

# The Mail Bag

## THE REFERENDUM VOTE

Editor, Guide:—You have spread a list of questions of very wide-reaching, practical importance before your readers, providing lots of splendid material for filling the meetings of our local unions with lively discussion.

Under the head of Tariff, I would have preferred our Ottawa program, particularly in regard to American Reciprocity. Personally I never approved of their recent reciprocity agreement, it was not our policy. It placed on the free list in our trade with the United States all that we sell. It left the tariff burden on all that we buy. It was unfair to American farmers, exposing them to the full competition of Canadian farm products, without lightening their own tariff burdens. It was a timid, facing both ways, political device, trying to please the farmers without irritating the manufacturers. As a fighting proposition it failed, and while reciprocity is more of a live question than ever, the late reciprocity agreement is dead, both in Canada and the States. Why should we farmers try to galvanize it into life again? Let us go back to our Ottawa policy and fight for a better reciprocity, than the thing that was buried during the last elections.

Which of your questions should we concentrate upon for immediate action? I think Direct Legislation, especially the "Initiative." This appears to me the key that would open the door to all our reforms. Many of our thoughtful members must have noticed, that somehow our attempts at influencing legislation have not been very successful. The political head seems to listen to our proposal with great interest, give us very nice words, promise careful consideration, then the matter drops. Or if by chance one of our proposals is drawn into the legislative machinery, it comes out so twisted and altered in shape, that we can hardly recognize our unlucky offspring. The chief reason for all this is our crazy party system. Our proposals generally will tread on the corns of some privileged business or vested interest which naturally will squeal and fight. To turn our proposals into laws we have to put them into the hands of the party leaders in power; these know, of course, that our measures will provoke the hostility of powerful men with votes and much money, and if the party leaders ask us: "Will you back us up with your votes, if we take up your proposal?" we cannot answer yes, not merely because of the party spirit of many of our members, but because the thing is not reasonable in itself. For this support would mean, not merely to help the party leaders to pass our measure, but to endorse by our votes wholesale all the other acts of legislation and administration of a party that may in many respects be abhorrent to us, and to vote for any candidate, irrespective of ability or character, whom the party caucus nominates. No wonder many of our members think this too big a price to pay.

Direct Legislation would rid us of these difficulties. We could employ the best legal talent to draft our proposals in our own way, we could easily get the required votes to petition for their initiation, and thus we could place them before the country to be voted

upon on their own merits, free from all personal and political entanglements.

I want especially to appeal to the United Farmers of Alberta to try to get this matter put into practical shape at our coming convention. The Alberta legislature meets on February 13, a few weeks after our convention. It is just possible that we might get this matter passed right then. The Conservative opposition is pledged to Direct Legislation. I know that some Liberal members are in favor of it. In any case, this session is the last before a provincial election, and if we fail in the session, we must try to succeed in the election.

JAMES SPEAKMAN.

Penhold, Alta., Nov. 18.

## FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Editor, Guide:—As the final vote on your eight questions is drawing near to hand, I would like to say a few things regarding the letters of W. B. Hull and "A Thinker" in the recent issue of The Guide.

Let me say that it is our duty as loyal and progressive citizens to look at things from a fair, impartial and unbiased standpoint. The whole thing in a nutshell is this: All people are amenable to the law, hence all the people should have a say in making the law. Votes cannot be forced upon women.

A little further on he says the time is not opportune. Selfishness, ignorance and greed have used this old argument since time began and until "Thinker" can sweep the cobwebs of selfishness and tradition from his mind and substitute some of that education he says women need, he will be unable to clearly determine normal well-balanced civilization from abnormal, lopsided, jumbled so-called civilization. Wake up "Thinker," view things from an unbiased frame of mind and you will join the ranks working for equal suffrage.

H. G. AHERN.

## THE GUIDE REFERENDUM

Editor, Guide:—Six of the eight questions asked by The Guide should be answered in the affirmative—Yes! There is hardly room for an argument on questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. Universal free trade is the best thing for all the nations of the earth. Anything else is merely parish politics. You may as well allow every little village in the land to build a wall around its small surroundings and charge outsiders a fee for admission. A tax on churches is just as defensible as a tax on newspapers, and when you tax the pulp wood and the printing press you are doing the nation more harm than if you taxed the preacher.

