



NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS

This department of the Guide is maintained especially for the purpose of providing a discussion ground for the readers where they may freely exchange views and derive from each other the benefits of experience and helpful suggestions. Each correspondent should remember that there are hundreds who wish to discuss a problem or offer suggestions. We cannot publish all the immense number of letters received and ask that each correspondent will keep his letter as short as possible. Every letter must be signed by the name of the writer though not necessarily for publication. The views of our correspondents are not necessarily those of the Guide. The aim is to make this department of great value to readers and no letters not of public interest will be published.

MORE INVESTIGATION NEEDED

Editor GUIDE:—The last issue of THE GUIDE has an account of the recent prosecution and fining of three terminal elevators for violation of the Grain Act. The Grain Growers were well aware that the practice of mixing and shipping out more high grade wheat from these elevators than was taken in by them, had been going on for some time so that this exposure was no surprise to them. It was only to be expected that any honest attempt at investigation would bring the rascality to light. But what is surprising, and should challenge the attention and compel the serious consideration of every Canadian citizen, was the evident attempt on the part of those connected in the prosecution to hush the whole matter up and keep it from the public. Was there really collusion for the purpose of trying to shield those high class rascals from public odium and condemnation? Are the Canadian people to understand that there is one course of treatment in Canada for the rich criminal and another for the petty thief? This sort of thing should not be tolerated. The people should demand an investigation. The public should know who is responsible for this attempt to screen these elevator criminals. It would appear that the president and secretary of the Grain Growers' Association; when they got an inkling of what took place, called upon the warehouse commissioner, the magistrate who tried the case, and the lawyer who prosecuted for the government for the purpose of getting the proceedings in the cases just tried, but were refused any information. These men were entitled to all the information in connection with these cases because they represented those whose property was being manipulated and tampered with. Yet they could get no information and had to wire a member of the House of Commons at Ottawa to ask to have the report of the police court proceedings laid on the table so that it could be made public, and then there was only a part of the report in our western papers. The people should not let this matter drop. They should enter such a protest as would prevent any attempt to screen criminals no matter how high up, in the future.

This whole business should open the eyes of western farmers and show them the necessity of supporting their organization and their official organ, THE GUIDE, which has taken these elevator prosecutions and laid all the information they could obtain before the people.

J. W. SCALLION.

Virden, Man.

A CORRECTION

Editor GUIDE:—In looking over my contribution published in THE GUIDE of April 13th, re The Government Pork Packing Plant, I notice a few typographical errors have been made which change somewhat the meaning of the sentences in which they occur. At the foot of the second column it reads, "Should such a thing occur the politicians would make merry, etc." It should read, "The plutes would make merry, etc." Plutes is an abbreviation for plutocrats. It would seem from the sentence as it now stands, that I was deliberately making an assertion that would unjustly censure our politicians, which was very inconsistent. And where is the politician who would not take exception to such a tirade upon the dignity of the representatives of the people. Another typographical error is where it reads as follows: "In the late investigations in the western states

as to the workings of the meat combine, etc." it should be "eastern states." The papers a few months ago devoted considerable space to this subject of the meat combines in the east, so no doubt many of our farmers are somewhat conversant on the matter. There is another typographical error of minor importance which occurs in the following sentence: "Still they might remain in the field long enough to submerge the interests of the co-operative plant." It should read: "Still they might remain in the field long enough to prove subversive to the interests of the co-operative plant."

JAMES FLETCHER.

Kingman, Alta.

REPLY TO MR. GREEN

Editor GUIDE:—In your issue of March 16 Mr. F. W. Green returns to his attack on farmers' elevator companies in a presumably mythical conversation headed "Elevators and the Interests." He states that "In some cases our farmers' elevator companies have tasted of the sweets of the sweat from the brow of the toilers and will hang onto their hold like leeches until compelled to let loose." If this means anything, it is that some of the farmers' elevator companies have distributed unduly large dividends and are robbing their patrons. But may I ask is there anything wrong in tasting the sweets from the sweat of the brow of the toilers? Do we, when hiring our farm hands give them in wages and board every cent that their labor brings in? Sometimes I admit that we have done so, when crop failures and low prices compelled us to. But not many of us, myself among the number, hire men solely for their companionship or for their value as table ornaments.

