

sections which lie idle on either hand. This land is owned by speculators, the great majority of whom live in far away cities, in Eastern and Western Canada, the United States and Europe, and whose only interest in the land is to hold it until they can sell it at a profit usually to someone else who will do the same again a few years later.

Statistics issued by the Department of Railways and Canals at Ottawa show that on June 30, 1911, there were 9,089 miles of railway in operation in the three Prairie Provinces. The census taken in the same month shows that the rural population of the three provinces numbered 849,042, comprising approximately 200,000 families. These figures enable us to make an interesting calculation as to the greatest distance which it would be necessary for any of those 200,000 families to live from the railway if all the land adjacent to the line was cultivated before they were compelled to go farther afield. In some portions of the West, chiefly in Manitoba and Southeastern Saskatchewan, the lines of railway are within a few miles of each other, but if instead of using the total mileage of 9,089 we take 8,000 miles as the basis of our calculation, we find that there is altogether in Western Canada 112,000 square miles of land within seven miles on either side of the railway. Deducting 12,000 square miles as an allowance for land covered by water or unfit for cultivation this leaves 100,000 sections of land or sufficient for the 200,000 farmers in Western Canada to have a half section each within seven miles of the railway. If a half section is not enough they could each have three-quarters of a section within ten and a half miles or a whole section within fourteen miles.

As a matter of fact there is nothing like this area of land under cultivation at the present time. Two hundred thousand farms of 320 acres each would contain 64,000,000 acres of land, whereas the total area under wheat, oats, barley and flax this year, is shown by the reports of the provincial governments to be about 19,000,000 acres or less than one-third of the area we have mentioned. In other words if all the land under crop this year, when Western Canada is producing the largest crop on record, were laid in strips alongside the railways every foot of it would be within two miles of the track. And yet there are thousands of farmers hauling their grain fifteen, twenty and forty miles to the railway, and the fact that so much of the land is locked up for speculative purposes is responsible. The farmers who get up on a winter's morning before dawn to feed their horses and load their sleighs and then drive thirty or forty miles over the snow to sell their wheat have to thank land speculation for the long, cold hours they spend on the trail. We hope some of those quiet hours will be spent in devising methods of making the speculators give up their land to someone who would use it. Already in the Western Provinces vacant farm land is taxed at the same rate as that which is under cultivation, but this is not enough. The farmer, though he pays no tax to the municipality on his buildings and improvements, pays heavy taxes to the Federal Treasury and heavy toll to the protected manufacturers on his machinery, building material, clothing, much of his food, and in fact on practically everything which he must have in order to live and carry on his business. The speculator, the owner of unoccupied land, pays nothing in respect of that land except the local taxes which the farmer also pays. When we have Free Trade and all revenues, municipal, provincial and Dominion are raised by a direct tax on unimproved land values, a great deal of the burden of taxation will be shifted from the shoulders of the farmer to those of the speculator, and at the same time the inducement to hold land idle will be gone. Then the speculator will be glad to relinquish his idle acres to those who will make use of them, and there will be plenty of good land con-

venient to the railways for all those who desire to use it.

WHO WANTS A FORTUNE?

Winnipeg, and no doubt other Western cities, are being plastered with flaring posters booming a certain Fort McMurray. It is described as "a city site, not a townsite." The thick splashes of red ink catch the eye as one walks along the street as from a dozen bill boards this flaring advertisement fairly barks at the peaceful pedestrian. "What, and where," he asks himself, "is this growing city?" The poster mentions "Northern Alberta." That is true—very true—for it is 250 miles north of Edmonton as the crow flies, and only three degrees further south than the Yukon. From the early traders in that northern country we know that this has been a Hudson's Bay trading post for many years. Fort McMurray's chief use has hitherto been as a mission and trading post. Might we suggest that the missionary force be increased and that in relays they expend their ministry upon the local real estate fraternity, preaching the gospel of giving a dollar's worth for every dollar received. Just why this particular plot of ground should become a flourishing city is not very apparent, at least until it has had a trial as farming land. Of course the speculators need the money, and what better reason could be advanced? The poster describes this venture as "the last great opportunity to make a fortune out of real estate in Canada." Nonsense! Fort McPherson, near the mouth of the Mackenzie river, is not yet subdivided. Here is another "city site, not a townsite," which, in addition to being high and dry, has the advantage of being well within the Arctic Circle. When the North Pole is discovered past all gainsaying and labelled and festooned with patriotic bunting and an airship line is running between it and southern cities what is to hinder Fort McPherson, being on the direct route, from becoming the metropolis of the Arctic Ocean? And even when the Yukon and Baffin Land have been suitably decorated with "city sites, not townsites" and profitably subdivided and worked off on Eastern, and preferably English, investors, ("distance lends enchantment") our enterprising wild catters need not despair. Mars is still left—a whole world—on which it is conjectured people can live. That is more than can be said of some properties being boomed today.

