

The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, August 26th, 1914

RESPECT THE FOREIGN BORN

In Western Canada we have a very large number of citizens whose former homes were in Germany or Austria. Today, however, they are naturalized Canadians and enjoy the same rights and privileges as those who were born in Canada. But even tho they left their old homes to better their conditions, and in many cases to secure greater freedom, it is only natural that the home land, where they have left many relatives, will still have for them very tender memories. It is one of the greatest misfortunes of the age that the nation of their adoption should find itself at war with the nation of their birth. We have welcomed them in the past to the full privileges and responsibilities of our citizenship, and today among our most progressive, prosperous and law-abiding citizens are large numbers from those countries against which Great Britain and Canada have been forced to take up arms. For these foreign-born citizens it is a time of great trial and it is a test of Canadian civilization to see that these people are treated with no disrespect nor discourtesy on account of the present war. There has never been any race hatred between the British and German peoples, both of whom are highly civilized and leaders in industry and commerce. The common people of Germany, we have every reason to believe, were anxious for the most peaceable and friendly relations with the people of Great Britain, but have been forced into war by the military autoeracy by which they are governed. There is good reason to believe that the war lords of Germany were anxious for war to prevent the rise of democracy among their own people. This great war will be attended by tremendous loss of life and destruction of property, and Canada, tho far from the scene of the struggle, is bound to suffer great financial loss and will undoubtedly sacrifice some of her soldiers on the battlefield. While these losses may not be prevented let us hope that nothing will be done to prevent the harmonious relations which have always existed among the citizens of Western Canada, as this war is but temporary, and our western civilization, we hope, is permanent.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE LAND QUESTION

Mayor Hocken, of Toronto, has made the proposal that the Dominion Government should break up a million acres of land in the West in order to provide work for the unemployed and at the same time produce food for consumption in this country and in Great Britain. Details of Mayor Hocken's plan have not come under our notice, but it appears to be impracticable for several reasons. In the first place the present is the wrong time of the year to break the prairie sod. Then, the unemployed could not sow a crop in the spring and wait till fall for returns unless they were provided with seed, machinery, horses, feed, etc., as well as homes and food. Moreover, the government has no land suitable for the purpose. The provincial governments of the Prairie Provinces own no land, except for Manitoba, which has a comparatively small area of swamp land, while the Dominion government lands are the homestead lands which are practically all situated too far from the railroad to make their cultivation immediately profitable. Mayor Hocken's proposal, however, like the other "back to the land" suggestions which are heard from time to time, indicates a realization of the fact that in the land question lies the ultimate solution of the problem of unemploy-

ment. It is clear that when a man goes on the land and there earns a living by producing food required by others he is not only engaging in useful work himself but he is providing employment for others in supplying him with manufactured goods, and in transporting and marketing his products, thus starting in motion the endless chain of industry.

The problem is how to get men on to the land, and the solution must be found, not in any philanthropic or paternal, government-aided scheme, but in the establishment of proper economic conditions.

A few years ago men were coming from every quarter of the globe to take up and cultivate land in Western Canada. They were able to make a reasonable living, unemployment was practically unknown, and prosperity was general. Today very few people are taking up new land, those who are already engaged in agriculture are, speaking generally, having a struggle for existence, and unemployment was a serious problem long before the war broke out. Why the difference? There are many causes contributing to the lack of prosperity for the farmer, including the increased cost of living and consequently of production, and the lower price of grain in recent years but the big factor that is operating against the farmer and the country generally is the increased price of land. A few years ago it was possible to secure good land at a reasonable distance from the railroad as a free homestead, or to buy land close to town for a few dollars an acre. Today homesteaders must go forty or fifty miles from the railroad to get good land, and all vacant land near to the towns is held by speculators at exorbitant figures. The result is that land on which crops might be profitably raised is lying idle, while farmers are struggling for a living miles away or paying out practically all their profits in interest on the cost of the land. To set the wheels of industry turning by getting men back to the land, the land must first be set free. The surface of the earth was made for men to live and work upon, and to allow speculators to keep men out of employment and stop the wheels of industry by holding land idle in order that they may appropriate unearned profits is the great folly of civilization in this age.

BRITISH FARMERS ORGANIZED

A publication of great interest to members of the Canadian farmers' organizations recently reached The Guide office in the fifth annual report of the National Farmers' Union of Great Britain. This union very closely resembles the Canadian farmers' organizations, its membership consisting of farmers in actual and active occupation of land, and the problems it deals with being very largely the same as those which concern our own agricultural industry.

The National Farmers' Union, unlike most British institutions, is of quite recent origin. It was formed in 1908 by the association of a number of county unions, the first of which, the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union, was established in 1904. Already it has a membership of over 20,000 farmers, with branches in almost every county in England, and the progress which the union is making and the results which it has already achieved are a striking tribute to the fact that the English farmer, like his Canadian brother, is awake to the necessity of organizing his forces in order to protect his own interests, and also of the futility of depending for legislative

justice upon party politicians. Like the Western Grain Growers, the English farmers have a Bill of Rights and they announce their intention of not voting for any parliamentary candidate who does not pledge himself to support the whole of their platform. The question of taxation naturally is prominent, and the English farmers are demanding changes which will relieve them from a portion of their local taxes, which they consider burdensome. They ask that preferential railway rates on foreign produce be abolished, and ask for legislation protecting them from fraud thru the adulteration of fertilizers. The great majority of English farmers undoubtedly are to be found in the Unionist party, and a leaning towards protection is noticed in planks which call for army meat contracts being restricted to home-fed meat, and the continuation of the regulations respecting the slaughter of foreign and colonial cattle, sheep and swine at the port of entry. That the members of the National Farmers' Union are sincere in their declaration of political independence is clearly shown, however, by their stand on tariff reform, which is the British Unionists' name for Protection. The late Mr. Chamberlain, it will be remembered, advocated among other duties a tariff on imported wheat and flour, with a preference to the Colonies. The British people very strongly objected to food taxes, however, and the Unionist party has abandoned its proposal to tax wheat and other agricultural products. As a result the farmers are asking how tariff reform, which will increase the cost of their machinery, fertilizers, etc., will help them if it does not raise the price of their own products. So far no satisfactory answer to this question has been given, and the N.F.U. has consequently adopted as part of its platform a plank which demands that if a definite scheme of tariff reform is promulgated the industry of agriculture shall receive an equal share of any benefits that may accrue to other industries. The British farmers also have problems which arise from the fact that the great majority of them are tenants, and they favor a scheme of land purchase financed by the government. Outside of its stand on public questions, the N.F.U. is doing a very valuable work for its members in fighting their legal battles, and has an arrangement in force by which its members secure insurance against fire and accidents to their employees at a reduction of 20 per cent. compared with regular rates. The organized farmers of Canada have the friendliest feelings towards their brothers in the old land, and mutual benefits would doubtless result from the exchange of ideas and visits.

RELIEF FOR THE DRY BELT

The Dominion Government, it is announced, has decided to furnish relief by way of loans to settlers in the dry belt of Southwestern Saskatchewan and Southeastern Alberta, whose crops have been destroyed by drought and who have neither grain to sell nor hay to feed their livestock. At the same time the Provincial Government in Saskatchewan is endeavoring to give employment to as many as possible of the distressed settlers on road construction and other public works, and in co-operation with the railway companies is making arrangements to convey men who have no crop of their own to districts where they may obtain employment in the harvest fields and with threshing gangs. In Alberta the Provincial authorities and railway officials are also dealing with the situation, and the Central Office of the U.F.A. is rendering very valuable service

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