From figures recently published in THE GUIDE, I understand that there are fifty-two farmers' elevators in operation in the west today. From what I know of the situation these are not over one-third of those that have been brought into existence in the past twenty-five years. If Mr. Green's contention is correct that the profits are undue, why have so many of these concerns disappeared? I think I can safely say that the following are the principle causes: Insufficient capitalization, undue competition of the line companies, too small charges and dockage, lack of cohesion among the shareholders, and insufficient support from non-shareholding farmers, the suffering of control to leave their own hands and poor business management. Those that have survived have only done so after a tremendous amount of work and the acceptance of a large amount of responsibility in the public interest by the directors, and officers, etc. So far as I have ever heard they are well entitled to any dividends they may have earned. In spite of the agitation that is being aroused by the Grain Growers' Association for government ownership there is a growing feeling among the less noisy but by no means the less-thoughtful farmers, that this scheme would render valueless the most valuable lessons of self-reliance and interdependence that have been earned in the past eight or nine years from the successes attending their united efforts in securing redresses from many abuses from which they were suffering.

At the present time the principal improvement required to insure to us the proceeds of our toil to which we are entitled are:

1. The prevention of admixture and

consequent depreciation in value of our grain at the terminals.

2. The prevention of manipulation of the prices of our grain in European markets in the interests of speculators.

3. A sample market in Winnipeg.

4. Facilities for special binning, either by individual or joint shipments without deterioration or undue dockage.

Of these requirements the first two would not be appreciably influenced by the government ownership of interior storage. The third, the sample market we have today in a limited but most valuable degree in the offices of the Grain Growers' Grain Company in Winnipeg, and its value will doubtless increase under present conditions without government intervention. In this connection it must be borne in mind that under the present Grain Act provision is already made for sampling on practically the same lines as the advocates of government ownership suggest. And the fourth requirement we already have at point, where there are farmers' elevators operated by the farmers in their own interests, and I submit that it is in the extension and operation of this system of farmers' elevators along co-operative lines that the best interests of the farmer can be served. With local ownership and management of such elevators, with a central advisory body in close touch with the markets, the results, I am positive, would be much more satisfactory than they can be under government ownership and control. The citrus growers, the grape growers, and the farmer's elevator companies have already shown us what can be done along these lines, and the articles appearing in one of the magazines, one of which was reproduced in THE GUIDE of the 23rd of March, should be studied by all western farmers.

We have now evidence in Manitoba of the system we are likely to get from any government, and so far as I can see the less government intervention we have in such matters, the better for us. As I stated in my reply to Mr. Green's former attack, in the matter of inspection, we have already men checking the grading of the government inspectors in the Winnipeg yards, and whether with cause or not, it is very unlikely that there would be any less friction than there is today if the government were to own and operate the interior elevators, as necessarily there must be less elasticity than in a system in which the management was under local control and no compensating advantages.

Now, I am well aware that these views will be deemed by many as heretical, but the Grain Growers' Association was not instituted as a mutual admiration society and the welfare of this most important industry demands a much fuller discussion of the pros and cons of the elevator question than has been accorded in the past two or three years. The association (in both provinces) having been stamped by its leaders into the government ownership scheme. Although this letter has attained great length, I will, with your permission, discuss some of the figures presented by Mr. Crerar in your issue of the 16th March, designed to show that the operation of the interior elevators under government control at the suggested rates, would be profitable.

