

The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, May 31st, 1911

GET NEXT THE POLITICIANS

The announcement is made that the Hon. Frank Oliver, minister of the interior, and probably another cabinet minister will address meetings next month at different points in the West on reciprocity and other live public questions. It is a common practice for ministers of the crown to make tours through the country to discuss public questions and ascertain the sentiment of the people on them, but in the past the custom has been that on such occasions they are so hedged about by party politicians and leading business and professional men, who usually have some special interest of their own to keep before the minister, that they have never got in touch with the needs of the common people.

Nothing has aroused Canada within recent years as the presentations that have been made by the farmers' organizations to cabinet ministers of their view point, and if the farmers of the West want their demands to be attended to at Ottawa they should make it a point to get next to the minister of the interior on his prospective tour. At every point where he addresses meetings as many as possible of the Grain Growers ought to get together and get in touch with him and tell him in plain terms what they want parliament to do in the way of legislation. If the government of which he is the Western representative has done anything which meets with your approval, tell him so. Also tell him about those things which the government has done of which you disapprove and ask for explanations not only in private but at public meetings, so that instead of the minister getting his cue of what to say and what to do from the viewpoint of the urban population, professional exploiters and party politicians, he may get it from the rural population.

What applies to the Hon. Frank Oliver and his colleague who will accompany him, applies with equal force to Mr. R. L. Borden. As soon as he reaches Manitoba he will be surrounded by a bodyguard of politicians who, since the reciprocity agreement has been before parliament, have been assuring him that the people of the West, more especially the people of Manitoba, do not want parliament to ratify the agreement and that the Western farmers favor the continuance of the protective system. On the strength of such representations Mr. Borden, as leader of the Opposition, has intimated in the House the determination of the Opposition to prevent the ratification of the reciprocity agreement. These gentlemen will naturally be interested in preventing the honorable gentleman from ascertaining the real situation and will endeavor to so arrange matters that he will meet the right kind of people. The Western Grain Growers should not hesitate at every point to break through the cordon of politicians and get next to Mr. Borden and tell him what they want and expect the Opposition to do in respect to the platform of demands the farmers' organizations presented to the Dominion government in December last, especially emphasizing the reciprocal trade agreement with the United States and the increase of the British Preference so as to reduce the customs duties on manufactured goods entering Canada.

There is little use in farmers passing resolutions at their meetings and complaining of the government and their lack of interest in the common people unless they get next the leaders of both sides of politics and so place their needs before them that those who have to do with legislation will get their informa-

tion from the viewpoint of the common people, who are the real producers of wealth, and not from the viewpoint of people who are not producers but who get an undue share of the wealth produced on the farm and by the labor of the common people, simply because they persistently keep next the powers that be.

PROVINCIAL ELEVATORS

Among the larger Dominion-wide questions, such as tariff and transportation, now before the farmers of the West, the work of the provincial elevator systems, which was so prominently before the Grain Growers' Associations a few years ago, has been somewhat lost sight of.

In respect to Manitoba, it is understood not to be the intention of the government to purchase or erect new elevators this season, but to remodel and improve those already built, and to remove houses from points having more than they require and re-erect them at new points that have none.

After getting started to work last year, the Elevator Commissioners had only a few months in which to get their work organized and under way. This included not only office work, which in itself was a large matter, but also the work of getting reports on the value of elevators throughout the province and completing arrangements for purchasing them. Taking all this into consideration, it is only natural that grounds for criticism should arise. This was especially manifested in respect to the selling of street grain, particularly at several points. The troubles of the Commissioners in this respect were very much increased by the shortage of crop in the southern half of the province, with the result that hundreds of farmers, who, in other years had carloads of grain to sell, had last year only wagon-loads.

As to the financial side, there is every reason to believe, judging as far as possible from information available, that when working properly, the system will meet the expectations of those who have advocated the scheme since its commencement. While there has been dissatisfaction in some quarters, considerable progress has been made, and the government and the Commission are now in a better position than ever before to proceed with making the system everything that its advocates claimed for it. To make it a complete success, absolute sincerity must govern all connected with it: producer, commission and government alike.

It must be kept clearly in mind that the ultimate end is the acquisition of all the elevators in the province.

In Saskatchewan, where the government is following a somewhat different plan from Manitoba, everything indicates that good progress is being made. In that province the Grain Growers' Association has accepted the responsibility of creating a system, with the assistance of the government, and is now busily at work upon it. One thing must be kept very clearly in mind by the grain growers, both in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and that is, they must do their part in making this work a success in both provinces. It is easy to find fault. Honest criticism is beneficial; fault-finding can do no good. The farmers in both Manitoba and Saskatchewan must be loyal and support the elevators created for their benefit. They cannot escape this responsibility; and if competitors in the line elevators, who have been bleeding the country for years, offer superior inducements to the government or co-operative elevators, they should be measured by their worth. A

farmer who accepts bribes in any form whatever, held out to induce him to pass by his own elevator, is doing something that should give him serious thought. Successful farmers' organizations cannot be built up by such men.

THE PACT AND THE WESTERN FARMERS

The farmers' delegation, which waited on the government last December, in their demands for a lessening of the burden of customs duties, proceeded along two distinct and well defined lines.

First: That reciprocal free trade relations should be made between Canada and the United States in all products of the farm, forest, mines and fisheries, and also certain lines of manufactured goods which the United States exports and which Great Britain does not manufacture for export to any appreciable extent.

Second: A gradual increase in the British Preference from year to year that would result in free trade between Canada and the Mother Country within ten years.

Not many days after the hearing of the delegation, the Canadian government resumed negotiations with the United States for reciprocal arrangements, and within forty days of the date of the farmers' delegation, an agreement was presented to parliament for ratification. Although not embodying everything that the farmers asked for, the proposed agreement was a step in the right direction. On agricultural implements a small reduction in the customs duty was made, though not enough to afford practical relief to the Grain Grower.

The agreement was before parliament continuously from the 26th of January until the House adjourned on May 19, and although a great deal of valuable time was spent, no progress has yet been made towards its ratification, the Opposition having expressed their determination (avowedly because of a danger of its leading to annexation with the United States and disturbing British connections), not to allow the pact to pass, and to force the issue to an election. The discussion that has taken place in parliament as well as in the press and at public meetings, indicates the direction that opposition to the agreement is going to take. There is no pretention that the agreement as it now stands interferes to any appreciable extent with the protection afforded manufacturers, yet it is a very significant fact that the opposition to the agreement was first instituted by the Manufacturers' Association of Canada, and Canada's prominent capitalists. Recently the farmer has become the storm centre of the agitation, the evident purpose of opponents to the agreement being an attempt to convince the farmer that the agreement is not in his interests and will work towards his ruin. The politicians step in, and at recent meetings all through the country as far as the West is concerned, the gravamen of their indictment has been that the agreement is not the kind of reciprocal trade that the farmers asked for, that it takes away all the protection the farmer has on his product and gives him nothing in return, special emphasis being laid on the fact that agricultural implements have not been placed on the free list. This line of argument is taken undoubtedly because the duty on agricultural implements affects farmers only; is directed solely against them. While as a matter of fact that statement is correct, it is also a fact that no commodity used on the farm carries as light a burden of taxation as agricultural implements, excepting cream