



ALBERTA SECTION

This Section of The Guide is conducted officially for the United Farmers of Alberta by Edward J. Fream, Secretary, Innisfail, Alta.

UNITED FARMERS OF ALBERTA

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A FEW RAMBLING THOUGHTS

When the Railway Commission visits Western Canada a great deal of the time is occupied in hearing cases relating to the lack of fencing on the rights of way of the different railways. Several cases were heard at the last sitting of the commission, held at Edmonton, and what happened? In one case the applicant was severely rebuffed for bringing the case forward, being told that he should not go to the commission seeking cheap law and that the killing of his stock was only a result of his own negligence in not keeping his gate closed, thereby letting his stock get out and onto unenclosed land. The commissioners did give some small relief by ordering the railway company to fence its right of way along the vacant piece of land.

The question is, what is going to be done about it? If a farmer applies to a railway company for damages he gets a stock answer in return to the effect that after investigating the matter the company finds out that the stock were running at large, contrary to the provisions of the Railway act and, therefore, the company is not liable. Then, for fear some fight might be left in the man, the claims agent sometimes adds a clause to the effect that the farmer can consider himself lucky if an action for damages to rolling stock, etc., is not taken against him, and the awful responsibility resting on this man in the event of any human lives being lost is also pointed out. Sometimes the farmer is not bluffed that way and possibly after several months of scrapping, a compromise at the rate of about twenty-five cents on the dollar is made. In other cases nothing results, and the farmer knows he will stand no chance in a court of law. If he won in the lower court he would soon lose out by being unable to pay the costs entailed through the numberless appeals which would be entered at every stage of the game.

The farmers have, therefore, turned to the Railway Commission, knowing that the members thereof were men who would give a square deal, and have asked for relief. The answer they have received is a rebuff, which is taken in many cases as an insult added to injury. The final outcome is that the complainant becomes one more agitator who will do what he can to make his wrongs known. Such action and talk will not make a contented people.

What then can be done? The Railway Commission cannot make laws and the chairman has truthfully stated that the commissioners are only there to administer the laws already made. Perhaps if Judge Mabey were given the power to adjust a few of these laws it would be a very short time until the whole matter was righted as he has shown himself a shrewd, level headed, commonsense man who is always ready to give every one a square deal.

The railway act must be amended and the full onus of proof must be placed where it belongs. It is not right that all the loss as well as the responsibility should be on the farmer. The companies should bear their share as well. Some day the change will come and let us hope that the change will come quickly.

Changes required include the placing of the full onus of proof upon the railway companies, making them responsible for stock killed upon their right of way at any point except where the highway intersects the right of way, the fencing of all railway lines with efficient fences, and providing efficient cattle guards.

If this is done the complaints will be few and far between, for it will place the farmer on an equal footing with the railway and the little catch clauses under which the companies work will be eliminated.

It seems also that the excuse is made that efficient cattle guards have not been devised. The answer to that remark is if the railway act calls for efficient guards, the guards will be forth-

coming, but the farmer will go one step farther and state that the old pit cattle guards were safe before and would be safe again. Stock will not go over a hole in the ground no matter what people may say, unless, of course, they have been badly scared by something.

These are just a few rambling thoughts which came to the surface after reading the report of the recent sitting of the commission at Edmonton. Perhaps someone else will add their thoughts and even yet we might get something done. It's worth trying any way.

E. J. F.

FOREST FIRE CASE

Realizing that the time allotted to the delegates of the U. F. A. would be all too short to enable them to present in detail all the questions in which they were interested to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and his colleagues, the delegates from Cowley Union, consisting of Messrs. Ross and Kemmis, knowing the Hon. Frank Oliver personally, interviewed him on the evening previous to the public meeting on the question of the prevention of forest fires, etc. We had the satisfaction of seeing

ranchers and others in the neighborhood, and who not only had to fight the fires but to feed the men who came from a distance. The forest warden had to locate the fire, then come out and procure men and then go back and superintend operations, all of which lost valuable time, millions of feet of timber being destroyed for want of proper organization to fight the fires. These fires in the foot hills destroyed timber that was peculiarly valuable to the farmer and residents in the district, for these small bodies of timber are generally handled by small mills outside the combine, and formed a means of providing competition which the minister acknowledged was heartily detested by the big mill owners who classed them as pirates.