The earth was given to the children

may turn up, but we can select a man who has time, means and capacity to attend to the business.

Of number 8 I should say that Female Suffrage is the maddest of all mad fads of the age. From the earliest times women have shown a great want of judgment.

Even when our Mother Eve (the fairest of her daughters) was given the best man ever made, she chose a devil for her confidant, and treated the salvation of her race as a matter for a bargain counter, vainly deciding that she could get something better than Paradise from the advance agent of the other shop.

THOMAS C. ROBSON.

Dauphin, Man.

## REFERENDUM OPINIONS

Editor, Guide:—As you invite discussion on the eight questions submitted in your Referendum, I beg permission to forward short notes on each.

I think question No. 1, the Initiative, Referendum and Recall, would be a distinct advantage. By the Referendum the entire electorate could pass judgment on any important question before it became law. At the present time legislation is passed favoring a certain class or the "big interests" to the disadvantage of the people as a whole. Under the Recall our members would be

very careful about accepting bribes directly or indirectly from corporations and other interests to vote for them. At the present time we cannot call them to account until the end of three or four years instead of, as it should be, any time.

Question No. 2.—Gradual Free Trade with Great Britain would be a great advantage to consumers and the farmer especially, as he could buy the necessities of life minus the preferential tariff now in force.

Question No. 3.—Reciprocity with the United States is becoming of more vital importance to the farmers and the Dominion of Canada as a whole every day. Supposing the Canadian farmer did not receive one cent more for his grain by the American outlet, the advantages are obvious. The Americans need our hard wheat to mix with their softer varieties. It would make another outlet for our

grain with a far shorter haul than to Liverpool. At the present ratio of increase of population in the United States, the Union will be importing large quantities of our hard wheat in a few years. With free trade in grain the American railroads would push their lines all through Western Canada, thus doing away with the congestion at the present time. Even this year when our production is only a fraction of what it will be in twenty years, grain men are predicting 30,000,000 bushels of wheat left in the farmers' hands owing to inability of railroads to haul it out, and insufficient storage facilities.

Continued on Page 23

## NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS

This Department of The Guide is maintained especially for the purpose of providing a discussion ground for the readers, where they may freely exchange views and derive from each other the benefits of experience and helpful suggestions. Every letter must be signed by the name of the writer, though not necessarily for publication. The views of our correspondents are not of necessity those of The Guide.



## A PROTECTED INDUSTRY

In this room these two children lived and slept and passed their leisure moments until found and removed elsewhere. They were employed during the daytime in a cannery, the owners of which were protected by a high duty. This shows that Protection does not protect the workers.

They can refrain from voting if they choose just as thousands of men do every year from some reason or other best known to themselves. It is not a question as to whether women would vote as their husbands do or not. Such logic as that is childish. Women should have a good right to do and act and think as they please, as men have. If they want to vote, no imperial power or prehistoric custom or tradition born of greed, nursed in opulence and fettered by custom and superstition should override the vaunted civilization of today and say: "No. You are a woman, your place is home." There are just as bright, active and progressive female brains as male and the best ideas can only be evolved out of the union of both male and female brains.

"Thinker" reminds us that few women are actively interested in politics; that is easy to say, but can he prove his statement? Surely the record of women's achievements in about a dozen of the states of the Union will very emphatically disprove his statement. He says he is with Sir Rodmond; he would keep women out of politics. Selfishness!

of men as a community and the land values should alone be taxed for its defence, improvement and government. William the Norman knew this. He divided England among his barons on the condition that they defend it and him. Today, while the successors of these barons, still with greedy hands clutch the land, they call upon the unhappy back-handers to do the fighting. This we hope David Lloyd George will correct. He is up against a great Goliath, but the little Welshman is a good fighter and he has more than one stone in his wallet.

Of question No. 1, I would say that we are not sufficiently well educated to decide on a referendum. Interested parties can so easily draw a red herring across the trail that will puzzle the average voter. This was done in 1911. In spite of all the literature, etc., to the contrary, a great many voters voted against union with the States rather than against reciprocity, while others for a mere glass of beer, like the base Judean flung a pearl away worth half the tribe. We cannot all spend our time in studying every question that