

The Grain Growers' Guide

ADDRESSED TO THE FARMERS OF



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PUBLIC ABBATOIR IS ASSURED

One of the most significant and important series of articles that has been published in the newspapers of Western Canada, is that published in the Winnipeg Telegram every day for the past week, under the title "The Middlemen in the Meat Trade." These articles are the explanation of the methods by which the meat trade has been brought under the control of three or four concerns in the West. They show how competition has been completely eliminated and monopoly reigns supreme. These articles in the Telegram deal with the beef from the time it is born till it is shipped from the range to the market; then as it passes through the abattoir, and hence on to the consumer, with prices going higher all the time.

The most significant statement in the article is the following:

"If there existed a public market and a public abattoir where cattlemen could sell their stock in an open market, and where the butcher could buy what he wanted when he wanted it, and get it slaughtered by an abattoir operator for the producer and the consumer, it would produce the same result as if the retail butcher were enabled to do his own slaughtering."

This is a very plain, truthful statement, but when it is published with great prominence in the official organ of the Provincial Government of Manitoba, it assumes a new significance. We may assume henceforth that the Government of Manitoba is favorable to the establishment of a public abattoir and a competitive market in Winnipeg. The government that does this will be taking a step in the right direction and will be doing a vast work in favor of the producers of the West as well as for the consumers in the cities.

The fact that the abattoirs in Winnipeg control the cattle market, is well set forth in The Telegram in the following words:

"Today the C.P.R. stock yards in this city which receive the 170,000 cattle, which are marketed here every year, are the centre where the buying and selling of the cattle of this country is conducted. They are operated by the abattoir interests, simply because the abattoirs are the controlling people in the trade."

"The abattoir buys the cattle, kills them, exports the hides, sells the offal and retails the meat through twenty-five or thirty of its own butcher shops in the city of Winnipeg and other shops of its own in other centres throughout the country. The butcher who does not do his own slaughtering, and there are practically none who do in this city, buys his meat from the abattoir, and for what he is delivering to you today he paid the abattoir eight and a half cents a pound if he purchased it by the carcass. If he bought it in cuts or quarters, he paid more."

This is a comprehensive view and should be considered very carefully by all men interested in the progress of the west. The ways

of the abattoir men are many and varied. They contrive to make big profits out of the cattle business, while they pay no more to producers, but charge higher prices to the consumer. We quote further from the Telegram articles:

"Here is one instance of how the abattoirs are in a position to off-set any price which they may be compelled to pay to the shipper or producer. Two years ago when the butchers of this city were buying their beef from the abattoirs they received with every carcass a set of offal. Offal in the meat trade, comprises the heart, liver and tongue of the animal. Every butcher that bought a carcass went and picked out his own set of offal and he reckoned on receiving \$1.00 for this when he retailed it."

"When the price of live stock moved a little upwards the abattoirs discontinued this custom. Now the retail butcher pays the abattoir \$1.00 for this meat, and the public pays the retailer this \$1.00 plus his profit. Taken by itself it seems a small consideration, but considering the 64,323 cattle that were consumed locally in the year 1909 it simply means \$64,323 more to the receipts of the abattoir people."

The method by which competition is eliminated is easily shown when it is considered that there are few interests concerned, and the understanding between them is such that they afford no real competition. Here is what the Telegram says:

"The four or five organizations now in control of the situation represent only four or five independent interests. They are the people who buy the cattle from the farmer, and buying in a market of their own, not regulated by other markets, they can fix prices to suit themselves. They do fix them, for they inform the dealers from time to time what they will pay for cattle shipped to them, and frequently when the cattle arrive in the stockyard the shipper cannot get this price. It is a case of take what's offered or take your cattle away."

"With only a limited number of independent interests in the trade, it is the easiest thing in the world for understandings and arrangements to assume form, quietly and automatically, without the members of these interests ever coming together on the subject at all. Some of the very best stock districts in this country never have more than one buyer, and that single buyer is always the representative of the same people. Most any live stock shipper can tell you enough facts with respect to this to show the absence of real competition."

