

# The Mail Bag

## AGAINST DIRECT LEGISLATION

Editor, Guide:—I wish you would grant me the privilege of answering Mr. F. J. Dixon's and Mr. Levi Thompson's letters, which appeared in your August issues, on the subject of Direct Legislation. The Guide has a reputation for fairness and discrimination throughout the West. I hope you will not impair that reputation. To my mind both Mr. Dixon and Mr. Thompson dealt very discreetly with my quotation from Premier Asquith, and also my Australian illustration. Mr. Dixon arrays a strange medley of names in support of his argument; some, I think, would hardly bear examination. The inclusion of both Salisbury and Rosebery among his list of "intellectual men who advocate the extension of Direct Legislation" caused me some mild surprise. As to Balfour, his announcement in favor of the principle of the Referendum being applied to Tariff Reform, was conditional upon the Liberal party consenting to refer the Home Rule question to the electorate in a like manner. And to this the Liberal party refused to agree. Balfour's offer was nothing but the last desperate eleventh hour throw of a gambler. His party have since then repudiated the Referendum, in fact, that policy does not appear even on the horizon of British politics. Mr. Levi Thompson, in attempting to prove that the principle of Direct Legislation is a good thing by citing Switzerland, attempts to prove too much. If it be so distinct an advance upon the usual method of governance, then Swiss people must, I suppose, be the best governed and of course the most contented people on earth. Are they? But there is one point which I omitted to urge in my former letter on this subject. That is, that a parliament possesses—other things being equal—a higher average of intelligence than do the people whom it both represents and governs, consequently it is more logical to expect better legislation by following the present system, always providing that parliament does not sit too long—than by a system of sporadic interference which may sometimes be guided by a sane instinct, but again, as often by some passionate outburst of sentimentality which contains no stable element. I said other things being equal. I mean, of course, that we must believe our parliament to be composed of men of average probity, and not of men who can be corrupted by the first gang of capitalists that comes along. But, of course, to assume that the representative is corrupt or liable to become corrupted, assumes also that the represented are corrupt or liable to corruption, and that is a somewhat sorry picture of democracy.

From my observation this Direct Legislation agitation is an outcome of the instinctive fear with which democracy regards the growing power of Capitalism. Its supporters fail to perceive that Capitalism can, under the present system of society, wield the power when it will and how it will, whether we get the power of the Initiative and Referendum or not. Any small group of men possessing the means and the incentive can soon possess the power to will and to attain that which they desire. Proportional Representation is one remedy; Socialism is another. Every man must choose for himself. I cannot see how the possession of the power of the Initiative, Referendum and Recall by the people can change the existing situation one iota.

JOSEPH H. ANDREWS.  
Langbank, Sask.

## FARMER BEARS THE BURDEN

Editor, Guide:—In my last letter I pointed out, conclusively, I think, how burdens carried by the other classes

in the community are turned over to the farmers' shoulders by the process of a natural law, they being able to shift their's while he cannot, because he never makes a price for his product, that being regulated by the competition of the farmers of the world in an open market. I notice that most of your writers on this question have failed to take cognizance of several ways in which the tariff burden is made heavier than the mere rate of duty levied. The wholesale merchant who first buys the goods must have a profit on the total value, including the tariff, and each through whose hands the goods pass must have a profit on the whole cost to him. The railroad which carries the goods to this country must have a higher freight rate on account of the duties levied on the material going

we buy at least 25 per cent. of the duty more. In other words, this policy of protection to the industries of the country adds one-third to the cost of everything we buy, while not giving us one cent of advantage in our sales.

"But then a farmer does not buy much." How often has that assertion been made to the farmers by the apologists of protection in discussions of this question? Well, I know that every year of the forty that I have been on the farm in this country I have purchased to the full extent of my income, and I will venture the assertion that there is not more than one farmer out of ten but does the same, while I have known many who spent considerably more than their income and got behind every year.

My income from the farm averages

they wish "to point a moral or adorn a tale" of avariciousness?

ROBT. FISHER.

Oak Bank.

## C.P.R. HIGHHANDEDNESS

Editor, Guide:—It would appear that the time has arrived for the men of the West to show that this country is run by the people and not by high handed corporations. The last act of corporation contempt of Canadian courts is being performed in the vicinity of my ranch.

The facts, as I have been able to ascertain them, are as follows:

The C.P.R. have, during the course of three years, been carrying on legal actions to prevent rival railways from passing through this district to enter Calgary. The pleas, to enable the C.P.R. to enforce these actions, have been of a technical nature, the apparently only practical reason being to prevent any other railway, except the C.P.R., to run through the district. The last of the injunctions asked for by the C.P.R. was quashed by the courts a short while ago. When the C.N.R. then proceeded to complete the work, the C.P.R., disregarding court decisions, armed some 100 men with pickaxes, etc., and rushed that bunch of rioters through this district to obstruct the work of the C.N.R. by force.

