

# THE WESTERN HOME MONTHLY.

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## The Farmers and the Grain Exchange.

### A Permanent Settlement Desirable.

In the articles preceding this we have pointed out how the shippers of grain or at least a section of them shamefully robbed the producers; how a company was formed among the producers to operate independently; how that company fought a good fight and came out victorious; how it is growing in power and influence so that it is now one of the leading organizations in the West. Yet we have had to point out that this is not a satisfactory permanent arrangement, and not even a safe temporary arrangement excepting under certain conditions. The conditions under which it would be even a safe temporary arrangement are that the company should be strong enough to successfully encounter all opposition; that it should be strong enough to control the terminal elevators; that it should include practically all the farmers of the West so that all might benefit by the reductions; and that it should be managed by thoroughly competent men who are not addicted in any manner, shape, or form to the practice of gambling. We are glad to believe that the Company bids fair to comply with all but one of these conditions. But a temporary arrangement is not enough. We are not thinking of the present situation alone, but of every struggle between opposing interests when we lay it down as a principle that nothing is ever settled right until the interests of the whole community are concerned in the settlement and until the claims of all are respected. The cost of fruit, of coal, of meat were given to illustrate how we are suffering today because the consumers have not been considered in the fixing of prices. The producers, or at least a portion of them, and certainly the transporters, get their full reward, but we who must eat and keep warm have to pay the price. It is time that the consumer had some recognition. And although in the matter of the price of flour the consumer may not for many years be affected by any arrangement that is made for the shipping of grain, in the long run he will find a difference; and in any case as he is interested in the matter just as vitally as others he should be concerned in the settlement of the question. This eternal fighting between sections of the community—must it go on forever, or must the state assert its lordship in matters that affect the welfare of all? Must we leave employer and employed, and producer and shipper to fight it out as they please or must we compel both to listen to the voice of reason? We can well believe that if the State had been half alive in this matter a few years ago, the present trouble would never have arisen, and the farmers would be shipping at lower rates than are now charged or likely to be charged.

### Conditions of National Peace.

There are two conditions under which community life may be peaceful and prosperous. The first condition is that every department of activity be under the charge of those who are competent to advise and lead; and the second is that the state exercise a wise supervision over all, to the end that no injustice as between man and man, or between interest and interest be permitted.

### Some Illustrations.

If these conditions were met, transportation would be carried on under a commission of trained experts rather than by a body who must learn their duties after appointment to office; the vexed question of taxation would be entrusted to specialists who have made a real study of the subject and who know the practice in other lands; manufacture would be supervised by a body of men who are thoroughly acquainted with it in all its forms; the character of the service rendered by that great class known as the middlemen, including as it does all wholesale and retail dealers, would be reported upon by a company of experts; and agriculture quite properly would be carried on under the advice of such authorities as now conduct the experimental farms and agricultural colleges. Yes, and departments outside the field of production and distribution would come under the direction of those who have special knowledge and wisdom. Education, temperance, public morality, protection, would all be administered under the guidance of those who are specially trained for their duties. A state is most unfortunate indeed when its activities are carried on without regard to law and order, and its condition is not improved when those responsible for the direction of affairs are ignorant and unwise.

### The Form of Government Required.

This, of course, leads directly to the question of government, and here is the centre of the whole discussion. It will be admitted, that the form of government now in force does not secure the best results. A number of men selected because of their wealth, business ability or political sagacity are chosen by the electors, and these constitute the legislature. Were they to be called upon to legislate and adjudicate only in such matters as they are familiar with, all would be well, but unfortunately this is not the case. A member of the legislature is required to deal with hundreds of problems every session, and of ninety per cent. of these he has no more reliable information than the man on the street. Still he must assume an air of importance, and pretend to know. He picks up ideas from newspapers and random conversations, and then judging that he knows at least as much as his associates, proceeds to give his opinion and his vote. Such is the origin of much of our legislation. True, the minister in charge of a department frequently gives the cue to his followers as to how they should act, but unfortunately the minister is rarely—very rarely—an authority in his own department. Even if the minister always had a deputy who was an acknowledged authority in his line, and if he were guided by the advice of this deputy it would not be so bad, but in Canada it is not always the custom to select deputies because they are authorities in their departments, but because they have good political ability or a record for party service.

