

The Mail Bag

WHY FARMS ARE DESERTED

Editor, Guide:—That the average farmer in Manitoba, with his \$10,000.00 investment and his year's labor has to be satisfied with a less net income, as shown in my late letter, than the poorest paid laborer in our cities getting constant work, is nearly unbelievable, if we did not have the authority of the sworn enumerators who officiated at his last stocktaking in 1911 to back it up. Yet a little intelligent consideration would convince anyone seeking the truth that the farmers' position here was an unenviable one. Take, for instance, the farmer in Ontario or in the United States, and consider his financial position, and no one will claim that the farmer in either place is making more than a "decent" living. Now when it is remembered that here we pay from 10 per cent. to 100 per cent. more for everything we buy and have to take much less for everything we sell than the farmers of those places, it should be easily seen that here we must have a serious problem in making any headway. Again, is it not a fact which needs no demonstration that every one in any business or employment here gets a higher remuneration for his services than he would get in the east, and the reason therefor will be readily given—“Of course; it costs more to live here,” we are told. Over fifty years ago, in the common school in Ontario I was taught (for they did give us a smattering of political economy then) that there was a relation between the cost of all commodities: If the latter, because of the higher cost of his food or his raw material, charged the shoe-maker more for his hat, then the shoe-maker must get a better price for the shoes he made; and if the farmer had to pay more for his hat and shoes, then he would naturally require a greater price for his produce. This is a fundamental economic law; then how is it that here, where the farmer has to pay more for everything than the farmer of Ontario, has to take less for his produce than the farmer there? Simply because his is the basic industry and if this country is to develop and progress it must do so because of the surplus produce which can be sent out of the country. If the farmers here simply fed those engaged in supplying their wants in this country, then it would take ages to populate and develop this country. This surplus and its value in its ultimate market fixes the farmer's price for all his produce; so no matter what expense he is put to because of distance from his market, distance from the centres of production of his supplies, or the cost to him, thru high cost of living, of any service rendered him, he must be satisfied with the returns which a world-wide competition will give him. Let our friends in any other calling try to imagine what their positions would be if their income was regulated by what their services would fetch in Great Britain, while their expenses were regulated by values here, and they will get some idea of the problems of our farmers. The natural hindrances referred to above, while great, are not insurmountable. The artificial burdens heaped upon us are ten times

worse. Take for instance that iniquitous system of taxation—the so-called Protective Tariff, born of the grossest selfishness and nurtured by ignorance, imposed upon us by our self-styled empire-builders, the manufacturers and those allied with them. How any sane man, not a beneficiary of the system, can defend it is beyond my comprehension, and yet there are many farmers in even our western provinces who cannot yet see that while it is making a few millionaires it is doing so “scientifically” at their expense. And intelligent(?) people are asking why do the people leave the farm and crowd our cities? Others, with benevolent intentions, urge the people “back to the land.” All sorts of quack remedies are suggested for the bringing about of this result so much to be desired. While the only sane or scientific remedy for this state of affairs—the making of the conditions under which the farmer works such that his chances for a “decent” living for himself and family are equal to those of any other class in the community—seems to be ignored by nearly all. How few seem to realize just how much our boasted national policy is responsible for the desertion of the farm. Take the various items of outlay in the balance sheet of the average Manitoba farmer, given in my former letter and is there one item, even the produce of the farm consumed in the home, not made more costly to him by the Protective Tariff. But surely scientific Protection has gone mad when our paternal government gives a bonus to our implement manufacturers to enable them to supply our competitors abroad with cheap machinery while prohibiting the shipment of our produce to the market from which we would get the best returns. Now, Mr. Editor, as I know you object to long winded letters, I will stop here, tho much might be said along these lines. Later I will again ask your indulgence while I attempt to suggest a remedy along same lines for the state of affairs suggested so far by me.

Oak Bank, Man.

Note—Come again. Ed.

GUIDE'S FEARLESSNESS APPRECIATED

Editor, Guide:—The attached clipping was not written or intended as a tribute to either your honest, fearless weekly, or to the organized farmers, but it has such a fitting application that those particularly who have closely watched and waged in the struggle for existence on the Western Prairies will fully appreciate its truth. When The Guide and the organized farmers cease to have enemies, both will have ceased to justify their existence. There is a common law even in savage warfare, that the water wells shall not be tampered with or poisoned, but that friend and foe may drink alike thereat, but the Triple Alliance and their allies so contaminate and poison the wells of information thru the medium of their owned or controlled periodicals, that many men are kept willing slaves to that system. But go thou on thy way rejoicing, that while you have enemies, the thirty-four thousand paid subscribers are behind

you, and more coming who will pay and pray that your light may so continue to shine.

