

# The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, March 13, 1918

## Railways and the Government

The public hearings on the railway freight rate question have been concluded. It is now entirely in the hands of the cabinet ministers at Ottawa to make the momentous decision. If they decide not to interfere with the Railway Commission's order, the 15 per cent. increase in freight rates will go into effect on March 15. Under that order the people of Canada will pay to the railways somewhere about \$40,000,000 a year more than they are now paying. Of this amount the C.P.R. will get somewhere about \$20,000,000 in addition to its already colossal profits. It is the most important and far reaching question the Union Government has yet been called upon to decide. The people of Canada are watching the Union Government more closely and more sympathetically than ever any Canadian government has been watched. In its decision the Union Government may lose that sympathy or it may establish itself more firmly in the confidence of the people.

If the government permits the increase in freight rates according to the order of the railway commission, it will forfeit the confidence of the people and will create suspicion and distrust which it cannot live down. If there must be an increase in freight rates, every cent of it should go to the public treasury and be used by the government for necessary transportation development. This can be done in several ways. The best way is to nationalize all the railways of Canada, cut out overlapping, waste and duplication and give the people the benefit of the service for which they are paying. Canada has been railroaded almost to ruin and the railroad magnates have bedevilled our politics for the last forty years. It is time for a cleanup. National safety demands that the railroad magnates be driven out of politics. The only way to drive them out is to take the railroads out of private hands. Every other country in the world except Canada has done it. Is Canada to be a laggard in the movement towards world-wide democracy?

## The New Parliament

When the House of Commons opens next Monday it will present a spectacle absolutely new in Canada. The old party lines have been shattered completely. The miserable picayune peanut party strife and bickering will be absent. On one side of the House will be the French-Canadian members and a handful of Laurier-Liberals under the leadership of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. On the other side will be the Unionist camp composed of Liberals, Conservatives and Independents under the leadership and domination of no one man. The Union camp can never be dominated under its present constitution. Its direction will be in the hands of the government composed almost half and half of Liberals and Conservatives. The Unionist party will have a majority of 69 in the House out of 235 members, the largest majority ever held by any party in the House of Commons. Quite a number of the old party warriors, political time servers and "handy" men will be missing. They were carefully, thoughtfully and wisely left at home on election day. It is hoped they will be allowed to remain in peaceful, private life to the end of their days and that their years may be long in their new sphere.

It is doubtful if either party will spend much time in speeches, arguments and obstructions merely for political effect. The people are pretty sick of that kind of politics, which was the chief reason for supporting the Union Government. It was the first time anything approaching a breakdown of party politics was made possible. It is very doubtful if

Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the French-Canadian party will adopt the cheap fault-finding role of the ordinary opposition. The verdict of the Canadian people was so emphatic that Quebec and its representatives cannot disregard it. The future harmony between the French and English in Canada depends in a large measure upon the attitude adopted by Sir Wilfrid Laurier and his French-Canadian followers in the House of Commons. Laurier is a man of wide experience and is undoubtedly the safest man to hold the leadership of the opposition party today.

The new House will also test the possibilities of a union between the Liberals and Conservatives. While there is a Union Government and a Union party, the union spirit is none too strong among the members themselves. It is to be hoped that it will steadily grow stronger. One of the chief dangers will be the campaign of the protected and other financial interests. They are organizing and mobilizing their resources for the most gigantic struggle which they have yet made. These interests are determined that they will not lose any of their special privileges. They are determined that the common people shall pay for the war and that those with big fortunes shall continue to keep them. These interests are cold-blooded. If they can capture the entire Union party, they will do it. If not, they will split it and throw in their lot with the strongest. Herein lies the chief danger in the future of the Union party.

