

The Mail Bag

THE SASKATCHEWAN COMPANY

Editor, Guide:—As the annual meeting of the shareholders of the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Co. is approaching, it may be advantageous to note a few things in connection with our company.

Having attended many conventions, the writer has found that much time is wasted by delegates in talking, which a little more quiet thinking would obviate. Of course quakerism is not advocated, but it is a waste of time to jump up to ask a question hurriedly which a little quiet reflection would answer. But the greatest waste of time is caused by those delegates who persist in drawing attention to themselves and they generally succeed in attracting attention, but not to their best qualities.

The program is usually arranged by some of the officials, but the delegates convened as the paramount power can change the procedure if they wish. Sometimes much valuable time is spent on rather unimportant matters, and more important ones are hurriedly considered later. It would be well if the program could be arranged so that the delegates could obtain all reports and information which are forthcoming on all matters, and ample time to consider same, before they would be called upon to decide on those matters.

The writer hopes that the next convention will introduce some more of the brotherhood or Christian spirit into the workings of our company instead of the cold commercialism that has so far been too prominent. Our management seem to follow too much the old, cruel, grinding-the-weak business method instead of that of equity. To be successful any institution must be based on the principle that each one gets as he does. According to that rule each shareholder should receive from the profit of our company according to what he did to make it. Instead of that the shares only draw all the profit with us, while in equity the amount of grain or business brought to the elevator should draw as well. If half the dividend was given on the business supplied what an incentive it would be to bring grain to our elevators. Each local again should stand on its own feet, which would be a great incentive to it. But along with that

it should have more self-government. At present the local board is a nonentity and the central is all in all.

When we apply the same principle of getting according to the doing, to the voting again we find that our company is very much astray. Whether a man has one share or ten shares he has but one vote. Is that right? Emphatically not, notwithstanding that the method is popular with some of our shareholders. The popularity of the sentiment "one man one vote" does not make it right. In all human affairs intelligence and virtue should govern. Being so, it would be easy to find one man who should get five or ten votes to the other fellow's one. But even admitting men to be equal in the state—which is a tremendous concession to the ignoramus—would that make them equal everywhere? Is it right for any man to go over the fence to manage the property of his neighbor? Every man would resent the arrogance, yet that is just what the one share man does when he votes to control nine shares which belong to the ten share man.

I hope that our next convention will investigate the treatment our grain buyers receive. I find that the buyers of the line elevators are very unfairly treated and suspect that our company is inclined to imitate them. Since we desire equity ourselves let us give the same to them. Let us ask justice of them and not overage. Hold them responsible for their negligence, but not for all the leakages between here and Port Arthur. Also it should be arranged that these men should be doing something—work with farmers, say—during the summer, if they want to draw their pay. The present custom of keeping them in idleness is very uneconomical beside being injurious to their habits.

Now, I merely touched the above matters, and that in a friendly spirit, because I have the best possible wishes for our company, being as I am rightly

AN OPEN FORUM

This page is maintained to allow free discussion of all questions vital to western farmers. Up to the limit of space letters will be published giving both sides of all such questions. It is not possible to publish all letters received, but an effort will be made to select those most fairly representing different views. Short letters will be given preference. All letters must be accompanied by name and address of writer, tho not necessarily for publication. Unused letters will be returned if accompanied by postage.

to be considered one of its fathers. The late Mr. Green, Mr. Langley and Dr. McGill conceived the idea, but being a student of sociology I had been convinced of the same thing years before then and that was why I moved the resolution to adopt the plan, while many of our leaders at the time were either bitterly against, or in a blissful paradise of indifference. But tho our company is a great success, at least financially, which is not surprising, being based, as it is, on the lucrative grain business, yet it is not quite up to the ideal. In past conventions when some of us would ask for more of the real co-operative method our management would object on the ground that it would entail too much bookkeeping; but that is not a valid reason. The writer was one of the first shareholders of a great co-operative company which was and is still buying and selling grain along with everything else, and divides half the profit on the business and the other half on the shares, and that without any laborious system of bookkeeping.

LEWIS GABRIEL.

Bangor, Sask.

BOTH PARTIES HAVE FAILED

In a recent letter written by Hon. Geo. Langley in an exchange, he concludes by a review of agricultural conditions which is interesting to all farmers:

"I venture to add, in conclusion, just a thought on the present condition of agriculture in our agricultural province. We have this year, for which we are all thankful to Providence, the best crop that has ever been harvested in Saskatchewan, but there is danger that it may close our eyes and our minds to actual conditions. A very large portion of the proceeds of the present crop will have to be spent in defraying debts which have accumulated in previous years, and in very, very many cases, bountiful as the crop is, it will not be equal to discharging those accumulations.

Unless the future is going to be entirely different from our experience of the past, a portion of it may be needed in the very next year. I know I shall be accused of pessimism in stating this, but the only possibility we have of judging the future is by the experience of the past, and after the experience of the past three or four years it will be a misfortune if we allow the present year's abundance to close our eyes to the conditions that operate, not under special circumstances, but under average circumstances. I venture the opinion that settlement in the West is not only stagnant at present, but will remain stagnant until a radical alteration is made in the economic conditions that control the farming community on the Canadian prairies. What is wanted for Canada to realize the full benefit of her great agricultural heritage is a Dominion agricultural policy, a policy that will give to the farmers on the prairies freedom of access to every possible market in the world, and that will, at the same time, liberate the farmers' supplies from the shackling enactments that place artificially high prices on nearly everything they have to buy. And I have to make the frank confession that neither of the Federal political parties appears to me to appreciate the issue. Until this takes place, there will be spasmodic movement as the result of such a crop as we have this year, but permanent improvement, needful settlement, or continuous progress cannot be expected and is entirely out of the question."

