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Alberta

This Section of The Guide is conducted officially for the United Farmers of Alberta by Edward J. Fream, Secretary, Calgary, Alberta.

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Official Circular No. 15, 1912

Gentlemen:—At the last meeting of the Board of Directors the matter of an Elevator policy for the Province of Alberta was fully discussed, and the result of same was the passing of a resolution, by a unanimous vote, endorsing the proposal made for an aggressive elevator policy in Alberta and recommending that same be carried out by the Government guaranteeing the bonds of the Grain Growers' Grain Co. Ltd., on the basis of a stated sum for each house erected, the agreement with the company to outline conditions under which the guarantee would be given. Besides this it was decided that this matter should be submitted to the local unions so that the delegates at the annual convention will be able to act thereon.

The elevator system in Alberta is such that if some decisive steps are not taken at an early date then there will be nothing left in the province but one very active combine controlling practically every line elevator. In fact the statement has been made by one man interested in elevators, who is supposed to be independent of the recent formed merger that he with some of his friends invested the sum of \$1,305,000 in the elevator system of Alberta a few months ago, purchasing some 130 houses and that this number will be considerably increased, the intention being to have no let up in this work until the whole province is covered. To quote the words of the person referred to "this places the interior in an excellent position." It does—for the elevator company.

What is required to offset this is a strong, efficient and aggressive organization capable of conducting, formulating, and putting into effect a policy which will be an effective weapon in the hands of the producers in keeping the present mergers in their right place. At the same time something is required which cannot at any time be taken to be a leading string of any Government, rather than that, any enterprise of this kind should from the first stand alone, and be conducted along safe and sure business lines.

The one difficulty which has to be faced in undertaking any large elevator policy is that of financing the erection of the houses, as after this is done, if the company undertaking the work is of a good position, and bears a good reputation in the financial world, then the rest of the work is comparatively easy. This difficulty can be overcome by the passing of an act to guarantee the bonds of the Grain Co., the terms of the act to limit the amount of the guarantee to be given on each house to, say, approximately \$7,500. Once this guarantee was given the responsibility of the Government would cease, as the bonus would be met from the earnings of the houses, and with the reputation enjoyed by the Grain Co. there would be no doubt as to the future.

The scheme which is in mind and which has met with the approval of the Board of Directors is based upon the following lines: The Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council to be authorized on such terms and conditions as would be laid down in the Act to guarantee the payment of the principal and interest on the bonds of the company in respect to a line of elevators erected or to be erected in Alberta, the amount of this guarantee not to exceed a stated sum for each elevator. The Province to be secured by deeds of trusts or mortgages, covering the elevators and plant, payable in such instalments and terms as would conform with the debenture issue. The company to have the power to acquire by purchase or otherwise any elevators already built on terms to be mutually decided upon. The conditions on which the elevators would be erected or purchased, under the terms of the

guarantee, to be that in each instance the company shall dispose of sufficient stock which will be equal to the cost of erecting or acquiring the elevator, and on which not less than twenty per cent. of the amount of such shares has been paid up, and provided further that the annual crop average of the shareholders in that district represents a proportion of not less than 2,000 acres for each 10,000 bushels of elevator capacity. The balance due on shares to be paid by instalments at one and two years (or one, two and three years) or the shareholders to be given the privilege of ordering a reduction to be made upon all their grain passing through the local elevator until such time as the stock is paid for, if they prefer that method. The company to arrange for a meeting of the supporters of the local elevator once a year, when matters pertaining to the management, operation, and maintenance of the elevator can be received and discussed, a local board of management, consisting of three or five duly qualified shareholders, elected to act in an advisory capacity to the central office, also a delegate to the annual meeting of the company, to represent the shareholders in that vicinity.

This, I think, covers the general details of the scheme which is in view and will show that matters are moving along in this line, and by such a scheme the possibility is given to the farmers who are interested in the elevator proposition and who require relief from the present burdensome conditions to secure an up-to-date line of elevators in such a manner that they will not be considerably hampered, or embarrassed in arranging for the funds to build the house while they are at the same time keeping the control of the business to themselves. There are other parts of the scheme which will come forward when the general details are being worked out, such as the co-operative marketing of other lines of produce in such a manner that the benefit will come right back to the producer and the consumer. To give only one instance of what has already been done, it is only necessary to state that the Grain Growers' Grain Co., which is this year operating the line of government owned elevators in Manitoba, has been able to make such a satisfactory arrangement that the company can supply flour in carload lots, to local associations in that province at the reduced price of \$2.60 per 100 lbs. for first grade and \$2.35 per 100 lbs. for second grade flour. This alone gives one an idea as to the possibilities which are to be found in such a scheme as the one here outlined.

It is only right that you should know that the rights of the farmers would be further protected under the provisions of the charter which limits the amount of stock to be held by any one man and which brings into force the principle of one man, one vote, no matter how many shares are held. I recognize that it is hard to present the full details of such a scheme as this, but trust the matter is made sufficiently clear for you to consider at your next meeting. If there is any further information you may require on any point, if it is possible for me to do so, I shall be only too pleased to supply you with same.—Your obedient servant,

EDWARD J. FREAM.

General Secretary.

FOOLISH FARMERS TO GLUT MARKET

Under the above fancy heading an article has appeared in many Western papers, originating in Port Arthur, where a transportation official is reported to have stated as follows:—

"In any case the farmers of the West are very foolish to glut the market at

this particular season by shipping all their grain out to the head of the lakes. If they would hold back their grain there would be a tendency to boost prices. They will not go to the expense of building granaries and for fear of damage from frost, rain, etc., flood the terminal elevators and tie up the railroads."

