

The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, July 22nd, 1914

PROSPECTS GROWING BRIGHTER

The result of the Manitoba elections cannot do other than have a most favorable effect on the Federal political field, from the standpoint of the Western farmers. It is true in Canada, as in all other countries, that democratic legislation for the benefit of the masses is very seldom recommended by governments of their own free will. The western farmers have been urging tariff reduction in order to reduce their cost of living, and the acceptance of the United States offer of "free wheat" in order to give them a better market for their product. They have also been urging the Federal Government to introduce co-operative legislation. To all of these requests, however, the Government has turned an absolutely deaf ear, and undoubtedly would continue to ignore the requests of the western farmers, so long as it was possible that they could command a majority of the members of the House. The Manitoba election, however, has naturally altered the situation. Three Cabinet Ministers, Hon. Robert Rogers, Hon. Arthur Meighen, and Hon. W. J. Roche, all took a very active part in the Manitoba elections and all had the discomfiture of seeing their own constituencies give very decided Liberal majorities. The great revulsion of feeling in their own constituencies will give these ministers cause for sober thought. There will be a Dominion election in 1915, and in the face of the recent Manitoba election, and the strong feeling among the farmers in favor of "free wheat," the prospects are that Manitoba will go strongly in favor of "free wheat." Saskatchewan and Alberta are not likely to change their representation very much. There will be forty-three seats in the three Prairie Provinces at the next election and unless the Government can command a big majority in Manitoba it is very doubtful if it will be able to secure a majority in the House of Commons. Cabinet Ministers in Canada, practically without exception, give their jobs first consideration, and if they realize that they cannot hold their jobs by ignoring the people and pandering to the interests, they are likely to change their tactics. The Western farmers by standing together and presenting a united front will steadily gain in strength. The upheaval in Manitoba is a most encouraging sign and it indicates that public opinion is becoming very favorable to democratic principles. The next session at Ottawa is extremely likely to produce some legislation along the lines demanded by the organized farmers because present indications are that the Government will need some support from the Prairie Provinces.

LOW PRICES IN PROSPECT

It is evident from the condition of the markets at the present time and the large grain crops that are being reaped in different parts of the world, that the price which the Canadian farmer will receive for his wheat during the coming fall and winter will be considerably below the average of the last few years. It seems likely, indeed, that prices will be several cents a bushel lower than they were last fall. On Saturday, July 18, No. 1 Northern wheat, for October delivery at Fort William or Port Arthur, was selling on the Winnipeg Grain Exchange at 83 1/4 cents, while on the same date last year the quotation was 91 1/4 cents, and in 1912, 93 3/4 cents. In the last two seasons many farmers have harvested good crops, only to find that the price was so low that nothing remained to pay them for their labor after expenses

had been met. This situation will obtain again in the coming fall and winter, probably to a greater extent than before, and farmers who are dependent for their income upon the wheat crop must bear this fact in mind. The farmer whose crop has been ruined by frost, hail or drought knows that he will be in financial difficulties in the fall, but it is difficult to realize that many a farmer will harvest a bumper crop next month and still be unable to meet his obligations unless he either has a reserve to draw upon or has been very careful in his expenditures. What is the farmer to do under these circumstances? This, largely, is a problem for each individual to work out for himself, but one thing necessary is for the farmer to be extremely cautious about incurring new obligations, especially for machinery. A man who buys a new binder when there is no possibility of his being able to pay for it is not deserving of any sympathy if he has trouble with the collector. A man who cannot pay for new machinery should patch up the old and make it do, or borrow the necessary implement from a neighbor. The implement companies, we understand, are as a rule adopting a fairly reasonable policy, and, while endeavoring to collect as much money as possible, the better concerns are not using undue pressure in cases where the farmer is doing his best and appears likely to settle his account in full if given time. Where an attempt is being made to evade payment, or where it is evident that the debtor is hopelessly involved and will be unable to pay all his creditors, the machine companies are putting on the screws and using every possible means of getting what is coming to them. For this they are not altogether to be blamed. In the matter of sales too, many of the implement companies, our readers tell us, are adopting a sounder policy, and are not endeavoring to persuade a man to buy machinery that he cannot afford to pay for, as they have done in the past few years. Sales of machinery have, consequently, been much less than formerly and a great deal less credit has been extended. This is all for the good of the farming community, the manufacturers, and the country generally. A man without capital should not expect to establish himself with an expensive outfit of farm equipment, any more than a storekeeper or a manufacturer would expect to go into business without having considerable financial resources, and while the present is a very trying period for every Canadian industry, it will undoubtedly lead to the laying of a surer foundation for prosperity if it is the occasion for the restriction of the system of credit which has been such a drain upon the people.

