

The Grain Growers' Guide

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MANITOBA LEGISLATURE AND FREE WHEAT

A significant turn is given to the "Free Wheat" controversy by the notice given in the Manitoba Legislature on Friday last, by Harvey Simpson, Conservative member for Virden, that on the reassembling of the House after the Christmas recess he will move a resolution in favor of removing the duty from wheat and wheat products entering this country from the United States, in order to open the southern market to the Canadian farmer. G. H. Malcolm, Liberal member for Birtle, has given notice of a similar resolution. It was expected that the Liberals would bring forward such a motion, and there was considerable speculation as to the attitude the government would take. The fact that the motion is to be introduced by a private member still leaves the position in doubt, but the most likely conclusion to be drawn is that the Borden Government has decided to grant the demand of the Western farmers for the opening of the southern market for their wheat, and that an intimation to this effect has been conveyed to the Manitoba government. We earnestly hope that this is a correct conclusion. There seems to be absolutely no reason why wheat and its products should not be placed on the free list. The farmers who raise wheat, the millers who produce flour and leading grain dealers have declared in favor of accepting the offer made by the United States of reciprocal free trade in wheat, wheat flour and other wheat products, and so far as we know there has been no opposition expressed by any interest concerned. The Liberals can, no doubt, make party capital out of the fact that in the reciprocity discussion of 1911 Conservative speakers and papers declared that the American market was of no value to the Canadian wheat grower, and that they are now inconsistent in supporting Free Wheat, but if the Liberals are wise they will co-operate with the government (assuming that the government is behind Mr. Simpson's motion) to secure a unanimous expression from the Manitoba Legislature in favor of Free Wheat. The unanimous passage of such a resolution by the Manitoba Legislature, before the matter is dealt with at Ottawa, would practically ensure favorable action by the Dominion Parliament, and there is no doubt that Free Wheat would mean millions of dollars a year to the Western grain growers.

SASKATCHEWAN AND DIRECT LEGISLATION

A number of letters have reached The Guide during the past two weeks complaining seriously of the manner in which the Referendum on the question of Direct Legislation was taken in Saskatchewan on November 27 last. The official figures have not yet been announced and it is, therefore, not known how many voters went to the poll, but it is evident that the vote fell considerably short of 30 per cent. of the total number of names on the list. Consequently the Direct Legislation Act does not go into force automatically and unless further action is taken at the present session of the Saskatchewan Legislature there will be no opportunity of taking another vote on the question until 1915. Nevertheless, we confidently assert that the vote which was taken on November 27 proves that the people of Saskatchewan are very strongly in favor of Direct Legisla-

tion. The returns, as far as at present known, show that a majority of approximately six to one was given in favor of the bill, and, although the total vote was small, that is not to be wondered at under the circumstances. If the voting had taken place at the time of the municipal or provincial elections a large vote would have been polled and Direct Legislation would probably have been endorsed by just as large a majority. Instead, the vote was taken at a time when there was nothing else before the people, and there was no means of conducting a campaign for or against the bill or of getting out the voters, except by a special organization which would have cost an enormous amount of money. That the small vote polled cannot be properly called a rejection of Direct Legislation by the people of Saskatchewan is shown by a large number of resolutions and letters we have received from different parts of the province. A typical resolution is that passed by the Mountain Chase branch of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, as follows:

"The members of the Mountain Chase Branch of the Grain Growers' Association, in annual general meeting assembled, desire to put on record their feeling of dissatisfaction at the manner in which the recent vote on Direct Legislation was taken. The want of publicity in everything concerning the vote, the mismanagement in all the arrangements and the general secrecy that enshrouded the whole matter, leads them to believe that the government showed a lack of earnestness and sincerity contrary to their pre-election promises.

"Notwithstanding all the difficulties placed in the way the result of the vote was so favorable to the principle of Direct Legislation that the members of this Branch are convinced that it was a true expression of the sentiments of the electors, and they are determined to spare no effort to bring this reform to pass.

"They refuse to regard the question from a party standpoint, and, as both parties in the Legislature have pronounced themselves in favor of the principle of the measure they pledge themselves one and all to support with their votes the candidate of the opposite party if the present Government refuse to put into operation an act that is obviously desired by the people.

"It is further agreed that copies of this resolution be forwarded to the member of this electoral division and to the editor of The Grain Growers' Guide, for publication in that journal."

Dinsmore Grain Growers' Association is another branch that has passed strong resolutions on the matter, condemning the government, the opposition and the press of the province for failing to make known the fact that the vote was being taken. Readers of The Guide were, of course, aware of the Referendum, for the matter was dealt with in our editorial columns in every issue published between the announcement by the government and the taking of the vote. The place of voting, however, was not known to many, especially in outlying parts of the province, and from such places we have received letters declaring that secrecy was observed in order to prevent voters from recording their views. The Saskatchewan Legislature would be acting in accordance with public opinion if it passed an act at the present session bringing Direct Legislation into force, and the least it can do is to make provision for the taking of another Referen-

dum on the subject at the next municipal elections.

INDEPENDENCE IS COSTLY

There was a time when the farmer and his family made their own clothing largely from the materials produced on their own farm; when his food supply was also of home growth and manufacture and when the lumber for his buildings was cut from his own timber lot and manufactured at the local mill. In those days the farmer was practically independent of outside influence. But those days have gone, never to return. Today the occupation of farming is so interlinked with many other occupations and lines of business that none can be said to be independent of the others. Today the farmers' food, clothing, building material and tools of industry are very largely factory products from various corners of the earth, while the surplus products of the farm find their market abroad, and the foreign price regulates the home price. Conditions have been undergoing a remarkable change during the past generation, and as a class the farmers have not been the most alert in meeting and coping with those changed conditions. There are still farmers in this country who harbor the delusion that the farmer is the most independent man, and that, in the vernacular, he needs not to "take off his hat" to any man. This is a very pleasant thought and one that gives inward satisfaction, but unfortunately it will not bear close scrutiny. The farmer is no longer an independent man, and in the march of civilization it is decidedly better for the agricultural industry and the people of rural Canada that such is the case. But in so far as the farmers fail to adjust themselves to these changes in conditions, just so far will they be the losers under the new economic system. It is through the Grain Growers' and the United Farmers' organizations that the men on the land in Western Canada are adjusting themselves to meet these new conditions and endeavoring to hold their own and secure an equitable portion of the wealth they produce. The organized farmers, of course, find themselves face to face with other organized business and meet with considerable opposition. The opposition which is most serious and most dangerous to the farmers' organizations, comes from the farmers themselves, and too frequently from their own members, who have not yet learned that the farmer is not independent but can only secure his rights through co-operation with his fellow farmers. We recall many incidents of farmers purchasing their flour in car lots and saving themselves 50 cents or more per sack; purchasing their apples by the carload and saving \$1.50 per barrel; purchasing their fence wire by carloads and saving more than \$500 on a carload, and the same in many other lines. Every farming community in the West could do the same thing if the farmers in that community were wide awake to their own welfare. The organized farmers are asking to have the tariff reduced on the necessities of life so that the cost of living may be reduced, but there are a great many shortsighted farmers who are opposed to tariff reduction chiefly because they are not alive to changing conditions. We find farmers also who still believe that land speculation is a good thing for the country, because they have not grasped the seriousness of its effect, not only upon the