GEORGE LANGLEY.

Regina, Sask., Sept. 15.

THE THRESHING PROBLEM

Editor, Guide:—Lately Western farmers have been receiving a large amount of gratuitous advice from touring Wise Men of the East and others as to the advisability of stacking their grain after being fortunate enough to get it safely in the shock.

In my opinion this is a question, like many others, that can only be solved by the farmers themselves, and while it may be, and generally is, advisable for a quarter section farmer to stack his grain,

Continued on Page 18

What Does Protection Protect?

By Henry George

Protection implies prevention. To protect is to preserve or defend.

What is it that protection by tariff prevents? It is trade. To speak more exactly, it is that part of trade which consists in bringing in from other countries commodities that might be produced at home.

But trade, from which "protection" essays to preserve and defend us, is not like flood, earthquake or tornado, something that comes without human agency. Trade implies human action. There can be no need of preserving from or defending against trade unless there are men who want to trade and try to trade. Who, then, are the men against whose efforts to trade "protection" preserves and defends us?

If I had been asked this question before I had come to think over the matter for myself, I should have said that the men against whom "protection" defends us are foreign producers who wish to sell their goods in our home markets. This is the assumption that runs thru all protectionist arguments—the assumption that foreigners are constantly trying to force their products upon us, and that a protective tariff is a means for defending ourselves against what they want to do.

Yet a moment's thought will show that no effort of foreigners to sell their products could of itself make a tariff necessary. For the desire of one party, however strong it may be, cannot of itself bring about trade. To every trade there must be two parties who mutually desire to trade, and whose actions are reciprocal. No one can buy unless he can find some one willing to sell; and no one can sell unless there is some other one willing to buy. If we did not want to buy foreign goods, foreign goods could not be sold

here even if there was no tariff. The efficient cause of the trade which our tariff aims to prevent is the desire of the people of this country to buy foreign goods, not the desire of foreign producers to sell them. Thus protection really prevents what the "protected" themselves want to do. It is not from foreigners that protection preserves and defends us; it is from ourselves.

Trade is not invasion. It does not involve aggression on one side and resistance on the other, but mutual consent and gratification. There cannot be a trade unless the parties to it agree, any more than there can be a quarrel unless the parties to it differ. England, we say, forced trade with the outside world upon China, and the United States upon Japan. But, in both cases, what was done was not to force the people to trade, but to force their governments to let them. If the people had not wanted to trade, the opening of the ports would have been useless.

Civilized nations, however, do not use their armies and fleets to open one another's ports to trade. What they use their armies and fleets for is, when they quarrel, to close one another's ports. And their effort then is to prevent the carrying in of things even more than the bringing out of things—importing rather than exporting. For a people can be more quickly injured by preventing them from getting things than by preventing them from sending things away. Trade does not require force. Free trade consists simply in letting people buy and sell as they want to buy and sell. It is protection that requires force, for it consists in preventing people from doing what they want to do. Protective tariffs are as much applications of force as are

blockading squadrons, and their object is the same—to prevent trade. The difference between the two is that blockading squadrons are a means whereby nations seek to prevent their enemies from trading; protective tariffs are a means whereby nations attempt to prevent their own people from trading. What protection teaches us is to do to ourselves in time of peace what enemies seek to do to us in time of war.

Can there be any greater misuse of language than to apply to commerce terms suggesting strife, and to talk of one nation invading, deluging, overwhelming or inundating another with goods? Goods! what are they but good things—things we are all glad to get? Is it not preposterous to talk of one nation forcing its good things upon another nation? Who individually would wish to be preserved from such invasion? Who would object to being inundated with all the dress goods his wife and daughters could want; deluged with a horse and buggy; overwhelmed with clothing, with groceries, with good cigars, fine pictures, or anything else that has value? And who would take it kindly if anyone should assume to protect him by driving off those who wanted to bring him such things?

In point of fact, however, not only is it impossible for one nation to sell to another, unless that other wants to buy, but international trade does not consist in sending out goods to be sold. The great mass of the imports of every civilized country consists of goods that have been ordered by the people of that country and are imported at their risk. This is true even in our own case, altho one of the effects of our tariff is that many goods that otherwise would be imported by Americans

are sent here by European manufacturers, because under-valuation is thus made easier.

But it is not the importer who is the cause of importation. Whether goods are brought here by importers or sent here by foreign exporters, the cause of their coming here is that they are asked for by the people. It is the demand of purchasers at retail that causes goods to be imported. Thus a protective tariff is a prevention by a people not of what others want to do to them, but of what they themselves want to do.

When in the common use of the word we speak of individuals or communities protecting themselves, there is always implied the existence of some external enemy or danger, such as cold, heat or accident, savage beasts or noxious vermin, fire or disease, robbers or invaders; something disposed to do what the protected object to. The only cases in which the common meaning of the word does not imply some external enemy or danger are those in which it implies some protector of superior intelligence, as when we speak of imbeciles, lunatics, drunkards or young children being protected against their own irrational acts.

But the systems of restriction which their advocates have named "protective" lack both the one and the other of these essential qualities of real protection. What they defend a people against is not external enemies or dangers, but what that people themselves want to do. Yet this "protection" is not the protection of a superior intelligence, for human wit has not yet been able to devise any scheme by which any intelligence can be secured in a parliament or congress superior to that of the people it represents.