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EDITORIAL

The Damage by Smut

More than the ordinary amount of smut is to be found in the wheat crop this year. The cause of this is not known but a liberal exchange of opinion upon the matter might make it more plain. Smut is not a mysterious visitation of Providence although it develops in accordance to Providential Laws. It grows much like a plant grows, only its food is plant sap instead of food derived directly from the ground. It cannot develop unless the spore (seed) is present with the grain seed at sowing time, and if the seed grain is properly treated there will be no source from which smut could spring. Of course the condition of the vitality of the crop makes a difference in the extent of the damage by smut, and the weather has an effect upon the vigor of the crop, but there is only one direct source of smut, and that is smut spores. There may possibly be a limit of the increase in smut in the fact that more formaline was used last spring than ever before, and being more new than bluestone, in the hands of those using it, may not have been as carefully handled. Or it may be possible that all the formaline sold was not up to the full strength. The loss from smut has been quite heavy and anything that can be done to lessen the loss next year should not be neglected.

Bolstering the Woolen Trade

It has often been noticed that for every advantage gained through a raising of the tariff or other artificial impediment to the free play of natural forces in trade, there has been required a corresponding expenditure of energy or money in the opposite direction to maintain a balance. For instance when a Canadian farmer becomes convinced that a tariff on sugar would deliver into the hands of Canadian sugar factories a larger market, and therefore enable the factory owners to pay a larger price for sugar beets, he is confronted on the other hand with the fact that he will have to pay more for the sugar he uses. To extricate himself from this dilemma the farmer must grow more sugar in his beets than he requires for his own use, and every farmer and every one who used sugar would have to do this to avoid an injustice, and this is an impossibility.

This same logic applies in the discussion of every article upon which the government is urged to increase the duty. The latest appeal for public sympathy is in the interests of the woolen industry. A pamphlet is circulated showing how if a higher duty were put upon woolen manufactured goods a greater demand would be created for wool, farmers would go more extensively into sheep raising and therefore the manufacturing and farming interests would prosper. If a man is a sheep farmer such a scheme would appeal to him and a proselyte to the doctrine of protection is made. In the meantime all other farmers and citizens who are not sheep farmers would pay extra for their clothing. The foundation of the woolen trade and the sheep industry would be laid on the unstable whim of a political platform. No business worthy of the name should be attempted on such a wobbly basis.

Going farther afield the same illogical argument that is advanced in the case of woollens and sugar, is applied to machinery, lumber, cottons, etc., until through the multiplicity of interests involved it is expected that every one will be advocates of the policy of protecting our markets for those who are within our own national boundaries to explain. The question is where is this policy of protection to stop. At present there is an element arguing for more, and an element resisting

any increase under our present system and being in the company we are, as a nation, a certain degree of protection is made necessary, but we must not forget that the whole tendency of protection is to limit trade, and that tariffs always add to the cost of the goods they are framed to protect, and constitute class legislation. If they did not, they would not be levied. This brings us back to one of the principles we have been advocating for years, namely, that every operation in manufacture and distribution should be free from artificial impediments; or in other words, natural forces in trade should be given free play.

After-Harvest Cultivation

After-harvest cultivation of the stubble, if one has time to do it, is one of the best means of holding weeds down. The trouble, however, is to find time to work up the land after the grain is off in the fall. Most farmers, as quickly as the land is cleared and threshing finished, commence fall plowing, and the time that intervenes between the finish of harvest and freezing up is all too short for this most important work, without shortening it by discing, cultivating, or ganging before getting at the fall plowing at all. At the same time there is no discounting the value of cultivating the land previous to fall plowing, of getting it worked up just as soon after harvest as time and working facilities will permit, so as to give weed seeds, lying on the surface of the ground, an opportunity to germinate and thus open the way for a cleaner crop next year.

Most of the troublesome weeds, wild oats and French weed for example, are dead ripe and the seed, a good part of it, on the ground long before the grain is cut. Some of it of course will be buried so deeply that it will not germinate the following spring at all, but it will be in the earth, a second plowing turns it up to, or near, the surface, when growth is made and the damage done. For the control of weeds it is important that as much cultivation as possible be given the land between cutting and fall plowing. The question is how is the average farmer going to get his stubble land cultivated before fall plowing? The average farmer spends most of the early fall, threshing his own or his neighbor's crop. His land is not clear for cultivation of any kind until long after the season when shallow cultivation for weed eradication would be of much value.

