

The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, January 17th, 1912

FORWARD THE "STEAL" BRIGADE!

Just at the present time all the heavy artillery of the steel industry of Canada is being brought to bear upon the Dominion government. The steel magnates are camping in Ottawa and sending delegations to meet the government. They are travelling over Canada in their palatial private cars and entertaining lavishly. It might be expected from their activities that these steel barons were interested in the manufacture of steel. But such is hardly the case. The manufacture of steel and iron is a side line with them. The chief business in which they seem to be engaged is in tapping the public till in the shape of bounties. Already they have taken \$7,000,000 in hard cash of the people's money right out of the federal treasury, in addition to tariff protection and other special privileges. Public opinion became so incensed at this outrage that the late government was compelled to stop the payment of bounties. Now the steel barons are trying to force the new government to give way to them and to allow them to plunder the country again. If the people of Canada sit quietly by, the government may yield to the pressure of the steel magnates, but if popular opinion is sufficiently strong no more bounties will be paid. This steel industry is already so strong that it can compete all over the world with the United States steel trust, and evidence is that it has sold its rails cheaper in India and Australia than in Canada. To continue the payment of bounties is nothing short of picking the pockets of the Canadian people under cover of the law. These same steel barons spend a part of the money they get out of the government in carrying on a campaign in favor of high protection. Thus the people of Canada are compelled by law to provide the money which is used to keep them in bondage to protection. It would be cheaper for Canada to give the steel barons a title and a pension for life and close down the steel plants than to continue the outrageous system of bounties, which has been carried on in the past. If every reader of The Guide who agrees with what we have written will write to Hon. W. T. White, Minister of Finance, Ottawa, and set forth the reasons why no more steel bounties should be given, it would have a good effect. The time is short and it is only a matter of a few weeks until we know whether the people of Canada are to be saddled with another "steal" bill or not.

A MILLION FOR MANITOBA

On January 12 an organization was completed in Winnipeg, entitled the "Million for Manitoba League," and composed of the lieutenant-governor and representatives from the leading public bodies, as well as from the various cities and towns throughout the province. It was a representative gathering and their object was a most commendable one. The population of Manitoba has not increased as much as its abundant natural resources would warrant. The new organization decided to prepare illustrated literature, setting forth the great opportunity of farm and commercial pursuits in the province, and to conduct an advertising campaign throughout the United States and the Old Country to induce people to come and settle in the province of Manitoba. We would not in any way disparage the efforts of these gentlemen, but we would point out that they all took it for granted that conditions in Manitoba were quite satisfactory, whereas they will find that the lack of growth in population is due to fundamental inequalities of opportunities offered. Their campaign

will result chiefly in increasing the population of Winnipeg, which is already too large in proportion to the population of the province. Such an organization as the one formed the other evening should rather seek to eradicate the disease than to gloss over the defects. If this organization had studied the situation carefully, they would have seen that the cheap and fertile land which the province has to offer is completely discounted by the various handicaps placed upon the farmer. The principle of "all the traffic will bear" is carried out in the West to such an extent that the farmer reaps little special benefit from the opportunities extended to him. If this new organization would devote itself to eradicating the weeds that infest the farm lands of Manitoba, to the introduction of the Single Tax and the elimination of the land speculators, to the reduction of freight rates and telegraph tolls, to the inauguration of a system of cheap agricultural credit, to the conservation of the natural resources of the province for the benefit of the people, and to the opening up of the very best markets for farm produce, they would be doing more to accomplish their purpose than in any other way. No doubt if this proposition had been placed before the organization it would have been scouted as visionary, but we submit that it is merely good common sense. The only way to get people to come and live on farm lands in Manitoba is to give them some kind of a square deal after they get here.

