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EDITORIAL

Bankers and Car Distribution.

In a conference which the Minister of Trade and Commerce held with representative grain men and farmers in April, Mr. McKenzie, of the Manitoba grain Growers' Association, clearly demonstrated that the amount of grain loaded by farmers directly into cars was so small that it could not possibly have any appreciable effect upon the car supply, and further, that if it were a fact that farmers took longer to load cars from their wagons than the elevator managers did through their grain legs, the time of loading was so short as compared with the amount of time wasted after the cars were loaded—that there could not possibly be an improvement by loading all the cars through the elevators.

Among all those who have seriously studied the movement of grain, and who have honestly expressed their opinions, these conditions are admitted.

But there is an element in the commercial and financial community who, having some selfish interest to serve, fail to take the facts of the matter into consideration. One of these individuals, a banker, gave expression to a sentiment in a press interview recently that does not in any way bristle with knowledge of the situation or radiate a disposition to apply reason to the case. He says there will not be much money available for moving the crops this year as the banks do not feel disposed to loan money on wheat in store, when there is no certainty of that wheat being moved; that the farmers have brought this condition of affairs upon themselves by the clause in the grain act respecting the distribution of cars and that they will now have to find their own remedy.

This interview represents a mood into which certain men easily fall on blue days. It is not a mood in which the business of the country can be conducted. Business men must surely recognize the fact that business cannot be conducted by an autocracy. Both parties must be equally clear in their understanding of a transaction. Display of spunk and sulk have no place in the business transactions of this enlightened age.

Bankers, also, above all other classes, should hold themselves free from the discussions of car distribution, for whether the elevators get cars or the farmers get them, it is certain that the amount of grain handled is wholly determined by the railway companies and the demand for wheat. Bankers might as well make up their minds that there is a certain amount of grain to be handled, and refuse to lend their sympathy or animosity to either farmers or elevator companies.

Further, it is still fresh within the recollection of everyone, that for several seasons after the car distribution clause of the grain act came into force, bankers were quite willing to loan money to farmers to finance their crops, but after the experience of last year it seems necessary to offer some excuse for what appears to be a change of policy. The grain act, however, will not answer for an excuse in this case, and the public is quick to ascertain motives for any discrimination. Some other one must be connected if financial assistance is withheld.

Presidential Elections and the Tariff

Whichever party ascends to power in the United States after the present campaign, it seems reasonably certain that before another four years roll round our American friends will make some attempts to reform the tariff. It is unlikely that much will be heard about tariff reform during the coming campaign, neither of the great political parties is expected to commit itself very definitely to the principle of tariff revision, but all the same, back of the four flushers and bosses that control the party machines, there is a growing agitation among the people, an agitation which very soon will be a demand, that the national government shall undertake to more equally distribute the charges of national maintenance. Tariff first is to provide funds for the maintaining of the government and of public institutions. Tariff reform, or what they call tariff reform, is generally a device for shifting a little more of the cost of public maintenance from one class on to another. This, at least, is what happens too frequently when politicians set out to reform the tariff, or when tariffs are imposed in the first instance for revenue or protection. When our American friends undertake to revise and reform theirs, the effort will be watched with some interest.

Controlling the Elements

It is not often that windstorms of serious violence occur in this country. True, we have at most times a good stiff breeze blowing, but it is seldom, even in severe storms that the wind does any serious damage. All the same, the seasons are few in which some part of the country is not visited by windstorms of hurricane violence and considerable property destroyed. Last week the newspapers reported that such a storm had wrecked unprotected farm buildings in Saskatchewan, doing considerable damage by wind and lightning stroke.

Farm buildings on the bald, open prairie are about the only obstacles in the path of a wind-storm and a convenient conductor for the electric flash from the storm cloud to the earth. Hence it is that farm buildings are more frequently damaged by these destructive agents than are less isolated buildings in towns, and require special protection. The best kind of special protection is the natural protection afforded by a clump of trees, planted where they will break the force of the wind upon the buildings and draw off from the house or barn the electric discharge which the height of these structures attracts from the storm cloud.

Lightning rods certainly are effective in taking care of an electric current if it is drawn to the buildings, and rods may be so cheaply put up nowadays that there is small excuse for buildings of any kind not being provided with the lightning protection which they afford. Anyone can twist together a few strands of barb or smooth wire, about number nine size, stretch it along the ridge-board of a building, raise a "point" pin on there to receive the flash, run the cable down the end and bury it deeply in the earth, which experience has shown furnishes protection equal to that given by a higher priced and more gaudy equipment. But trees and more of them are wanted about farm buildings. They are the great natural protective agents for both wind and electric stroke. Invariably it is the barn or isolated house, standing out exposed from every quarter, that bears the brunt of the damage when the elements in their violence sweep the earth.

The Plumb Line

In order to properly judge of the merits of the amendments to the Manitoba Grain Act that have been proposed by the Minister of Trade and Commerce, members of the Senate, and members of the House of Commons, it is necessary to always keep in mind a fixed principle, namely, that all efforts to better conditions must be in the direction of reducing the cost of handling, the cost of insurance and the cost of the risk of carrying, also the necessity of maintaining the grades to as near the fixed standards as possible. Every possible device for the economic handling of wheat should be employed, every effort that does not add to the value of the grain or the security of the produce and consumer should be avoided.

In growing wheat and putting it on the world's markets, Western farmers have to compete with countries that have cheap labor, that are nearer the markets and nearer the seaboard, therefore it is essential to eliminate all except the strictly necessary expenses in production, transportation and distribution. All charges of distribution, transportation, inspection and insurance have to be borne by the product itself. This is an established fact, and the greater the expense in handling the less the price to the producer.

The matter is not settled when the elevator companies buy wheat and pay for it, for if the producer could reduce the cost of distributing by bearing the insurance, or the risk of getting cars, there would be more actual cash in the crop for himself. In the controversy that has raged over the existing conditions in the trade, the essential factors are often obscured, but if one keeps always in mind that the object is to effect economy without sacrificing security, then he is in a position to judge of a proposal whether it be advantageous or not.

Let Us Have a Fair Circuit.

One way or another the farming community will be called upon to exercise its established role of reformer in connection with the unfortunate condition into which our fair directors have landed the Brandon and Winnipeg Exhibitions. The farming community may not be asked directly to arbitrate the matter of the right to certain dates, but it is certain that the manner in which these fairs are patronized by visitors from the country, will have its very decided effect upon the policies of both boards. And it is also a foregone conclusion that both fairs would benefit by an amicable arrangement whereby the events would follow in sequence.

The suggestion in another column by Mr. Hopkins, is worthy of consideration. The aim and object of the managers of our large fairs should be to eliminate the expense in connection with the transporting of exhibits, and to work up interest in a circuit of exhibitions that would increase as the fairs proceed until a grand climax was reached. Winnipeg naturally should be the scene of the climax but it may be that the consensus of opinion is in favor of Winnipeg coming first on account of the stock exhibitors preferring to show at the largest fair when their stock is in the best bloom. This, however, should not be a serious objection to the formation of a continuous circuit.