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The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday February 11th, 1914

MARKETING OUR GRAIN

Judging by the synopsis of the report of the Saskatchewan Commission on Grain Markets, published in this issue, the complete report will be a collection of information exceedingly valuable to all grain growers. The commissioners spent a great deal of time and made very careful investigations of the marketing conditions at various European ports. Valuable data regarding local conditions has also been collected from the Province of Saskatchewan. There are undoubtedly many valuable recommendations attached to the report, but perhaps the greatest benefit from this investigation will be secured by a study of the information collected and published in such a readily available form. Two statements stand out from the report as worthy of special consideration. The one is the cost of production, which the Commission places at 55 cents per bushel on the farm, and 62 cents per bushel when loaded in a car at a country point. This figure, which is, of course, an average one, is lower than the cost of production on the farm situated from ten to thirty miles from the railway. But even at 62 cents per bushel as an average, it can be stated without fear of successful contradiction, the larger portion of the wheat grown in Saskatchewan last year was sold for less than the cost of production. When the full significance of this fact is driven home to those interested in the making of our fiscal system it should demand their serious consideration. The second point is that the price of Canadian wheat on the European markets is depressed very considerably as a result of throwing the most of our wheat on the market before the close of navigation. There is no doubt that if the farmers were able to hold their wheat in their own granaries on their own farms and market it at their leisure throughout the year, they would secure from 5 to 10 cents per bushel more for it. The farmers do not rush their grain upon the market of their own free will, but only because they are forced to do so in order to meet their obligations, and because economic conditions due to unjust legislation, prevent the western farmer from making his business profitable. It will be gratifying to every grain grower to know that the Commission find that Canadian Government Inspection Certificates are held in high esteem by all European importers, and that Canadian grain has no superior on the world's markets. An idea suggested from the perusal of the synopsis is that the quality of Canadian grain should be advertised more extensively throughout Europe, in order to create a better demand for it and consequently a better price. Wheat is Canada's chief export and brings into Canada an immense amount of money to build up every line of business in the country, and anything that will help to provide a better market will stimulate every line of business. The Commissioners could not help seeing the need for wider markets for Canadian grain and lower prices on farm necessities. They have also emphasized a number of other important points, including public ownership of terminal elevators, which has occupied the attention of the organized farmers for several years. Grain growing is the chief business in the Prairie Provinces, and it is very important to note that the Commissioners do not expect to see Argentine, India and Russia increase their exports of wheat in the future, as home consumption will equal increased production. Their conclusion is that Australia is the only other country which will increase its export of wheat to any considerable extent. Flour

from Australian wheat, however, blends particularly well with flour from strong Canadian wheat and will therefore not injure the standing of Canadian wheat on the European markets. The Canadian farmers, judging by the Commissioners' report, if every available market is opened and economic conditions corrected, may continue to increase their production of wheat without glutting the world's markets.

We understand that some of the business interests in Saskatchewan have already begun to criticize the Commission for what they consider the pessimistic tone of the report. We consider that the Commissioners deserve credit for telling the truth and telling it plainly. Rural conditions in Saskatchewan are unsatisfactory and the truth must be faced. Nature has been kind to Saskatchewan and it possesses wonderful possibilities. But unjust laws have loaded such an economic burden upon the farmers that they are not prospering. It is all very well for the Boards of Trade to maintain official boosters to bring in population and increase the value of the real estate held by their "leading citizens," and to think that by so doing they are making the country prosperous. The number of real estate men in Saskatchewan who have been hunting for productive employment during the past year is sufficient proof that there was no stability to the bogus prosperity they have been boosting. Saskatchewan has no future unless it be founded upon prosperity in the rural districts.