In pointing out the rake-off which the middleman gets, the articles state as follows:

"It is the spread of price between what the man on the farm receives and what the householder in the city pays, that tells the story. Give the middlemen every reasonable benefit of the doubt, and the best you can figure out, is that he is getting a profit equal to the combined profits of every other party in the trade, a gross profit of nearly \$1,000,000 a year, on cattle for local consumption alone. This is minimizing the real condition, because he is getting more. There can be no doubt that this iniquitous distribution of the profits of the trade contributes much to the high price of meat."

"Of the four interests that are considered in this article, the work and risk of the producer are out of all proportion, even when considered in relation to the smallest of the other three. A farmer makes his turnover in the cattle raising business on an average of once in every three years, sometimes once in every two years. The butcher who is selling you your meat, makes the turnover once in every three to ten days. The abattoir comes in on a much better basis and the local dealer's turnover averages once in about two weeks. There is an irregularity in the case of the dealer, for he is not permanently stocked like the wholesaler or the retailer."

These articles paint the general situation and prescribe a good remedy. Some of the statements and figures may allow of some variation but such publicity will do great good to the cause. When the big daily papers begin to pry into these matters there is a lot they can find out. If they are sincere and will go right to the bottom they can do a vast amount of good for their readers. But one thing will commend itself to all westerners, and that is the plan of the government to provide an open market and public abattoir whereby the producers and consumers will not be mulcted of heavy tolls to benefit a few individuals who at present control the live stock industry of Western Canada.

NO MORE LAND GRANTS

A deputation of the veterans of the Fenian Raid of 1866 and 1870, have asked the government of Canada for a land grant similar to that given to South African veterans.

It is to be hoped that the government is alive now to the fact that this land grant business ought to be stopped. The man to get land in Western Canada hereafter should be the man who is going to use it, or otherwise he should be made to pay for holding it out of use. In the past land grants have been about as easy a thing to get as could be desired. The government has had considerable experience with the grants made to South African veterans and the land grants made to them are now being manipulated by speculators. If there is to be anything done in recognition of the veterans of the Fenian Raid it should take some other form than that of a grant of land in Western Canada. The veterans would not live on the land if they got it, and it would very shortly pass into the hands of speculators and be used for a directly opposite purpose than that for which it was originally intended.

EDUCATE THE FARM BOYS AND GIRLS

At the present time every branch of agricultural activity in Western Canada is being thoroughly overhauled. There is a determination on the part of the farmers of this country to make conditions right. Wrong has been seated upon the throne of power in many cases ever since the plow first turned the sod on the Western Prairies. Now the farmers are together in a way that never was known before. They are seeing the great problems eye to eye and are fighting side by side. The greatest need and the most important product of the farm is being neglected. The most valuable product in this country or any other country is the children in the farm homes. If the boys and girls today growing to maturity on the prairie farms in this great country are properly equipped for their life work there will be no further oppression of the farmers. The habit which prevails far too commonly of pinching the country school until its usefulness and efficiency is greatly restricted, should be curbed. Just as long as the farmers and their wives are not mentally equipped as well as physically equipped for their work, just so long will they more easily fall victims to unscrupulous exploiters. The farmers in every school section should deem it their greatest privilege to contribute to the limit of their means in order that the country school should perform its proper function. Every boy and girl should attend school regularly until they have secured all that the country school has to offer. The country schools are weak today and it is the fault of the people in the community that they are in this condition. Where possible and practical, rural schools should consolidate and thus secure for the children of the country the same advantages that accrue from the splendid graded schools in the cities and towns in the West. Where not possible the children should be sent to high schools. The problem of education is so great that it overshadows every other problem that is today agitating the farmers of the West. We hear the conventions discussing that matter. We see great business concerns setting aside large sums of money to educate the public towards their own ends. While the problem of the commercial life of the world is education in some one or more of its numerous phases, in not one of these cases is education so immensely important as to the farmer. When a man has reached the age when he is the head of a family and compelled to labor steadily for their support, it is late in the day to acquire an education. It can be done, but requires prodigious effort. The time to get an educational foundation is when the boys and girls are young and impressionable. No effort on the part of parents and no sacrifice is wasted if it tends towards making the boy and girl better fitted for their life work. Every man and woman on the Western farms today will wish something better for their boys and girls in the future. The only gift to a boy and girl, that cannot be squandered, and which