PROGRESS FOR DIRECT LEGISLATION

Direct Legislation, by means of the Initiative and Referendum, received a thorough endorsement at the hands of the electors of Manitoba at the recent elections. This is the first time in Canada that Direct Legislation has been made a prominent question for discussion in any provincial election. True, Direct Legislation was in the platform of both political parties in the last general elections in Alberta and Saskatchewan. As it was adopted by both parties in those provinces, however, it received very little attention and was practically not discussed at all throughout the campaign. For that reason there was very little educational work done in favor of Direct Legislation in the two Western Provinces. In Manitoba, however, the case was entirely different. The government

was openly opposed to Direct Legislation and several of the Ministers had studied it and debated it at length, not only in the legislature but on the public platform. Those who favored Direct Legislation also discussed it fully and explained its provisions to the electors in their constituencies. The Initiative and Referendum were discussed on practically every platform throughout the English-speaking part of the province, and it may be fairly said that the electors of Manitoba are pretty well informed on this democratic question. In the heart of the City of Winnipeg, F. J. Dixon, who has been in charge of the educational work of the Direct Legislation League for the past four years, was elected by a majority without parallel in the history of Manitoba. He educated his constituents thoroughly on the question of Direct Legislation, and, in full knowledge of the facts they have sent him to the legislature as their representative. Premier Roblin and his Government were returned to power by a very narrow majority and they cannot afford to ignore any longer the demands for Direct Legislation which were exhibited in the recent election. Whether or not the Government will grant Direct Legislation still remains to be seen, but it is certain that they will make strenuous efforts to stem the current of public opinion and attempt to win back the political support which has maintained the government in power for the past fifteen years.

ECONOMICAL PRODUCTION

It is not reasonable to suppose from a natural standpoint that any particular resources can be drawn upon indefinitely without any return being made for their use, and it is contrary to business principles to expect that a profitable return can be obtained without due attention being paid to economy in production. Of course the line of least resistance is the one most naturally followed and it is due to this fact that all-grain growing, which calls for a comparatively small initial outlay, has been widely practiced in these Western Prairie Provinces. The time has come, however, when the grain farmer, as a producer, is forced to recognize that his ability must be turned to a closer enquiry into the working of his business with a view to making the most use of all the assets at his disposal. Not more than a quarter of the farmers made any actual profit thru growing wheat last year and, taking into consideration the effect which the present indications of an excellent world's crop will have in generally lowering the prices this fall, it is scarcely probable that any larger percentage will be able to show a credit balance when this year's returns are arrived at. There are a large number of economic factors which, if remedied in the farmers' interests, would allow of a more adequate return being received for the labor expended in growing grain crops, but since the principle of depending upon one crop for all the necessities of life is admittedly wrong, the question has arisen as to a method of farming which will give a more stable return for the work done. The question is not so much one which necessitates a drastic change in method, such as the adoption of a system of mixed farming is usually taken to imply, but it is largely a matter of making more complete use of the opportunities which are already at hand on the farm. What is needed more than anything else is a more complete application of simple business principles to farm management. It is largely a matter of stopping the wastes rather than that of introducing a completely new system. Just