Some farmers manage to accomplish it all right. But there are few who do. Some seem able to get threshed off early, right out of the shock, and can go ahead immediately either plowing the stubble outright, or skimming it over with a disc or something that will cover up the weed seeds on the surface and give the sun, air and rains a chance to do their part in weed destruction. Others again practice following the binder with the discs or cultivator, working up the space between the sheaves and standing grain, round and round the field, following the swath the machine is taking, until when the field is cut it is also disced and the shocks standing on the cultivated ground. It requires an extra outfit of horses for each binder to do this, and a man in most cases to drive, though we saw a farmer the other day handling a six horse cutting and cultivating outfit, three on the binder and three leading behind on the discs. He would have been better, however, to have had an extra man or boy with the second outfit.

On most farms over a good part of the West, the soil may be worked up readily by discs after the binder like this, weed seeds turned under, and as good work done in the way of weed destruction as farmers in the east and south accomplish with gang plows. Our lands for the most part are open and loose. It is a question of time with us, but some men seem to be getting around this lack of time in early fall, and are making a partial summer fallow of their stubble land each year. It is a good practice.

Equal Freight Rates a Fallacy

It is being proposed in connection with the scheme for government packing plants in Alberta, that the prices paid farmers for hogs should be the same at all points in the province, a certain flat rate to cover freight being charged up against the business and all farmers selling hogs, no matter where they lived, paying the same freight rate to the factory. That is to say, a man living twenty miles from the factory would pay the same freight charges as the man living two hundred miles or so away, if hogs were shipped that distance. A proposal such as this is likely to be popular, especially in districts distant from the plant, but being economically unsound and manifestly unfair, it is not likely to work to the advantage of the government factories, if they are established.

Raw material has to stand its own cost for carriage to the point of manufacture. It doesn't make any difference whether the material in question is hogs, sawlogs or grain. From whatever source, it sells in its ultimate market, providing it is similar in quality, at precisely the same figure as the same material sells for that is produced near at hand. And it bears the cost itself of its carriage thither. The manufacturer who undertook to buy his raw material at a certain flat rate everywhere, and charged up against the business the cost of freighting that material to his factory, would quickly discover that in the distant field alone could he meet the competition of rival concerns, and his business would dwindle to that trade only. Competitors could pay more for raw material in his immediate district than he could. He would either be forced out of business, or brought to a common-sense understanding of the case. It is the same in any industry where competition exists. Competition itself produces this condition of affairs. It is the same whether the interests concurred are private or public. It is one of the fundamental principles of trade that materials shall bear their own charges of transport and manufacturing.

It is reasonable to presume that the government packing establishments, if they are started, will have to compete with existing packing concerns and others that may subsequently be projected. The government will be in precisely the same position as a private company. It will cost as much to build a government packing plant as any other, as much to operate it, and the factory will have to meet competition in the trade both in buying hogs, and selling its bacon, lard, etc., just as existing factories in the trade do, or are supposed to do now. In the circumstance we are dealing with then, the business would resolve itself into this: Competing packing establishments would overbid every government packing plant in its home field, and force it back on the distant districts for supplies. It would be necessary either for the government plant to change its system of buying, or go out of business entirely. No manufacturing concern could stand if operated on those principles. They are economically unsound.

We are not going to use space discussing whether a farmer living several hundred miles away from a pork packing establishment has a moral right to receive for his hogs a price equal to that received by a man next door to the plant. If there are any moral rights in the case, then the men who came in here and pioneered this country, broke up the farms that now adjoin our thriving towns and cities, built up these places and made the country what it is, have all the moral rights that are needed to entitle them to reap now some privileges for their earlier hardships and labor. If living in the vicinity of a pork packing plant can be called a privilege, which it evidently is in this case. But it is not a question of moral rights or anything else but straight business. A man farming high priced land has generally some privileges that his less favorably situated