

The Grain Growers' Guide

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THE CONFERENCE

During the past few years our readers have seen in these pages many criticisms of the tariff policy of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association and also of individual cases where it was pointed out that the tariff was imposing a very heavy burden upon the agricultural industry of Western Canada. We have also published in The Guide the relationship existing between the manufacturing industry of Canada and the other large commercial and financial institutions. Suggestions have been made from time to time that it would be well for the manufacturers and farmers to meet in conference to discuss matters of national importance. It will come somewhat as a surprise to most readers of The Guide to know that, on the invitation of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, a conference was held last week in the City of Winnipeg between representatives of the organized manufacturers and representatives of the organized farmers. The report of the proceedings of this conference will be found on another page of this issue.

This was the first time that the leaders of the Manufacturers' Association and the leaders of the organized farmers in Western Canada had ever met face to face. Each side has discussed its own problems thru the press and on the platform and has said some very strong things about the policy adopted by what they considered to be their opponents. The representatives of the manufacturers no doubt expected to see a much more warlike aggregation of farmers than those who met at the conference table. The farmers' representatives who gathered at the conference were dressed about the same as the ordinary business man of the cities; none of them carried weapons and none of them adopted a belligerent attitude. On the other hand the manufacturers did not seem to be overloaded with diamonds, nor did they claim that they had a monopoly of Canadian patriotism. There was some slight hesitation shown by both sides in the expression of opinion as the conference opened, but it soon dawned upon the manufacturers that the farmers intended them no bodily injury, and it became clear to the farmers that the manufacturers were not trying to betray them into some action which would lead to their disadvantage. Gradually the diffidence wore away and the conference became most exceedingly frank.

There were thirteen hours actually spent in conference, all of which time was occupied in discussion. The utmost harmony prevailed thruout. The farmers, however, discussed every phase of their program and laid before the manufacturers the true state of conditions in the rural West, showing how artificial restrictions were making farming an unprofitable business for a very large number of our farmers. As the matter was made clear the manufacturers heartily agreed to join hands with the farmers in an effort to have these disabilities removed as far as possible. They expressed themselves as quite willing to make sacrifices for the general good. The farmers' delegates boldly discussed the tariff showing how it burdened the farmers. The manufacturers agreed to have the tariff investigated to see how far it bore heavily upon the farming industry, with the aim of having it corrected. The farmers stated clearly that they believed in free trade with Great Britain, Reciprocity with the United States and general tariff reduction. Manufacturers made it equally plain that they were opposed to free trade, but declared that they were equally opposed to a prohibitive tariff. They thought there would be a common ground upon which both farmers and manufacturers would meet, and would be glad to

have an investigation by a board of able and unbiassed men, with the aim to arrive at this common ground. The tariff question was naturally the one which led to the strongest division of opinion, but when an agreement was reached to have a thorough investigation made into even the tariff, it was felt that decided progress had been accomplished. The manufacturers frankly admitted that it was bad for their industry to have the farmers of Canada in any other than a prosperous condition, and they expressed themselves as strongly in favor of any program of reform and improvement which would tend towards this end.

There was not so much difficulty met with in discussing the matter of high interest charges upon bank loans and mortgages and this also is to be a subject of searching enquiry. It was shown to the manufacturers that the practice of having all machinery notes, bank notes and other obligations fall due in October and November forced the farmers to throw their crop upon the market and thus break the prices. The manufacturers saw the seriousness of the situation and this will also be one of the subjects of enquiry with a view to remedy. The question of co-operation and the cheaper distribution of the products of the Canadian factories was laid before the meeting by the farmers, and it was shown to the manufacturers how they could help the farmers by aiding a system of distribution which would materially reduce the cost of taking the goods from the factory and placing them in the hands of the farmer. This will also be a subject of enquiry and will undoubtedly be the cause of considerable development in this direction.