I venture this question:—Are we expected to be law abiding citizens, governed by British law, or are we to be run by moving picture displays of Mexican nature?

This work of obstructing competing railways is to prevent competition with the C.P.R. in the district where

my ranch is located—where the C.P.R. are running trains only twice a week—where there is no station agent at the C.P.R. station—where there is no telegraph office or line—and where a whole string of farmers are waiting for cars to ship their grain. The pretext under which this system of obstructing other railways is being carried on is that the competing railways are interfering with the C.P.R. irrigation system. There are some 300 farmers' complaints regarding this system registered with the Dominion Government, and this Government has as yet not granted a water licence to the C.P.R., as the C.P.R. have themselves not complied with the laws and regulations. There are, besides this, many other farmers' grievances, which could be mentioned if time and space would allow.

If the C.P.R. believe that they can carry their private interests by brute force in opposition to the decision of the courts, it would appear that the time has now arrived when the people of Canada get an opportunity to check a corporation so detrimental to the progress of the nation, and that a plank be introduced in a political platform to instruct the government to build a railway parallel with the C.P.R. main line from the Prairie Provinces to the Pacific Coast and leave the management of this railway to commissioners free of party politics. It would hardly be necessary to remind the public that the vote of one single homesteader in such a ballot will equal the vote of the president of the C.P.R.

HENRY SORENSEN.

Strathmore, Alberta.

## 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. Every letter must be signed by the name of the writer, though not necessarily for publication. The views of our correspondents are not of necessity those of The Guide.

We see neither justice nor injustice which doth not change its quantity upon changing climate.—Pascal.



Hindus at Home—A Street Scene in Madras, India.

## Questions for Discussion

We are going to try and make the Mail Bag more interesting and profitable by suggesting one or two subjects on which we especially desire to have the experience and opinions of our readers.

We would be glad to have a number of letters during the next few weeks on the question: "What Is a Fair Profit?" The manufacturers in defending Protection and in asking for higher tariffs often point to the big profits which they assert Western farmers are making. The manufacturers are making profits which run all the way up to 50 per cent. on their invested capital. We want to know what interest the farmers are making on their investments. How much per cent. on the money they have invested are the farmers of the West making out of their agricultural operations, after paying expenses and allowing wages for their own work and the work of members of their families, for wear and tear on machinery, equipment and buildings, and so forth? Are our Western farmers getting paid for their labor and 8 per cent. interest on their investment? We would like facts and figures on this point.

We would also be glad to have letters from our readers discussing the interview with Sir Edmund Walker, published in The Guide on November 6. It is not intended that the Mail Bag will be devoted exclusively to these questions, but we think they are of sufficient importance to merit special consideration from our readers at the present time. We will publish the best of the letters received and in order that the views of as many of our readers as possible can be presented we ask correspondents to make their letters short. This is an opportunity for men and women who are thinking to put their thoughts before the country.—The Editor.

into the equipment of the road; and they must all charge more for their services, because their employees must get higher wages, for their necessities are increased in price by this same tariff.

Our politicians tell us that we must bear our share of the burdens entailed upon the builders of such a great country as Canada is destined to become. Are we not practically carrying all? Just think for a moment of the logical conclusion of these undisputed facts and all must admit that the burdens of the country, whatever their source, must be borne by its basic industry, agriculture.

With three or four exceptions everything we buy is protected by a duty of from 15 to 40 per cent., to which must be added, if we are going to get anything like an adequate conception of this subject, the enhanced cost on account of merchants' profits and the higher freight rates, to which I have referred above, which increases the cost of everything

about twelve hundred dollars and consequently the tariff imposes on me a burden of at least four hundred dollars, of which the treasury of the country possibly gets one hundred while the beneficiaries of the system profit to the extent of three hundred. Now if the average farmer had this three hundred dollars to spend in more comforts for his family, a trip and rest for the over-worked wife, a more liberal support to the church and education, would the country generally not be benefited more than it is by its expenditure, by those who have it now, in touring Europe?

"We can't all be farmers." Would not this additional wealth at the disposal of the farmer enable him to support even larger cities and towns, with their diversified occupations, than under present conditions? Might not this lessening of the necessity for economising in the home deprive some of our ignorant critics of the opportunity they seem to enjoy of using the farmer as an object lesson when