



NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS

This department of The Guide is maintained especially for the purpose of providing a discussion ground for the readers where they may freely exchange views and derive from each other the benefits of experience and helpful suggestions. Each correspondent should remember that there are hundreds who wish to discuss a problem or offer suggestions. We cannot publish all the innumerable number of letters received and ask that each correspondent will keep his letter as short as possible. Every letter must be signed by the name of the writer though not necessarily for publication. The views of our correspondents are not of necessity those of The Guide. The aim is to make this department of great value to readers and no letters not of public interest will be published.

IDLE LAND AND THE RURAL SCHOOL

Editor, GUIDE:—In THE GUIDE of March 9, Mr. John Campbell, of Lloydminster, tells of the pioneer's struggle and in his article in this significant sentence: "In many places school districts cannot be organized because speculators keep the settlers off the land." In the same issue is a report of a meeting of the Valley River G.G.A., in which the following appears: "Moved by F. Boughen, seconded by Geo. McIntosh, 'That whereas the progress of our province is made difficult by so much of the land being held by speculators and left unoccupied and whereas the increase in the value is due to the labor and industry of the actual settlers, resolved, that our local government be asked to give municipal councils the power to assess vacant lands as high as double the assessment on similar and adjacent occupied lands.'"

Now, Mr. Editor, with your permission, I would like to make a few remarks with the foregoing facts as texts:

There is no doubt but that the idle land all over the west is the prime cause of the rural school difficulty. In old and well settled districts the rural school is in a very fair condition because there are families enough and children enough to make a fair attendance at school. But it is where there are stretches of idle land that we find a poor rural school with an average attendance of seven or eight pupils. The remedy is not in the consolidation of schools as some politicians would have us believe, but in having the wisdom to see that the right thing to do is always the best thing to do. The right thing in this case is to set free the vacant land so that settlers can have access to it in order that homes may be established and children reared so that the schools can have a good attendance, and there is no doubt but what if taxes were increased on the vacant land year by year the price would be lowered, more settlers would move on to it, and the rush of people to towns and cities would not be so great. The rural population would increase, not decline, as now; the taxes on actual settlers would get lighter year by year while municipal revenues would increase. As the law is now in Manitoba, all personal property and improvements are entirely free from municipal taxation. But that is not enough. To the settlers should belong the value that their presence and industry puts upon the vacant land held by absentees. Justice can be secured to people in this respect only by increasing the tax on vacant lands year by year as the resolution of the Valley River Grain Growers' Association demands. This increase in value of the vacant lands is not an increase in wealth. That value is not wealth. Wealth is a product of human labor, but that value of land means power to its owner to take wealth for the privilege of using land. Owning land produces no wealth. It is only laboring the land that results in wealth production, hence, if we want to secure to those who labor the full reward for their toil, we must not allow land to be owned for the purpose of taking from those who labor to put into the pockets of those who labor not. The great Lincoln taught us that the worthiest object of any just government was to secure to those who labor the fruits of their own industry, and increased local taxes on vacant land will be a long step in that direction. But I understand that the government has already been asked to give municipal councils the power referred to, but they refused, putting

up excuses but no reasons. Politicians of both parties have fleeced settlers out of hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of hard earned crop by means of the vacant land game, and they intend to fleece them out of millions more. Hence it is no wonder that they do not favor increased local taxation of vacant land. "Strange," as Lincoln said, "that so many good people, as the politicians are, dare to ask a just God's help in wringing their bread from the sweat of other people's faces." But let the Grain Growers' Associations all over the west pass resolutions similar to those passed by the Valley River association and then let them highly resolve to have candidates pledged to this step. Let them insist that pledges be made in writing in the form of a manifesto or address to the electorate, stating what principles they stand for, and what measures they will work for founded on those principles, and it won't be long before the evils arising from the holding of vacant land will disappear. The voters should see by this time that law making cannot be left to the politicians as they generally profit by crooked laws, hence the masses must study the laws and insist on Manitoba made laws being in harmony with natural right, the right of every man to



Winter Scene on Farm of D. McKinnon, Oak Lake, Man.

enjoy the fruits of his own labor. Let it ever be borne in mind that as the poet truly said

"Laws rob the poor and the rich men make the laws."
The rich men are politicians, first, last and always.

Thanking you for your very valuable space, I am,

W. D. LAMB.

Plumas, Man., March, 1910.

♦ ♦ ♦ IT WAS WELL WORTH WHILE

The following letter has been received by the Grain Growers' Grain Company: Gentlemen:—I have received your report of sale of car No. 306321 and consider it very satisfactory. I make a clear eighty-one dollars over local elevator price on this car.

Please find application for four shares in your company with cheque for \$70.00 for first two payments.

Yours truly,

(Sgd.) PHILIP M. CHAPMAN.

♦ ♦ ♦ THE REAL CAUSE

Editor, GUIDE:—Accept my thanks for your kind courtesy in publishing my previous letter, and shall deem it a favor if you can extend me the same privilege this time.

