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## Legislative Reforms that Would Give Farmers More Power

By H. B. Cowan, Editor-in-Chief of Farm and Dairy

### To Improve Farm Conditions, Politicians Should Have Less Power and the People More Simple ways in which these improvements may be Obtained—how they have Worked Elsewhere.

WHAT improvement in material or social conditions is needed most urgently by the farmers of Canada? The answer is becoming clearer every day. It is a greater control over those influences of the farm which largely control conditions on the farm.

Every time the banking interests of the country are permitted to tighten, by means of legislation suggested and proposed by them, their grip on the savings of the common people, it is apt to mean added facilities for doing business by the big interests and greater difficulty on the part of the farmer to obtain on reasonable terms such banking advances as he may require.

Each occasion on which a million or two acres of land, with possibly a paltry few million dollars in cash thrown in extra on the side, are handed out by the Dominion or provincial governments, or by both, to enterprising railway promoters who may have already grown rich at the country's expense, it means that the farmer's taxes are in due time increased.

Whenever a few million dollars are passed around in the form of government bonuses or tariff favors to some lusty and vigorous but so-called struggling industry it results in the farmer being required to contribute his share of the resultant taxes.

When, also, it is proposed to give away, without consulting the people, some \$35,000,000 in cash either to buy warships abroad or build them at home it means that the farmers of the country are expected to raise their share of a tax that would be sufficient to supply neat schoolhouses, costing \$1,000 each, in 35,000 school sections throughout Canada or that would be enough to build 35,000 miles of stone roads at a cost of \$1,000 a mile.

Transactions of this character are piling up such burdens on the residents of the farm while concentrating immense industrial enterprises in our towns and cities that there is little need to wonder why rural depopulation proceeds apace.

But this is not all! In spite of all the farmer is asked to contribute for the upbuilding of the country he is bled white as a reward for his generosity. The great railway corporations charge him exorbitant prices for handling most of the goods he both buys and sells. They then escape with a rate of taxation that is ridiculously below the taxes the farmer has to pay on his land and

in so fixing things up that the rank and file of our farmers are apt to find it hard to tell what they do want.

#### TWO SIMPLE REMEDIES

After all, however, conditions are not so impossible of improvement as they may seem. There are two simple remedies which we should be able to obtain as soon as we make up our minds that we want them and are willing to work for them. These remedies are what are commonly known as the "Initiative" and the "referendum." Both reforms have received the hearty approval of the three great farmers' organizations in Western Canada as well as of the Dominion Grange in Eastern Canada.

#### THE REFERENDUM

The Referendum is the right of a certain number of duly qualified voters—generally five per cent., where it is in operation—to demand of the Legislature—or House of Commons—the submission on to the people for final approval or rejection of any law or laws which the legislature may pass. This has the effect of making the people the final arbiters of the laws to which they shall submit and under which the country shall be governed and its public institutions maintained and regulated. The Referendum also provides for the voluntary submission to the people by the legislature of proposed laws which may originate with the legislature but for which its members may be unwilling to assume the responsibility.

#### THE INITIATIVE

The Initiative is the right of a certain number of the duly qualified voters—usually eight per cent., to propose a law for petition. This proposed law and petition is sent to the legislature—or House of Commons—and may be enacted according to the ordinary course of procedure.

If the members of the legislature do not see fit to do this it is obligatory upon them to submit it to the people to be voted upon not later than the next general election. If it is passed by a majority vote of the people it becomes law upon being signed by the Lieutenant-Governor.

It is not necessary, if the legislature should decide that the matter is urgent and of such nature that it is not willing to assume the responsibility of passing it, to delay the submission of any law proposed under Initiative Petition until the next general election. The legislature can order a special general election to pass upon such proposed law upon giving full 90 days' notice

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A Public Benefactor who Receives Scant Courtesy from the State  
These splendid buildings on the farm of Mr. Wm. Hill, Huron Co., Ont., are a distinct addition to the community in which Mr. Hill lives. Their erection gave employment to masons, carpenters, plasterers, painters and indirectly to merchants, manufacturers and lumbermen. In fact, all classes were better off because of Mr. Hill's progressive tendencies. And how did the municipal officials reward Mr. Hill for the good he had done? They raised his taxes. Many are beginning to question the wisdom of discouraging farm improvements by taxing them.

below what they pay in adjoining sections of country, such as the northern states. Should farmers have the tenacity to ask that this burden of taxation be more equitably adjusted they invariably find their representatives in the Legislature much too busily occupied with other apparently more pressing matters.

When trusts and combines, in one form or another, secure control of the handling of the articles that we buy or sell, and we begin to look for some means of relief from the conditions that confront us, our helplessness is soon brought home to us. Powerful influences which we may feel but cannot see, are soon at work to thwart our best endeavors.

#### POLITICAL PARTIES UNDEPENDABLE

What then are we to do? One thing is certain: The sooner we cease looking for relief to political parties and learn to depend upon our own efforts the more speedily will improved conditions arrive. Long experience has demonstrated that there is little to choose between one political party and the other. Each is about as good and as defective as the other. Both are more concerned, as a whole, on getting into or remaining in power than they are in advancing the interests of the farmer. Between the two of them they generally succeed