

Farmer's Advocate

and Home Journal

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July 24, 1907

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA.

Vol. XLII. No. 774

EDITORIAL

Grain Conference Resolutions Disposed of.

The date of the conference of all the interests represented in the grain trade of Manitoba is not so far past but that most of our readers will remember the resolutions that were adopted and that a legislative committee was appointed to bring these resolutions before the provincial and federal Parliaments. The committee met representatives of the Manitoba Government, Messrs. Roblin, Rodgers, Howden and McInnes, on the 12th inst., to lay before them the wishes of the majority of the convention. One by one the resolutions with which the provincial Government had authority to deal were laid before the Government and disposed of. The result was not satisfactory to the representatives of the producing element of the grain trade. In short, the Government took a different view from that of the majority of the convention and declined to act upon any of the resolutions presented. During the same week the Railway Commission also sat in Winnipeg and heard arguments for the enforcing of the principle of reciprocal demurrage and decided against it. This disposes of all the resolutions of the convention except those memorializing the Dominion Government to amend the Grain Act and operate terminal elevators at the lake front. The action of the provincial Government and the Railway Commission practically relegates for the time being the complaints of the producers as represented by the reeves and the Grain Growers' Association, to the sphere of local agitation, and as they are likely to come up again and again until some modification in conditions is secured, it might be well to recount some of the reasons here for their existence.

The contention is advanced by a large contingent of the farmers of Manitoba that the cost of getting wheat from the wagons on the local market to lake front is too large; that in order to compete successfully in the world's markets the cost of hauling wheat must be reduced. The problem then is to devise means to effect this reduction. The conference in June recommended that the provincial Government operate a system of elevators throughout the province to act as a regulator of the prices paid by line elevators and eventually handle all the wheat, shipped forward at cost. The carrying out of such a suggestion would involve a large expenditure of money and the installation of a considerable system of Government service. The provincial Government declined to assume this responsibility unless the farmers secured from the Dominion Government the right of the province to weigh and grade the grain, and suggested to the farmers that the municipalities, since the reeves appeared to be in favor of public ownership, should secure authority from the provincial Government to erect and operate systems of municipally owned elevators. This is the present status of the agitation for public owned elevators in Manitoba, but it does not appear to be satisfactory to the great majority who have advocated the principle.

The farmers who have worked to get their principle incorporated in a resolution to present to the Government have now to take up the task of securing more evidence that public opinion is behind their agitation and that it will endorse the action of the Government in going into the grain storage business. The fact that will do most to crystallize this opinion is that fully ten per cent. of the market value of wheat is dissipated under the present system in transferring it from the farmers' wagons through the elevators to the cars. That no country or commodity can afford to stand this enormous charge is a foregone

conclusion, especially in the face of increasing cost of production and the tendency to decreasing yields. The Grain Act it is true provides for the maintenance of facilities for loading from a platform to the cars, but this merely substitutes hand labor, which is expensive, for machine power, which is cheaper, and where used avoids the charge of storage in the elevators, but necessitates the establishment of store houses on the farm, since it is impossible to get cars as fast as wheat is offered for market. To handle grain economically, therefore, the elevator is a necessity, especially as it is obvious that market conditions demand that a considerable proportion of the crop be stored.

The question has been asked, why should not the railway companies provide storage for grain, since their charters compel them to provide storage for most all commodities that are offered them as freight? But the railway companies have made it plain that they can only be expected to furnish storage for completed bulk shipments and a farmer's load of grain is not a complete shipment. In some quarters it is urged that the railways would be benefited proportionately with the producers if they provided storage for wheat, but as that is a matter in which the railway companies reserve the right to decide and have decided otherwise there does not appear to be a solution to the storage problem in that quarter.

Meantime the great question is before the farmers, for upon them falls the cost of the present expensive method. The producer is after his just share of that ten per cent. and upon the energy he displays in going after it depends the termination of the present unsatisfactory arrangements.

A View of the Labor Problem.

There are two sides to the farm-labor problem. There is the farmer's side and the hired man's side. The trouble is that each has insisted on looking at the situation from a one-sided point of view. Until this is changed, the problem will never be solved. Immigration will not solve it. Immigration may relieve it (from the employer's standpoint), but only, in most cases, by bringing about in the end conditions probably no better than it relieves. Immigration may, to a limited extent, be advisable as a temporary expedient, but will never prove a permanent remedy. It is to be feared that some Canadian farmers, in common with other employers, have been over-anxious to avail themselves of the expedient, and have failed to get down to a philosophic study of the problem.

