

The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, January 31st, 1917.

THE U.F.A. CONVENTION

The large increase in membership in the United Farmers of Alberta during the past year and the spirit of service which has characterized the work of the organization made the annual convention in Edmonton last week the largest ever seen in Alberta. The farmers of Alberta, as a rule, and particularly in Southern Alberta, have been riding on a wave of prosperity for the past two years. War prices and three or four crops in two has produced a combination that never before was heard of in this country and there is small likelihood of it occurring again. It is fortunate, however, that this wave of prosperity should have struck Southern Alberta, as no other part of Western Canada has suffered so many successive crop failures previously and left so many discouraged farmers and their families in its train. The danger that prosperity would make the farmers self-satisfied and tend to wean them away from their own organization has not yet become apparent. Altho far and away the largest U.F.A. annual convention ever held, the interest in questions under discussion was even more widespread and more intelligent than in past years. The U.F.A. seems to have settled down to a clearer realization of its responsibilities and its possibilities. The spirit of confidence permeates the whole organization. Its growth and development is normal and natural and it promises big for the future.

The wisdom of the men in placing the women on an equality in the U.F.A. and granting them their own separate convention was amply justified. Farm women gathered from all over the province and held a splendid convention in the same church where their husbands were convened. The women of Alberta in common with those of the other prairie provinces are now in possession of the franchise and they are determined to exercise it wisely. They know there are many injustices to their sex upon the statute books which they are determined to have removed and which the men will undoubtedly help them to remove. The women also bring a new viewpoint to bear upon public questions which has too long been lacking. Of all the good work that the U.F.A. has accomplished, nothing will in future count more to their credit than that they have assisted in building up a strong farm women's organization.

The Farmers' Platform, prepared by the Canadian Council of Agriculture, was endorsed by the U.F.A. convention with absolute unanimity and was declared by some of those present to be the most statesmanlike national platform which had been presented to the people of Canada since the Confederation.

RURAL BANKING SERVICE

The service rendered to farmers by the banks in the prairie provinces has been a subject of much discussion during the past few years. A considerable number of complaints, both of a general and specific character, have been levelled at the banks by farmers and by men in public life. As a result of these criticisms and discussions and with a desire to bring about more satisfactory relationships, conferences were arranged between the Winnipeg Bankers' Association and the Canadian Council of Agriculture representing the organized farmers of the three prairie provinces. As an outcome of these conferences the bankers agreed upon some important changes in their service to farmers. To carry the matter still further, The Guide requested Mr. Vere Brown, superintendent of the Bank of Commerce at Winnipeg, to prepare for The Guide a statement from the bankers' viewpoint outlining the functions and obligations of the banks to

farmers. We presented a large number of questions in which the farmers have been interested and asked Mr. Brown to discuss them in his article, which begins in The Guide in this issue and which will be concluded next week.

While not an official pronouncement from the Canadian chartered banks, Mr. Brown's article may be considered as representing the viewpoint of the bankers generally. This is the first time, so far as our knowledge goes, that any representative banker has discussed these questions so fully, freely and openly, and we consider that it is a splendid move in the right direction. There has been altogether too much secrecy in connection with our banking institutions. If they are the best for our needs they should be able to demonstrate that fact thru publicity and service. If they require improvements, those improvements should be made. It is a fundamental error to attempt to maintain the banking system upon a pedestal. Our readers will welcome Mr. Brown's frankness, whether or not they will in all cases agree with his conclusions. We would recommend that every reader of The Guide should read very carefully both this and next week's article by Mr. Brown and reserve criticism and comment until they have studied both articles. We shall then be glad to receive letters from our subscribers commenting upon these articles and criticising them and asking any further questions they wish in regard to the banking system as it effects the credit of Western farmers. We are prepared to publish any criticism that seems worthy of publication and we will ask Mr. Brown to answer questions that are asked.

