

The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, July 17, 1918

Look Ahead

It is now quite evident that the western grain crop this season, despite the excellent preparations that were made for it last autumn and this spring, will be very light. Drouth in Saskatchewan and Alberta, and to a less extent in Manitoba, has seriously affected the harvest for this year. Many districts will not have sufficient grain to provide seed for the crop of 1919, and the same conditions which have militated against cereal production have also injured the prospect of abundant supplies of feed grain and pasturage for livestock. In the face of this indisputable damage to its crop of 1918, the West with true western zeal and spirit will now begin to think only of the need of making due preparations for the season of 1919. Under no circumstances, should the Canadian west be permitted to recede from the strong agricultural position which has been gained through the successes of the past three seasons.

The first thing that should be done is to secure the livestock industry of the West against serious depletion. Capital holdings of cattle, sheep and hogs must be retained at all costs in the interests of the country, if not in the interests of the individual. The situation is not really as bad as it was in 1914, because there is money in the country with which to do things that ought to be done. Where herds of livestock are in danger through lack of feed, supplies of feed should be taken to them, or the animals should be taken immediately to districts where sustenance can be given them. Dominion and provincial governments must cooperate to give the country this security.

Secondly, every farmer whose supply of seed grain for next year has been endangered by crop failure, ought to be given assurance that he is free to go ahead with the cultivation of his land for 1919, and that seed grain will be provided for him in due time. Fortunately, crop conditions in the United States are more favorable than they are in Canada, and arrangements can be made early to reserve sufficient quantities of good seed to provide for the needs of next spring, before determining what the exportable surplus of cereals from North America shall be. It ought to be remembered that after the disastrous drouth of 1914 in the West came 1915 with its unprecedented abundance of grain. The great harvest of 1915 was due in no small measure to the fact that as soon as the damage of the previous summer became apparent, the farmer commenced to plow under his devastated areas, and to cultivate his land for the following spring. The land was prepared, and, in the idle months which followed, its stores of moisture were replenished. It was an ideal seed-bed that received the crop of 1915. The chances are that history will repeat itself in 1918 and 1919 if proper precautions are taken at once by the governments and the people. The watchword of the West during the coming months must be "forward," and there can be no regrets.

Meeting the Manufacturers

At the annual meeting of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association in Montreal last month, President S. K. Parsons devoted his annual address largely to the tariff. He also emphasized the need of a clearer understanding between the farmers and manufacturers and suggested a conference. R. McKenzie, vice-president of the Canadian Council of Agriculture, who attended the manufacturers' meeting, approved of the con-

ference. At the regular meeting of the Canadian Council of Agriculture in Winnipeg two weeks ago it was decided to accept the manufacturers' proposal of a conference. The council will hold another meeting in Winnipeg late in October or early in November and if that date is suitable it is expected that a conference between the farmers and manufacturers will be held. It will be remembered that the one and only conference between the organized manufacturers and the organized farmers of Canada was held in Winnipeg in November, 1914. While the conference was not open to the public it is betraying no secret to say that the tariff was the chief subject under discussion at that time. The farmers presented their case very clearly and showed that owing to the protective tariff they were paying greatly-enhanced prices on practically everything they purchased, either for their household or for the conducting of their agricultural or for their agricultural operations. At that conference, the manufacturers did not go into any of the details of the tariff.

The general plan at present in the minds of those who desire this conference is that all parties shall "place their cards upon the table." There are quite a number of manufacturers who are not satisfied with the present tariff. They feel that changes should be made. There are other manufacturers who are quite prepared to have the duty removed from their manufactured goods provided they are able to get their raw materials at the same time without paying duty. There are also a number of manufacturers who are not prepared to admit that anything is wrong with the present tariff. They think it is about as nearly perfect as it can be made and they maintain all the protective element in it is necessary if Canada is to retain her manufacturing industries.

There is, however, an element among the organized manufacturers who realize that the people of Canada who pay the tariff—enhanced prices, and the farmers in particular, are entitled to more information on the subject than they have hitherto received. They realize that the present law which permits manufacturers to raise their prices higher than they could raise them in an open market cannot endure without justification. The farmers of Canada carry the heavy end of the protective tariff burden. They are the manufacturers' biggest customers. They are entitled to know why these tariff-enhanced prices are necessary. The leaders of the organized manufacturers have expressed their intention of coming to the conference and of placing all the facts at their disposal, fully and frankly before the organized farmers. Such a course cannot but be productive of good results and a clearer understanding.

Mr. Parsons, in his address laid down the principle that even though the conference were held it must be understood that the tariff must be maintained. This is hardly in keeping with the intention to bring out all the facts, and examine fully the present situation. The farmers are quite as much entitled to attend the conference with a determination that no matter what the facts show, the tariff must be absolutely abolished. If the two parties attend the meeting in that attitude there is very little advantage in holding such a conference. It would be far more productive of results if the conference were to take the form of an enquiry into the facts, and following that, if there were to be no agreement, each party would still be free to pursue its own course as at present.

Rural Credit Conference

At the request of the Western Bankers' Association, the Canadian Council of Agriculture has appointed a committee to confer with that body on the question of rural credits. At the present time, Manitoba has a Rural Credit Act under which a number of rural credit societies are operating. The money is borrowed from chartered banks and loaned to the farmers through the rural credit society. The bank thus has the security of the entire subscribed capital of the society for its loans. The rate of interest is six per cent. Alberta has an act very similar to that of Manitoba, but is not so far advanced as Manitoba in the organization of societies. Saskatchewan has not yet made any movement in the direction of short term credits. The committee appointed by the Canadian Council will discuss the whole question of rural credit societies with the Bankers' Association. The bankers at present have some objections to the Manitoba and Alberta acts.

It will be the purpose of the organized farmers' representatives to confer with the bankers and, while protecting the farmers' interests, endeavor to find out the most satisfactory method of handling rural credit societies. The future steady and rapid development of this western country, particularly the rural portions, depends largely upon the volume and terms of short-term credit. The banks are the only medium through which that short-term credit can be secured. The rural credit society plan offers the best scheme yet discovered for the extension of credit to farmers. The scheme is yet in its experimental stage but it is full of promise for western agriculture.

Shipbuilding in Canada

An interesting survey of the shipbuilding industry in Canada is contained in a special article which appears on page seven of this week's issue, from the pen of E. W. Reynolds, who is the industrial editor of The Globe, Toronto. This article not only shows what has been done in the shipyards of this country to meet the demands of war during the past four years, but it points to a permanent revival of shipbuilding in Canada, as a means of securing the commercial welfare of the Dominion after the war has been concluded. It is to this latter phase of shipbuilding in Canada that The Guide desires to pay special attention.

Hon. C. C. Ballantyne, minister of marine and fisheries, at the recent session of federal parliament, succeeded in having a government appropriation of some \$30,000,000 devoted to the maintenance of 14 shipbuilding yards throughout Canada. It was pointed out that these 14 yards would produce 250,000 tons of ships in one year, and that as far as possible all materials and equipment would be found in Canada. It was provided that the rolling of steel plates for the ships should be done in Nova Scotia, presumably in the plant operated and controlled by Col. Thomas Cantley, at New Glasgow. Engines and boilers will be provided from another source; and altogether, supplies will be assembled and distributed in sufficient quantities to engage the energies of 14 shipyards scattered at various intervals all the way across Canada, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Steel plates rolled in Nova Scotia will go into ships made in yards at Vancouver and Victoria, B.C. The wooden boats, of course, can be manufactured more economically than those made of steel.