

The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, February 2nd, 1916

TAXING MAIL ORDER HOUSES

The proposal of the Manitoba Government to levy a discriminatory tax upon mail order houses is not in keeping with the spirit of their legislative program. The mail order houses enjoy no special privileges and in no sense do they constitute a monopoly. Their business is largely done with the people in the farm homes and any tax levied on mail order houses will simply be passed on to the farmers. It will in reality be a special and unjust tax upon the farmers who already pay more than their fair share of taxation. We hold no special brief for mail order houses, but in the interest of the farmers of this country we feel it our duty to protest against this special discrimination. The mail order houses have brought much needed relief to the Western farmers by reducing prices on thousands of the necessities of life. The only crime they have committed is to develop a more economical method of supplying the necessities of life to the people living in the country. The retail merchants claim that the mail order houses should be taxed because they take the "cream of the business" and deal only for cash while the retail merchants give credit and carry stocks in the community. While there is considerable truth in this contention, it must be remembered that the retail merchant balances this by selling at higher prices in many cases and he charges a carrying charge of interest on his outstanding accounts. It would be a great loss to the country if the retail merchants were driven out of business, but there is no justice in taxing their competitors.

It must of course be remembered that there is an immense volume of business that in the nature of things cannot be handled by mail order houses. And for that reason the local dealer will always remain a part of the commercial system of the country, and everything possible should be done to build up the local centres and retain the community life which means so much to our civilization. But it would be a great error to attempt to regulate by law the channels of trade. Where the farmer gets credit and receives the special service of the local dealer he must naturally pay for that special service. But every person should be at liberty to buy where he can buy cheapest and sell wherever he can get the highest price.

What we need in this country is greater efficiency. The retail merchants must get together so that they can purchase at the lowest possible cost and as far as possible eliminate the credit business. It should not be forgotten that the retail merchants themselves recognize the efficiency of the mail order houses by ordering for their families many of those articles not carried in their own stores. In one of the larger Western towns the express company stated that a large portion of the mail order parcels were delivered to the houses of the retail merchants. Surely the Manitoba Government is not going to place a tax upon efficiency. Surely the government is not going to interfere with efforts being made to cut down the cost of living by reducing the expenses of distribution. There is at least one of the largest wholesale grocery houses in Winnipeg that employs no travellers yet has been able to compete with great success against other houses that cover the country with travellers. Why not tax this wholesale merchant for his efficiency, if efficiency is a crime? The tax on mail order houses is in the same order with the protective tariff and is an iniquity which we cannot believe the Manitoba Government will force upon the people of this province. If it is extra revenue the government needs there are many more just ways of raising it. We would suggest that those holding land out of

use in the province be compelled to pay for their privilege. It would be very easy to raise a revenue of half a million dollars if necessary by taxing the vacant land, urban and rural, and in addition to giving the revenue required it would also assist greatly in placing the land within reach of bona fide farmers which the government is seeking to attract to the province.

ENFRANCHISEMENT OF WOMEN

The Bill which is to give the women of Manitoba the parliamentary franchise on equal terms with men passed the Manitoba Legislature last Thursday and only requires the signature of the Lieutenant-Governor to make it a part of the provincial constitution. Henceforth the women of Manitoba may vote with the men at all provincial elections. This is a great step forward in the march of civilization and Manitoba is to be congratulated as being the first province of Canada to recognize the rights of women to have a voice in making the laws which govern them.

In Alberta, Premier Sifton has announced that in that province the bill to enfranchise the women will include not only the parliamentary franchise, but also the right to vote in municipal and school elections as well. Whether this will be done by abolishing the property qualifications for school and municipal franchise has not been announced, but if so it is a move that has long been overdue and will be welcomed by all democrats. At any rate the prospect is that in Alberta, tho the women will not receive the franchise as soon as in Manitoba, it will be even a wider franchise.

In Saskatchewan the signs of the times indicate that the Government is not to be outdone by the other two sister provinces. It was intimated in the speech from the throne two weeks ago that the women had shown that they wanted the vote as they have shown in Manitoba and Alberta. Social reforms are of slow growth, but the suffrage movement in the West has made exceptional progress in a very short time. Those who love liberty will hail the day when women are placed before the law on terms of absolute equality with their husbands, brothers and sons.

