

to produce facts, figures and arguments to disprove the case made out on behalf of the people that the freight rates charged in the West are unduly high and discriminatory. Having failed to defend themselves in open court, the railways are apparently endeavoring by secret representations to the government to have the case withdrawn. The Railway Commission on April 23 handed down a decision partially recognizing the justice of the complaint against high and discriminatory express rates and ordering a reduction of 20 per cent. in western express charges. It may be that an attempt will be made to appease the demand of the West for justice by this concession, but, on the contrary, this success should encourage those who are fighting for fair play to the West and cause them to redouble their efforts to secure substantial freight rate reductions. The question as to why the investigation is not being proceeded with was raised in the House of Commons on Friday last, and the only explanation that was forthcoming was that the counsel for the Dominion were conferring with United States experts as to conditions across the line. This seems to be a very poor excuse and it certainly will not remove the suspicion in the minds of the people of the West that sinister influences are at work to have the freight rate investigation indefinitely delayed and finally abandoned.

LAND SPECULATION

We believe that most of our readers will agree with us in regarding land speculation as one of the greatest evils at present rampant in Western Canada. By the rapid increase in population the value of land is being enhanced and fortunes are being made by men who are holding land utterly idle. In fact millions of dollars are being "made" by speculators in various parts of the United States, Great Britain, France and other parts of Europe, many of whom have never seen Canada. The value of the land in Western Canada is entirely created by the presence of the people, and yet they sit idly by and allow foreigners to come in and take away this common property. It is exactly the same process as if these foreigners came into the country and robbed the treasury of any school district or rural municipality. The only difference being that in one case the law permits it and in the other case the law forbids it. But both propositions are on an even footing morally and socially, and, in fact, the people of the West today suffer more through land speculation than they would if every municipal treasury in the Prairie Provinces was robbed of every cent in it. This truth should strike home to every farmer and his family when they see a quarter section of virgin land in their own community that was purchased for \$3 an acre being turned over for \$30 per acre. Thus the man who paid \$480 for this land has held it out of use, kept it away from those who would like to make it productive, and by so doing is now able to sell it at \$4,800 or a profit of \$4,320. This money was earned by the people in that community, and they have quietly stood and allowed their pockets to be picked. We think all will agree with us that the man who holds land out of use simply for speculative purposes is of no use to the community nor to the country. Why should not the entire value of this vacant land be taxed into the public treasury where it will be of service to the people who made the value and who are actually working and developing the country. A few months ago, we took a referendum upon the question of the taxation of land values and our readers were practically unanimous in declaring in favor of this reform. The Saskatchewan Legislature at its last session took a decided step in this direction by placing a surtax upon vacant land. Land speculation can be stopped if the people want it

stopped, and that without waiting for the customs tariff to be abolished. If the provincial legislatures will enact laws upon the principle of the Lloyd-George land laws in Great Britain, supplemented by a heavy surtax upon idle land, the speculators' game will be played out and the workers will get a better return for their labors. The bonafide farmer has nothing to gain through land speculation because his farm is his home and is used by him for productive purposes. If it increases in value he gets no advantage out of the increase unless he sells it, because it produces no better crops. This very fact is one of the strongest possible agencies at work in driving the people away from the farm. Farmers who have purchased land at a low price in years past are now finding that the margin of profit is being squeezed out of the farming business. Their land, however, has increased in value and the easiest way for them to make money is to sell the farm, if possible, and invest the proceeds in city real estate or some good paying investment and devote their energies to some occupation that will be more remunerative than farming. It is not difficult to see that unless land speculation is killed in this country we will never have a well developed agricultural community, where families build homes wherein to live throughout many generations, as has been the case in Eastern Canada. Are the farmers now ready to have land speculation killed? If they are we believe the legislatures of Saskatchewan and Alberta will be prepared to enact the necessary laws, because they have already taken advanced steps in this direction.

The Direct Legislation League of Manitoba is endeavoring to raise a fund of \$2,500 for the purpose of keeping an organizer in the field and carrying on the campaign for popular government during the present year. Previously the League has received substantial assistance from Joseph Fels, the millionaire single-taxer, who subscribed an amount equal to that raised locally, but Mr. Fels, who is contributing to similar funds in many parts of the world, considers that Canadian reformers should be able to finance their own campaign in the future. Consequently it is necessary for the supporters of Direct Legislation in Manitoba to increase their subscriptions and a generous response is being made by those who have so far been applied to. Up to date \$1,500 has been subscribed in amounts ranging from \$3 to \$100, all but \$163 of which has been given by residents of Winnipeg. If supporters of the movement in other parts of the province will do their share the balance of the required amount will soon be raised. The membership fee of the League is \$1 a year and subscriptions of small and large amounts will be thankfully received by the secretary, F. J. Dixon, 253 Chambers of Commerce, Winnipeg.

We would be glad to have any banker explain upon what principle his bank loans hundreds of thousands of dollars to manufacturers and wholesalers at 5 per cent. and 6 per cent. interest, when these same banks charge the farmers 8 per cent., 10 per cent. and 12 per cent. interest. The result is that the manufacturers and wholesalers finance the farmers and charge them long prices and high rates of interest which results in making them pay 10 per cent., 15 per cent. and even 20 per cent. interest on agricultural implements purchased on credit. If the farmer could borrow at the same rate of interest as the manufacturer and wholesaler, he could pay cash for his implements and be in a far better shape than he is today. We will gladly give any banker space to explain this to the satisfaction of our readers.

We are glad to know that the majority of the implement dealers doing business in Alberta have followed our advice and have decided to continue doing business in that province. If the legislation which has been passed is a serious detriment to the conduct of business in that province it will undoubtedly be amended. The time has come, however, when the contracts between the machine companies and the farmers must give the farmer a fair chance for his life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

We would draw the attention of our readers to our list of books on another page of this issue. On nearly every subject we can supply books or pamphlets and there is no better way of strengthening the cause for which we are working than to purchase a bunch of pamphlets and give them to those who are still in the darkness. The entire hope of the farmers' organization and of future democracy in Canada depends upon the spread of education. The circulation of these books and pamphlets is the very best possible means of showing the people the needs of the present day and how to secure the proper reforms.

We want some more suggestions as to the best way to make a successful local association. There are a number of local secretaries who have given a lot of study to the subject and their experience will be of inestimable value to those who are endeavoring to make their local association as efficient and valuable as possible. We would also be glad to have an article showing how to go to work to organize a local branch women's association. Some of these have already been organized and possibly the secretaries can send us an article showing how they have gone about it and what they are planning to do during the coming season.

Our Ottawa letter this week on another page shows how the "steam roller" works at Ottawa when the Bankers' Association wants to retain its special privileges and to continue plucking the public. It is a most enlightening view of the operation of our great democratic (?) law-making machinery.

We hope the Saskatchewan Government will announce the date of the referendum on the Direct Legislation Bill in sufficient time to allow the Grain Growers to use the summer months for educational work, if they decide to carry on a campaign in favor of the bill.

Now we have another "absolutely final" extension of time on the South African Scrip. But, of course, if some more speculators pop up before next session there will be still another "final" extension.

We hope that the reduction in express rates has not been such a severe strain upon the Railway Commission that they will be unable to keep up the good work and give us a little relief in the matter of freight rates.

Co-operation is in the air. One thousand members of the Ontario Vegetable-growers' Association have decided to save about \$50,000 a year by purchasing seeds, fruit baskets and boxes on the co-operative plan.

Finance Minister White is expected to bring down his budget in the House of Commons this week. We will then know what the government intends to do with the tariff.

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