

# The Mail Bag

## FOR DIRECT LEGISLATION

Editor, Guide:—The Initiative, Referendum and Recall must ultimately be adopted by all governments, because the principles they embody are fundamentally right. Representative government has proven a failure, for it has become a cat's paw in the hands of the larger monied interests. It has seemed easy for wealthy combinations to line up legislative bodies, through party organizations in their behalf (because of their contributions), both in the making of laws that give them special privileges and to prevent laws from being made in the interest of the producer and consumer. While it has been possible to control a small body of men elected by the people to make laws for the common good, it will not be found as easy to control the electorate, for in putting into practice the Referendum the electors vote upon the law as it will finally appear upon the statute books, which cuts out all opportunity to make amendments, which often annul the purpose of the original measure. It will put every elected official upon his good behavior, and they will refuse to be a party to the passage of a measure that will be likely to be defeated by the people on a Referendum. Men in official positions usually desire to be endorsed by a re-election, hence under the Recall they will do the best there is in them, so as to meet the approbation of those who are responsible for the position they hold. The big interests will cease to invest their funds when they see that they are not getting results in that kind of boodling. Armed with this triple chord the people can rule, can take over telephones, telegraphs and even railroads when the time is ripe, just as they did in the Swiss Republic. It was well known in the States that President Taft was in line with the big interests when he opposed the admission of Arizona into the union, because her people had put into her constitution this triple chord. This should be sufficient reason for farmers and laboring men to support with their votes these measures.

J. R. LOWE.

## FARMERS' HIGHWAYS OR AUTO ROADS?

Editor, Guide:—I beg to call your attention to enclosed remarks of the United States Secretary of Agriculture on "Farmers' Highways before Auto Roads." I have felt for some time that too much attention is being paid, and public money voted, in Canada to making auto roads across the country, and not enough done to improve the farmers' roads, who are left to build their roads out of their own local taxes. These trunk auto roads are for the idle rich only and help the farmer very little. Vast sums, too, are spent on building most expensive highways in the mountains, in the proximity of the C.P.R. hotels, chiefly for foreign tourists. The ordinary Canadian cannot use them, as he cannot afford the prices charged at the railway hotels, and if he ventures to pitch his tent within sight of that supreme beauty spot, Lake Louise, he will be ordered off by the C.P.R., who have corralled all the land fit to camp on. There is a sad lack of inexpensive pack trains in our mountains, which the mountain climber or other camper of moderate means could use for enjoying his heritage. But in the prairie country let every necessary road for the farmer to get easily to his station or town be put in good order before public money is spent on less necessary roads. But Secretary Hoiston expresses my idea fully in his speech.

Yours truly,  
F. W. GODSAL.

The item enclosed is as follows:  
Detroit, Mich., Sept. 29.—Secretary Hoiston, of the United States department of agriculture, in an address before the American Road Congress today, expressed his approval of the efforts of the organization, and explained the interest of the federal government with reference to road building. He urged good roads for the farmer in preference to great transcontinental highways for automobilists and at the same time he said he did not under-estimate the

valuable service rendered by automobilists in the propaganda for road building.

"The suggestion of great national transcontinental roads appeals to my imagination, as does the suggestion of interstate roads connecting capitals or cities of commercial importance to my logical faculty and to the sense of pleasure that I experienced in riding about the country in my friends' automobiles. But that the essential thing to be done is the providing of good roads, which shall get products from the community farms to the nearest station and make rural life more profitable, comfortable, pleasurable, I entertain no sort of doubt, and it is obvious that the representatives of the people in congress are like-minded. For in making their recent appropriation of \$500,000 for good roads, they stipulated that it should be used in improving the condition of post roads, with a view to the economy and efficiency of postal delivery and for the transportation of farm products to the market."

## WHY COST OF LIVING IS HIGH

Editor, Guide:—Owing to invention and general progress, the natural tendency of prices, measured in labor, is toward lower levels. As commodities are produced with greater ease and facility, they tend to become cheaper, so that one pays less labor for the things one earns and buys. Prices could remain stationary only in a stationary world;

labor will hardly buy a dinner, we stand bewildered, while the special pleaders for the parasite kindly and learnedly explain that the real causes of the trouble are lack of enterprise, the law of diminishing returns, extravagance of the working classes, the discovery of too much gold, etc. Several professors of political economy (!) have given generous aid in teaching the unreasonable rabble how simple and self-evident it is, that too much gold necessitates bare backs and empty stomachs. Perhaps a little more gold would cause the human race to wind up its affairs and die of starvation! Of course the professors hesitate a little before pointing out the errors of God, who made the gold. Seriously, gold is subject to the law of supply and demand, and being our monetary standard, any material increase in its supply, making it cheaper, causes a proportional increase in nominal wages and nominal prices; but if all the mountains of the world were metamorphosed into gold, the miracle could not diminish the purchasing power of a day's work. As gold becomes cheaper, a day's work will buy more of it, but not less of other things on that account. The depreciation of gold in recent years is of no consequence whatever, but the fact that the purchasing power of labor is decreasing daily is a sign of public distress and industrial disaster.

Monopoly in its multitudinous forms is the root of all economic evil. There

or less heavy fine, as the case may be, to keep our fields free from weeds, but how is it possible to do so under these circumstances? Where, Mr. Editor, is the justice or equity of such a system?

We farmers laid our complaint before the Commission about four years ago, and again last year, and some relief was granted. We were allowed to grow crops on our own land that erstwhile had been appropriated without fear of having it plowed under and we were supposed (I say supposed advisedly) not to have our fences destroyed as formerly by the railway company, but of damages for the pollution of our land with foul weeds nothing is said or done.

What would happen to a farmer if he, by neglect or carelessness, caused a railway company hundreds of dollars damage yearly? It may be of interest to speculate on—yet the two cases are analogous.

