

# Farmer's Advocate

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### EDITORIAL

#### Manitoba Agricultural Societies Handicapped.

The question has been asked us why the farmers of Manitoba display so little interest in the field grain competitions that have been held during the past two years. In Saskatchewan these are regarded as of greater educational value than summer fairs and certain it is they tend more to foster the most important industry of the country than any other single institution. But the trouble in Manitoba is not that the farmers do not appreciate the value of field grain competitions or of seed fairs, nor that they consider their summer fairs capable of rendering sufficient encouragement to those who excel in the growing of crops or raising of stock. The system of organization for the holding of such good aids to farming as institute meetings, field grain competitions, seed fairs, and the ordinary fairs is so irrational, cumbersome and ineffective that these institutions simply languish. The trouble begins with the act respecting agricultural societies under which agricultural institutions must operate in order to partake of the financial assistance voted by the Legislative Assembly. According to this act it is not possible for an agricultural society to receive a grant of more than three hundred and fifty dollars, except in rare cases, but through a special act of the Legislature, grants may be made in aid of exhibitions, as for example, those at Winnipeg, Brandon, Portage la Prairie and Minnedosa. Nor is the act simply ineffective to assist field grain competitions it practically discourages such work by not including it in the list of enterprises upon which an agricultural society may expend its energy and money. On the other hand it seeks to establish agricultural fairs at every point where an agricultural society is formed. Clearly the act does not provide for the carrying out of the aims and objects of the members of agricultural societies nor of the ideals of the officers of the department of agriculture.

Although comparisons are odious, still we may be excused if the Manitoba act is compared in some of its more pertinent features with that of Saskatchewan. In the new province the act makes provision for the disbursement of a total of \$1,386 to each society that engages in all the lines of work which an organization of farmers might reasonably turn their hands to, such as the holding of institute meetings, fairs, field grain competitions, stock judging competitions, seed fairs and co-operative experiments. For grain field competitions where prizes amounting to not less than \$100 are given the provincial government makes a grant of \$100 and this is practically the reason Saskatchewan had some fifty to sixty societies engaging in seed grain field competitions this season as compared with only one society in Manitoba.

In addition also to the hindrance which the act puts upon the work of agricultural societies in Manitoba there is the further drawback, that there is no official of the department of agriculture whose whole interest is centered in the work of societies and farmers' institutes. This was plainly evident this last summer by the lack of organization and interest which characterized the farmers institute "campaign" in June. Arrangements were hurried, the convenience of the members of societies was scarcely consulted, and their co-operation apparently not earnestly solicited to make the meetings a success, hence the whole series with but very few exceptions, fell flat. Last winter, when representatives of agricultural societies met in convention at the college, a resolution was carried asking the government to

appoint an official as superintendent of the fairs and institutes, so that these organizations might be made of more value to the agricultural community. The resolution was acted upon, but as is too often the case, the best horse gets the extra work and the office was thrust upon Principal Black, an already too much over-worked man. No one blames Principal Black because Manitoba agricultural societies cannot participate in a grant to hold seed grain field competitions, nor because the farmers' institutes are not the vital force they should be. The trouble rests with the act which needs amending, and with the department of agriculture in which there should be found an enthusiastic, competent, official in charge of the administration of the act. The part that members should play is to recommend amendments to the act at their annual meeting and forward these recommendations to their members of the Legislature together with a letter urging their support.

