

The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, May 22, 1918

The Draft

Farmers from all parts of Canada have advised Premier Borden and the Union government of the inevitable result of cancelling the exemptions of agricultural laborers between the ages of 20 and 22 years. From Ontario and Quebec, a deputation of some 4,000 farmers visited Ottawa last week, and urged the premier to reconsider the drastic amendments of the Military Service Act in their application to agriculture. While the West was not directly represented in that big deputation, the sympathy of the western farmer towards his eastern brother was strong in the claims that were made to the government. The large number of letters which have been received at the different central offices of the organized grain growers, reveal the extent of that sympathy. The interests of greater production from the land are vitally affected by the new Military Service Act, and the farmers in the West realize that fact as strongly as they do in the East. Production of food in Canada will unquestionably be reduced by the unqualified application of the recently amended military law; and it is the national importance of that fact which looms up in the mind of the Canadian farmer at this time.

Sir Robert Borden and his government, however, consider that the need for men from Canada in the fighting line of France and Flanders is greater than the need for men on the farms of this country. When Sir Robert and his colleagues were seeking election last December, they thought differently. The change in point of view has come, according to the words of the prime minister, as the result of the increasing seriousness of the military situation at the front. And the farmers have expressed their belief in the sincerity of the premier and his ministers. They accept the verdict of the government, but they do not necessarily approve of it. This attitude, and no other, was expressed in the resolution of the executive of the United Farmers of Alberta, which, by the way, was used by several partisan minds in an attempt to prejudice the West against the East. The insinuation in some quarters that the farmer is anxious to profit all he can by keeping his labor on the farm during an era of high prices, is beneath contempt. Through such despicable observations, not only is the part played as actual soldiers by the 50,000 or 60,000 farmers who have gone overseas from Canada, ignored, but any tendency towards national harmony is disordered. There is only one interest in the mind of the Canadian farmer at the present moment, and that is to do his duty by the country to the very best of his ability.

Now that the government has decided to cancel all exemptions in the cases of men between the ages of 20 and 22 years, regardless of their occupations, the necessity of taking steps to maintain, as completely as possible, the work that was planned and undertaken on the farms of Canada for this crop season of 1918, is most vital. Because the best results in food production cannot be obtained with unskilled labor the problem becomes all the more serious. The gravity of the struggle on the West front between the desperate Hun and his allied opponents—and no farmer minimizes that fact for a second—does not make any less grave the real danger of a famine within the next 12 months. The shortage of food constitutes a very real peril which has been thoroughly emphasized during the past year, but which, of late, has been placed rather in the back-

ground of our national problems. The farmer certainly appreciates its seriousness; and all he asks is that he be enabled to "carry on" effectively in defeating that other enemy of the Allies—Hunger. If those supplies of food are not forthcoming this year, and if due preparation is not made for the crop next year, upon whose shoulders will the responsibility rest? The farmers of the West and the farmers of the East know whereof they speak when they tell Sir Robert Borden that the government must accept full responsibility for impairing the working strength of the farm.

The government will be faced with many cases of extreme hardship amongst the farmers who are being affected by the amendments to the Military Service Act. In none of the Allied countries, now at war, has there been such a rigid and drastic order of conscription as that recently adopted at Ottawa. The government, in the face of these grave personal hardships, will undoubtedly find some course to alleviate such distress.

Keep Up The Good Work

The results of the big drive for new members in the Saskatchewan association to date have been checked up and the results are encouraging. Seventy new locals have been formed and 2,000 new members secured. Receipts for membership dues received at the Central office are \$3,500 in excess of those at the corresponding date last year. This splendid showing is due largely to voluntary work in the locals stimulated by a strong policy of extension by the Central office. Reports indicate that in Manitoba and Alberta also there has been a healthy growth in membership. But encouraging as this growth has been, there is still a great deal of work to be done before the territory is fully covered and organized. There are thousands of farmers in each of the three provinces who could be brought into these associations by organized efforts. They are all needed.

The farmer who thinks the beneficiaries of special privilege are losing any opportunity to consolidate their positions, has another thought coming. In spite of the fact that the very existence of the Allied armies at the front is jeopardized by famine they have succeeded so far in blocking free agricultural implements, which would be the greatest stimulus to greater food production that could be introduced. It is clearer than ever before that the tariff will never be overthrown until the organized farmers are strong enough to force the issue. Let the big drive for new members be continued. Just now, when the farmers are busy with their operations on the land they have but little time to devote to the objects of their associations. As soon as the spring rush is over, however, and the summer gatherings begin to take place, there will be a splendid opportunity for reviving the enthusiasm which has characterized the membership campaigns since the new year.

The Food Controller's Order

There is widespread confusion amongst farmers regarding some of the recent orders of the Food Controller. Those respecting the hoarding of flour and sugar and the feeding of wheat to stock and poultry are far, it appears, from being understood. The order of April 25, as it applies to farmers, provides that the amount of flour that can be held varies according to the distance they live from

a dealer licensed by the food board. Those living farther than two miles and less than five miles from the dealer are allowed sufficient flour, under ordinary requirements, to last them 30 days. Those from five to ten miles out, may hold enough for 60 days, while those at a greater distance than 10 miles may hold sufficient for 120 days' requirements. These rules also apply to the amount of sugar that may be held. Stocks of sugar in excess of the amount stipulated in the order are to be returned to the dealer from whom they were purchased. If the supplies are in good condition they must be paid for, in the case of sugar at the current market price, or at the purchase price, whichever is the lower.

The order governing the feeding of stock and poultry does not refer to coarse grains or to feed wheat but to the milling grades of wheat only. No milled wheat or product thereof, except bran and shorts may be fed. Provision is made that wheat grown with other grains for feeding purposes may be fed unless it exceeds 25 per cent. of the mixture. The confusion that prevails regarding these orders suggests that the present facilities used in informing the public of the decisions of the Food Control Board are altogether inadequate. Before enforcing the orders to the letter, the government should take measures for seeing that they are given reasonable publication so that everyone concerned may be at no loss as to what the orders mean.

An order passed last week meets the objection that the first order imposed a hardship on many farmers. It provides that a bona fide farmer may hold the amount of flour made wholly or in part from wheat, which he may have in his possession in excess of the amounts prescribed by the order of April 25, on the condition that, on or before June 15, he report to the miller or dealer from whom it was purchased, or by whom it was manufactured, the excess amount held by him. It shall then be the duty of such miller or dealer to report all such holdings to the Canada Food Board.

Another Provincial Organization

The organization of the United Farmers of New Brunswick has brought a feeling of satisfaction to thousands of farmers in the older associations. The time is not far distant when the farmers' movement in Canada will be nation-wide. Last winter when the United Farmers of British Columbia were organized, the movement reached the Pacific. With the birth of the U.F. of N.B. it reaches tidewater on the east. Indications are that the near future will see a provincial organization established in Quebec. From the Pacific to the Atlantic there will then be, almost within hailing distance of each other, a broad band of locals welded into provincial organizations which in turn will be affiliated with the Canadian Council of Agriculture. The farmers of New Brunswick have, by organizing, brought Canada's great agrarian movement a long step toward being a truly national one, speaking with the weight of the best elements in Canadian agriculture behind it. The benefit that will accrue to the whole movement from their step cannot easily be over-estimated. The U.F. of N.B. begins its career auspiciously. It already comprises a membership of about 1,000 with clear-visioned, hard-headed, substantial farmers at its head. It is safe to say that under their guidance the organization will rapidly attain that measure of success which has characterized the farmers' organizations in other provinces.