

The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, August 20th, 1913

TRUTH IS NEEDED

While in London, as a member of the Saskatchewan Grain Commission, Hon. Geo. E. Langley made a statement to the Daily News and Leader for which he is being vigorously pummelled by both Grit and Tory newspapers in Western Canada. His statement in the above paper on June 6 was as follows:

"The fiscal system in Canada is operating to make settlement on the land less inviting and less attractive every year, in spite of the fact that there are many millions of acres of virgin prairie inviting the husbandman to set free its enormous latent wealth. The proportion of population is growing larger in the urban centres and smaller on the land, not only in Eastern Canada, but in the prairie West as well.

"The policy of high protection is making all the farmer buys artificially dear, while what he sells is cheapened by the open competition of the world, and to such an extent is this felt that farming the prairie, even by men of experience, has almost ceased to be a profitable or even a paying occupation. The unfortunate outcome is that increasing population in the Dominion is rapidly reproducing the conditions generally deplored in the older countries."

For making the above statement Mr. Langley is charged with "knocking Canada," yet the statement he makes is true. It is about time we looked the truth in the face. The protective system and its accompanying evils are eating the vitals out of this Western country. There is no more sense in the newspapers and the official boosters of the various Boards of Trade trying to cover up the evils of our economic system than there is in a man posing as in perfect health while suffering from a malignant disease. Western Canada is naturally rich and can stand truth telling. Let us have Free Trade and make conditions right and then we can dispense with all our official boosters, because our wide-spread prosperity would be our best advertisement.

UNDERHAND METHODS OF C.N.R.

The Canadian Northern Railway Company is certainly proving very resourceful in its fight against fair freight rates. Its lawyers and its experts have presented their arguments and their figures to the railway commission, their lobbyists have done their secret work among the politicians at Ottawa and now the company is making an appeal to the farmers of the outlying districts to come to their aid. Below is a copy of a circular which has been posted up at a number of country stations on the Canadian Northern Railway in Saskatchewan:

"TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

"It has come to the notice of the agents of the Canadian Northern Railway that certain manufacturers are bringing pressure to bear upon the Railway Commission to obtain many reductions in the present freight tariffs. The effect of the proposed reductions will not, it is sure, be of benefit to the farmers of this district in any way, as it will not be utilized to reduce the cost to the consumer. The reductions, if they become effective, will, however, prove a very serious detriment to the farmers of Saskatchewan, as the Canadian Northern Railway, in common with other railways operating in the province, will be compelled to do much less construction work than is at present contemplated, as well as the ordering of new equipment to successfully handle the present year's grain crop, and farmers will find that branches which they expected to help them out in various parts of the province will not be constructed on account of the Canadian Northern being unable to finance the work. It is evident that the Canadian Northern is not now making huge profits as they are unable to get along this year without borrowing \$22,000,000 for construction. We, the agents of the C.N.R., have met and decided to ask you to petition the Railway Commission not to grant these proposed reductions, as we feel that they are not to your advantage. Petitions may be signed here on application to the agent."

No one, of course, will believe that this circular was issued by the station agents of the C.N.R. on their own initiative. Such action on their part would be regarded by the company as presumptuous meddling and, besides, they would not have had the information contained in the circular unless it was supplied to them by responsible higher up officials. Mackenzie and Mann, themselves, must be held directly responsible and it shows to what a low level these noble knights have fallen when they resort to such crude misrepresentation in the effort to prevent the West securing fair treatment. The circular begins by saying that the demand for a reduction in freight rates comes from "certain manufacturers." This is a deliberate falsehood. The demand has been made by the people and a section of the press of Western Canada, and it is being pressed before the Railway Commission by counsel employed by the Dominion Government, the Governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan and the city council and Board of Trade of Winnipeg. The statement that the proposed reductions will not be of benefit to the farmers is another attempt to deceive. The farmers themselves pay many freight bills, both on goods which they purchase and on grain and other produce which they ship and it will be hard to convince them that a reduction in the freight on grain, for instance, would not put money into their pockets.

