

The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, February 15th, 1911

SASKATCHEWAN ELEVATOR SITUATION

The Grain Growers of the West have for several years past persistently demanded that the internal elevators be taken out of the hands of the private owners and placed under a control which would protect the farmers from the extortions practiced by the elevator companies. The Manitoba government, a year ago, adopted the principle of government ownership, and government owned elevators are now in operation in that province. In Saskatchewan the government appointed a commission of enquiry and in the report of that commission, made public a few weeks ago, a co-operative elevator system was recommended. The new system was to be owned and controlled absolutely by the farmers, who were to put up fifteen per cent. of the cost, and the government of Saskatchewan was to advance eighty-five per cent. of the money needed to carry on the enterprise. The Grain Growers' Association of Saskatchewan had previously adopted the policy of straight public ownership, until about a year ago, when the legislature was asked by the association to appoint a commission of enquiry into the matter of grain storage in the province. It was then pointed out that the Grain Growers were not wedded to the principle of government ownership, but wanted above all else a system which would provide relief from the extortions of the prevailing conditions. At the Regina convention last week there was an all day debate upon government ownership versus the co-operative system recommended by the commission. Before the debate opened the government had introduced in the legislature a bill embodying the principles recommended in the report of the commission. It was apparent that the government was willing to go ahead and assist in the establishment of the co-operative system, but was hostile to government ownership. At the conclusion of the debate in the convention the co-operative system as recommended by the commission was supported by a large majority of the delegates and was then endorsed unanimously. The Grain Growers of Saskatchewan said they preferred the co-operative system, which was within reach of their hand, to government ownership, which was not yet within reach. The chairman of the Manitoba elevator commission was present at the convention, and explained the Manitoba system and how it was working out. He showed that Premier Scott in his address in the legislature on the previous day had misrepresented the Manitoba system, and he expressed his own personal belief that the Manitoba system would be a perfect success if it received the support of the farmers of the province. Mr. Scott rectified his error on the following day and explained that his unfair statement regarding the Manitoba system had been unintentional. He gave the complete figures to the legislature showing the Manitoba system to be working much more successfully than his figures of the previous day had indicated. It should be borne in mind that the convention did not endorse the bill before the legislature but only the elevator scheme recommended by the elevator commission. Mr. Green, secretary of the association and one of the elevator commissioners, frankly stated to the convention that the bill was not satisfactory as at present drafted. He believed, however, that it would be made satisfactory, and it was left to the directors to see that the necessary alterations were made in the bill. That is practically the light in which the matter

was left by the convention. The bill provides that the executive officers of the association are to be the provisional directors who will put the scheme into operation in Saskatchewan. While the success of the elevator scheme in Saskatchewan, as in Manitoba, depends to a great degree upon the sincerity of the government and the support of the farmers of the respective provinces, it also depends upon the extent to which it is made a virtual monopoly. The farmers will give their support to a system just in proportion as they are assured of proper service. The Saskatchewan scheme is not far removed from government ownership in that the government provides nearly all the funds and will take security upon all the elevators purchased and the subscribed stock. If for any reason the system should not prove satisfactory there will still be an opportunity to inaugurate a system of straight government ownership. The Grain Growers of Saskatchewan have been given the positive assurance of the government that everything possible will be done to make the new system such a success that the line elevator monopoly will be broken and that the farmers will have absolute control of interior storage. Several of the supporters of the co-operative system in their addresses before the convention declared their belief in the principle of government ownership, but considered that before the government ownership would be a success it was necessary for the people to own their governments. Saskatchewan and Manitoba have now embarked on different schemes to attain the same end. There are in each province opponents to both schemes, but the majority in each province favor the scheme they are committed to. The Grain Growers of Saskatchewan in changing from the definite attitude of government ownership, which they unanimously adopted at the Saskatoon convention in 1908 and the Weyburn convention in 1909, to what is termed a co-operative scheme in 1911, have accepted a heavy responsibility. It is the duty of every member of the association now to put his shoulder to the wheel in earnest and do his full share towards making the new undertaking a success.

SPECIAL TARIFF CAMPAIGN

The Canadian Manufacturers' Association has decided to educate the employees of their factories to the need of high protection. The following notice is being sent out to all factories:

"SPECIAL TARIFF CAMPAIGN"

"In view of the strong and persistent agitation for tariff reduction now carried on by the Grain Growers, it is urgently necessary for every manufacturer to give the widest possible circulation to the arguments advanced by the manufacturers for the maintenance of the tariff as it now stands. A carefully prepared statement of the manufacturers' case was presented to the government a few days ago. This will be sent to you in any number you wish free of charge, for general distribution. It is especially desirable that this should be sent to your Western Agents and customers. An antidote to the present free trade propaganda is very necessary in Western Canada. It will be well to circulate it among your employees. Advise us at once how many you will distribute.

"Address:

"The Secretary,
"Canadian Manufacturers' Association,
"Toronto."

This is a good scheme on the part of the manufacturers and one that no person will object to. In fact, we should like to see every farmer in the country send and get

a copy of this famous document prepared by the manufacturers. It will make a very interesting story to read in connection with the letters from British Manufacturers in last issue. The more literature the manufacturers send out the sooner will the people of Canada demand that protection be wiped out.

SUPERVISING THE TERMINAL ELEVATORS

Some of the members of the House of Commons are thinking along the same lines as the farmers. Dr. Schaffner on February 13 moved the following resolution:

"That in the opinion of this house the present system of operating the terminals and transfer elevators is detrimental to the interests of the Western grain producers, and that the government should take immediate steps to operate the terminal elevators at Fort William and Port Arthur and the transfer elevators between those terminals and the Atlantic seaboard."

This resolution sets forth the principle for which the Western farmers have been contending for years. It was supported among Western members by Messrs. Sharpe, Lake, Bradbury, Herron, Campbell and Roche. Dr. Neely moved an amendment which put the resolution on the shelf and was supported by the government and Messrs. McCraney, Clark, White and Oliver. The other Western members were not present when the vote was taken. Neely's amendment carried. The amendment was to the effect that no action should be taken till the government elevator bill, which is now in the senate, should come before the house. Dr. Schaffner, in moving the resolution, gave the house some valuable information and showed how the farmers have for years been robbed at the terminals. He laid down the sound principle that there was no guarantee of safety in any system which allowed the elevator operators to have an interest in the grain passing through. The government has had nearly one hundred men at the terminals watching the operators, yet all this supervision has failed completely. The new system in charge of a commission will never restore confidence in the terminals unless the elevators are actually taken out of the hands of private parties and operated by the government. The new bill, as we understand it, provides for government operation if the necessary funds are voted by parliament. Those funds should be voted. If not, and the elevators are merely supervised by a commission there will be just as much suspicion as at present. Suppose a year passes and no further proofs of the manipulations in the terminals are shown. Will that restore confidence? Not at all. No person in the West will believe for an instant that all the supervisors the government might employ, nor all the systems of checking that might be inaugurated, will circumvent the elevator operators. **THE RESULT WILL SIMPLY BE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE SUSPECTED OF COLLUSION WITH THE ELEVATOR COMPANIES.** This would be most unfortunate, but if it occurs the government can blame no person but themselves. It is to be hoped that no government of Canada will ever allow itself to be contaminated by the crookedness which has been rampant in the terminals. **TODAY THE TERMINAL ELEVATORS SMELL DECIDEDLY BAD IN THE NOSTRILS OF THE WESTERN FARMERS. SUPERVISION OF A BAD ODOR DOES NOT MAKE IT MORE AGREEABLE. COMPLETE ELIMINATION**