We pointed out the utter inability of one man, no matter how strong, willing and able, to handle fires in these mountains. It needed many more and at least one man with authority over each district to hire help and purchase provisions. The minister said it was absolutely impossible to thoroughly safeguard the forests of the Dominion and asked if this were a genuine appeal to protect Dominion property or an attempt to secure private property, and on our answer proving



A Properly Constructed Stock of Fodder Corn

that the minister was thoroughly interested and before we left he gave us every assurance that the question would be taken up on his return to Ottawa. He informed us that Sir Wilfrid Laurier was keenly alive to the necessity of preserving our timber and even the brush growing on the head waters of the streams, and that our requests were reasonable and practical.

Mr. Ross introduced the subject by stating that a tract of hill and mountain country from the Crows Nest Pass north to High River had been burnt over this summer, that in the vicinity of Cowley the Forest Warden had more than thirty miles square to patrol, and in the nature of things he could not by any possibility cover the ground, furthermore he had no authority to hire men or teams or purchase supplies for the fire fighters, who were a voluntary force raised from the farmers,

satisfactory he then asked why this sudden interest had developed if fires did not occur every summer and why our district had been especially scourged by the fire fiend.

We pointed out that this country was very well settled up, that large towns and numerous villages were springing up, that with the advent of the holiday season hundreds of campers went to the hills and head waters of our streams. The woods were full of these campers all summer and from our own experience with these people we had found that in very many cases they were absolutely ignorant of the danger of leaving their fires alight, that we thought in a majority of cases these fires were due to their carelessness and ignorance. A few were perhaps incendiary and a few were started by the railway. For these reasons more men were necessary in well settled dis-

tricts than in those more remote in order that the timber might be safeguarded.

We further represented the hardship and expense entailed on those who had fought the fires this year, not to mention the loss of their time in spring, haying and harvest. Cases are known where men had lost three weeks haying, ten days harvesting and a week in the busiest time last spring and some men had fought fire for nearly a month straight. These men had no compensation though an effort was being made to get it. Some ranchers had fed the fighting crews, numbering from twenty to forty men, for days, also without compensation, but an application has been made for it.

The minister, while he would not, for he said he was unable to, promise anything along this line said he would take the matter up with his colleagues. He finally promised to go into the whole subject and have it carefully studied out with a view to improving very materially the conditions of forest protection. He was good enough to say that the deputation had afforded much light and information on the matter.

The hour being late, the interview was then terminated, but there is one suggestion which might be made in following up the work already done, that is that every forest ranger ought to be a fish and game warden as well. Our streams are depleted in spite of regulations, and as the fishing attracts the campers, who are the chief cause of fires, it would give the forest wardens an extra hold over them. The suspicion is around that nets and dynamite are used in the best fishing grounds we have, and as the forest wardens are travelling all the time they should be in a good position to stop such proceedings.

JOHN KEMMIS,
Secretary.

RALLY AT HOLDEN

Despite the fact that the weather was ideal, and the farmers were therefore exceedingly busy making up for the time lost during the rainy spell in August, there was a large turnout of members of the Holden Union at the meeting held on September 13th, and they were considerably augmented by townspeople and others who had come to hear what the U. F. A. was doing. Arrangements had been made for Mr. E. J. Fream, general secretary of the U. F. A., to be present and start the fall work of the Union. The chair was taken at three o'clock by Mr. Appelbee, vice-president of the Holden Union, who immediately called on Mr. Fream to address the meeting. In the course of a rather lengthy address Mr. Fream thanked the members for the opportunity they had given him of meeting with them, and then took up in detail the work done by the association since its inception, dealing with the questions taken up at the first convention and following them down to the present day. He also explained what the pork packing scheme meant and took up the questions which were discussed on the occasion of Sir Wilfrid Laurier's visit to the West. Mr. Thos. Kennedy, of Uster, followed on behalf of the Holden Agricultural Society and appealed to the members for assistance. The meeting then closed with a hearty vote of thanks to Mr. Fream for his interesting address.

DISTRICT CONVENTION COMING

At the last meeting of Fishburn Union the subject of sending delegates to Ottawa was brought up and the secretary was instructed to ascertain the probable expenses of this act and the time the delegates would be required there. Arrangements are also proceeding apace