#### Harvest Home on the Coast.

The Pacific slope country has been holding its fairs the past few weeks amid ordinarily favorable weather conditions and attended by large crowds of exhibitors and interested spectators. Agricultural work on the coast is peculiarly of a class that easily contributes to the holding of exhibitions. There is no long-continued pull to gather in a crop before frost sets in as there is in our prairie farming. The crops of the coast are those which are naturally suggested by the term "harvest home"; fruits, vegetables, field roots, hay and grain, all grown in such quantities that their handling does not demand prolonged exertion. Stock also is a prominent feature of the coast agriculture. The farms there closely resemble those of eastern Canada and parts of Great Britain. An attempt is made to raise practically everything of which a soil is capable of producing. The nature of the distribution of population in British Columbia and the natural resources of the country makes it imperative that this shall be the case. The cities constitute the larger part of the market and first aim of the farmer is to supply what his nearest city demands. Agricultural products, if we except fruits, are not exported in very large quantities. The system of farming is intensive and each farm is somewhat of a demonstration plot of the possibilities of the country. The cultivated areas of British Columbia increase slowly for many very good reasons, first, because the area suitable for cultivation is not extensive, and second, because it requires a lot of labor to prepare the land for crops. Hence, although the province is growing rapidly her consuming classes keep pace with the producing and good markets are a usual circumstance. Fruit is one of the largest commodities produced and although the export surplus has to bear an enormous charge for express and freight before it reaches its market it still is one of the most profitable products grown. The agricultural and horticultural potentialities of British Columbia may be said to be scarcely discovered. The valleys already settled and planted have not reached their maximum yield and there are others whose fertility is still locked in forest fastness. The opening up of the interior of British Columbia will be the great agricultural pioneering task of the present century.

#### Honey and Wormwood.

Our great corporation, the C.P.R., has aroused a mood in the public mind that cannot possibly result in good to itself. The western public, while recognizing the service the company has been to the country and taking a certain pride in it as a creature essentially of western enterprise, at the same time remembers that its proud place in the world of commerce, industry, and finance is due wholly, directly and indirectly, to the patron-

age of the producing classes in the country which it serves. The declaration of the president of the company in his annual address that one-twelfth of the people of Canada were dependent upon the C. P. R. was honey to the officials but wormwood to the supporters of the company and would have been better left unsaid. And in proof of the old adage that "it never rains but it pours," the manager of the telegraph department of the company deliberately antagonizes every citizen who is not a stockholder. The public has been patient with the shortcomings of the C. P. R. because it has difficulties peculiarly its own, but when in this tolerant mood does not like to be reminded patronizingly of its contributions to corporation building. Nor is the C. P. R. within the range of truth and justice when it claims to be the dispenser of livelihoods to a large part of the population, it rather depends upon the population for its existence. The statements of public men are taken seriously and should be weighed carefully.

#### Analysis of the Cattle Trade.

In this issue, Mr. Root, of Red Deer, gives us some data upon the shipment of steers which he and some neighbors made to Chicago last month and while not wishing to disparage their efforts to secure higher prices for their cattle and to demonstrate the fact that prices in western Canada are too low we feel convinced that Chicago is not the natural market for western Canadian beef. In examining Mr. Root's figures it is plain that Chicago prices are higher than Winnipeg's but we also have to take into consideration that Chicago is nearer the world's markets than is Winnipeg. A fair comparison would be Chicago prices with the value of steers on the Canadian side about eight to ten hundred miles east of Winnipeg, or Winnipeg prices plus the freight for this distance which would be about fifty cents per hundred weight, or at least thirty-two according to the trial shipment. On such a basis Winnipeg prices would still be below Chicago's but not enough to warrant the paying of duty into the American market. The most obvious fact about the experiment is that the American duty upon Canadian cattle is more beneficial to Canadian dealers than it is to American cattlemen, especially when it is considered that a lot of the cattle, such as our ranchers are selling this fall, are being taken by corn belt farmers for short keeps. The American tariff however, is something over which we have no control.

If we enquire more closely for the reason why prices on the American side are higher than values on our side, the same distance from Liverpool, where actual values are fixed, we will find that several conditions contribute to the circumstance; first, that the smaller volume of trade on this side makes it impossible to maintain as active a market; second, that because marketing is so irregular the packing houses cannot afford to pay as high prices as they could with regular supplies; and third, that a combination of circumstances enables buyers to conduct their businesses with the minimum expense of competition. The cure for these ills of the trade is not easily discovered or applied. There is one fact of economics, however, that cannot be ignored, and that is, that a good market is to a large extent dependent upon a high quality of produce, in other words, high prices in a market are due largely to the demand upon the commodity handled for export purposes. This implies that producers must not neglect their share in creating a market. Another factor that will have to be employed in improving our cattle prices is the more general practice of freezing and canning meats for distant shipments, and again the making of economical use of offal. As far as Winnipeg