

The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, June 19, 1918

Overtures from Mr. Parsons

The Canadian Manufacturers' Association has had its annual convention and S. R. Parsons, the president, just retired, has spoken. True to the intimation given through his recent letters to *The Guide*, he "came out into the open" and spoke frankly about existing differences of opinion with regard to the tariff. A digest of his speech as well as a summarized report of other features of the C.M.A. convention appears elsewhere in this issue. It ought to be read closely by all grain growers, for Mr. Parsons, accepting the suggestion frequently offered by *The Guide*, has strongly urged that a conference between manufacturers and Grain Growers be held in Winnipeg some time this year. The dominant note sounded by Mr. Parsons in his address of last week at Montreal was national unity—a unity which would enable the manufacturer, the workman and the farmer to live and work together in Canada for the good of the country as a whole. This desire was expressed by Mr. Parsons in words of deep fervor, and we are told that his speech was received with great applause by the manufacturers who attended the convention.

Before advising this meeting of farmers and manufacturers where "all the cards would be laid on the table," however, Mr. Parsons devoted much of his speech in misrepresenting the attitude of the organized grain growers toward manufacturing. He referred several times, for instance, to "the propaganda being waged against the manufacturers of Canada." He said, "it has been necessary to deny many of the unfair, erroneous and misleading statements that have been made for the purpose of trying to prejudice the minds of the public against manufacturers and manufacturing interests." These remarks were made by Mr. Parsons as a justification of the manufacturers for raising the tariff issue at the present time, and in making them he entirely ignored the farmer's reiterated objection to Canada's present fiscal policy. There has been no propaganda against manufacturers or manufacturing, and there has been no effort exerted by the grain growers to prejudice the mind of the public against manufacturing interests. *The Guide* and the leaders of the organized farmers have said repeatedly that they do not want to destroy manufacturing, or bring destruction upon the individual manufacturer. It is not a personal question with the farmer at all. He believes that the system of protection as it exists in Canada today is not in the best interests of the country, and if the manufacturer who profits by that system first, last, and all the time, believes that it is absolutely essential to national progress and prosperity, the farmer must be convinced of his mistake before he will stop criticizing the tariff. It certainly is not the farmer's fault if the manufacturer insists upon regarding himself as the whole of Canada, and mistakes the criticism of a system for a personal attack.

Mr. Roderick McKenzie, of the Canadian Council of Agriculture who attended the convention, as an invited guest, approved of Mr. Parsons' desire for a joint conference of manufacturers and farmers, and also said: "I want you to show me an undertaking that needs protection and which we cannot do without." Mr. McKenzie expressed the point of view of the West completely when he said to the manufacturers: "I want you to show me." Unless both manufacturing and agri-

cultural interests approached such a conference as has been suggested, with open minds and an unreserved willingness to advance every particle of information that it would be possible to present, any meeting that might result would be absolutely fruitless. The manufacturer would have a case to prove. He would be in the role of defendant, and he could not set down any such rigid hypothesis for the hearing of his case as was suggested by Mr. Parsons in his speech when, in the same breath that gave utterance to the desire to meet the western farmer, he said: "We would, however, be altogether insincere and dishonest did we not state in general terms that if there is one thing more than another, it is that the manufacturers could not possibly exist in this country without the small measure of protection which the tariff affords them." There is the manufacturers' viewpoint in a nutshell. He would be willing to confer with the farmer, but only under fixed terms. The tariff is indispensable to any deal in which our manufacturer would engage.

Mr. Parsons would also have a tariff board created to investigate economic conditions in Canada, and have its findings regarded by the government as the final word upon our fiscal policy. To this recommendation, we have only one thing to say just now. The idea of a tariff board with power to determine the fiscal policy of Canada is all right in the abstract; but the practical composition of such a board would have to be considered very carefully indeed—yes, very carefully.

The People Should Know

It is announced from Ottawa that the 19-year-old boys who recently registered under the Military Service Act will not be called to the colors immediately. If this report is correct, it will be very welcome news to the agricultural districts in particular. It was feared that the government, by order-in-council, might cancel the exemptions of the 19-year-old boys in conformity with similar action on the 20 to 22-year class. The cancellation of exemptions on this latter class has brought very serious hardship in numerous cases both in town and country, but more particularly on the farms both East and West. The western farmers are generally in favor of conscription by the selective draft as they showed by their votes at the last election.

It was the departure from the selective draft method and the arbitrary cancellation of exemptions which has created a deep feeling of distrust in many quarters. Numerous reports that we have received show that production will be seriously curtailed in some districts, not so much for the present season as next year. The government should take this into consideration because the food problem is extremely serious. The uncertainty regarding the 19-year-old class is affecting preparations for production still further. Farmers with 19-year-old sons are in doubt as to whether these boys will be called without a possibility of exemption and must, therefore, make their plans for production accordingly. If the government will clear up this uncertainty it will help to relieve the situation in the country. The farmers of Western Canada have demonstrated their loyalty and their determination to win the war in a manner not surpassed by any other class in Canada. There are of course exceptions to every rule. They have given their sons nobly and are not opposed to any sacrifice that may be necessary to win the

war. It would be most unwise and unfortunate if the government arbitrarily ignores the interests of the greatest food-producing district of Canada.

The government has already been derelict in its duty in not giving the general public more information regarding the war and war problems. Sir Robert Borden should take the people of Canada into his confidence and tell them every fact that it is possible to publish. The people can be trusted. They are quite as loyal as the government and quite as determined to win the war. They cannot be expected, however, to accept blindly and enthusiastically more drastic regulations than have been imposed in any other allied country unless the reasons are forthcoming. Both President Wilson and Premier Lloyd-George recognize this fundamental fact and have taken their own people into their confidence.

In the winning of the war it needs not only our men at the front, but the united support of the people at home. The Union government has lost the confidence of an immense number of people who supported it at the last election. This loss of confidence is due almost entirely to the failure of the government to give the people the information and the facts which they should have. This lack of confidence, if it continues, will seriously affect the morale of the people at home and will curtail production at a time when it is most vitally needed. The people should be shown clearly that the selective draft method has failed to produce the soldiers required and should be notified of the intention of the government on this matter in the future. Otherwise, the government must assume the responsibility of the results that are bound to follow.

Senator Nichols' Idea of Profits

Senator Frederick Nichols, head of the Canadian General Electric Company and the Canada Foundry Company, and a director of numerous other industrial and financial concerns in the East, says that the average cost of producing a bushel of wheat is 80 cents, and that because the government fixed the price of wheat at \$2.20 per bushel, the western farmer has been making profits at the rate of 200 to 300 per cent. per annum. He has it all figured out just like that. He gave the convention of the C.M.A. in Montreal last week the benefit of his calculations on this subject, in the course of a speech which tried to show why farmers and manufacturers should get together a little more closely in future than they have in the past. Senator Nichols' idea of getting together has always been based upon the possibility of dividends and profits, and so, he sought a natural medium in trying to present an argument to his fellow manufacturers, many of whom, like himself, had had the advantage of shell contracts from the first Imperial Munitions Board.

There is little use attempting to offset any idea that happens to find an open crevice in the brain of a man like Senator Nichols, whose mind is about as susceptible to a contrary impression as one of his steel boiler plates is to the single blow of a trip-hammer. The fact is, however, that the cost of producing wheat on the western plains since the outbreak of war has increased so rapidly, and the return, even at \$2.20 per bushel, has been so uncertain, that there are many farmers who have lost money and lost heavily. There is this crucial difference between the grain grower and the manufacturer of