N. H. NATHORST.  
Summerview, Alta., Oct. 5.

## ALL VALUABLE LAND TAXABLE

Editor, Guide:—In your Referendum, published October 1, question 4, I think, should be qualified. If it means that the C. P. R., irrigation and other corporation lands are to come under this law, then I would vote "Yes." But if, by some means, they would remain exempt, then I would by all means vote "No." I think you should bring this matter up in connection with the Referendum.

H. C. HAECHER.  
Edgerton, Alta.

Note.—Under the taxation of land values, all lands, whether owned by individuals or corporations, would be taxed according to their unimproved value. Another correspondent has asked if government lands would be taxed. This is a detail which need not be settled in advance, but it would certainly seem fair that land owned by the Dominion or Provincial governments, such as the site of a post-office or telephone exchange, should pay taxes to the municipality. It might be argued that the homestead lands still owned by the Dominion government are of no value (otherwise they would have been taken up) and consequently would not be taxable.—Editor.

## REGARDING MR. GREEN

Editor, Guide:—I notice there has been some adverse criticism concerning F. W. Green, Secretary, Saskatchewan Grain Growers' association, in The Guide. I do not think it is in the best interest of the Association to publicly criticize its officers, and while Mr. Green holds the confidence of the directors and the majority of the delegates present at the annual convention, individual members can accomplish no good purpose by public and adverse criticism. As evidence that Mr. Green holds the confidence of the majority of the delegates and that the directors were justified in re-appointing F. W. Green, when Mr. Green was nominated for position of director at large, Mr. Green told the delegates present that if it were their desire that he (Mr. Green) should be retained as Secretary-Treasurer of the Central Association, it would be necessary for the convention to elect him as director. If defeated he would understand that his services were not acceptable to the local associations throughout the province. Mr. Green was elected director at large, therefore the directors received a mandate from the delegates to re-appoint Mr. Green as Secretary-Treasurer, and individual members should submit to the ruling of their representatives.

JOHN L. ROOKE.  
Director Dis. No. 10, Togo, Sask.

Note.—We had announced that correspondence on this subject would cease, but Mr. Maharg, President of the Association, has forwarded the above letter and requested its publication. We trust that Mr. Rooke's letter will clear the air and that the incident may be closed.—Editor.

## PROFITS OF FARMING

Editor, Guide:—Some time ago The Guide had several items by correspondents on the cost of farming, but perhaps some

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## Sixty Years of Protection in Canada

(By Edward Porritt)

This book completely fills the need of the man who is interested in the tariff question and wants to understand it. It gives in a most entertaining style the history of the Canadian tariff from 1847 to 1913. "Where Industry Leans on the Politician" is the sub-title of the book and indicates the tone of the contents. In no country in the world have the protected interests such a grip upon the people and Mr. Porritt in "Sixty Years of Protection in Canada" shows just how strong is the grip and how the common people are paying toll to the protected group. The rise and growth of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association is given, as well as the story of the "Red Parlor" days when the manufacturers and politicians gathered together in a Toronto hotel, prior to general elections, and bargained for the betrayal of the people. Mr. Porritt travelled with the Canadian Tariff Commission in 1905-6 and heard the pleas of the manufacturers. He states that all but two industries at that time admitted prosperity, yet most of them got further tariff favors. The inside history of the iniquitous steel industry is given fully. Later chapters deal with the rise and growth of the Grain Growers' movement, the Western tours of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and R. L. Borden, the "Siege of Ottawa," the Reciprocity defeat and the present tariff agitation. Any man who reads this book can upset the best protectionist argument ever advanced. Handsomely bound in red cloth covers, 500 pages, large, clear type, post paid.....\$1.25

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and prices would naturally tend upward only in a world or country on the down grade. The economic progress of the world is, therefore, measurable by the rate at which prices tend downward.

Bearing in mind that real price is cost measured in labor, any rise in real prices indicates disease in the body economic, just as increased temperature shows disorder in the physical body. If the inhabitants of a country should become insane, devoting themselves to the destruction of labor-saving devices and the annihilation of wealth, prices would rise just as they have been doing for some years.

Our country's facilities and resources have not been destroyed, but all the advantages of invention, discovery, and the abundant gifts of nature have accrued to the benefit of a few monopolists, while the masses, shorn of all the material fruits of civilization, are as helpless and hopeless as if they lived in a declining world.

This condition is the result of legislation—the achievement of privilege—that is, of the parasite. Every barrier to trade and every law that facilitates monopoly sends prices higher. No man can plunder the public, except by virtue of special privileges obtained by legal legerdemain.

We have enabled the parasite to make our laws; and now, finding that a day's

can be no easement from the press of prices until we put an end to land monopoly; no relief from the demands of the parasites while the common wealth of the people is in the hands of the despoiler; nor freedom from tribute while our country is being sacked and plundered more effectually than the domain of Gaul at the hands of Caesar.

WILLIAM SCOTT.

## RAILWAY FIREGUARDS

Editor, Guide:—Farmers now living in the neighborhood of a railway line, as well as others, are indebted to Mr. Godsall for drawing attention in your issue of September 24 to the iniquitous way in which the railways, under the authority of the railway board, destroy individual farmers' land, partly by burning a part of their pasture and partly, but with more far-reaching consequences, by infecting the country through which it passes with noxious weeds. Of these the Canadian thistle in particular costs the nearby farmer hundreds of dollars yearly, partly in work, endeavoring to subdue growth of the weed, and partly in loss of crop. I have personally for four years seen the appropriated fireguards as well as the railway embankment one mass of Canada thistle in full unchecked seed, and when the wind blew you might imagine you were out in a snowstorm.

We farmers are compelled, under more