The chief point in the circular, however, is the threat—and it is nothing but a threat—that if freight rates are reduced the construction of new branches and the equipment of existing lines will be curtailed. The answer to this is to be found in the evidence which has been placed before the Railway Commission proving conclusively, first, that the rates charged in Western Canada are greatly in excess of those charged in the East for the same service, second, that the cost of construction and operation are less in the prairie section than in any other part of Canada, and third, that the profits of the C.P.R. are higher in the Prairie Provinces than anywhere else in Canada. It may be, as the circular states, that the C.N.R. is not now making large profits. It is not being conducted with that end in view. Mackenzie and Mann, through their control of that road, have nevertheless amassed immense fortunes. They have fattened their other enterprises at the expense of the C.N.R. and because of this the Railway Commission is being asked to allow all the railways of the West to continue charging freight rates that have been proved to be excessive and exorbitant. We cannot believe that the farmers of the prairies will be a party to any such unjust condition or that, if they understand the circumstances, they will be foolish enough to sign a petition whose object is to perpetuate their own exploitation. It is understood that this circular has only been distributed at outlying points where it would not be likely that the press would hear of it. We should, therefore, be glad if any readers who have seen the circular would inform us, so that it may be known what localities are being appealed to in this underhand way.

The Political Equality League of Manitoba had a booth at the Stampede, and secured a large number of signatures to a petition asking the Manitoba Legislature to pass a bill giving votes to women. Visitors from states in the south, where women vote, almost without exception expressed themselves in sympathy with the cause and regretted that they were not allowed to sign. Canadians, however, were found to be divided in their opinions.

E. M. TROWERN AND CO-OPERATION

A great deal of indignation has been aroused, and justly so, by the impudent and untruthful statement made at Saskatoon recently by E. M. Trowern, Secretary of the Dominion Retail Merchants' Association, when he characterized co-operative trading societies as "The greatest frauds that ever struck the country." "I have never seen an honest co-operative store yet," said Trowern, "and there has not been one found in Europe." This statement, on the face of it, is of course ridiculous and it might be passed over as a mere raving of one possessed of an evil spirit, but for the importance of the organization which he represents and the influence which that organization has with the government of Canada. "We have gone to the government from time to time opposing co-operative societies," said Mr. Trowern in the same speech, and we know that the Dominion Government, under both Liberal and Conservative rule, has listened to the voice of the retailers and has refused the request of the organized farmers and the Co-operative Union of Canada to pass legislation permitting the establishment of co-operative societies under Dominion law.

In view of Mr. Trowern's sweeping denunciation of co-operative stores in Europe, it is interesting to note that these establishments have had the sanction of British law for over a century. In this issue of The Guide will be found an article telling something of the history of co-operation in Scotland. The movement was begun by men who were forced into it by poverty, but in 1910 the co-operative societies of the United Kingdom had 2,894,586 members and conducted a business of £118,448,910. In that year they made a profit of £11,250,718. That profit, under co-operation, belonged to the members of the societies. If there had been no co-operative societies it would have belonged to a comparatively small number of retail merchants and that, no doubt, is what has made Mr. Trowern's employers so bitter.

It is also interesting to observe the attitude of the British Government towards co-operation. It is to be presumed that if co-operation was the fraud Mr. Trowern declares it to be that the British Government would see that those responsible were punished, yet we find that when the co-operative commission, sent to Europe by the United States government, was in England, the members of the commission, together with the leaders of the co-operative movement in Great Britain, were entertained at a great banquet given by the British Government and presided over by a member of the cabinet. A further proof of the good will of the British authorities towards co-operation was provided recently when Premier Asquith received a deputation from the joint Parliamentary Committee of the co-operative congress with regard to a bill extending the scope of the law under which co-operative societies conduct their business. Mr. Asquith, after hearing the deputation, said that the government was in full sympathy with the measure, both as regards the principle and details. This, surely, is sufficient to show the utter falsity of Mr. Trowern's charges. They were made, no doubt, in the hope that the cause of co-operation in Canada would be injured, but if we judge the temper of the Western farmers aright, it will have the opposite effect, because it shows how much the retail traders of Canada fear the day when the consumers of this country, by establishing their own co-operative stores and factories, will free themselves from the shackles of the combines, which at present largely control the food supplies of the people.