THE GUIDE REFERENDUM

Letters received at The Guide office show that the greatest interest is being taken in the Referendum which is to be held for our readers in December. The questions on which our readers will vote are all live practical questions that the people of Canada will have to decide in the very near future. We want the readers of The Guide, who, we can say without flattery, comprise the best informed and most intelligent body of farmers in Canada, to give a clear-cut expression to their opinion on all of them. It is sometimes said by the enemies of the farmers' organizations that their resolutions do not represent the views of the mass of the farming community, but come only from a few of their leaders. We want this Referendum to show unmistakably the attitude of the Western farmers as a whole on the questions which are now before them, and we hope that when the ballot is published in The Guide on December 11 every reader will mark it so that there can be no mistake as to where the farmers stand. Space prevents the publication in this issue of full details as to the Referendum, but the questions submitted relate to Direct Legislation, the increase of the British Preference and eventual Free Trade with the Motherland, Reciprocity with the United States in natural products, Reciprocal Free Trade with the United States in agricultural implements, the gradual reduc-

tion of the Canadian Customs Tariff, leading to complete Free Trade in ten years, the raising of all public revenues by a direct tax on land values, public ownership and operation of railroads, telegraphs, telephones and express services, and Woman Suffrage.

It is interesting to note that following the lead of The Guide, the Montreal Witness, which has a large circulation among the farmers of Eastern Canada, has announced its intention of also holding a Referendum on the same questions. Thus we shall see what the farmers of both East and West think on these questions. A number of our readers have evidently mistaken the form of questions printed in the last two issues of The Guide for the ballot and have marked these and sent them to the office. The official ballot, however, will appear in one issue only, on December 11, so that each subscriber will be able to record only one vote.

THE MACDONALD BYE-ELECTION

To have carried Macdonald for reciprocity and freer trade against the combined forces of the federal and provincial governments would have been little short of miraculous. Macdonald constituency has always elected a Conservative regardless of the issue. The reciprocity supporters have no reason to feel discouraged. They polled as many votes as last year and showed that there has been no weakening in the cause. The constituency is partly in the residential portion of Winnipeg city, the rural section being divided between French and English. The fight was intentionally brought on at a time when the farmers were busy, which prevented many reciprocity votes being polled. The Manitoba government comes out of the fight with little glory. Probably the political history of the last generation records no more flagrant case of the prostitution of the machinery of justice to partizan purposes. No one can object to fair fighting, however hard, but when British justice in a British province becomes a farce honest men should pause and consider. This is a matter that pales into insignificance that of wider markets and is a dark blot on the political record of Canada. As to reciprocity, the fight will go on as usual and as sure as the sun continues to shine so sure it is that relief must come to the Prairie Provinces; if not reciprocity, then what?

Grain Growers generally will be sorry to learn that Mr. D. D. Campbell, who for some years past has been Dominion Shippers' Agent at Winnipeg, has resigned his office and gone into private business. Mr. Campbell has not stated any reason for his retirement. The position of Shippers' Agent was created to assist the farmers in their troubles and Mr. Campbell has been the only man who has held the office. His retirement is an unfortunate thing for the Grain Growers. He has helped to solve a great many problems, and has helped many farmers to secure a square deal from the railways and grain dealers. In the interest of the Grain Growers the work should not be allowed to remain undone, but should be continued at once by the best man to be found.

A farmer loading a car of wheat is compelled by the railways to make 180 miles a day or is fined in default. The railways move the car at 10 miles a day and allow the grain to spoil, but they get off scott free.

What is needed today is men who will act honestly in the interests of their constituents and of Canada as a whole, when they have been elected to Parliament.

If Canada had more sincere statesmen and fewer political carpet baggers, it would be better for the country.

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