FREIGHT RATE INVESTIGATION

The Board of Railway Commissioners have yielded to the pressure of public opinion and last week they announced that they would make a general enquiry and investigation into all freight rates in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. The first sitting of the board in this investigation will be in Ottawa on February 13 to decide upon the course of procedure. The vast importance to Western Canada of this action on the part of the Railway Commission cannot be over-estimated. The Guide has been assisting in this fight for reasonable freight rates for a long time, and it is hoped that the result of the investigation will mean a great reduction in rates. The organized farmers will, undoubtedly be asked to give evidence before the Railway Commission, as well as the various boards of trade throughout the West. This investigation will not be conducted in a hurry, but probably will require the greater part of 1912 before results are secured. If the freight rates in the West, as an outcome of this enquiry, are made as reasonable as those in the East and to the South, the people of Western Canada will have great cause for self-congratulation. The excessive freight charges prevailing in the West help to raise the cost of living for every family in the country, and it is therefore a matter of vital importance to every individual. It will be remembered that after the enquiry into express rates, the Railway Commissioners decided that the rates in the West should be sixty-six and two-thirds per cent. higher than in the East. It is to be hoped that they do not arrive at any such conclusion in regard to freight rates.

F. W. Thompson, vice-president of the Ogilvie Milling company, suggests an export duty on the higher grades of wheat to keep it in the country for seed. Hasn't the farmer been getting it heavy enough with duties in all directions without taking another toll out of his wheat?

BETTER AGRICULTURAL CREDIT

One of the most serious handicaps in the agricultural development of Western Canada is the high cost of living. This is felt in every part of the West, but falls heaviest upon new settlers. Considering the importance and magnitude of the agricultural industry in the three Prairie Provinces, and that agriculture is the foundation of Western progress, it is distinctly in the interest of every citizen to encourage farming. Too much importance is attached to free or cheap land. It is quite possible that the benefit of cheap land might be entirely discounted by other handicaps. No person will maintain that the interest charges which the farmers today pay are satisfactory, except to the man to whom they are paid. Money borrowed from the bank costs the farmer from eight to ten per cent. Mortgages on his land cost him seven and eight per cent. in addition to a very heavy initial charge. The implement companies selling their products to the farmer on long terms necessarily have to charge substantial rates of interest which run from eight to twelve per cent., but these implement firms would undoubtedly welcome any system which would enable the farmer to pay cash for his purchases. The same applies to the local merchants who charge from eight to twelve per cent. on overdue bills. There seems no good reason why these high rates of interest should exist. All over Canada people are depositing money in the savings department of the chartered banks and receiving three per cent. upon it. This money totals hundreds of millions of dollars, and it is loaned out again by the bank to the farmers at from eight to ten per cent. The chartered banks of Canada during the past year have made from twenty to twenty-five per cent. profit on their business. There is no reason why all of this money in the banks could not be handled profitably at a margin of two per cent., which would make it far easier and far more satisfactory to the public. Again, the Dominion government has a very large sum of money deposited in the postal savings department, which is paying the depositors only three per cent. Untold millions of money in the Old Country are drawing from two and a half to three per cent. on deposit. Our big railway companies, with the backing of our provincial and federal governments, can raise the money at four per cent. or less. Other big industries can do likewise, and there is no reason why farmers should not have the same privilege, when they could secure it through the co-operation of their governments. This system is being worked out successfully in Australia, New Zealand, Germany, France, Ireland and other countries. We believe that great improvements can be made in the situation in Canada, and henceforth The Guide will endeavor to place before the farmers valuable information upon this subject.

THE PARCELS POST

In this country, where settlement is spread over a vast area and where immense distances have to be contended with in the carrying on of trade and commerce, it is of great importance that the transportation of goods of every class and description should be conducted at the lowest possible cost. The question of freight rates is now receiving greater attention than ever before, and there is reason to hope that as a result of the enquiry to be opened by the Railway Commission on February 13 some reductions of the tariffs now charged in Western Canada will be secured. Only less important is the cost of carrying small consignments such as are handled by express companies. So