

The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, July 8th, 1914

THE MANITOBA ELECTIONS

On Friday, July 10, the responsibility will rest upon the electors of Manitoba of choosing their representatives in the legislature and in the government of that province for the next four years.

The issues are numerous and clearly defined. The Conservative party, which has been in power for 14 years, and has been led and dominated during practically the whole of that time by Sir Rodmond Roblin, is appealing to the electors upon its record. It claims to have given Manitoba an honest and efficient administration, and promises to maintain the prosperity of the province by a continuation of its present policy. The Liberal party, on the other hand, very vigorously attacks the record of the government, and claims that the affairs of the province have been administered, not for the good of the people as a whole, but for the personal profit of friends of the government and for the political advantage of the party in power. The Opposition, moreover, undertakes, if placed in power, to enact a number of advanced and progressive measures, including Direct Legislation and Woman Suffrage, and to hold a referendum on the question of banishing the bar. Other planks in the Liberal platform include Compulsory Education and the obligatory teaching of English in all public schools, the encouragement of agriculture thru the development of co-operative methods, including cheaper money, the extension of practical education and the establishment of a public abattoir, the encouragement of hydro-electric development, and municipal autonomy in local taxation.

All of these are measures which the great majority of farmers thruout Manitoba will heartily support, and the leading planks of the Liberal platform—Direct Legislation, Woman Suffrage, and the Banish the Bar referendum—have repeatedly been endorsed by the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association at its annual conventions. The Grain Growers, in fact, have to a large extent been responsible for the adoption of the advanced and progressive policies now presented by the Manitoba Liberals, for in the case of each of the leading planks, the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association placed itself on record in favor of the reforms mentioned before they were officially adopted by the Liberal party.

If the members of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association who have voted for Direct Legislation, Woman Suffrage and Banish the Bar year after year in their local associations and at their annual conventions were sincere they will vote for the Opposition candidates on Friday next. In addition to this we believe that the record of the Roblin government is in itself sufficient to warrant its defeat. It seems to be the history of both political parties in Canada that when a government has been in power for a number of years it becomes more or less corrupt and seeks to entrench itself in power by dishonest means. The Ross government of Ontario, and the Laurier government in the Dominion, both Liberal administrations, went down to well-deserved defeat because of their corruption. And the time has come when the best interests of the province will be served by retiring the Roblin government from power. It has been accused, and with reason, of dissipating the resources of the province by selling large areas of public lands to political friends at much less than their value; it has used the machinery intended for the enforcement of the law to persecute political opponents and to shield its own tools; it has employed the officials of the civil service, particularly in the Liquor License Department

and the Department of Public Works, to bribe and debauch the electorate, and it has proved itself the friend of the saloon keepers and the proprietors of drinking and gambling clubs. An instance of the manner in which the government has used the public money to buy votes for its supporters, is provided by the election in Gimli last year. The public accounts show that during the year \$93,000 was paid by the Government for roadwork in Gimli, while only some \$43,000 was expended in all the rest of the province. A member of the Opposition, on his responsibility as a member of the Legislature, charged on the floor of the House that men were employed on that work on condition that they voted for the Government candidate; that Government officials distributed wagon-loads of liquor in local option territory; that employees of the Government and officers of the law were personally guilty of intimidation, bribery and corrupt treating and that violators of the law were protected by the officers of the Government, whose duty it was to enforce the law. The Government, however, refused absolutely to permit the holding of a judicial investigation into these charges or into the counter charges with which they replied, and tho a protest against the election of the Government candidate was entered, the ingenuity of his lawyer in raising technical objections succeeded in preventing the case coming to trial before the legislature was dissolved.

It is not sufficient, however, to defeat the Roblin Government in order to ensure the honest and efficient administration of the affairs of the province. It is necessary to provide safeguards which will prevent the Opposition party, if it be placed in office, from the same degeneration. Liberal Governments in the past have committed precisely the same sins for which the present Conservative administration is condemned.