CANADIAN WHEAT LEADS

In a copy of the leading English milling journal, entitled "Milling," of January 10, just to hand, we find the following two paragraphs of special interest to every Canadian grain grower:

CONTINUED HIGH GRADING

At the beginning of the season on several occasions we commented in these columns upon the exceptionally large quantities of wheat then being graded at Winnipeg and also upon its superior quality. At that time such was the rush that attention was drawn even more to the quantity than the quality of the wheat being sent forward. The grading, however, was noted to be not only remarkable but unapproached in the percentage of wheat which passed as No. 1 Northern Manitoba. It was confidently expected that, as the season advanced and receipts decreased to normal amounts, the grading would also become normal. Contrary to expectation, this, however, has not happened, and the grading continues phenomenally high. Thus up to the time of writing the total receipts at Winnipeg have been 101,838 carloads. This in itself is a huge figure and is 30,000 carloads more than the quantity received at Winnipeg during either of the last two seasons. But the most peculiar feature is the fact that out of the total amount of wheat received at Winnipeg no less than 57,741 carloads have graded No. 1 Northern Manitoba. Of the remainder considerably more than half has graded No. 2. Figures like these have never before been approached, and we expect that it will be a long time before we see again the "premier wheat of the world" as No. 1 Northern Manitoba is now claimed by its growers with much justification to be, so plentiful and relatively cheap.

THE STRONGEST WHEAT

From the English miller's point of view there can be no doubt that this time of plenty and relative cheapness in the case of Manitobas will be especially welcomed. Millers, too, who can buy English wheat reasonably should be in much better spirits now than they were at this period last year. Years ago it would not have been possible to speak with any justification of Manitobas as the premier strong wheat. Pride of place in that respect was held jointly by the best Spring American and the choicest Russians. During recent years, however, the imports of Spring American wheat have fallen to relatively insignificant proportions—their rose somewhat last year—and in addition most millers agree that the Spring Wheats that

now come to this country from the States lack just that final extra strength which they had some twenty years ago. As to Russian wheat, during recent years the bulk of that which has been shipped to England has been of the average quality, tho there have, of course, been a few exceptionally fine parcels. Still the result of the circumstance is that No. 1 Northern Manitoba, if not absolutely the best—about this opinions may differ somewhat—at any rate is certainly the best, indeed the only, regularly available strong wheat English millers can rely upon. That it should have been quoted relatively at so low a figure will, we think, finally be regarded as one of the chief features of the season now in progress.

The journal from which the above is quoted is generally regarded as authoritative, and that it should place Canadian 1 Northern wheat at the head of the list is gratifying. That the low price we have been securing for our wheat is surprising even to English millers, is also worthy of our attention. It is quite evident that English millers want our high grade wheat, and will pay for it the market price. Our system of marketing must be improved so that the market price will give a fair margin over the cost of production to the producer.

BETTER BUSINESS METHODS

For the past four or five years business methods in the Prairie Provinces have been undergoing steady change, and many improvements have been made to the decided benefit of the farmers. The most important of these have been in the way of co-operative buying. It is only a matter of three or four years since it was almost impossible for the farmers to get together and buy for spot cash even a carload of flour, as the milling companies in most cases refused to deal with the farmers other than thru the middleman, which, of course, very much enhanced the price of flour. The same applied to almost every other line of farm necessities. The development of the farmers' organizations and a study of better business methods, however, have brought about a decided change. Hundreds of local farmers' organizations today are buying their flour in car lots, and have thus reduced the cost to themselves from 40 to 70 cents per sack, which is a material saving to every family. The same change in business methods has taken place in the purchasing of binder-twine, wire fences, lumber, coal, apples and many other articles. In the case of lumber farmers have succeeded in reducing the price from 25 to 35 per cent. in very many cases and an equal amount on wire fencing and apples. New articles are being added to the list steadily, as the farmers are waking up to the possibility of reducing the cost of living by sane and intelligent co-operation. The trend of business development in the future will be to reduce as far as possible the spread in prices between the producer and consumer not only in manufactured goods but in natural products also. The individualism which has marked the agricultural industry in the past, must give way to co-operation, as the farmers grasp the possibilities of working together. It should be the aim of the local association, as far as possible, to have all those farmers who participate in co-operative buying become members of their local association, and join with their fellow farmers in making conditions better for the men and women on the land. Practically every article of commerce can be secured at lower prices when purchased in large quantities, and it should be the aim of the farmers of this country to put their business on a cash basis as soon as circumstances will permit, and by joining hands secure the lowest possible prices on their necessities of life.