919 prices.

It will be neither wise nor patriotic for us to break more land than we can cultivate as it will surely infest the country with weeds, which have already obtained a hold owing to settlers leaving the country. Some may argue that all our grain could be hauled in the winter, but this is impossible, as the snow is usually deep, and is constantly drifting. To the north is the Goose Lake line which has never given any real satisfaction, often as many as a hundred teams waited in Youngstown for cars to arrive, and I have several times been delayed in town two days; and I can assure you, Mr. Editor, that it is both costly and discouraging to haul wheat 40 miles and then lay around town waiting for the elevator to receive cars. To the south is the Red Deer river with its 300 to 400 foot banks, and for two weeks both in fall and spring it is impassable by either ferry or ice.

In the winter the snow blows off the grades and in mild weather they are either covered with glare ice or else entirely bare, and it is often necessary to use six to eight horses to pull up a two-horse load. It is undoubtedly our duty to produce food for our gallant soldiers and their allies, but we feel that we are entitled to the support and co-operation of the government in doing so.

The construction of this line offers no serious difficulty, the country is almost level prairie and the farmers could and would supply all necessary labor. Every one living in the 43 townships I refer to is anxious for this line and willing to do anything to hasten its construction. This district was settled in 1910 and 1911, and most of us have all the cultivated land we can handle. It takes from two to three days to haul one load of wheat and unless better facilities are afforded we shall be forced out of business when normal prices again prevail. But there is another reason why this line should be built without delay. It will tap the Sheerness coal-field, one of the largest and easiest worked in Alberta. There are several mines working now with eight foot seams and the supply is unlimited. In view of the coal shortage I think you will agree that this feature is important, and I am convinced that the only way production can be stimulated in this district is by building this line and thereby placing this fertile area on a proper basis.—W. Lloyd Brown, Delano, Alta.

Reply to Labor

Editor, Guide: Your issue of May 8 contains a letter from one H. Wheeler, who says the farmers have had their wages raised 200 per cent, while they have raised the wages of their help only 50 per cent. I don't know by what rule of arithmetic he arrives at his conclusion but mine don't work out that way.

Before the war we paid from \$30 to \$40 a month for farm labor; including board we figured it cost about \$50. Now, we pay from \$70 to \$80, which, with board, amounts to about \$100, owing to higher cost of everything. Frequently, a hired man has a horse which the farmer has to board for nothing. One man we hired had an automobile and our buggy had to stand out in the weather while his auto occupied the shed.

The question naturally arises: "If the profits of farming are so great, why did not Mr. Wheeler stay on his farm and pay his help the 200 per cent. raise

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WHEN WRITING TO ADVERTISERS PLEASE MENTION THE GUIDE

he says the farmers are getting!" He says he quit because of crop failures. Does he think he is the only farmer that lost his crop? Last year one of our fields of wheat that was a joy to look at and seemed good for 40 to 45 bushels to the acre got frozen, and from the 200 acres we got only green feed. Two hundred acres of oats along side that looked as though they would make 75 to 80 bushels, made 40. These losses made a difference in our income of between \$16,000 and \$18,000, yet the hired men had to be paid in full. For a man who confesses he has made a failure at farming, Mr. Wheeler makes a mighty poor advocate to increase the expenses of the farmer. Very truly yours, C. T. Sears, Nanton, Alta.

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[L.S.]

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AND V of April last, it it is among oth Act, 1917, shall include all me described, and aforesaid, shall Service Act, B as in such pro liable to the p thereafter

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