The best safeguards that can be provided against the abuse of power by any party are Direct Legislation and the election of some independent members to the House. The Liberal party is pledged to enact Direct Legislation, and its leader, T. C. Norris, has given a statement of his understanding of that reform satisfactory to the Direct Legislation League. There are a number of Independent candidates nominated. One of these, A. C. Craig, is seeking election in Mountain as a farmers' candidate, on a platform almost identical with the platform of the Grain Growers' Association. His election would be of great advantage to the farmers' cause, but, unfortunately, the fight is a three-cornered one, and the outcome is extremely doubtful. The remaining Independents are running in Winnipeg and its suburbs, and each of them has a Liberal and a Conservative opponent, except in Centre Winnipeg, where the candidates are a Conservative, a Socialist and an Independent.

Summed up the issue is "Shall the people rule?"

RAILWAYS AND PEOPLE

A Royal Commission in Great Britain is at the present time studying the national railway situation, with a view to preparing a report in regard to the problems which that situation presents, and especially the problem of national ownership. The man at the head of the Commission is Lord Loreburn, formerly solicitor-general in the British Government. Recently, the president of the Railway Nationalization Society of Great Britain, E. Davies, gave evidence before the Commission. He presented an able argument in support of the proposition that

"railways, being public services, ought to be publicly owned." He set forth, with unanswerable clearness of proof, that, in the old world, as in the new, private railway corporations are guided unfailingly by self-interest to realization of the fact that combination is better than competition, and so they come to working agreements for the maintenance of rates at as high a level as possible. At the same time, as Mr. Davies also set forth, the system of private ownership of railways, with its duplication of staffs and lines and plant, means economic waste.

Some sentences at the outset of Mr. Davies' evidence before the Royal Commission may well be reproduced here:

"There are some services which, from their nature have come to be regarded thruout the world as being distinct from ordinary commercial undertakings, in that, being essential to every branch of trade and commercial activity—sometimes also to the social life of the community—they should be operated primarily to serve those needs, and only secondarily, if at all, for revenue-producing purposes. This applied particularly to means of communication, as was instanced by the high roads—formerly subject to tolls—the postal service, the telegraph service, and more recently the telephones. Railways, being the main arteries of transport in the modern world, belonged to the category of communications, and just as it was recognized that it was in the interest of the national well-being to render road transport as cheap as possible, and to carry correspondence and parcels at minimum rates, so it was in the national interest to facilitate to the utmost the exchange of commodities between different parts of the country and with foreign countries."

The advocates of national ownership maintain that the private railway corporation does not make transportation for the benefit of the community its first consideration, as the state-owned railway, when rightly managed, does. The first interest of the management of the private corporation is to produce dividends for the shareholders, often on watered stock. In this country, indeed, the root from which every one of the railway evils which bear heavily upon the people grows is over-capitalization.

In Germany and other countries of continental Europe in which railways are state-owned, rates are lower than in Great Britain, where private railway corporations are supposed to compete. With regard to the value of competition, the witness said:

"The history of railway development in this country showed that, while it was long held that competition between railway companies was beneficial, there was an almost continuous process of amalgamation of small companies into larger ones. Next came an agreement between the great companies not to cut rates. It might be taken that now there was no active competition between the different railways in the matter of rates and fares."

Without going further into the details of Mr. Davies' comprehensive evidence before the Royal Commission, it will suffice to set forth here his summing up:

"The large financial saving to be effected by utilizing the better credit of the State not only to purchase existing systems, but also to provide the capital necessary for extensions at a considerably lower rate than that which has to be borne by the railway undertakings, combined with better financial methods than the present methods, will provide a considerable margin to meet the cost of reduction in rates and improvements in conditions of labor. Additional facilities will largely stimulate traffic and be beneficial to the whole country, without throwing any burden on the community."

In regard to what was said by opponents of national ownership in regard to the evils that would result from the intrusion of politicians and politics into the control and management of state-owned railways, Mr. Davies