

The Mail Bag

SASKATCHEWAN HAIL INSURANCE ACT

Editor, Guide:—It occurs to me that this is an excellent time to discuss the merits and demerits of the Saskatchewan Hail Insurance Act. Such a discussion from men in the field, may greatly assist the government in making amendments to that Act.

First and foremost of those amendments must be the total abolition of taxes on pasture lands, for the very obvious reason that pastures are excluded from benefit. In these days of agitation counselling mixed farming it may be right or wrong to exclude grazing grounds, which is a matter of personal opinion. Grass may be cut down like a lawn at juiciest season, and the hot days prevent further green growth; other feeds may have to be sought to sustain stock, or stock be put out at so much per head, but no compensation is possible, tho these lands contribute equal taxes in all but hail, and many even in hail. The government, however, has only granted compensation for grain loss, and if a crop is hailed late there is no stand for winter feed. Personally I acquiesce in the government attitude. There seems peculiar difficulties associated with pasture lands that are easier of solution associated with crops. I can, therefore, understand the former's exemption. But here is a most pertinent question: Why should they ever have been taxed? If they are not entitled to benefit, why compelled to contribute? It is manifestly unjust to compel tribute where there is no hope of compensation. Clearly it was not the intention of the government that pastures should redeem crops, or grass atone for stubble, or why exemption provided for? Ay, there's the rub. The exemption appeal was demanded before May 1, 1913, or else forfeited. But if pasture, wholly pasture, proved only pasture, it should be exempt before and after May 1, 1913 and every other month. If a rigid date is fixed for appeal, then at least secretaries should be compelled to deliver assessment notices prior to this fixed date. Of what use is a demand notice several months after May 1? While absence of notice may not invalidate claim for taxes, at least it is assumed such notice has been sent. But what of lands bearing first taxes? I acquired a quarter in 1912, which I fenced all round and which is used purely for pasture purposes. My councillor informs me he acquainted the secretary that I owned this quarter last winter. When last year's notices came along this quarter was omitted. I judged it was not entered upon register and taxes would not be claimed before 1914. In October, however, I wrote saying I owned this quarter, and on Nov. 8 a demand notice was sent demanding every tax. I again wrote, saying this pasture quarter was not subject to hail tax and requested corrected notice. The secretary replied I was too late and would have to pay. I appealed to council. They told me the secretary could demand taxes at any time, with or without a notice at all. Then where is our privilege or right of citizenship? The reeve said they could not allow my appeal as thirty more were similarly affected. Very politely he asserted I was "not the only pebble on the beach"—that proves the injustice like a shore. Now think, I was not asked for taxes on this pasture quarter, indeed the secretary admits it was not on register, until I wrote in October. Then on November 8, without previous assessment notice, the full taxes are demanded. The act assumes assessment notice has been duly sent in proper time, or why make May 1 rigid? Now think again, the hail benefit was calculated apart from pasture contribution, and no hailed person would suffer if there was no contribution from grass. If they would, then the hail benefit is a delusion, balanced upon a fictitious imagination. The before-mentioned thirty are not the only thirty enmeshed. If there are thirty in each of twenty-five municipalities, and hail benefit rests upon this

filed tax, the whole calculation is false, a financial bungle. It is presumed this year's victims will avoid paying another year, then their income cannot be counted, should not be counted now. If wrong next year, it is wrong this year. It amounts to robbery to extort money from those not entitled to benefit for enrichment of another. This is contrary to the very principle of the bill and power of recovery should be granted at once, before any fat profits are declared. To say the tax is not much does not right the wrong. This recovery appeal could be made on evidence—before local council—of witness and divisional councillors' inspection, when council would be compelled to grant; thus the abolition of an unjust tax would be effected.

Another amendment needed is the adjustment of tax to area entitled to benefit. At present quite a number of homesteads are broken by creek or slough, ravine or scrub. It is to the welfare of a district that even these rough quarters should be taken up, and they are being settled gradually, many of them because mixed farming has prospered of late. It cannot be expected such rough land shall equal returns of a good quarter, hence there is more credit to the man who thrives upon this limited area. Here is a man with only 60 acres possible out of 160 assessed. Another has 10 acres of creek but pays the same. Ad-

vised in one year, and the excluded pastures of surrounding neighbors with poorer crops mulcted for the double enrichment of two. This is manifestly unfair, and while presuming to relieve hardship in one case, actually imposes it in another. What shall be done? Award benefit upon the average yield per acre in district for year.

If, say, average is 18 bushels and the hailed victim threshes only 6, make up to 18; if none at all, grant full average. If any, deduct from average. But if, after hail, the average is still threshed, not entitled to benefit. What say you?

JOHN HOLMES.

Hurdman Lodge, Sask.

