

The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, March 15, 1916

Owing to the fact that Monday afternoon is a public half holiday on account of the Prohibition election being held in Manitoba, it was necessary for The Guide to go to press early on Monday, which accounts for the fact that the result of the Prohibition vote is not published in this issue of the paper.

GETTING TOGETHER

The conference held in Winnipeg last week between the leaders of the organized farmers and representatives of various commercial interests (which is reported on another page) is bound to bring beneficial results which will be felt to a greater or less extent by every farmer throughout the three Prairie Provinces. It was the first time in the history of this country when organized agriculture and organized business got together with the earnest and serious intention of understanding each other better and making their business relations mutually more pleasant, more sympathetic and more profitable. For a number of years past there has been a considerable growth of suspicion and distrust between the farming and the business interests of the west, some of it justified and some of it due to misunderstandings on both sides. This conference was held for the purpose of clearing up these misunderstandings and clearing away the causes of suspicion and distrust, and it was the unanimous opinion of both the farmers and the business men that the two days' conference had made considerable progress towards this desirable end.

The business men did not gather at the conference with the idea of "putting it over" the farmers, and if they had done so it would not have been possible because the conference revealed that the leaders of the farmers' organizations were quite as well informed and quite as well able to take care of themselves as the business men. The leaders of the farmers' organizations did not approach the conference with the aim or purpose of making any attack upon the business interests nor of entering upon any general denunciation of the methods which they employ towards the farmers in the transaction of their business. It was realized by both sides that the farmers and the business interests in this country are here to stay, and (except where there may be overlapping or duplication of service) they are all necessary to the proper development of this country. Both sides prepared for and expected a very frank discussion and both sides were prepared to listen to the other in explaining the difficulties they had met with and to receive and welcome suggestions for mutual improvement. The time of the conference was not employed in throwing bouquets at each other, as might well be imagined by those familiar with conditions in this country.

It was decided that this first conference, which is to be succeeded by many others it is hoped, would be devoted practically entirely to the discussion of farm credits because it was felt that no matter what other question might come up in later conferences the solution of the credit problem would have a direct bearing upon all of them. It is an undoubted fact that both parties in the conference learned a great deal in the discussion which took place. The farmers learned that a great many of the cases where farmers have suffered injustice at the hands of bankers or loan companies were not in pursuance of the general policy of these institutions and would not be approved nor tolerated by the managing heads of these institutions if they knew of it. The business men learned that the farmers' organization was neither desiring nor promoting legislation which would handicap or

cripple legitimate business in this country. The understanding on these two points alone was worth more than the time occupied in the conference. The farmers expressed themselves as desiring that they should be given the same advantage in using capital in the development of their business as was provided by the banks to the other manufacturing and industrial institutions in Canada, and the banks expressed themselves as favorable to this proposition. Whether the chartered banks are in a position to provide the short term capital in sufficient quantities to develop agriculture in the west to its utmost possibilities is a question that cannot be decided immediately. It was, however, the opinion of the bankers that better facilities could be provided since the Bank Act had been amended, by permitting loans to farmers on the security of their grain on the farm and also upon their live stock. The bankers explained that absolute security for their loans was of even greater importance than a high rate of interest, which was illustrated by the live stock association at Elfros, Sask., where the very highest type of security has been provided and the farmers are borrowing money from the local bank at seven per cent. The farmers were equally desirous with the bankers of mobilizing the farm securities and putting them into such shape that the banks would be absolutely protected for any loans which they made in order that they could make longer loans, larger loans and at lower rates of interest. There was considerable discussion as to the wave of extravagance which has spread over this country in the last ten years, and the enormous amount of money that has been spent by governments, cities, towns, municipalities and all kinds of public bodies. The security of this money is really the earning power of the farmers on the land, and if more of this money had been loaned directly to the farmers upon ample security, it would have produced much more for the welfare of the country.