Yours faithfully,

THOS. L. SWIFT.

The enclosed clipping was as follows: Enemies of Fearless Papers

Men may be measured as accurately by the enemies they make as by the friends that they have drawn about them. It is always creditable for a man to have enemies in the factions that stand for corruption or tyranny—no man can take a vigorous stand for any good cause without stirring up the hostility of those who have been profiting by the evils he would exorcise.

And what may be said of men may be said of a newspaper. Every contest in the interest of the people, every fearless onslaught upon wrong arrays against a newspaper certain ones who are enjoying privilege, legal or illegal, which they think should not be interfered with.

The more successful a newspaper is in arousing public sentiment for the enforcement of law and discountenance of demoralizing tendencies, the more active are its discomfited enemies in their endeavors to injure it—the casual reader has no idea of the many obstacles that are thrown in the path of a newspaper which seeks conscientiously to serve the best interests of a community, and would be astonished at the various tactics taken to “punish” it for daring to oppose the evils by which some men would prosper.

Sometimes an effort is made to cut off subscribers, a method that seldom accomplishes anything but increased circulation, for the public as a class are appreciative of a leadership against danger; sometimes thru the advertising columns the offended element think to withdraw patronage and cripple a paper, tho in this direction the “biting off noses to spite faces” is too apparent to assure it success. The very courage that has led the paper into a fight against wrong insures it a welcome in the homes of a community that no advertiser can dare ignore—sometimes the public finds out the reason for a firm's disapproval of an advocate of good, and then it is many a day before the stigma against that firm can be washed away.

Altogether a newspaper which is trying to throw all of its leverage on the side of good must expect to make enemies—in fact, it must welcome the possession of enemies as showing the value of its antagonism to things that are corrupt.—Miami Metropolis.

JOURNALISTIC FAKIR EXPOSED

Editor, Guide:—I read with interest a letter published in a recent issue of The Guide re the promise made by the “Herald and Star” before the election of 1911, to subscribe ten thousand dollars to a fund towards securing free implements if reciprocity with the States was defeated. I have been a subscriber of the Herald for nine years, and I remember quite distinctly reading the above offer at the time it was made, but have seen nothing of it since. I was always led to believe by the statements made by the Herald from time to time (before

the election) that it was a strictly non-partisan paper, but I have noticed that during the last two years it has slowly but surely changed into a protectionist organ. What brought this fact most plainly to my notice was its recent attitude in opposing free wheat. No farmer should support a paper that advocates protection, as he would be working against his own interest by doing so. I have profited by your correspondent, Mr. Bennett's, example and withdrawn my subscription from all protectionist papers, including the Herald and Star.

With reference to your circulation campaign, enclosed please find one dollar, for which you can send The Guide to the address given below. I will send four more subscriptions later on, as soon as I can, of farmers who do not subscribe to The Guide already. During the last four years I have had over five thousand dollars' worth of goods off people who advertise in The Guide. Wishing you all success.

WILFRED HILL.

Tessier, Sask.

RURAL DOCTOR PROBLEM

Editor, Guide:—With reference to your article on “Doctor's Exorbitant Charges,” in your issue of April 29, I think a solution of this difficulty could be found if the resolution passed by the Stettler Union in January last were acted upon. The resolution, which was carried unanimously, read:

“That in the opinion of this meeting the inadequacy of medical attention in the rural districts is deplorable, and that it be sought to obtain for the rural municipalities power to form medical districts on somewhat similar lines to the school districts, and to levy taxes for same.”

All we, who live in the rural districts, have seen pitiful cases where medical aid has arrived too late on account of the distance to be travelled or has been unobtainable. In other cases the medical aid has not been requisitioned until on arrival it has been found too late, for the majority of farmers are poor and the fees are high where a long journey has to be undertaken by the medical man. For this reason many valuable lives are lost annually. The number of deaths at maternity—largely preventable—is awful, to say the least of it. Then, again, the number of people who are in need of medical attention for ordinary complaints and diseases, but who are unable to obtain it for the reason previously mentioned, is a blot on our civilization.

As to the forming of medical districts. These districts would necessarily have to be larger than the school districts (say four townships to each medical district) on account of the greater expenditure which would be involved, for not only would it be necessary to erect a residence, but to equip it with drugs and appliances. There would, I imagine, be very little opposition to such a scheme on the part of the medical profession, because it would to a large extent be opening fresh fields of remunerative practice, for most of us have to get well or die without medical attention under present conditions.

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MONEY-MAKERS IN ALBERTA
Part of the flock of Simon Downie and Sons, Carstairs, Alta.