Every other point of interest to the welfare of agriculture in Canada was thoroughly discussed and it was generally felt by all those present that the result of the conference would be a decided step in the right direction. It is very probable that the Dominion government will appoint a board of enquiry asked for in the course of a very few weeks and that the investigation will be taken up at once. If the board appointed by the government consists of able men who set out upon their work in real earnest, they will undoubtedly be enabled to accomplish very much for the improvement of the farmers of Canada as a whole. It was suggested and heartily agreed to by every one that further conferences between the farmers and manufacturers would help to clear away any misunderstanding that might exist between them, and also assist in getting them together to work for a common cause. They represented the two largest industries in Canada and, in the last analysis, their interests were the same. The manufacturers' representatives from the East undoubtedly had not before realized the conditions under which the Western farmers labor and the handicaps which they face in attempting to make a living for themselves and their families in the Prairie Provinces. They found that these Western difficulties were real, and that the representatives of the organized farmers of the West who met with them in conference were men of long years of experience in this country, well informed on every phase of Western conditions and capable of expressing their views in the clearest cut manner possible. Altogether the conference may be regarded as one of the most important meetings held in Canada in a long, long time, and, if the outcome of it is to get the manufacturers and the farmers closer together, working for a common cause instead of struggling as they have been for some years past, it will be one of the greatest accomplishments for the development of a great Canadian nation that has taken place in recent years.

PROGRESS OF THE WAR

The war situation, tho not greatly changed, continues to be favorable to the Allies. Slowly but surely the German lines are being forced back towards Berlin and, for the time at least, the attempt to force a way from Ostend down the Belgian and French coast to the ports on the Straits of Dover has been unsuccessful. In Prussia and Poland, both Germany and Russia are claiming important victories, and apparently each side is meeting with success at some points on the 200 mile battle line. In Belgium and France considerable ground has been gained, but the rate of progress from trench to trench is so slow that the ultimate defeat of Germany seems likely to come from national exhaustion and the inability of the country to continue to feed and maintain its enormous army, rather than from a decisive action on the field of battle. It is difficult to prevent Germany importing supplies from neutral countries, tho the allied fleets are on the watch for contraband, while she has money with which to pay for them, but there are signs visible to those acquainted with international finance that Germany, financially, is rapidly approaching the end of her resources. This is the most hopeful sign in the war situation. If Germany must be conquered by invading her territory and marching on Berlin by taking one fortress after another at the point of the bayonet, the cost in human life and suffering will be immensely greater than it has so far been in this, the bloodiest war of history. There will, however, be no turning back. General Von Bernhardi, in his remarkable book: "Germany and the Next War," said: "For us there are two alternatives and no third—world dominion or downfall." Britain and her allies have accepted that challenge, and whatever may be the cost, must, and will, see to it that the first alternative shall not be achieved.

The main German fleet is still safe in harbor protected by land forts and sea mines. There has, however, been some activity by submarines and cruisers and some fishing boats have been sunk by the Germans near the Norfolk coast. A German cruiser has been sunk by a mine intended for her enemies, and over 260 lives lost. The big naval news of the week, however, comes from the Southern Pacific, a German squadron of five cruisers having attacked three British cruisers and an auxiliary off the coast of Chili and sunk the "Good Hope," the flagship of the squadron, with Rear-Admiral Craddock and 900 men. The cruiser "Monmouth" was also severely damaged, but is believed to have run ashore.

Turkey, after attacking Russian seaports and then offering profuse apologies which were not accepted, is at last embroiled.

HIGH MORTGAGE CHARGES

Letters continually arrive at our office from farmers showing that the mortgage companies are taking advantage of the war situation to increase their rates of interest on mortgages which are being renewed at the present time. We have a letter from a farmer in Saskatchewan whose mortgage is falling due and he encloses the original letter from the Standard Trusts Company, of Winnipeg, demanding that the rate of interest on the renewal mortgage be made 9%.

A farmer in Alberta sends us his correspondence with the Manufacturer's Life Insurance Company. He had a mortgage with this company which was falling due. The notice from the company informed him that unless he replied by return mail and paid the mortgage in full or consented to renew it at 9% foreclosure proceedings would be instituted