

The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, April 21st, 1915

THEY CANNOT ANSWER

From letters which we have received during the past two or three weeks, it is evident that a large number of our readers have acted on our suggestion, and have written to Premier Borden and the Hon. W. T. White asking for advice as to their duty as patriotic citizens in view of the recent increase in the tariff. The letters given below are typical of those which have been sent to Sir Robert Borden and Mr. White, and the replies which those gentlemen have made:

Sir Robert Borden, M.P.,
Prime Minister of Canada, Ottawa.

Dear Sir:—Will you kindly advise me which you consider more patriotic, to buy manufactured articles which are imported, so as to help increase the revenues of the Government, or to buy the made-in-Canada goods, and thereby help to give employment to workmen?

Also do you think the Canadian manufacturers will take advantage of the new customs duties to increase their prices on their products?

These are questions I am being asked daily by members of the United Farmers of Alberta, and they are very hard questions for me to answer, and I would therefore like your views on the subject.

Yours respectfully,

W. D. TREGO,
Corresponding Secretary, Gleichen Union
No. 96.
March 12th, 1915.

The same letter was addressed by Mr. Trego to the Finance Minister. The Prime Minister's reply was as follows:

W. D. Trego, Esq., Gleichen, Alberta.

My Dear Sir:—I beg to acknowledge your letter of the 12th instant. The interesting question which you propound is one upon which every man must form his own opinion, and I leave it entirely to your own good judgment.

Believe me,

Yours faithfully,

R. L. BORDEN.

Ottawa, Ont., 20th March, 1915.

The Minister of Finance replied thru his secretary as follows:

W. D. Trego, Esq., Gleichen, Alberta.

Dear Sir:—In reply to your letter of the 12th instant, and by direction of the Minister of Finance, I am sending you herewith a copy of his speech in the House of Commons on the 10th instant in connection with the budget.

Yours truly,

R. B. VIETS,

Private Secretary.

Ottawa, March 22nd, 1915.

It will be seen that both the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance are unable to give an answer to this question. They must by this time realize, if they did not realize it before, the absolute contradiction which exists between the two purposes of the tariff policy which they maintain. The tariff was increased at the recent war session for the purpose, according to the Finance Minister, of increasing the revenue from customs duties, and at the same time, he expressed the hope, that it would encourage home industry, and increase the demand for Canadian-made goods. The plainest farmer in the country can see readily enough that if home industry is encouraged and Canadian-made goods are purchased in preference to imported articles, the revenue of the country must suffer, and that the accomplishment of one purpose of the tariff means the defeat of the other. The Guide, of course, believes that the customs tariff should be abolished, and the public revenues raised by direct taxation, which would enable us to buy "Made in Canada" goods, and at the same time pay our share of the

taxes required for the carrying on of the public business and the prosecution of the war. It would be interesting to know what Sir Wilfrid Laurier's views are upon the question, and we would suggest that our readers ask the same question of the Leader of the Liberal Party, and let us have his reply. Address him, "Rt. Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, M.P., House of Commons, Ottawa."

THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY

Letters to hand in the past few weeks indicate that there is already a serious determination on the part of a number of farmers, in at least four federal constituencies in the Prairie Provinces, to nominate and elect independent candidates. It is quite within the power of the Western farmers to elect candidates independent of both political parties, if they set about it in real earnest. The first essential is to find a good candidate. He must be a man who honestly believes in the principles of democracy, such as the organized farmers are contending for. He should be completely in touch with the work of the organized farmers, and should be able to discuss their problems upon the public platform. Furthermore, the candidate should have the courage to stand up for what he believes at all times and in all places. The organized farmers have repeatedly laid their demands before both parties, but have received no redress. There is now no hope for redress, except to elect men who will stand up in Parliament and speak, fight and vote all the time for democracy. It is an error to suppose that only the farmers have lost faith in the Liberal and Conservative parties. There are thousands of men in the Prairie Provinces of all occupations and professions who are utterly disgusted with corporation and boss rule, such as we have had for the past twenty years at Ottawa. These men will gladly unite with the farmers in support of truly democratic candidates. For this reason it would probably not be wise to nominate distinctly "Grain Grower" or "Farmer" candidates but straight "Free Trade" candidates. By so doing the entire force of democratic opinion in the West would be united, and the Grain Growers' Association, as an organization, would not be carried into the stress and struggle of political warfare. In simple form the democratic principles for which the organized farmers have long contended are as follows:

1. Free Trade.
2. Direct Taxes on Land Values.
3. Graduated Income Tax.
4. Direct Legislation.
5. Woman Suffrage.
6. No more public aid to Railways.
7. Reform of the Banking Laws.
8. Co-operative Legislation.
9. Reduction in freight and express rates.
10. Take the Civil Service out of politics.

These are mighty problems, but they must be solved if Canada is ever to become a land of contented and prosperous people. Half-way measures will no longer suffice. The axe must be applied to the root of the evil. But the farmers must face the fact that the fight will be long, hard and costly. The enemy is powerfully entrenched, and has endless money at its command.

Men who support an independent candidate must be willing and prepared to give of their time and money whatever is necessary to see that the candidate is elected. But tho the fight will be costly it will pay in the end, because under the present system every family is being robbed of at least \$200 a year for the benefit of the privileged few, and the burden is being increased yearly.

PROGRESSIVE IDEAS AT OTTAWA

Altho reactionary forces are at present in control of both political parties at Ottawa, the past session of the federal parliament has not been without some signs of the growth of progressive ideas. For the first time, as far as we are aware, the taxation of land values was advocated in the House of Commons as a means of raising federal revenues. The member who had the honor to bring this proposal before the house was Thomas MacNutt, M.P. for Saltcoats, Sask., who read to the house the resolution of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association in favor of this form of taxation and referred to the passage of similar resolutions by the U.F.A. and the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association. Dr. Michael Clark, M.P. for Red Deer, Alta., also spoke in favor of land value taxation, and other Western members have intimated their support of the principle thru the press. The Finance Minister, tho he had been sent copies of the resolutions passed by the Manitoba and Alberta conventions, did not refer to the proposals of the organized farmers in his first speech on the budget, but at a later stage of the debate, after Mr. MacNutt had called the matter to his attention, he stated that the proposal was not practical as a means of raising immediate revenues because the taxes on land due to the municipalities were in arrears and could not be collected in many cases without selling the property at a tax sale. This, however, is not a valid objection to a tax on land values. Under the new taxes which have just been imposed any person who neglects to pay the tax of 2 cents upon a check is liable to a fine of \$50, while a letter or post-card which does not bear the extra war stamp is sent to the dead letter office. The customs law does not permit an importer to take his goods out of the customs house without first paying the duty, and if he cannot pay the duty, which may amount to one-third or one-half the value of the goods, they are forfeited and sold by auction. It would be a good thing if a lot of the vacant land on which taxes are unpaid were put up for sale without waiting for two years or more, as is usually done by the municipal authorities. In most cases the taxes would be immediately paid, and where the sale actually took place, it would enable farmers who need more land for the raising of crops to get it at a more reasonable price. So far as the farmers are concerned they need not fear the taxation of land values. There is far more land in Western Canada held by speculators than by farmers, and the speculator is the man who would pay more under land value taxation. The farmer is paying more than his share now, thru the taxes on manufactured articles, and if he were relieved of the burden imposed by the tariff he could well afford to pay a little more taxes on his land.