Recently I have been interested in several articles in connection with the

subject of the "Increase in Living," and especially the explanation given by Mr. J. J. Hill, railway magnate. Mr. Hill commented on the fact that we were consuming faster than we were producing and that we were altogether too extravagant and wasteful. I think that if Mr. Hill were doing pioneer work on a homestead, he would find that he could not be extravagant or wasteful, and still the increased cost of living is felt on the homestead as elsewhere pro rata. I think that he would infer that supply and demand rules the market, but he seems to lose sight of the fact that under the present day world of combines, mergers and monopolies exist to secure control of and thereby inflate the prices of the most necessary supplies of humanity. We also find governments assist these "combines" (if I be allowed to use the term) to pry on the people and increase the cost of living, by granting them concessions, giving bonuses, and raising tariff barriers to protect them. When is this favoritism to end? Have we not men in parliament patriotic enough to stamp out this juggling in the lobby, and protect the utilities of the people as a sacred trust, instead of a fat thing to be exploited to the highest bidder. What do these wealthy heifers, craving for protection, care for the cry of the hungry wail, as long as they are allowed to pelfer the almighty dollar from the farehills of the widow and orphan, and unfortunate poor. Do we farmers in any year of crop failure receive a bonus from the government to help us. Do we combine to unlawfully enhance prices of our products? Do we howl and squirm when the government and other agencies do their best to flood our country with emigrants from all countries, the greater part of whom will be our competitors, and who will later on help to increase the supply of our products on which we are dependent. Do we not pay a fictitious price for our implements, and household necessities, so that the wealthy heeler may be made more wealthy? Can the complaint that we are too extravagant and wasteful explain these conditions. If they do I cannot see it. I would say: let every

government throw down their tariff wall on the public necessities, make it illegal for combinations to withhold these necessities for fictitious prices and return to the old system of supply and demand, and I think that the cost of living would be greatly reduced. If governments must have a tariff let them build it on our luxuries, but by every means let us have our necessities free, and I think there is food for all if this were the case and ever would be, if humanity did not interfere with its free distribution.

Mayview, Sask.

A. W. MAY.

When sending photographs to us be sure not to roll them but send them flat.

FAVORS A GOVERNMENT PORK PACKING PLANT BUT NOT A GOVERNMENT MONOPOLY

Editor, GUIDE:—Will you kindly give me a little space in the next issue of your valuable paper to explain to the members of the U.F.A. my views in respect to the proposed government pork packing plant and the contract the farmers are asked to sign?

I have been informed by some members from different parts of the province

that they have been told I am opposed to the plant. To this I wish to say that the first resolution in respect to a government plant was introduced by myself in the Strathcona Union three years ago, and at that time, it must be remembered, conditions in Alberta in respect to the hog market and packing plant were very different than at the present time. A plant such as the one recommended by the pork commission would, at that time, have been a boon to the farmers and would have had the support of myself and mostly every farmer, but in the last three years quite a change has taken place. When we first took up the matter, we were at the mercy of about three buyers in Alberta, with one packing plant at Calgary and two very small plants at Strathcona; but as a result of the action taken by the association and the board of trade of Strathcona, Pat Burns decided to build a plant in Strathcona. Then came the larger plant of G. Y. Griffin in Edmonton, and still, with this addition, we have room for more. So we have continued our agitation for government plant, and I wish to say that I am still in favor of the plant being built. I am, however, inclined to think that the proposed plant will be too small to be of any material benefit to the farmers, and seeing that the larger plant of Griffin & Co. was considered by an experienced company to be the best to build, I think we could well copy them in that respect. I know that they handle beef as well as pork, and that it is claimed by some that pork can be best handled alone; still experience has convinced the large packers that the two works out best.

We must also remember that if we are going to do an export trade we must have a plant large enough to keep the market supplied regularly, or the trade will soon go to pieces. It is not that I am opposed to a government plant. What I have been asking for is a larger plant and better terms for our farmers. I think the contract sent out for signatures very unreasonable, inasmuch that it not only requires the farmer to sign for a certain number of hogs, but that he must give all the hogs he raises to the government plant under a penalty of two dollars per hog for all hogs sold to any other person for packing or killing purposes. I have no use for monopolies—not even government—and I am now just as much a slave as I ever wish to be. I do not believe in signing away my freedom, and I am convinced that the two dollar penalty cannot be collected if imposed. More than that, why should we, as farmers, be so mistrusted in this matter? We have asked for the plant and it is the intention of the farmers to supply it with all the hogs it can handle—and far more.

We notice that our government places confidence even in strangers, guarantees bonds by the millions for railway propositions, signs documents and accepts plans without investigation. This, I say, for strangers and those who have never invested a cent in the province. Yet, when we, the farmers, the backbone of the province who have made it flow with milk and honey, by our everlasting struggles, and by the investment of every dollar that we owned and all that we could borrow, and invested too when it was a question if we could ever hope to make it a paying proposition, and in fact, it was almost a case a few years ago of throwing up the sponge.

Yes, I say, when we ask for a small outlay to warrant us continuing a line of business that should be profitable, we are called upon to submit to fines and to sign contracts that are unreasonable. Does any man, who has given this matter a few hours thought, think for one minute that it would be necessary to send a half a dozen men all over this province at several dollars a day and expenses, to get the farmers to sign this contract if it was a reasonable one? No, I think not. It could just as well have been presented at our regular meetings by the secretaries and the signatures could have been readily obtained for more hogs than the plant can handle. The two-third payment again for hogs at time of delivery is another sticker with many farmers, and I say any business man knows well that there is no need of tying up so much of the farmers' money. The commission tells us that they found the cost of handling a hog was from 35 cents to 90 cents. Then if we allow one dollar or one-tenth, that should be enough. We are told all such matters