The immediate outcome of the conference was a joint recommendation for the establishment of a government system of land mortgages and an arrangement for a conference between the organized farmers and the western section of the Bankers' Association in the very near future. We have every hope that when the bankers and the farmers get together for a heart-to-heart and earnest discussion on this question they will be able to evolve very considerable improvements in the banking arrangements with the farmers. Further conferences will be held at which the problems that have arisen between the farmers and the wholesalers, the retailers, the implement dealers, the railways and other interests in this country will be threshed out in the same way that the credit question was threshed out at this conference. The possibilities of the benefits which may be derived thru the work of these conferences cannot be measured. If the farmers and business interests remain at a distance and continue to struggle with each other no doubt some progress would be made, but infinitely greater progress can be made by getting together in the spirit of give and take. The outcome of this first conference warrants the belief that it is one of the greatest movements for western development that has taken place in this country in recent years.

FEDERAL LIQUOR LEGISLATION

For the first time in many years the liquor question is being seriously discussed in the House of Commons and it seems likely that some definite action may be taken. The proposal to have Dominion-wide prohibition is not likely to be enacted but there seems to be a very strong feeling in favor of extending the powers of the provincial legislatures to enable

them to provide for total prohibition within their own borders. At the present time no province in Canada can prohibit the manufacture, importation and exportation of liquor. The most they can do is to close the bars and stop the public sale of liquor.

Saskatchewan and Alberta have already taken definite action and have practically wiped out the liquor traffic in those provinces. At the time of writing the result of the referendum in Manitoba is not known, but it seems very probable that Manitoba also will go dry. The governments of British Columbia, Ontario and New Brunswick have also announced that they will hold a referendum vote in the very near future to decide upon the abolition of the liquor traffic in those provinces. The temperance feeling is growing very strong throughout Canada. Coupled with the usual sentiment in favor of temperance there is the very strong feeling that during the time of war when our national resources are being strained to their utmost it is the height of folly to continue the enormous waste which is caused by the liquor traffic. If the parliament of Canada will grant to the provinces the power to deal with the liquor traffic within their own borders in every detail it will be possible for each of those provinces to prohibit absolutely the manufacture, exportation and importation of liquor and the provinces can be made really dry. Everyone who believes in temperance would heartily favor legislation at Ottawa wiping out the liquor traffic in Canada absolutely, but if parliament is not prepared to go so far, the next best step, and one that will be welcomed everywhere, will be that of granting full power to the provinces to deal with the liquor traffic within their own borders. It would appear that the hand-writing is on the wall for the liquor traffic in Canada, and all those who believe in a clean public life and better opportunities for the development of a high type of civilization will hail with joy the prospect of having the liquor traffic absolutely abolished from our country.

SOLDIERS TO HELP SEEDING

Announcement has been made from the militia department at Ottawa that enlisted soldiers in the three Prairie Provinces will be permitted to go back to their farms to put in seed or assist other farmers thru seed time. As there are now about 35,000 soldiers enlisted in the three prairie provinces, this militia regulation will provide a very large number of men to help put in the seed this spring. The militia department has announced that the soldiers will receive their regular pay and will be given a month's leave of absence to take part in seeding, and in addition will be permitted to keep whatever they earn while working on the farms. This very generous arrangement will no doubt encourage the soldiers, particularly those who have been enlisted for some considerable time, to go out into the country for a month at financial advantage to themselves and to the great advantage of the farmers in the three provinces. It is estimated at Ottawa that about 25 per cent of the soldiers will take advantage of this permission to go out on the farms in seed time. If this estimate be accurate it will provide 9,000 men and they will all be needed, and considerably more we believe could be used to great advantage during seed time. At the time of writing (March 11) official notification had not been received by the commanding officers in the West from Ottawa, but it was expected that information would be arriving in a day or two. Just as soon as the authority is received by the commanding officer of the western districts, it will be forwarded to the commanding officers in every