

The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, May 15th, 1912

DOES THE GUIDE REACH YOU ON SATURDAY?

This week's issue of The Guide was mailed from this office to reach every subscriber in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta on Friday or Saturday of this week, wherever there is a frequent mail service. If you do not receive it on these days please notify us. The Grain Growers' Guide, Winnipeg, Canada.

BEYOND ALL REASON

Premier Roblin has issued instructions to the Manitoba Elevator Commission to lock up every government elevator in the province immediately, to discharge the employees and close up the office of the Commission. This is merely another step in the huge waste of the people's money through government mismanagement of the elevator system. As we have pointed out before, the elevator system never had the slightest chance to succeed. There are good reasons for believing that the Government never intended that it should succeed. The Government must plead guilty either to the charge of incompetency, or to the more serious charge of deliberate intent to wreck the elevator system in order to discredit the Grain Growers' association. After the Government removed from the Elevator Commissioners the power to purchase elevators, the funds of the province were simply thrown away in the case of a large number of elevators purchased. Many of the elevators purchased by the Government for from \$5,000 to \$6,000 are not today worth half this amount. In fact their original owners would have been fortunate to have secured half this amount for them. Some of these elevators had been standing for over twenty years, and others are worth only their value to tear down and remove to another shipping point. The competition of one or more mill elevators at some shipping points had also made a number of the elevators white elephants on the hands of their owners when the Government conveniently stepped in and purchased them. As the matter stands the Government has invested more than one million dollars of the people's money in elevators, that, at a generous valuation today are not worth half that amount. The worst feature of the whole situation is that Premier Roblin endeavors to shield himself and his Government from the responsibility of the elevator fiasco by shouldering all the blame on the Grain Growers. To say the least this is not a manly action on the part of the premier. If he did not intend to give the elevators a chance to succeed, he should never have made the promise to the Grain Growers' convention at Brandon in December, 1909, when Hon. G. R. Coldwell, on behalf of the Government, announced that the Government was prepared to accept the principle of publicly owned elevators. Mr. Coldwell in making the announcement and asking the assistance of the Grain Growers said:—

"The question is a difficult one, and the Government desires your fullest assistance and the best assistance, and I am sure you will give it loyally and assiduously. The policy of the Government is to do everything that will build up this, the greatest interest in our province. We think we can assist you in this matter. There is a great deal that the majority of the Government is ignorant of, and we want to learn and understand the question in all its details. . . . We feel that we must have your help and suggestions to put this in the best possible shape."

In the preparation of legislation upon the elevator question, the Government had every possible assistance from the Grain Growers in working out the scheme. But the suggestions of the Grain Growers, in the main, were

not accepted. The Commission appointed was never given a free hand, with results now known. In the light of present information the sincerity of the Government in making the announcement to the Brandon Convention can be questioned. And now the Premier orders the elevators to be locked and closed at once, despite the fact that there are a large number of shipping points where there are none but government elevators. At many of these points there is a lot of grain yet to be marketed. With no elevators in operation, where is the man with less than a carlot of grain to find a market? Surely the need for action is not so urgent that the farmers at these shipping points must be sacrificed. With such elevators as are necessary open for the next two months the required service can be given, and then, if the Government is not prepared to do better with the elevators in the future than it has in the past, the sooner they are locked the better for the province.

DIRECT LEGISLATION BANQUET

The Direct Legislation banquet in Winnipeg last week indicates that this great democratic reform movement is firmly established and is rapidly gaining ground. Leading business and professional men gave addresses on the need and progress of the reform, not only in Canada but in other parts of the Empire and foreign countries. One of the speakers quoted Lord Rosebery, Arthur J. Balfour, and Lord Lansdowne in support of the Referendum. Peculiarly appropriate was the fact that Mr. Balfour in advocating the Referendum as a means of settling the tariff reform question in Britain, was accused of adopting an American innovation. The leader of the Unionist party silenced his accusers by showing that the Referendum was quite in accord with the British constitution and quite British in principle. When such leading statesmen approve of the Referendum it would seem that such a reform could hardly be called un-British. There never was a time in the history of Canada when a popular check on our elected representatives was so much needed as today. Intelligent and thinking Canadians are beginning to realize this fact very clearly. The Initiative, Referendum and Recall are the best means at hand for providing this check. Both political parties in Alberta, and one of the parties in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, have already declared for the Initiative and Referendum. This reform is coming and coming very rapidly. When it is on the statute books of the Prairie Provinces our representatives will then be more responsive to the will of the people. The gathering in Winnipeg last week was the culmination of two years' splendid work in the province. The Western people are in the mood for reform. They see the need of it. They cannot get justice from their representatives and they are finally driven to look to themselves. Which government in the West aspires to the honor of leading the way towards democracy? Which will go down to defeat as opposed to granting to the people the power to say how they shall be governed? The answer will be known within two years.

On another page we publish the report of the Saskatchewan Direct Legislation League. This organization has started under favorable circumstances and will undoubtedly meet with much popular support. The people realize that they must depend upon themselves and they are accepting the responsibility. With their organizations working steadily in the Prairie Provinces the spread of information will be rapid and reactionary politicians will soon be brought to see the light.

SINGLE TAX IN ALBERTA

The new Towns Act, passed at the last session of the Alberta legislature, contained the following clause:—

"All municipal and school taxes shall be levied equally upon all rateable land in the town."

The new Rural Municipalities Act, passed at the same session contained the following clause:—

"All municipal taxes shall be levied equally upon all rateable land in the municipality according to the assessed value of such land."

Both of these acts make the following provision for the assessment of the land:—

"Land shall be assessed at its actual cash value as it would be appraised in payment of a just debt from a solvent debtor, exclusive of the value of any buildings erected thereon or of any other increase of value caused by any other expenditure of labor or capital thereon."

It is expected that during the course of the next four years all the towns and rural municipalities in the province of Alberta will come under the operation of these two acts, and as they become operative it will be seen that no taxes can be levied from other sources than land values. The province of Alberta is to be congratulated upon this progressive legislation. The city of Edmonton has already adopted the system of raising revenue by taxing land values, and a campaign in favor of the same system is already in progress in Lethbridge and Calgary. Within a very short time the prospects are that all taxes raised in Alberta will be from land values alone. So far as we know Alberta is the largest area under one government in the world to adopt this progressive form of taxation. Under the system of taxing land values only a man is not fined for being industrious, nor is he bonused for being lazy. By raising all revenues from the taxation of land values the business of the land speculator will be considerably discounted, and his services can well be dispensed with, without any serious loss to the community.

A GOOD EXAMPLE

Just to the south of us we see Taft, Roosevelt and La Follette as Republican presidential candidates. There is cleavage in the party. Each one has a following. The result of the division will help to clean up the party and show the people the absurdity of the party system, whether or not it places any of them in the White House. Such a division in Canada would be impossible under our party system, which is the most undemocratic in the English-speaking world. We have only two parties in Canada and they both take orders from Ottawa, while Ottawa too often takes orders or advice from other sources. As soon as the two parties at Ottawa decide what a man must believe in to be a Grit or a Tory the word goes out through the land. The provincial parties line up as they are told, on pain of losing the aid and patronage of the federal party. Thus a man who claims to be a "loyal" Grit or a Tory is always in hot water to know just what he believes. He dares not have an opinion on any new question till his party leaders announce how he is to think. It must be humiliating to be a hidebound party man and be compelled to swallow the opinions of party leaders who are interested chiefly in getting power or holding it. The true party man cannot form an independent opinion. They are always formed for him