There was a time when labor for the soil was abundant, servile and cheap. That was in a dark period of the world's history. Going back farther, there was a time when Egyptian kings constructed monumental pyramids by commanding the services of subjects little better than slaves. Those were great times for the ruling classes. The idea of democracy is foreign to it. Since the time of Christ, the tendency of civilization has been to raise the position of the lower classes, to make the chances of life as nearly as may be equal for all. The tendency has been counteracted by many adverse influences, such as tariffs, which tax the many to enrich the few, and unjust assessment systems, which discourage and hamper enterprise by taxing improvements; by a society which looks down on the man or woman who does manual labor; by various sinister influences, from which the Church itself has not been free, and, perhaps, most of all, by the benighted and bucolic mind of the masses, which could do little to help themselves, and required ages of education to reach a point where they were ready to be helped upward. But, despite all these drawbacks, the church, school, platform and press of civilized countries have tended, by broadening the individual's outlook and stirring humanitarian impulses, and by educating the average citizen towards an ultimate betterment of the laborer's position.

Hand in hand with these agencies, came invention, which, by increasing the productiveness of labor and intellectualizing a part of it, has given the laborer grounds for demanding, and brains to organize and obtain, a constantly-increasing remuneration for his toil. Capital, which controlled, manipulated and applied the inventions, has naturally wanted to reap the full advantage thereof. Labor disputes its right to do so. Capital, by virtue of its position, has held the long end of the lever, but labor is steadily gaining ground. What the end will be, no man can now foresee, but this much is certain: The fight for democratic principles and the rights of the masses will go on till conditions are brought about as different from those of to-day as present conditions are superior to those of slavery and serfdom. A state in which the masses dwell in poverty and hardship, while the few, dominant by accident of birth or by mental superiority due to the favor of nature, revel in wasteful luxury—such a state becomes increasingly painful the more it is contemplated. That is why high-minded men, though oftentimes grieved by the laborer's failings and shortsightedness, and by the violent methods to which he occasionally resorts, are, nevertheless, bound to sympathize with his cause.

How, then, can the laborer's position be improved? By doubling his wages? No; wealth suddenly acquired is not used wisely. Emancipation was of little or no immediate benefit to the American slaves, because they knew not how to use their new-found freedom. Moreover, commerce and industry, as at present organized, could probably not afford to double wages all round. The result of such a step would very likely be bankruptcy or anarchy, with grave attendant evils to all classes. Commerce, manufacturing, farming and society cannot be advantageously revolutionized in a day. The change is a matter of growth; it is being evolved. Change in any established order of things has never been brought about without hardships and opposition, very often opposition from the class it was destined to help. In order that the present and impending improvements in the situation between labor and capital may be accomplished as speedily as possible, with a minimum of hardship and a maximum of net advantage to both sides—for it will be genuine advantage to all men in the long run—it is necessary that each party take a broad, tolerant and progressive view. The laborer must be active, but patient; the employer firm, but progressive. He must look ahead and plan his work with a view to making his business as profitable and congenial as possible for those he employs. He must endeavor to see, not how cheaply he can hire, but how much he can safely manage to pay, and how far he can raise the condition of those he employs. This ideal may not appeal to the avaricious man, but it will find a response in every Christian heart. Incidentally, it is the best way to build up a permanent business success—a success that will stand when the ill-gotten gains of the selfish employer are crumbling into dust. That stage is coming. It is on the way. The signs of the times are unmistakable. Civilization is beginning a war on extortion, monopoly and sweat-shop methods. The day of humanitarianism is dawning. It is time for employers to look ahead.

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The Standardbreds get plenty of notice, at this time of year, of the attraction they will furnish at the fairs, but what would a horse show ring be if it were left to trotting horses to make the attraction. As show horses the trotters that are advertised are not a consideration, and unfortunately the interest they might create on the track is marred by the obvious fixing of the races which amounts to little more than a procession. It is a pity for such a noble breed of horses that their real worth is not made more of by their breeders and their professional exponents.