That is the story of the theorist, the man who lives in the East and who believes he can show the Western man just how he should handle his business. There is another side to the story, however, that of the man who is living upon the land, and the following instance is given just to show where the difference lies.

During the summer of 1909 a settler came into the country and homesteaded on a quarter section of land. He worked industriously and not having an abundance of cash he took advantage of the offer made by the local agent of one of the machine companies and purchased some machinery on time, giving his notes in payment thereof, the notes falling due on November 1, 1910, and November 1, 1911, respectively. He plowed up some land during the season of 1909 and in the spring of 1910 he used up the last of his available cash to purchase seed grain. His crop was that year a complete failure, the bulk of the seed not even showing above the ground, and not having any other resources he was unable to pay his notes when they fell due. In the spring of 1911 he was able to get a second supply of seed and that year had a crop of a kind, the net returns on his no grade feed wheat, tough, being insufficient to pay his threshing bill let alone meet any notes, so once more he did not meet his liabilities and the machinery company was kind. It did not press for payment.

For the third time this farmer was able to get seed grain and in the fall of 1912 his labors were rewarded with a crop consisting of about 1200 bushels of good 2 northern wheat and about 1400 bushels of 1 N.W. flax. In the meantime the notes had been piling up, the interest after due date being ten per cent., and on October 24 last this farmer received a call from a collector for the machinery company, who demanded instant payment of the notes, now amounting to nearly \$300. The collector was answered that the notes would be paid just as soon as the grain could be marketed and his answer to this was to the effect that the farmer had a pretty good looking crop this year and if he couldn't pay the cash he had better give the company an assignment of the grain. Naturally the farmer refused to do this as he felt that he should hold his grain and sell just when the right time arrived, but he told the collector that he would order a car at once and as soon as possible would meet his bills out of the proceeds. He was told that there must be a settlement or an assignment of the grain that day or the farmer could take the consequences.

The settlement was not made, so on November 4 the farmer received a visit from the sheriff's officer who served him with a writ on behalf of the machinery company. The farmer is not a man who speaks English very well and he was greatly frightened by the legal document, so much so in fact, that he immediately took a trip to Calgary to see what could be done, but his trip was in vain as he could make no impression on the company most interested.

The position the farmer found himself in at that time was, over 60 names on the car order book, and even if he could have got a car it would have been impossible for him to load, as there was a large river between his farm and the track and no bridge. During the summer time a ferry is in operation, but that had been withdrawn a short time previously owing to ice, and the state of the river was such that it was impossible for any person to cross with a loaded wagon. There was too much ice on the sides of the river and too much floating ice to make this possible. He asked for a stay of proceedings, but the only answer he got was, give us an assignment of your grain, you might as well anyway for we will have judgment and execution against you before the end of the month and then

we will get the grain anyway. The writer tried to intercede and help in the matter, but the only answer he got was that a dozen writs were being issued every day and the farmers who were in debt could either settle up at once by selling their grain or could expect a writ.

Just think what it means, the farmers being forced by their creditors to sell on a falling market (this is no doubt what is generally known as good business, as a man must pay his just debts), and the business men of the East telling the farmers they are foolish to glut the market simply because they will not go to the expense of building granaries. The pity of it and the need of some change is apparent.

Surely the remark made some time ago to the effect that the greatest curse in Western Canada today is the indiscriminate selling of machinery on time has a lot of truth in it. When will there be a change?

E. J. F.

HAVE ALL DOUBTFUL SEEDS TESTED FOR VITALITY

Owing to the fact that climatic conditions have again been unfavorable in certain districts to the satisfactory maturity of seed grain, we wish to draw the attention of every farmer to the advisability of having his grain tested for germination.

Oats are particularly subject to injury by frost, and in certain stages of their growth are rendered worthless for seed purposes even though they may look perfectly plump and sound outwardly. Others again, though undoubtedly frozen, are not seriously affected in vitality. As a germination test is the only sure indication of the grain's condition in such cases, we would strongly advise having all doubtful oats tested.

Flax is also subject to injury by frost as well as moisture, and its vitality may be considerably lowered by these factors. Barley is affected likewise and often shows a low percentage of growth when cut after frost. Wheat, on the other hand, is much less liable to injury and will usually germinate readily, even when frozen quite severely. It may, however, be rendered unfit for seed by frost or through excessive moisture.

Timothy cut after frost should be tested, as it is often greatly reduced in vitality. We would suggest having tested any other cereal or fodder seeds that may be suspected of not being up to the full standard of germination.

In sending in samples to be tested the following points should be remembered:

1. All samples are tested free of charge.
2. Seed bags suitable for sending samples may be had on application to the Dominion Seed Laboratory, Calgary, Alta.
3. About half such a bag full (1,000 grains) is ample for a germination test.
4. If possible samples should be cleaned before sending.
5. Postage should be prepaid at the rate of 2 cents for 4 ounces and 1 cent for each additional 4 ounces.
6. It is unnecessary to enclose stamps for a reply.
7. The usual time necessary for a test is ten days, but when a retest is made a longer time is required.
8. All samples should be plainly marked with the name and address of sender, together with an identification designation when more than one is sent.
9. All samples should be sent to the Dominion Seed Laboratory, Calgary, not to any individual member of the staff.

In addition to the above, this Department, when required, tests any kind of cereal or fodder seeds for purity from noxious weeds. Samples sent in for such purposes should contain not less than one pound of the larger grains and two ounces of flax, grasses and clover.