Mr. Brown has set forth in great detail the points that make or mar a farmer's credit standing and these facts should not be passed over lightly. The more money the farmers are able to borrow from the banks in Western Canada, provided it is wisely used, the greater will be the wealth production. The safer the business, the lower will be the rate of interest which the banks will accept. We are not here going to enter into any criticism of Mr. Brown's article. We feel greatly obliged to him for preparing the articles and we feel that it is a distinct service, not only to the farmers, but to the bankers as well to have this matter dealt with so fully and completely in the public press. After our readers have considered it and sent in their criticism, comments, suggestions and questions, we will throw the matter over for discussion with the idea of arriving at helpful conclusions to secure a still better banking service for Western farmers.

THE TARIFF AND TIN PAILS

Every farmer knows the tin pail we generally speak of as a ten quart pail (really about eight quarts). It is the cheapest and poorest quality pail on the market. It is a pail used in large numbers and "protected" to the tune of 32½ per cent. As a result, the following are comparative prices per dozen on what we pay now at Winnipeg and what we could buy this pail for if there were no duty.

	Present Cost	Without Duty
Manufacturers' price, per doz.	\$2.33	\$1.42
Wholesalers' price, per doz.	2.81	1.70
Retailers' price, per doz.	3.75	2.27
Price to farmer, each	.32	.19

Thus by protection the ultimate price of this pail is advanced 13 cents or 68 per cent. Who is the protection for? Incidentally it might be mentioned that the present Minister of militia is one of the chief beneficiaries of this most highly protected industry.

HAVE PRODUCERS A VOICE

The value of the agricultural products of British Columbia for the year ending March, 1916, was slightly over \$30,000,000. The total value of the fruit produced in that province in 1915, a fairly good year, was \$1,600,000. Of the latter figure apples made up a little over one-half or \$881,000 (1,537 cars). Practically all of these were marketed by a comparatively small number of growers, around 1,500 or less.

The farmers of the three prairie provinces in 1915 produced 360,000,000 bushels of wheat worth about half a billion dollars or nearly 600 times as much as the apples of British Columbia. Yet this comparatively small fruit interest was able to go to Ottawa a year ago and get an extra duty of 50 cents a barrel with which to add their extra burden on to the grain growers. Why was this? Why had a few apple growers such influence when the prairie farmers can get virtually nothing they ask from Ottawa but the cold shoulder? Verily, it is time the farmers sent some representatives of their own to Ottawa. The new National Political Platform has pointed the way. It only remains for the farmers to act, but that means some sacrifice. Are they ready to make it?

FREE TRADE MUNITION MAKING

Recently when the United States Government asked for tenders for a variety of shells for naval purposes, the contract was awarded to an English firm, Hadfields of Sheffield. On 16 inch shells, for which the Bethlehem Steel Co. asked \$755 each and the Midvale Steel Co. \$900 each, the English firm only asked \$513. Furthermore, whereas the American or home companies could only promise delivery in 24 to 42 months, the English firm promised delivery in 16 months. Yet this English firm was not only working in the midst of this war when costs in England are supposed to have soared so high, but under that other terrible handicap—free trade. The crux of the matter is that the United States steel companies either thought the United States Government was up against it and deliberately decided to make the government pay dear (as most people do to the government), or else these huge steel companies built up under high protection are not able to compete with the English industry developed under free trade. Not many months ago when there was a strong move in United States to have the government manufacture part of its own munitions, the Bethlehem Steel Co. was the loudest protester. It offered to put its plant to work at cost plus a small profit. Hence these prices either represent the comparative costs of making shells in the two countries named or else, these American firms were merely trying to perpetrate on a supposedly helpless government the old game of highway robbery. It should also be remembered that the English steel worker under his union (existent prior to war) had an eight hour day, while it has been shown that trade unionism has been squelched in the American steel mills and workers are forced to work twelve hours a day for seven days in the week, year in and year out, under conditions of squalor and poverty.

A CASE OF INJUSTICE

A case has come to our attention where a farmer in Saskatchewan made application thru a local agent of a mortgage company for a loan on his farm in February, 1916. No money was forthcoming from the mortgage company despite the fact that the mortgage had been registered, and his farm therefore,