

Farmer's Advocate

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EDITORIAL

Did any person ever hear the Manufacturers' Association suggest export duties on lumber and coal? Oh, no, but true to their instincts and opinions, they suggest it on 'wheat.'

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Dishonesty in registration of pigs is so rampant in Great Britain that it is suggested to have the local veterinarians do the ear tagging, on the basis of which ages would be reckoned.

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If the Shire horse breeder in England would only breed horses with better feet, or at least send horses to Canada with better feet, their Canadian business would increase.

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The Smithfield Cattle Club is evidently not a worshipper of the bovine aristocrat; in fact it is so democratic as to allow grade cattle to enter purebred classes.

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Too many people are making a living from the grain while it is in transit from the producer to the consumer! Exactly so, Mr. Sirett, you have hit the nail on the head.

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It costs 12½ cents to ship oats from Neepawa to Winnipeg, 115 miles and 14 cents from the same point to Fort William which is over 500 miles.

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An Old Country contemporary refers to the cross-bred cow, Doctor, as a 'marvellous cow'; she is twenty-four years of age, won a first prize, and her yield for one day was forty-three pounds of milk, 2 lbs. 5 oz. of butter.

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It looks rather incongruous, to say the least, to see a front page editorial which literally foams at the mouth over the iniquities perpetrated by the grain combine on the farmer, when in the same issue may be found a big advertisement from what strongly resembles a bucket shop.

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The Old Country breeders have a quality which is rare on this side of the water, viz., backbone. Once a case of crooked work is proven against any one, that person is proceeded against with vigor; the fact that he is a friend or acquaintance is not permitted to hinder the course of justice.

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The Shorthorn Society of Great Britain has asked the R. A. S. to make sections for junior and senior yearlings, and junior and senior calves, in the male classes. They have also asked for a group prize for the male progeny of a bull, over six months; the group to consist of two, three or four animals.

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Professor McKay says that the farm dairy people should be able to produce better butter than the average creamery, as they have everything under their own control. The professor's opinion ought to carry weight, for, to quote a slang phrase, "he knows the business from soup to nuts."

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It will take a lot of pictorial literature, and expenditure of cash by the government to convince desirable immigrants that settlers do not freeze to death in their homes on the prairie. Thus is fully shown the folly of governments in giving away coal lands. As a result of the politicians handing out favors, the country gets a black eye, which good crops, cheap lands and big homesteads cannot hide.

Grain Growers Throw Down the Gage of Battle.

A climax to the Winnipeg sitting of the Grain Commission was the action taken by the president of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association, who on Monday Dec. 3 laid the following information against three members of the Grain Exchange:

"At the City of Winnipeg on or about the first day of September they unlawfully conspired, combined, or arranged with each other to restrain or injure trade or commerce in relation to grain which may be or was a subject of trade or commerce. And further that they did between the fourth day of September, 1906, and the first day of December, 1906, unlawfully conspire, combine, agree or arrange with each other to unduly prevent or lessen competition in the purchase, barter, sale, transportation or supply of grain, which was, or may be a subject of trade or commerce contrary to the statutes in such cases made and provided."

One of the city dailies had been calling on the attorney-general to prosecute, but it remained for the Grain Growers' to take action. The Grain Growers have already won a memorable fight on behalf of a farmer against a railroad corporation, and the public will watch with great interest the outcome of the proceedings. R. A. Bonnar one of the most noted criminal lawyers in the West has been retained by the prosecution.

Should the Public Operate 'Phones?

The discussion of telephone management and telephone franchises in Manitoba has extended from the circle of the village grocery store and has secured a place in the campaign meetings of both political parties. Both parties in provincial politics seem to have settled it in their own minds that the interests of the people demand governmental ownership or control of trunk lines, and municipal ownership or control of local exchanges, and have committed their respective parties to a policy having practically the same object in view, so that no matter which party is entrusted with the affairs of provincial government in the future, the farming community will be obliged to take a more lively interest in this branch of rural economics.

When a public utility like a telephone exchange is a paying concern it is obviously in the interest of the municipality in which it is located to own it, and conversely where it is an expensive and sparingly used luxury people care very little in whose possession it is. But the telephone is moving out of the category of the latter class and from all appearances will soon be generally considered a necessity, and the question of its ownership and cost of its service will become more engrossing, since people insist upon getting their necessities as near the cost of production as they can be had.

Doubtless people will hear much about the advantages that will accrue to a municipality through the ownership of such a utility as a telephone, and there are municipalities where telephones could be built and operated by the people that would insure their use at a much lower cost than they could be had from a private corporation, but in considering this question, since it is of more importance to the people as a class who are permanent than to either political parties which may be the government temporarily, it is well to look at it from both sides. If it is admitted that municipal ownership and operation would insure a service for less money, we must consider what we give in lieu of money for this service, and try to decide upon a policy that will insure good service at a fair cost without placing the municipality under any serious handicaps.

As against the policy of municipal ownership and control with private operation about all that can be urged is, that to build or acquire a system

would require the expenditure of a considerable sum of money, and this expenditure would of necessity adversely affect the borrowing power of the municipality and thus arrest the progress of more essential public works, such as road and bridge building and eventually schools. One of the most common errors into which municipalities fall is of over-extending their credit and so deterring the completion of absolute necessities. This is practically all that can be advanced against the policy of municipal ownership and control, but if, in addition, we include municipal management and operation, the case for private corporations becomes much stronger. In fact it is on the grounds of the evils which arise from governmental operation that private corporations maintain their superiority. These arguments advanced by private corporations to discredit public ownership and operation are perhaps as familiar to most people as are the assertions of the advocates of the latter system. Briefly, they are as follows:—Tardy attention to detail, lack of enterprise in extending business, extension in unwarranted directions due to the influence and for the private convenience of a certain faction, and the creation of a vast army of civil servants.

The question of public ownership of utilities has received the most thorough study from the best modern economists, men who are materially interested in the subject, with the result that the conclusion has been reached that a system of municipal ownership and control and private operation ensures all the advantages claimed for, and eliminates the disadvantages of the former, while securing for the public the energy and executive ability which characterizes a privately owned corporation. Such a principle may be expected to prevail in the management of utilities and it would be well for those most vitally interested not to lose sight of it in the maze of argument related to a discussion of the main question.

What Has Been Shown Before the Grain Commission so Far.

In conversation with some farmers regarding the Grain Commission, diverse opinions are elicited. Some think good work is being done, others state that the surface of things is only being touched, whereas others again state that the whole affair is a joke; all seem to be agreed that the commission has suffered for lack of a first class, fearless lawyer. Such might well have been provided in place of the messenger boy, yelet a secretary. That the commission has not a lawyer is the fault of the government appointing the commission, and no person else; at any rate, even if on the score of expense it might not have been advisable to retain a lawyer for the entire term of the commission, one should have been retained by the government, at least for the sessions at Winnipeg, Toronto and at the head of the lakes; and such retainer should have been given long enough ahead for the legal adviser to become thoroughly posted on the matters at issue. As to the work of the commission, it is not yet finished, and full criticism of its work in all fairness must be delayed until the work is completed. Farmers will do well to study the evidence they have heard, or read, and when the report of the commission is published, study it carefully. We should like to see the commission (and also the Grain Growers' Associations) give a little attention to those plundering organizations, the bucket shops; for a farmer patronizing such, can lose more money in a day, than from many years' stealings by line elevators, or illegal restraint of trade by fixing of prices. Three things have been pretty well proven by the evidence given; first, that farmers do not take sufficient trouble to verify their suspicions, and they neglect ordinary business precautions in their dealings; second, that there is an arrangement