Even admitting that the elevators would handle the amount of grain stated by Mr. Crerar, I would like to point out that the revenue ascribed to "additional storage" would be altogether too high. With improved transportation this has a tendency to decrease annually, and on the basis of the receipts of one elevator with which I am acquainted, from that source last season, (1908-09) the figures would have been \$78,511.38, as against Mr. Crerar's \$261,704.65, a shrinkage of \$183,193.27. I also note that no allowance is made for rent which is at least \$5 per elevator, nor so far as I can see for assistance to the operators in the busy season. Neither is there any appropriation for taxes. This last omission is, I believe, intentional and is not fair and neither is it honest. It is not fair because the business is well able to carry its own share of taxation and I know of places where should the elevator be struck off the roll, at least one-sixth of the village taxes would have to be made up from other sources, some of which, under present conditions are less able to bear the burden than are the parties that these buildings are designed to serve. It is not honest because the promoters of the scheme have persistently told us that if

it were brought into effect the whole cost would be borne by the parties interested. The shortage of the storage charges added to the rent, taxes, and deficiencies in the salary line, will, I fear, run away with all Mr. Crerar's balance, and leave the commissioners without salary and a deficit to boot unless something is made out of the dockage, a most necessary source of revenue at the suggested rates except where very large turnovers are made.

F. J. COLLYER.

Weylyn, Sask.

MR. GREEN'S RETURN

Mr. Green read the above letter from Mr. Collyer and replied as follows:

In reference to a letter from Mr. Collyer of Weylyn, which appears elsewhere in this issue, I wish to make a comment or two. I really cannot see what my friend objects to in what he calls my "attack on farmers' elevators." He gives a quotation from an article entitled, "Elevators and the Interests." He puts his own construction on it, which is altogether different from the quotation itself, and immediately asks if there is anything wrong in this, and proceeds to admit its truth. He says: "Sometimes I admit we have done so when crop failures and low prices have compelled us to." This reminds me of a story told by Professor Robertson of an old Dutch miller who appeared at the bar of justice in the high court of the universe. When asked if in the course of his life as a miller, he had ever taken an unjust toll from the poor farmer, he replied that only when times were very hard and prices very low, that just a little had been taken, and begged for pardon. But he was told the day of pardon was past and justice had now commenced.

I never dared to put this matter so forcibly as friend Collyer has put it, and I question if I would have believed it if it had not been admitted by my friend. But I know he has much more knowledge and is much better posted in this matter than I am. Now, my conclusions from his letter are that sometimes crop failures and low prices have compelled some farmers' elevators to make such charges for dockage and pursue such business methods as would enable them to distribute unduly large dividends, thereby robbing their patrons. Further, that those farmers' elevators that have failed, have failed because they did not charge sufficient dockage and prices and pursue other business tactics such as would permit of these dividends.

What our farmers are interested in now is the discovery of some plan of running elevators where there shall be no undue dockage, and charges; where the business methods shall be open and above-board and still the institution pay its way. If there has to be a dockage and a charge, farmers should know what that dockage and charge would have to be in order to put that institution on a paying basis; and if our friend will help us in making that discovery, one step in advance will have been taken. His long and wide experience will fit in admirably for giving assistance in this matter. Because most people are guessing at it our friend says Mr. Crerar is all wrong.

One or two words about the remedies our friend suggests. First, he says, prevent mixing. Second, prevent manipulation by establishing a sample market in Winnipeg. Now, if our friend in his next letter will show how a sample market in Winnipeg will prevent mixing and manipulation, it will throw a lot of light on the subject. Many fear that this will give the greatest kind of an opportunity for mixing and manipulation. Yes, to an extent undreamed of under the present grading system.

F. W. GREEN.

SOUTH AFRICAN SCRIP

Editor GUIDE:—May I be permitted to say, that the suggestion of Mr. H. Speare, of Copley, in THE GUIDE of the 20th inst., that the names of those M.P.'s who vote for South African extension, if it comes to a vote, be conspicuously published, seems very business-like. They will be tolerably certain to be relieved of their parliamentary duties by their exasperated constituents at the next election. This is the more necessary as all the papers published at Winnipeg, except THE GUIDE are carefully suppress-