

The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, April 19, 1916

FARM LABOR SITUATION

It is quite apparent that the visible supply of capable farm labor for the season's operations is about exhausted. There are quite a number of soldiers in Winnipeg who have come from the farms and who are prepared to help farmers put in the seed. The Manitoba Department of Agriculture states that there are at least 1700 soldiers in Winnipeg city alone ready to go out on the farms. It is hoped that arrangements can be made to extend the thirty days' limit to forty-five days or possibly sixty days in case farmers require help for this longer period. Many farmers in Manitoba and possibly some farther west will put in less crops rather than pay \$40 and \$50 a month for unskilled farm help. The prevailing rate of \$35 for farm labor in Manitoba is plenty high enough when the returns from the farm are considered. In Winnipeg also there are probably 2,000 non-English speaking men with more or less farm experience in the countries from which they came. They are not so valuable to the farmers as those who have had experience on western farms. All farmers in Manitoba who want efficient soldier help for thirty to forty-five days, or who want to hire these non-English speaking men for the season should apply at once to the Department of Agriculture, Winnipeg, and in the Western provinces farmers should also apply to their departments of agriculture. Recruiting officers have pretty well drained the country districts of the West and the result will show in reduced crops. The men left on the farms are required there and unless there is better reason than is yet apparent the military authorities should not further deplete the country districts. Seeding will be general in a very few days and farmers who want help and have not secured it must be active and get their applications in at once. When putting in applications it is advisable to say the highest rate of wages they will pay for first-class help and also for help that is less experienced.

THAT APPLE DUTY

If we can judge the spirit of the farmers of the Prairie Provinces, the apple growers of British Columbia will soon realize that the protectionist interests and the protectionist doctrine has made a donkey of them. It is estimated that there are from 4,000 to 5,000 bona-fide apple growers and those dependent upon them for whom the additional tariff tax of 50 cents a barrel was imposed by the federal parliament. When the matter was up for discussion in the House of Commons, Sir Thomas White, finance minister, made the following statement:

"Unless this tariff change is introduced the future of the British Columbia fruit-growing industry is of a most precarious character. I do not believe that any hon. gentleman would like to see an important section of the community most seriously affected by a condition of affairs that can be remedied by legislative action in this House, and such action not taken."

Sir Thomas considered it quite just to tax all the people of the Prairie Provinces for the benefit of a handful of apple growers in British Columbia. If he were sincere in the somewhat noble sentiments which he expressed he would try to do something to lift the unfair burden off the grain growers of the prairie; but Sir Thomas is a protectionist all the time and always looks after the protected interests. The grain growers have stated their case and their intention very clearly in a resolution unanimously adopted by the Canadian Council of Agriculture several weeks ago, as follows:

"Whereas, at the request of the British Columbia fruit growers, the duty on apples has been raised from 40 cents to 90 cents per barrel; whereas, this is an enormously high duty—approximating 100 per cent. ad valorem on the cost of production of

apples in Canada; and whereas, the evident purpose of the imposition of this duty is to force the prairie consumer to pay a higher price for apples; therefore, be it resolved that this, the Canadian Council of Agriculture, in meeting declares this to be an unrighteous attempt to exploit the prairie farmer for the benefit of British Columbia fruit land speculators, fruit growers and middlemen, and we advise the farmers of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, that if this becomes law and they are to be taxed in this manner, they pay these taxes into the federal treasury by purchasing imported apples, rather than pay the same duty together with profit thereon to British Columbia land speculators, fruit growers and middlemen."

No apples are grown in the Prairie Provinces (with trifling exceptions) and apples form one of the most important and necessary articles of diet. The tariff of 90 cents a barrel is practically 100 per cent on the cost of production and it is nothing short of a crime to punish the prairie people for eating apples. If the growers of Oregon and Washington can give us apples cheaper than anyone else, why in the name of humanity should not we be allowed to have them at that reduced cost? The prairie farmers sell their grain in open competition with the world and get not a single solitary advantage anywhere; in fact, Sir Thomas White has been one of the chief factors in refusing the grain growers the benefit of the American market, and now he turns around and punishes the grain growers by taxing their apples. If the grain growers stand firmly by their intention to purchase imported apples, the B.C. apple growers will find that they have upset their own apple cart. We fancy that the color and flavor of B.C. apples will not be very popular in the Prairie Provinces so long as that extra tariff tax remains. If the B.C. apple growers cannot grow apples at a profit let them grow something else the same as the prairie farmers have had to do. If they would join with the grain growers and force the protected interests, the railway magnates and the land speculators to get off their backs, they wouldn't need any tariff protection.

