

The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, December 28th, 1910

A HAPPY NEW YEAR

The Guide extends to all its friends the most sincere wishes for a happy and prosperous New Year. As we look back over the past year we feel very thankful to our many friends for their co-operation in building up The Guide to its present important position in Canadian journalism. We have had hundreds of most appreciative letters from our readers who realize the efforts we are making to forward the cause of democracy and to shed the light of truth in dark places. The leaders of the great farmers' movement in Western Canada are all readers of The Guide, but the progress of the movement is impeded by the apathy of many thousands who do not read The Guide. It is our desire to secure every farmer who is interested in this country as a reader of our paper. We feel that we have accomplished a great deal during the past year and we know that with the assistance of our readers we can accomplish a great deal more in the year to come. Let us help each other to swell the ranks of our readers and work together to usher in the day when right will prevail and when special privilege will not longer block the pathway of progress. Now then, all together to make the year 1911 the greatest year that the farmers of Western Canada have ever known.

THINK IT OVER

During the week that has just passed our readers have had an opportunity to consider the resolutions which were presented at Ottawa and the reply made by Sir Wilfrid Laurier, which was published in last week's Guide. We believe that the consensus of opinion throughout this great Western country will be that the demands of the farmers were reasonable to a degree. The farmers did not ask that anybody else should be burdened for their benefit and in fact did not ask any bonus of any kind for their own industry. The request of the farmers was merely that they be given a square deal. Of course it was not expected that Premier Laurier would at once promise the farmers everything they asked for, but he gave them no assurance that they would get anything they asked for. The terminal elevator question is the only one upon which the government is making any move whatever to protect the interests of the people. And yet the prospects are that even the terminal elevator question will be settled in some way contrary to the wishes of the organized farmers and every section of the grain trade, and in a way that will not restore confidence. It must be driven home by this time to the farmers of Canada what an insignificant part they play in the making of the laws of Canada. No man has said or can say that the demands of the farmers were unjust and yet the government paid little heed to those demands. The policy of R. L. Borden of the opposition is practically the policy of the government. The farmers may look towards both these parties with equal hope because from present appearances they will get as little as possible from either. Does there need to be anything more plain than that the protected manufacturers and a few monied interests in Eastern Canada have more power with the parties than all the farmers of Canada? There may be some who will object to this statement. But to those who object we ask for some other explanation. The people in Canada have asked for justice time and again and have asked in

vain. They get nothing. It is due to the intelligence and determination of the farmers themselves that today they are not bond slaves, as in some parts of the old countries. It is not due to our governments in any respect that the conditions of the agricultural classes are so greatly improved. Reforms never come from the higher powers. They always originate with the masses. But on the other hand we see the manufacturers go to the parliament and get whatever they ask for. We see the bankers secure special privileges which mean to them millions. We see the railway companies do likewise. Any interest with a lot of money at once commands the attention of our politicians. The farmers who come empty-handed to ask only for justice go away as they came. But is this to be? We think not. **We think that despite the fact that Messrs. Laurier and Borden and their parties respect the big interests instead of the people a change is coming. We mistake the temper and spirit of our Western farmers if they will sit by and allow any group of politicians to dictate to them and take an active part in robbing them.** The farmers know that protective tariff is robbery pure and simple. The manufacturers of course get the benefit of it, but the government is responsible for it. The farmers have laid down their platform. They have told the government of Canada what they want. No person who saw those eight hundred farmers at Ottawa will not doubt for a moment that they meant business. They were very much in earnest. Are they going to get what they want? Certainly they are if they stand shoulder to shoulder and fight for it. It requires just as much courage and determination to fight the bloodless battle with the predatory interests in our own country as it does to face the foreign foe with rifle and bayonet. Both battles are equally in defense of our fireside.

What are we going to do? This is the question which the Western farmers have been turning over in their minds for the past ten days. There is one thing very plain, namely, that not one member must get into the House of Commons from Western Canada next election who is not solemnly pledged to fight in the interest of the people who elected him. Some people believe it is of no use to pledge a candidate. But we have not so far lost our faith in humanity. We believe that it is a very wise course to pledge a candidate, and have him sign a written pledge in black and white. Farmers' organizations have many times been injured more or less through party politics. This danger in the West can be averted through county organizations in the three provinces. Our farmers will control the political machinery if these counties correspond to the federal electoral districts. The farmers then who lean towards the Conservatives can pledge a candidate of that party to protect the interests of the farmers. Likewise the farmers who lean towards the Liberal party can pledge their candidate. What difference then will it make which candidate is elected, providing he is an honorable man? But it should be agreed upon by all the farmers that they will defeat any candidate who will not pledge himself to the farmers' platform. By so doing the farmers can get justice.

The winter time is the time to think these things over and prepare. There will not be an election for a year and probably not till the fall of 1913. By that time the farmers in all of the rural constituencies of the West should have complete control of the

two political machines and make them subservient to their interests. This seems to be the solution of thinking men on the present situation.

But in addition we must unite the people of our Western provinces and cement them into a unit through the Initiative and Referendum. Now, more than any other time in the history of the West, we need Direct Legislation on the statute books of the Western provinces. When we have secured that, the people of these provinces will be able to control the legislatures which they do not do at the present time. The people of the West today have the power to throw out one party in the provincial legislature and put in another party that will be equally independent, but still the people will have no control over legislation. The only thing that will do this is the Initiative and Referendum. The people of the three Prairie Provinces, when they have once controlled legislation in their own province, will very shortly exercise dominant influence in the House of Commons at Ottawa because they will be supported by a large number of people from the other provinces. This seems a long process to secure reform, but it can all be accomplished in less than five years. The big interests have been forty years getting the people under their thumb, so that five years is not a very long time to upset these interests.

RETAIL MERCHANTS' ASSOCIATION

The farmers must be kept under and compelled to pay whatever price the merchants choose to charge them. This is the dictum of the Retail Merchants' Association. That organization is now engaged in preparations to have a delegation of 5,000 merchants and commercial travellers wait upon the Ottawa government and protest against the enactment of the Co-operative Bill. Because the farmers went to the government 800 strong the merchants think their case will be stronger with 5,000. But those merchants and commercial travellers represent only themselves, while the farmers represent directly at least 60,000 votes at the next general election. But the farmers must not rest easy in the thought that they are secure. The petitions in favor of the Co-operative Bill that have been sent to every local secretary in the three Western Provinces should be signed by every farmer in the country and sent in to the provincial secretaries by January 1. The presentation of a huge petition to the government will indicate that the farmers mean business. **The Co-operative petitions should have at least 50,000 signatures.** Sir Wilfrid Laurier, when in the West last summer, gave the farmers to understand that the Co-operative Bill would pass the House and become law. If Sir Wilfrid gives it his personal attention the Bill will surely become law during this session. The action of the Retail Merchants' Association is the essence of selfishness. At the present time the laws in force are quite satisfactory to the merchant or the firm in business. But the present law is not so satisfactory to incorporate a large number of people who want to do their own business. At the present rate there will soon rise up an organization demanding that the farmers be compelled to remain on their farms or be fastened on reserves like the Indians. The opinion seems to prevail among the special privileged class that the farmers are a necessary nuisance. The farmers, by standing to their guns, can soon clear away this delusion.