FARMERS GET POSTED

At the U.F.A. Convention in Calgary two weeks ago Dr. Magill, Chairman of the Grain Commission was present and answered many questions put forth by the delegates. The answers to quite a number of the questions asked were contained in the Canada Grain Act. When the Chairman of the Convention, E. J. Fream, asked for a show of hands of the delegates who possessed a copy of the Canada Grain Act, it was found that not more than 25 per cent of them had a copy. Enquiry at the Department of Trade and Commerce, Ottawa, shows that not more than one farmer in twenty-five possesses a copy of this Act. It should be remembered that the Canada Grain Act is one of the best pieces of protective legislation that has ever been enacted for the benefit of grain growers of this country. Year by year for the past fifteen years the Act has been amended and improved at the request of the organized farmers until it has brought the Grain Growers immense relief. True, there are many improvements yet to be made to the Act, and in due course they will come. But in the meantime every farmer that grows a carload of grain for shipment should have a copy of the Canada Grain Act and should read it from cover to cover. He will then be able to protect himself against the abuse of the car-order book. He will understand exactly the law in regard to car distribution and in regard to the rights of the elevator operator and the rights of the shipper. So far as the

grain trade is concerned the Canada Grain Act is in reality, the farmer's "Bill of Rights". Other publications that Grain Growers should read are "Grain Inspection in Canada", being a pamphlet written by Dr. Magill, Chairman of the Grain Commission, describing the whole system of inspection and grading. The Annual Reports of the Board of Grain Commissioners also contain a very large amount of valuable material on the grain trade. The list of licensed elevators and warehouses in Western Canada, together with the list of public elevators in each and the licensed commission merchants and track buyers, is put up in booklet form. At The Guide office we are receiving question almost daily that could be answered immediately by any person who possessed these documents. Every one of these publications is free for the asking. We would suggest that the secretary of each local branch in the three prairie provinces prepare a list of names and post office addresses of every farmer in his district, whether members of the association or not, and forward the list to the Department of Trade and Commerce, Ottawa, with the request that the Department mail to each name on the list a copy of each of the following documents:—

- 1—Canada Grain Act with Amendments.
- 2—Grain Inspection in Canada, by Dr. Magill.
- 3—Annual report of the Board of Grain Commissioners for the past three years.
- 4—List of Licensed Elevators, Commission Merchants, and Track Buyers.

We have no doubt that the Department of Trade and Commerce, Ottawa, will mail out these documents as soon as possible after the names of the farmers are received, and we are absolutely certain that it would prove of immense educational value to every grain grower in Western Canada. Another suggestion that we would make, is that the Board of Grain Commissioners should collect in pamphlet form all the rules and regulations which have been put out by the Board and which are not contained in the Canada Grain Act. These rules and regulations could then be issued free and in convenient form to any person who would like to have them.

BORROWING ON GRAIN

Several times in these columns we have asked for information from our readers to show whether or not the banks were loaning money to farmers on the security of the threshed grain on their own farm. Up till two weeks ago we were unable to get a report from any farmer who had succeeded in making such loans. Since that time, however, we have received a considerable number of reports showing that the banks are loaning money to farmers on the security of their grain in accordance with the amendment to the Bank Act, Section 88, made three years ago. We find that many of the banks doing business with the farmers in the West are loaning to the farmers on this security, and that some of the banks in particular are loaning quite extensively. Undoubtedly quite a number of the loans made on the security of the grain would have been made on the general standing of the farmer without such security, but our information is to the effect that a large number of farmers who would not have been able to borrow money from the banks under ordinary circumstances, have been able to do so by giving their threshed grain as security. This fact indicates that the amendment to the Bank Act was a benefit to the farmers of the West. It would seem therefore that any farmer who has a quantity of grain safely stored on his farm and insured, should be able to borrow a reasonable amount from his nearest bank. No doubt there is more money being borrowed on this security during the present year than ever before, because of