

# The Brain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, March 6, 1918

## Putting Soldiers on the Land

The new land settlement board for soldiers is comprised of Chas. F. Roland, of Winnipeg; Major Ashton, of Regina; and F. O. Maber of the Department of Interior, Ottawa. The board is now working on a scheme to locate returned soldiers on farms in cases where they desire to take up farming. At the last session of Parliament, provision was made for a loan of \$2,500 at five per cent. interest to returned soldiers who go on the land. The job ahead of the new board is a big one. The problems to be faced are enormous. It is of no use to put returned soldiers on the land unless there is the strongest probability that they will be successful farmers. To give out loans indiscriminately to returned men would be no kindness to the men themselves and would be disastrous to the government.

There have been many schemes for land settlement advanced in the last two years by well intentioned people. Some of them would place the soldiers on homestead lands in Western Canada and give them the \$2,500 loan. We can scarcely think of any plan that would be so certain of failure. It would be far better to close the homestead lands entirely and direct all settlers, including soldiers, into the districts already served by railways and other facilities of civilization. Many returned soldiers will go to their own farms or will take up work on other farms while thousands, undoubtedly, will prefer to farm on their own account.

It is estimated that there are approximately 30,000,000 acres of good farming land absolutely idle in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta in the districts served by railways. This is the land upon which soldiers should be settled and upon which incoming settlers should be placed until it is all in use. The majority of people seem to agree upon this general principle, that the idle land along the railways held by speculators should be the first land put to use. How to get hold of it though, is a problem nobody seems able to solve.

This land is a national asset provided by the Creator for the use of mankind. A comparatively few men and corporations have hogged it. They are not using it themselves and will not allow anybody else to use it until they have paid the price, and the price will be a good stiff one. When the government of Canada needed men for the army, it conscripted them. The government selected the finest class of men in Canada, singled them out from all other men and put them into the army to fight for the nation. By the same method this idle land could be brought into use. Let the government conscript it at a price about one-half its value for productive purposes. The bare suggestion of such a scheme will raise an awful roar all over the country. People will say that property is no longer safe. But it is just as true with the lives and liberty of our young men of military age. Is it any worse to make life and liberty unsafe than it is to make property unsafe. These young men were conscripted and forced to accept less than half their earning capacity in civil life. Why should the government not take over the idle land at one-half its value? It would be drastic action but the land problem in Western Canada will never be settled without drastic action. Somebody is bound to be hurt before our land problem is solved. In fact somebody gets hurt every time there is an economic readjustment.

The government has the power to conscript land. If it is conscripted at half price and payment made in Government war bonds, there will be no difficulty in getting land for the soldiers and bringing the idle land into use just as fast as it is good for the country to have it in use. If the land is to be taken

over and the speculators paid full price, a tremendous injustice will be done to the people of Western Canada and speculators will make a pile of money they haven't earned. A solution of the land problem lies in getting hold of the vacant land already served by schools, churches, and other facilities of civilization. There is no use dodging the issue. It is plain as a pikestaff, and it looks everybody in the face who has ever travelled over Western Canada. It requires a strong hand, however, and plenty of courage. We have plenty of land, good land right alongside our railways and there are plenty of men who would like to get onto it. Here is a chance for the government to show its mettle. Putting this idle land to use will at the same time solve the railway freight rate question, because it will create enough traffic to make the railways profitable.

## Wheat Price Fixed

By proclamation on February 24 President Wilson fixed the price of wheat in the United States for the 1918 crop, approximately the same as the prices prevailing at the present time. The action of the president, it is announced, was due to the fact that there was great uncertainty all over the United States. Bills had been introduced in Congress aimed to fix the price at \$2.50 and many were advocating \$3.00. The result of the situation created was that wheat was not flowing to the distributing centres as it was required. The President's action in fixing the price, under powers conferred on by Congress, cleared the air and made certain that practically the present prices would prevail for the 1918 crop. This means, naturally, that the Canadian wheat prices will remain practically where they are for the 1918 crop as Canadian prices were fixed last year on the same basis as the American and no doubt will be for the present year.

## Railway Situation

While there are plenty of rumors emanating from Ottawa these days in regard to the railways, the government has not yet announced any decision. The latest rumors still coincide with the earlier ones\* in the belief that the government will take over everything except the Canadian Pacific Railway, and leave that road to operate as a private institution. Anything short of government control and operation with immediate or future nationalization of all the railways will fall short of a solution of the railway problem. The fact that the C.P.R. is a well organized and a well operated railway is no argument against nationalization. Any railway would be well operated and well organized if it got all the money it wanted from the public treasury. Canada today remains the only important country in the world with private railways. The whole trend of modern civilization is towards the nationalization of these great public utilities with their tremendous economic and political power. Public opinion in Canada, outside of financial circles, largely favors nationalization of railways. The new government is strong with powerful backing from the people. It is time for the government to act and settle this momentous question in the proper manner.

## Starvation Comes Nearer

Reports from Great Britain are that the rationing system is being steadily expanded. The people of Great Britain are tightening their belts and grimly setting their faces to the completion of the gigantic task before them. Acute as is the food situation in

Britain, it is more so in France, Italy and Belgium. It is a mere commonplace to say that victory for the Allies depends today almost entirely upon the food supply which can be provided by Canada and the United States. It should be brought home to every farmer in this country that his supreme duty at the present moment is to produce every ounce of food possible during the coming season. There will be handicaps certainly. It will be many a year before the farmer has no handicaps. But despite them all farmers in the prairie provinces can produce more food per man than in any other part of the world. Farmers and farmer's sons have been largely exempted under conscription in order to increase the food supply. Unfortunately, some have been taken who would have been better employed on the farms. But considering everything, by a strange combination of circumstances, the fate of the Allies may be decided by the quantity of food produced in the prairie provinces in 1918 and 1919. There never was a greater responsibility upon the farmers of the prairie provinces. Never have they had such an opportunity to save human life from starvation. The trench line has been extended to the prairie provinces and every farmer is in the trenches. We believe they will do their duty in the farm trenches as nobly as their sons have done their duty in France and Flanders.

## Premiers' Conference

The conference between the provincial premiers and the Dominion government on production and other wartime problems should be productive of much good. The questions that face Canada require the combined wisdom of the best brains in the country for their solution. No Dominion government, Partisan or Union, would claim a monopoly of the brains of Canada. Upon many of the war problems the men at the helm in the various provinces are as well informed as those at Ottawa. It may be safely assumed that they are in closer touch with local conditions and requirements than the Dominion ministers. It is, therefore, in keeping that they be consulted from time to time on questions that vitally affect the different provinces. The advantages of such conferences as that held at Ottawa recently, have been too long overlooked. As a result the interests of certain sections of the country have received less consideration than their importance warranted. Conferences in which the provincial premiers would be taken into consultation on big national questions should become a regular feature. They would enable the Dominion government to strike a truer balance between the interests of different parts of Canada than has frequently been the case in the past.

## Shortening the Rope

The amount of food produced in the prairie provinces in 1918 and 1919 will depend in a large measure upon the farm machinery used. The farm machinery used will depend to a considerable extent upon the prices. The heavy tariff tax levied on farm machinery increases the price enormously as is well shown in Mr. McKenzie's article elsewhere in this issue of The Guide. The high tariff tax on all kinds of farm machinery except tractors will certainly cut down the use of machinery on the Western farms. The result just as certainly will be a reduction in the amount of food produced. What the reduction will be no one can say but it will certainly reduce the food supplies to the Allies and lessen the chances of victory. The revenue derived by the Dominion government from the tariff tax