### Direction by Experts.

This, of course, is a mistake. The real advisors in all legislation should be the experts in the various departments of life. The legislature should listen to these experts, get from them every item of information they possess, question them until they know what action is proper under the circumstances, and then legislate in accordance with the information given. To illustrate this point: Suppose it is proposed to tax railways. It is not enough that a minister should give a little second-hand information on the subject and that he should be met by arguments based on a little more second-hand information. The experts in the state on such matters should appear in committee and freely give their knowledge, and this knowledge should be the ground of legislation. Suppose it is proposed to amend the Banking Act, the rules governing shipment of grain, the education of children, the employment of child labor—the same course should be followed. Experts should really furnish information and guide decisions, and the representatives of the people should register the decisions. No nation that hopes for permanent prosperity can afford to do without the wisdom of those who are best informed in all departments of service. There has not been a case of friction in industrial and social life during these last few years that could not have been avoided if our legislators instead of depending upon their own wisdom had sought the opinions of those who were qualified to speak. If, for instance, the Parliament of Canada and the various legislatures had made diligent inquiry when the complaints against the elevator owners were first made, and if this inquiry had been conducted by a thoroughly competent body, then the present trouble would never have arisen.

### How Experts are Secured.

It will naturally be asked where this army of experts is to come from, and what it will cost the state to secure their services. The answer is given by what is probably the best-governed state on the face of this earth. Down at Madison there is a university, but it is a university of a type very different from those with which most Canadians and old-countrymen are acquainted. This university consists of an ordinary arts' college and a whole series of technical schools. To carry on the work of this university the state pays over a million dollars a year, but the return to the farmers alone in one department is said to be over ten millions a year. In this university the instructors are specialists or experts in their own fields. They train the rising generation as a matter of course, but they do something else which is equally important. Before the committees of the Legislature they are continually called upon to give the results of their researches. Is there an enquiry into railroad rates? A member of the commission is chosen from the department of Political Science to give

advice or rather information. Is there a movement towards improving the roads? The head of the Department of Geology is found to be an expert on soils. Is there an inquiry as to taxation? Then there is on the tutorial staff a man who has given the subject his special attention. No legislation is attempted, no legislation dare be attempted, unless the evidence of the best-informed men in the state has been secured, and if nobody has sufficient acquaintance with facts, legislation is postponed until a commission has reported. And this is not all. The conditions of life in the state are studied and reported upon by those who are receiving instruction in the university, and there is arising a body of young people, who understand thoroughly the trend of progress, and who are capable of directing affairs when their turn shall come to rule. And all this costs the state less than nothing. Intelligence rather than pompous self-assertion directs the affairs of state; the legislature finds in the university an invaluable ally, so valuable indeed that though there may be in the state some who believe it is extravagance to pay legislators for the performance of their duties, there are none who will not cheerfully hold up both hands for an increased grant to the university.

### How Trouble Might Have Been Averted

Now this direction of legislation in all departments by experts, would inevitably have resulted in the prevention of such struggles as we are now witnessing in Western Canada. The elevator owners and the grain growers had a disagreement and the state foolishly allowed them to fight it out, as if this were a matter for these two classes alone. As a matter of fact it is your matter and mine just as much as it is theirs. If Parliament had been wisely guided, if it had sought the advice of those who knew the history of these movements in other places, the whole trouble would have been averted.

We know full well that there are many who will have no patience with such recommendations as have just been made. They see everything from the angle of self-interest rather than from a national view-point. Even among the producers there are those who say "We have beaten the Grain Exchange to a frizzle. We will ship twenty million bushels this year and twice twenty million bushels next year. We are all right!" No, friends, you are not all right. In the first place you are not getting a fair deal yourselves. The commission on the twenty million bushels is about \$200,000. The conceded profit on this is between \$100,000 and \$150,000. Does this go into the pockets of the farmers? Do not believe it. It goes into the pockets of the shareholders of a private company—the Grain Growers' Company. Most people have an impression that if they are to be robbed it had better be by a stranger than by a member of one's own family. The fact is that the Grain Growers' Co., if it is to be fair to the farmers themselves, must give every farmer the same rate of profit. In other words, every one who ships through the Company, whether shareholder or not, must participate in the returns. Otherwise there is no difference between the Grain Growers' Co. and any other commission house. But this is not all. There is a question of terminal elevators and interior elevators. In whom will the ownership and control of these be vested? And if these are to be controlled by the producers, will the producers also attempt to control the railroads—which are the greatest robbers of all? There is evidently great need that this whole matter be thought clean through to a finish. There are evidences that a good many of those who are leaders do not know clearly where their policy is tending. It is not too late even yet for the services of experts—men who from their wide knowledge are able to see the bearing of methods of procedure upon every activity in the state. It is a good motto never to begin anything without considering what the end may be.

In conclusion let us express one word of satisfaction, namely, that although the governments of Canada through their inertness and failure to supervise the conditions of industrial activity, permitted this matter to end in a quarrel between two factions that could well have lived in harmony and mutual helpfulness, there is much occasion for congratulation that those who sinned against the producers are now reaping the reward of their iniquity. And pending a final solution, let us hope that all others concerned in the raising and shipping of grain, no matter under what name, will be punished in proportion to their offences against justice and unity.