

The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, October 16th, 1912

WHY THE SILENCE

The Toronto News has not yet answered our challenge of September 11, though they have had more than a month to do so. Their article was published on August 21, and we answered it on September 11, and The News has already taken more than a month. Surely The News is not going to back out and admit itself beaten. The News declares the protective tariff to be Canada's greatest need, and if this be so, surely The News can answer the statement published in The Guide on September 11. All the tariff experts of the Canadian Manufacturers' association are ready to help The News. If this combination is unable to answer our challenge all we ask is that they admit it. It must be rather humiliating to such a protectionist journal as The News not to be able to reproduce our article and expose the fallacies of tariff reduction.

THE WESTERN FREIGHT INQUIRY

The railways, after several months of labor, have at last presented their case in defense of the exorbitant freight rates charged in the West, and the Railway Commission spent four days last week hearing the evidence of railway officials in support of their contentions. A great mass of statistics was submitted, and the inquiry now stands adjourned until Monday, November 4, in order that these may be considered and digested. It will be remembered that last spring, when the inquiry opened, evidence was presented by counsel representing the Dominion and Provincial Governments and the Winnipeg Board of Trade, showing that considerably higher rates were charged in the West than those in force for the same service in Eastern Canada. The Commission then decided that discrimination had been proven, and gave the railway companies until October 1 to justify the rates. A report of the proceedings before the Commission last week will be found on another page in this issue. It will be seen that the chief reason given by the railways for discriminating against Western freight-payers is that in the East they have to meet the competition of water carriage, which does not exist in the West. Such frankness on the part of the railways is very refreshing. They are compelled, they say, to keep their rates down to a certain level in the East, because if they charged more the freight would go by water and they would lose the business. In the West the railroads have the carrying trade to themselves and they soak the Western shipper for extra profits accordingly. But even in the East water competition is not allowed to have its full effect, for Vice-President Bosworth, of the C.P.R., admitted that there was an unwritten agreement between the railroads and the navigation companies controlling their respective rates.

The railways evidently take the view that instead of the Western rates being too high, the Eastern rates are too low, and D. B. Hanna, third vice-president of the C.N.R., said they would raise the Eastern rates if they could, but water competition prevented them. It cannot, of course, be contended that the railways in the East are operated at a loss. There are big profits coming from somewhere, and if the Eastern traffic is not remunerative, then the West is making good the loss in the East and paying all the profits of the whole system as well, a position which the railways would not dare to take. The railways evidently believe in charging "all that the traffic will bear." They are in business for the purpose of making all the money they can, and they are doing it by

extorting the highest prices they can get from the people for every service they render, whether it is the carriage of passengers, freight or express, or the despatch of telegrams. But the railways have been financed by the government, they have been given gifts of money and of land, their bonds have been guaranteed and they have been given other favors on condition that they charge reasonable rates, that they do not discriminate unfairly between individuals or between different parts of the country, and that they give an efficient service. The railways are not carrying out their part of the contract, and it is the business of the Railway Commission to curb their greed and compel them to give the people a square deal.

CORRECTING THE PARTY SYSTEM

Here is a question from a letter we recently received from an Alberta farmer who is interested in circulating The Guide among his neighbors:—

"Please answer this question. I get it fired at me pretty often, and I am at a loss how to answer: The Guide often quotes the folly of voting for party and preaches the doctrine well known by any thinker that both parties are the same and controlled by the monied interests. Who then should we vote for, and why does not The Guide come out for some other system? I find many farmers annoyed at this attitude of The Guide, which they describe as sitting on the fence. I am forced to admit that this attitude is detrimental to The Guide, and it is the only complaint I ever heard against it. You cannot recreate the party system to benefit either the farmer or the city worker, if that is The Guide's idea."

That the present party system breeds corruption and legislation to benefit the few at the expense of the many, no one doubts. A remedy is urgently needed and that remedy must come from the people. Both present parties are reluctant to remedy the evils of the party system while in power, even though they strenuously advocate reform when in opposition. No careful student of Canadian affairs will hold that there is any appreciable difference in the two parties. Both want, first of all, power, and they are not over scrupulous by what means their ends are accomplished. Many honest men in public life have attempted the necessary reforms, but have generally been overridden by those who benefit directly or indirectly through the present system. The Guide is not "on the fence" in regard to the party system. We have advocated Direct Legislation by means of the Initiative, Referendum and Recall, as the best method in sight to ensure that the will of the people becomes law, that corrupt legislation is prevented or repealed, and that dishonest politicians are driven into private life. Already five out of the six provincial parties in the Prairie Provinces are pledged to Direct Legislation, and there is good reason to expect that this system of popular government will be placed on the Statute Books of Alberta and Saskatchewan during the coming session.

This action is also bound to affect the federal field, but in the meantime the federal parties can be improved from within. The main weakness of the party system is the poor quality of candidates selected. They are largely chosen by the party machine and get a share of their expenses from the party bag. Naturally such candidates have to dance in accord with their masters' tune. This evil can be considerably lessened by the farmers getting out to the nominating conventions and making sure that the candidate is a man of ability, honor and backbone. If the farmers of the West would attend the conventions of the parties which most appeal to them, and see that such a man was nomin-

ated for each party, the result of the election would be immaterial. Of course, it will be objected that many farmers are independent and have no party leanings. In that case it will not matter which convention they attend. Some propose the independent candidate as the remedy. This would certainly be a good beginning if the farmers would support such a man, and could select one who would carry weight in Parliament. But generally an independent candidate is one who has previously been affiliated with one of the parties and has left it in disgust. This being the case his former party turns on him and labels him "Grit" or "Tory," as the case may be. A large number of farmers are thus led astray and vote for their dear old party man and leave the independent in the cold. There must be a good deal of reform work done in the hearts of the individual farmers. So long as the farmers stand by their party, just so long are the parties going to play into the hands of the highest bidders, which are usually the railways, banks and manufacturers. Of course there is an ever-growing relief from the blind party loyalty on the part of the Western farmers. But too many of them are still inclined to regard themselves as "Grits" or "Tories," which means that they mark their ballot as their party leaders advocate and not according to their own judgment. This means that they have little influence in public affairs. Cobden and Bright, and their supporters in the fight for free trade in Britain, never affiliated with either party. They supported candidates of either party wherever they found one who would pledge himself to free trade. We can find men in this country both Conservative and Liberal who are men of honor and who will pledge themselves to the farmers' demands. By sending such men to Parliament we will soon have the politicians competing for the favor of the common people instead of for the favor of the Special Interests. We must endeavor to educate the people to something better than the dirty political system as we have it, and when the people themselves are freed from party loyalty they will soon demand something better. Direct Legislation is a splendid method of educating the people. We will be glad to have honest comment on this subject. Only by thoughtfully and sincerely working over the problem together can we evolve the proper remedy.

FARMERS AND SPECULATORS

It would be extremely interesting and probably somewhat startling if we could know just how much time, money and horse flesh are wasted every year in Western Canada by reason of the long distances which a great many of our farmers are compelled to haul their grain and other produce to market because of the locking up of land by speculators. A glance at the map published by the Department of the Interior indicating in different colors what land has been entered for by homesteaders, patented and disposed of in other ways shows that a considerable portion of the settlers in Western Canada are located at distances ranging from twenty to two hundred miles from the railway. And yet no one who travels across the prairies in the train can help noticing that there are miles and miles of good land lying right alongside the track that are uncultivated and unused except as a breeding ground for gophers. The farmer who is unable to pay the high price at which this land is held and the homesteader in search of a free grant must travel to and from his home many weary miles back from the railway, casting envious eyes as he goes upon the vacant