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The Brain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, March 7, 1917

BRITAIN NEEDS WHEAT

The British Government is bending every possible effort to ensure the greatest food production that the British Isles have ever known. But even with their best efforts they cannot this year produce nearly sufficient for their own home consumption. Canada is the nearest source of supply for the extra food and to Canada, Britain is looking for the wheat to feed her armies. The appeal will not be in vain. Barring unfavorable weather conditions, western Canada this year will produce a large surplus of wheat and will have an abundance for the British people.

THE FARMERS' PLATFORM

In response to numerous requests we reproduce again in this issue the farmers' platform in its entirety. It will be well for those readers interested to preserve it for future reference. The farmers' platform, drafted by the Canadian Council of Agriculture, has been unanimously endorsed at the three great annual conventions of the organized farmers during the last two months. It is now the official declaration of the organized farmers of the Prairie Provinces. As a broadminded, clear cut, comprehensive policy for national development, the farmers' platform is by all odds the best national political platform produced in Canada by any large organization since confederation. It crystallizes the result of many years of investigation, research and discussion. For the first time the farmers have now a national platform. It will not commend itself to either the official Grit or Tory parties because neither one likes it. No one can accuse the farmers of partisanship in drafting the platform. Free wheat and free implements are about the only things in the platform which the official Grit party favors. The Corporation Tax is the only plank adopted by the Tory party tho the rank and file of the party seems to lean somewhat towards nationalization of railways. Neither party will endorse the tariff proposals nor the taxation proposals in the farmers' platform. Both of them are too much beholden to the wealthy and corporation interests, who finance their political campaigns. Every farmer should study the farmers' platform and the explanations given in this issue. If the farmers, one and all, will give their honest and determined support to this platform it will revolutionize our political and economic life. The hide-bound party press as well as the corporation press find much fault with the farmers' platform which is only additional evidence that it is a good thing for the common people.

HOW TO GET ACTION

As the educational work on the farmers' platform proceeds, the question that continues to be asked is, "How can we elect candidates to the House of Commons in support of this platform?" It is a very practical question and one that demands an answer. The answer, however, must come from the farmers themselves. The organized farmers have no political machine for the nomination of candidates like the two old parties. They have no campaign fund with which to finance their candidates. It is absolutely certain that the corporations and interests who finance the Grit and Tory parties will not finance the organized farmers. And if they did it would be the worst thing that could happen. At the next general election there will be 43 seats to be filled in the House of Commons from the three Prairie Provinces alone. At least 36 of these seats are controlled by the rural vote. If the farmers of the West will unite in a determined effort they can elect 36 candidates

who will support the farmers' platform in the House of Commons. Such a united body in the House of Commons would create a revolution. But this great achievement can only be accomplished if the farmers are sick and tired of the performance of the two old parties and are fully determined to bring about a change. The West for years has received very scant justice from the law makers at Ottawa, due largely to the fact that the Western representatives have been divided between the two camps and generally been more interested in their party than in their country. If the farmers will see to it that at least one good candidate in each constituency is a supporter of the farmers' platform they can elect the great majority of the Western representatives. Whenever there is a candidate in the field it would only be fair and reasonable to give him an opportunity to consider the farmers' platform and express his views upon it. If he is prepared to support it regardless of the action of either of the old parties and can be relied upon to carry out his promises it will be a decided advantage. If two opposing candidates are both honestly in support of the platform so much the better. If both are opposed then it is time to put a new candidate into the field. One thing should not be lost sight of, namely, that the farmers must give their financial support to the candidate who accepts their platform. An election is probable before harvest time and action should not be delayed too long.