LOCATING NEW RAILROADS

Another bill to amend the Railway Act is ready for its third reading in the House of Commons. This measure proposes to vest in the railway board the power not only to fix the general location of a railway line, but to determine whether or not the public interest will be best served by the construction of such railway. At present the responsibility for such decisions rest with the railway committee and parliament. Conservation of capital expenditure and avoidance of unnecessary duplication of service are the chief reasons advanced. They are good and sufficient if the railway board would do what parliament has failed to do in this regard. Canada has carried on during the last fifteen years a program of railway building unparalleled not only in its magnitude in proportion to the population served, but also in its rapidity of completion. It is also unparalleled in sheer waste of public revenues on unnecessary lines, to say nothing of exorbitant building costs and squandering of the people's money in subsidies. No investigation is necessary to discover duplication of the most expensive kind. For 300 miles west from Edmonton the C.N.R. and G.T.P. parallel each other, opening no new territory. From Kamloops to Vancouver, a distance of over 250 miles, the C.N.R. virtually parallels the C.P.R. thru one of the most expensive places in the world over which to build a railroad. In Manitoba from Winnipeg to Portage la Prairie and even west of there the same thing is evident.

What justification can be advanced for the enormous expenditure and waste on the National Transcontinental from Winnipeg to

Moncton? Other instances might be pointed out but this serves to show that utility of fixed capital was certainly not kept in mind when the charters for many sections of our railway lines were granted. Double-tracking original lines where this duplication has occurred would have increased their efficiency approximately four times. Double-tracking is infinitely less expensive than building new roads which will not be able to give efficient service for many years to come. This needless expenditure is one potent factor in the present financial condition of some of our railways. Had the extra money that was thus spent in fixed capital been put into rolling stock, whereby a greater volume of trade might have been handled, maintenance charges cut and ultimately freight rates reduced, how much greater the benefit would have been to the people of Canada. After most of the political railways (let us hope) have been built, parliament proposes to shift the responsibility on to the railway board. The whole thing appears to corroborate the inference made in the House that parliament acknowledges its inability to cope with the forces of lobbyism which have been among the main influences in deciding on new roads, their location and subsidization, for the last forty years in Canada. Why it should expect the railway board to do better we do not know. The railway board, however, would still have plenty of work to do and the opportunity to save us millions of dollars, tho we hope it would exercise its influence with better effect than it has so far done in matters of such vital importance to Western Canada as freight rates.

PATRIOTIC OCEAN PIRATES

In the current issue of the Census and Statistics Monthly published by the Department of Trade and Commerce, Ottawa, is given the average freight rates on wheat from Montreal and New York to Liverpool, covering a period from 1861 to the end of 1915. During that period wheat has been carried across the Atlantic for as low as 1½ cents per bushel and as high as 40 cents per bushel. The following figures furnished to the government by the Shipping Federation of Canada, Montreal, give the annual average ocean freight rates on 60 pounds of grain from Montreal to Liverpool during the season when the St. Lawrence was open for navigation:—

1861	23.8	1880	14.1	1898	7.3
1862	31.4	1881	8.7	1899	5.2
1863	29.8	1882	8.2	1900	7.6
1864	17.7	1883	9.9	1901	3.4
1865	14.7	1884	7.5	1902	3.8
1866	17.9	1885	6.7	1903	3.4
1867	22.6	1886	7.0	1904	1.9
1868	17.4	1887	5.3	1905	4.5
1869	19.6	1888	5.4	1906	5.3
1870	16.7	1889	8.2	1907	4.4
1871	21.7	1890	5.2	1908	5.5
1872	19.9	1891	6.2	1909	4.3
1873	29.2	1892	5.3	1910	3.8
1874	17.9	1893	5.1	1911	4.2
1875	18.3	1894	4.0	1912	7.7
1876	16.5	1895	5.4	1913	8.0
1877	17.4	1896	5.9	1914	7.0
1878	15.9	1897	6.5	1915	26.4
1879	15.3				

These figures show a great variation in the freight charges and a very sharp advance in 1915 after the outbreak of the war. Figures furnished by the Canadian Pacific Railway covering the St. Lawrence season for the years 1913-14-15 are as follows:—

1913		1914		1915	
May	9.1	May	4.6	May	18.3
June	9.1	June	4.6	June	21.3
July	9.7	July	4.6	July	21.3
Aug.	7.6	Aug.	4.6	Aug.	24.3
Sept.	7.6	Sept.	6.3	Sept.	24.3
Oct.	8.3	Oct.	6.9	Oct.	28.9
Nov.	8.0	Nov.	7.6	Nov.	39.5

The C.P.R. figures it will be noted are given by the months, showing that the rates steadily advanced each season as the crop be-