PROGRESSIVE POLITICAL ACTION

Editor, Guide:—Being, like Mr. Kennedy, very much interested in the above, I wish to point out that, in my opinion, it is a great mistake to try to force this on a Grain Growers' Convention. The Association includes so many Grits and Tories that such a move might wreck it. As Mr. Kennedy says, let all in each constituency who favor such a move—and they are many—join together and start it. I feel that to again cast my ballot to either of the old parties would be to insult myself. It would be difficult to succeed without press assistance, but now we have it, as we have The Guide and the Tribune. As Mr. Kennedy puts it, "I think if

were at the beginning of our industrial association. This is because we have elected directors at large who do not believe in political action direct. Hence, see how the Saskatchewan directors stooped to block the proposal for any proper discussion of a direct political movement, this year and last year. Yet they know that all their journeys to Ottawa are political actions, which indirect actions do not avail any worth while liberty from our oppressors. The next lesson we have not all learned is that we are masquerading as a non-political association, as per our inconsistent constitution, while our directors at large are coolly dabbling in indirect political delegations and applications, and some are even taking part in our so-called party fights, which are only faction fights at best. The next lesson our members should strictly remember is, that if ever we are to be emancipated from our troubles, that true liberty can only be secured by us fighting for ourselves, and that co-operatively at the ballot box. The cause of democracy is the same everywhere, and if we are ever to have government "by, of and for the people," we have got to become truly political, instead of dabbling and disguising our Association as non-political, while our officials' main efforts are in reality indirectly political.

Will our officials please take notice that the greatest sensation at our two last conventions was the proposal "to form a third party." This problem will not down. I voted to postpone it, so that our directors at large will have a little more time to think it over, and others did likewise. I hope by next year they will give their royal assent to direct amalgamated Western political effort. The day is not distant when they will be forced to admit (Canada being a self-governing country), that the battle for redress of our grievances has got to be fought out in Parliament, at Ottawa; because the centralization of authority is right there, and the factions that are misruling us are both potent and impervious and decisively assisting the exploitation of the resources of the people.

We grain growers have the land and grow the No. 1 grain, and lots of it, but the exploiters get the gold, because the farmers and workers march to the faction call, the tramp of the dual factions of Liberal and Conservative fakirs and grafters! Thus we become their hirelings. We have neither politics nor party at Ottawa; they have been replaced by privilege, faction and corruption. A political party is a body of men united under a leader for carrying out some national principles. Laurier and Borden never did this. We have two troops of factional combatants led by Laurier and Borden, dual bodies of men who profess some common principles, so as to obtain power by a disillusioning of the credulous and extremely unfit voters; but who, once in power, turn their backs upon their professed principles and promises, and grant beautiful privileges to the Eastern plutocracy and jobs to their heelers. Thus they subject Canada to a continuous system of corruption and faction fifth. If Grits or Tories had any love of country, they would stand for the principle of clean elections and that the people should make the nominations; but the elections are foul fights and the nominations are made by base faction machines and fat bosses. Then those nominees who get elected join their faction caucus (which is secret), and agree to abide by majority rule. The East thus dominates the West. By this bond of agreement they lose their

Continued on Page 26



LAMBING TIME

A picture from R. D. Laing's Peerless Farm, Stonewall, Man.

joining me is a quarter with only some 40 acres possible for cultivation, the rest is excellent pasture. This quarter pays as much hail tax as the best quarter, but if hailed the owner benefits on 40 acres only, to another's 160. The same premium only yields a maximum benefit of 25 p.c. compared with the whole. At \$5 benefit per acre one receives \$200, another \$800, and both are taxed alike. It seems to me a yearly return could easily be supplied of area under cultivation, that area only to be subject to hail tax or benefit. A minimum of 25 municipalities was required before the act became operative, so that liability being distributed over large area the many would assist the few. I have never insured yet, not being in hail belt, but now I am levied for the support of the man in the hail belt. This is a real democratic measure, which I advocate—the strong assisting the weak, rich the poor, fortunate the unfortunate, but permanent pasture and barrenness taxed for fertile grain fields is an absurdity, an insult to democracy, and the very reverse of the above principle, as I will proceed to prove. The reeve informs me this municipality contributed \$6,000 to the hail fund. Am told two persons were hailed out. This hail came in May. The land remained untouched, a mild fall permitted a splendid crop to mature, and a better yield of wheat obtained than surrounding neighbors. Indeed, one of these men has never had such a crop before, nor threshed as much wheat, nor such yields per acre since farming. These persons received insurance and threshed actually more grain than neighbors who furnished the tax. Two crops real-

ever there was a time that such a movement could be carried forward, it is now." Some weeks ago The Guide referred to the promise of the Family Herald and Weekly Star to give \$10,000 toward starting a farmers' party if Borden would not do certain things. No doubt that money is now due, and would be very handy. Who will undertake to collect it? Some time ago I wrote the Star about it, but got no reply. Without deprecating the work done by the Grain Growers' Association, many of us feel that a more aggressive and enlightened move must be taken if we are to get justice. As one of your correspondents put it, "We have been putting in the powder but forgetting the bullet, and the bullet is the ballot." I invite sympathizers in the Dominion constituency of Saltcoats and the Provincial constituency of Pleasant Hills to correspond with me on the subject.

LEWIS GABRIEL.

Bangor, Sask.

PARTISANSHIP AND DISHONESTY

Editor, Guide:—The Grain Growers' Association has come to stay, but it will have to put forth work to justify itself, otherwise it cannot fulfil its mission. It was formed to free its members from the shackles of the exploiters, fakirs and grafters, and must move forward. The lesson we have not all yet learned is, that emancipation cannot be secured by economic organization. That we are no nearer the goal than when we started our work thirteen years ago. That while our officials have worked hard, the exploiters have done the same, and that we are worse robbed today than we

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS

This Department of The Guide is maintained especially for the purpose of providing a discussion ground for the readers where they may freely exchange views and derive from each other the benefits of experience and helpful suggestions. Every letter must be signed by the name of the writer, who not necessarily for publication. The views of our correspondents are not of necessity those of The Guide.