## British Labor Program

Elsewhere in this issue we are reproducing in full the tentative program of the British labor party. Canada is today closer to Great Britain than ever before in its history. Canadian people are more profoundly interested than ever before in British affairs. The labor party in Britain is powerful and may shortly be the governing party of that country. The program of the party, therefore, is one worthy of study. Whatever direction social reconstruction may take in Great Britain, it will profoundly affect the democratic development, not only of the European countries, but of Canada and the United States. It is a new world that will emerge from the war. It is a world in which the interests of the common people will receive more attention than in the past. Exploitation will never again be permitted such free rein and aristocracy and plutocracy will not sit so comfortably in the saddle. Things are due for a shakeup. The prospect of a shakeup in Great Britain seems near. It is worth watching.

## Increasing Tariff Burdens

The burden imposed on the farmer by the tariff on agricultural machinery is increasing by leaps and bounds. Just when the need for greater food production is most urgent the tariff is operating to still further reduce it. The war tax and the increasing cost of manufacture have enabled the tariff beneficiaries to double or triple the toll on machinery. This point was well brought out by Secretary McKenzie of the Canadian Council of Agriculture in his article in last week's Guide. Mr. McKenzie said:

"Increased factory cost and war tax have increased the duty more than double. For instance, in 1914 the duty on a 20-shoe seed drill was \$12.90; this year it is \$32. Add to that the profit of the dealer and cost on account of custom duty would be \$40. The duty imposed on a 12-inch, two-bottom gang plow in 1914 was \$5.36; this year it is \$19.16. A triple gang plow carried a duty of \$13.50 in 1914 and \$32.65 in 1918—so all along the line."

As further pointed out by Mr. McKenzie, the farmer can only meet the labor situation

by buying bigger and more expensive machines. Everything considered, the increase in the cost of a farmer's machinery requirements, due to the tariff, is now probably three times what it was before the war. It is time to call a halt. The increase in the original cost of manufacturing may be beyond control but the increase in the retail price due to the tariff can be wiped out by the government with the stroke of a pen. The demand for bigger food production makes such action imperative. Every increase in the price of food producing machinery puts it out of the reach of more and more farmers. Greater production depends more than anything else, on keeping the price of machinery within the reach of the largest possible number of farmers. Free agricultural machinery would mean that thousands of farmers would be working to better advantage this year in meeting the crying need for more food.

## Women's Conference

The conference of representative women from all Canada held at Ottawa two weeks ago was something new in the history of Canada. It was called by the government to consult with the government on great national problems. It was a recognition that the women are important factors in our national life. Such a recognition was long overdue to Canadian women. Always have they played their part well. But since the outbreak of war the heroic sacrifices endured by our Canadian women and the magnificent spirit displayed in the face of almost incredible trials has placed them on the same plane with our soldiers on the battlefield. Since the outbreak of war the provincial franchise has been extended to women in six of the nine provinces, and the others will not long be delayed. The federal franchise was extended to a part of the women in the last election. Canada has definitely decided to give women the vote on the same terms as men. It was only fitting that they should be called into conference with the government and it was a tribute also to the spirit of the Union Government. There is a tremendous work in Canada that women only can do. In solving the great war problems their part will be a big one. In binding up the nation's wounds and creating a new social order their part will be greater than man's.

## Land Settlement

The suggestion made last week that vacant land should be conscripted at half its market value and used for the settlement of soldiers and immigrants, we well knew would not commend itself to property interests. Those who have property are quite willing that young men should be conscripted at less than half their earning capacity and even at the cost of their lives to defend Canadian property. But to conscript property itself at less than its full market value these same people regard as a hideous suggestion. Human life is never regarded as sacred as property and wealth. When the time comes that human life is valued more highly than property wars will be a thing of the past.

But whether or not the vacant land is conscripted at less than its market value a solution of the land question must come and very soon. The first move on the part of the Dominion Government should be to have an accurate survey made of the idle land in Western Canada within reasonable access of railways and the other facilities of civilization. This can be done quickly and at low cost as the municipalities already have the information. The next step should be to close absolutely the homestead lands and permit