THE MERCHANDISING PROBLEM

The most economical distribution of merchandise in Canada is daily becoming a much more pressing problem. Particularly is this true in the West. The rapid rise in the cost of living has focused public attention on this sphere of our commercial activity as one from which more detailed explanations are due. A recent conference of retailers and wholesalers at Ottawa, another at Winnipeg in conjunction with some of the bankers and still others now proposed show that part of "the trade" at least realizes the seriousness of the situation. Satisfying the immediate public clamor is only one matter to be settled. A more vital problem and one which in its results means only public agitation put into execution is the strong competition of the mail order house and the influence of co-operative buying. There are at present two schools of thought, as it were, in the regular merchandising fraternity regarding this problem. One section is partly asleep and wants to stall along by appointing commissions to carry on so-called investigations and set prices, etc. The other, almost entirely represented by retailers, is moving to a solution more in line with the principles of modern business. It is cutting buying costs by co-operative purchasing direct from manufacturers and is aiming to give the benefit of that saving to the consumer. Already nearly 500 retail merchants from all three Western provinces are united in one body for that purpose and they have just finished a successful year's business in the face of enormous difficulties. These merchants are merely falling in line with the principles of co-operation. They have been forced to it for existence.

Too many manufacturers and wholesalers unquestionably operate under fixed understandings to maintain certain prices. Some combinations of wholesalers dictate who shall or shall not sell certain lines of goods and at what prices they shall be sold. Some manufacturers determine the prices at which wholesalers shall sell to the retailer, not only their own, but similar lines made by other manufacturers. They boycott breakers of these

agreements. Some jobbers or wholesalers exact exorbitant commission charges. Whereas the cost to the farmer of having an 80,000 pound car of wheat sold is \$17.58, the expense to the retailers in buying a 30,000 pound car of sugar is \$96.00. Both cars are of practically equal value, tho the actual labor connected with selling the wheat is several times that expended in handling the sugar.

There is no use in the retailer or wholesaler shouting about the co-operative buying of farmers and of the depredations of the mail order house. The mail order house has been a potent factor in making the rural west a better place in which to live. Most farmers are not anxious to keep store, but they are interested in just values. They have powerful weapons at their command. The retailers have a difficult problem, but farmers have already by their co-operative selling and buying furnished an object lesson to retailers. Until they make a real application of that principle to their own transactions and reduce this question to one of pure economics they have no reason whatever to blame the farmer for buying either co-operatively or thru the mail order house. Retailers must break down some of the combinations which are strangling them. Co-operation is the weapon to use and retailers will have a vast amount of sympathy from farmers if they attack this problem with vigor.

TO INCREASE CROP YIELDS

The kind of seed selection described in this issue by Seager Wheeler is worthy of careful study by every farmer. The only farmers who will make money out of wheat growing when prices go back to normal after the war will be those who use the best seed and follow a proper tillage system. It is not a very hard task to carry on seed selection to the extent required on any one farm. In fact it is a most interesting work and the greater part of it might be looked upon as a recreation. That it pays has been demonstrated conclusively. It is no impractical theory. Seager Wheeler has followed the system for many years and by so doing has produced the world's best wheat and record breaking yields. Furthermore, in a weed infested country he has been able to keep his fields clean. What he has done others can do. There ought to be not less than 10,000 farmers carrying on systematic seed selection in this country for the benefit not only of themselves but their fellow farmers.

STRENGTHENING POULTRY INDUSTRY

The poultry situation as explained in this issue by Prof. Herner is worthy of the closest attention by all farmers. Outstanding facts in connection with the past year's operations were the late hatching season, the large proportion of unfinished chickens marketed, the very high cost of feed, lack of thrift and vigor in farm flocks, the short producing season, the high prices and the effects of war in relation to our markets. The late hatching season and high feed prices were factors responsible for placing the whole industry in a precarious condition for this season, a condition deserving of the closest consideration of farmers. The next two months are vital ones to the success or failure of this season's operations. Farmers should use much more than ordinary care in the selection of fully matured and well developed breeding stock. Naturally eggs from the highest producers should always be used, but few farmers are able to tell just which are their best producers. Everyone, however, can pick out the strongest, best grown and most likely