

Are Farmers Prosperous?

Interview with F. W. Green

"I am just back from Vanguard where I was investigating blockade conditions," said Fred W. Green, secretary-treasurer of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers, in an interview. "It was my first visit to that point and I had no idea that Vanguard was in the centre of such a fine stretch of arable land and so settled with a fine class of settlers. The soil seems equal to our best and there are large stretches without a stone, slough or bluff—it is a possibility for a regular grain grower's paradise."

"Vanguard is now growing and is likely to make a city, for the country tributary to it stretches some 75 miles south and is thickly settled, and from range 5 on the east to range 17 on the west. This is some 13 townships square or 169 townships in all, making 6,000 square miles with two families to the section—a total of 12,000 families; consequently Vanguard today is doing the work for several stations."

"Farmers come flocking in from every direction with loads of grain. They are surrounded by machine men, lumber dealers, store keepers, horse dealers, threshermen, all of whom are trying to collect their accounts, which the farmers are most anxious to pay, but they have not got the money until they can get cars in which to ship their grain. Four elevators have been erected there and they are all filled up. One was opened on Thursday morning, Dec. 12, and was full to the peak at noon on Saturday, Dec. 14. Then there is 100,000 bushels of grain stored in temporary bins around town. Irregular track buyers are buying

down for use, 3 being spotted up at each elevator and 20 on the team track. They were not in place until dark, however, and the elevators worked all that night. At daybreak it was a wonderful sight—twenty different groups of farmers, each one with a shovel, pail or a scoop, loading cars at one time. There were 50 teams lined up between the cars. A busier scene could not be imagined."

"The railway is fearfully handicapped. The roadbed is new and unfinished and this traffic is being forced upon the company before it is ready to receive it. This condition to the farmers is one which requires great patience and I never saw patience better exemplified. Of course the condition at this point is extraordinary, but you know general conditions along all regular lines in the country, and you may be able to imagine what it means out there in the centre of that vast grain raising area. Of course hotel men, storekeepers and merchants generally are reaping the richest kind of a harvest on this account; the more acute the congestion the better for them. Congestion of cars keeps the farmers in town for days and liveries, hotels and stores are thronged, for the farmer's extremity is the golden opportunity for many."

"Most pathetic things occur under such conditions. I heard elevator men cursing and threatening to club the brains out of farmers' horses if they did not keep back. Elevator men told me that some of the farmers come to them and offer them sums of money if they will take their load out of their turn. One man told me farmers had begged him with



CONDITIONS AT VANGUARD

grain which the elevators cannot take and are paying from 50 to 58 cents a bushel for wheat and from 60 to 80 cents for flax.

"The different irregular buyers referred to above get a car, buy their wheat on the street and fill it. The Saskatchewan Elevator Co., which people tell me is the Robin Hood Co., has also large bins erected and are filling them with wheat for which they pay 58 cents a bushel. On the average the farmers do not draw more than 50 or 75 bushels in a load on account of the long haul with a dockage of from 2 to 5 bushels to the load, the average dockage being 4 per cent. of wheat and 6 per cent. of flax. To avoid this and the spread between street and track prices many of the farmers try to load direct and to help them do this the C.P.R. has built a good loading team track, which is nearly half a mile long, enabling the farmers to get in between the trains of cars."

Hauling 50 Miles

"When we got there on Tuesday there were scores of farmers waiting who could not get unloaded. Some had come 50 miles, leaving home early Monday morning and reaching Vanguard at noon on Tuesday and some of them had been waiting longer. On our arrival everyone got busy. There were some empty cars in sight and some 35 were specially sent

tears and offered money or extra dockage, and he said he could get rich doing it day after day, for it was an every day occurrence for farmers to offer to pay for the privilege of selling their loads. I cannot describe my own feelings as I saw how the tiller of the soil was thus being humiliated."

Live and Let Live

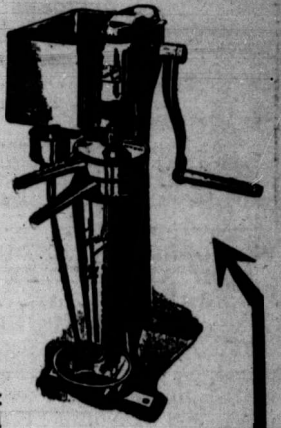
"Would not banks loaning on the grain help these farmers?" Mr. Green was asked. "Sure, if they will lend sufficient money to keep the hoard of collectors off until the farmer can sell, it would help," he replied. "How do they make a living? Well, such a life is not paid for, therefore it does not cost much in money. They do not live as high as city people. There is an awful scramble for coal also, and it is just about as hard to get coal as it is to ship grain. If a deep snow and severe storm would come the blessing of this fine weather might be more appreciated. What then would happen? That stretch of Southern Saskatchewan, west of the Soo line and south of the C.P.R. main line, is one of our finest, has only a few gardens under cultivation, is capable of producing more grain per annum than has yet been produced in any one year in the West. It means that a different system must be introduced, inland terminals—milling centres—steadier markets. Two and a half bushels of that 58 cent wheat is worth \$1.45 to the farmer now. When ground it is sold in Moose Jaw for about \$3.00 per sack under the name of 'Good Robin Hood,' and the 50 lbs. of offal goes at some 40 cents so that it more than doubles in value by grinding."

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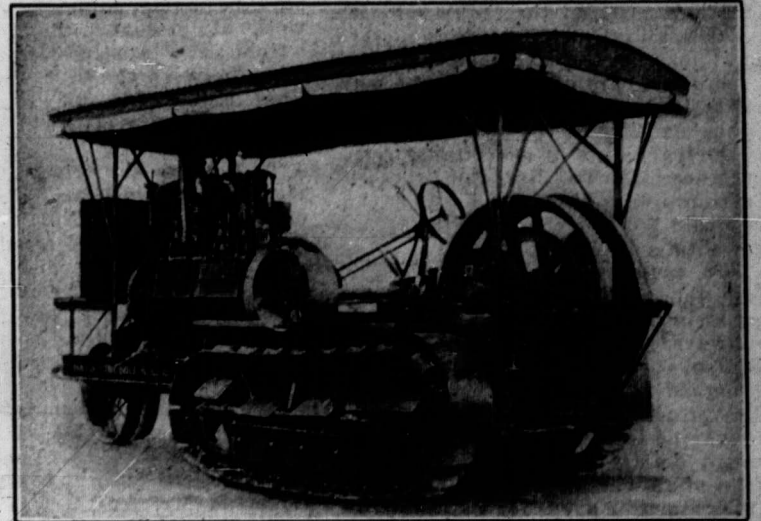
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