

The Mail Bag

THE REFERENDUM

Editor, Guide:—The Guide is to be congratulated for introducing a Referendum of the Western people upon eight questions which are the subject of a great deal of discussion to-day.

The statement has often been made at meetings of organized farmers that our Legislators do not truly represent the people they are supposed to represent. Whether this statement is true or not there is no doubt that the opinion is very generally held. At election time we are called upon to vote for a man who represents a party which advocates a certain line of action in reference to leading questions of the day. These issues frequently become so involved at election time that it is almost impossible for the voter to know whether he is voting for what he really wants or not. Direct Legislation has been advocated as a means of overcoming this state of affairs, and Direct Legislation means above all other things that the people shall have a chance to vote upon each issue separately, without the issue being associated with the candidature of any particular individual or party.

Opponents of the Referendum in particular make the statement that the people would not take the trouble to vote upon the Referendum questions when submitted. The Guide is attempting to disprove this statement by conducting an informal Referendum and if the people of the West wish to demonstrate their faith in the principles of Direct Legislation now is the time. Study The Guide questions carefully, and when the ballots are issued let every man vote as he thinks right. The important feature is to secure a large vote in order to demonstrate that the people do take sufficient interest in public questions to vote upon them when opportunity offers.

CHAS. A. DUNNING.

Regina.

AGAINST DIRECT LEGIS AT ON

Editor, Guide:—With reference to your invitation to discuss several interesting subjects, of which one is the Initiative and Referendum. In considering whether this principle should be adopted in our laws we have to ask ourselves whether it is necessary under our British form of government. I claim it is not. The adoption of the principle may or may not (I don't pretend to know) be good for a state comprising one of the United States of America or a Canton of Switzerland but not for a province, governed under British institutions, for the reason that we have our own way of attaining the same ends, viz: by agitation and petition, perhaps a slower method, but you are more sure of your results and not liable to legislate in advance of public opinion. Let me take an example: The Grain Growers of Saskatchewan for several years advocated and agitated for the Provincial Government to install a government owned and operated system of elevators. So popular was the idea that if the principle of the Initiative had been in force in this province at the time, today we would have been burdened with such a system of elevators. However, we were blessed with a government elected on the principle of being responsible to the people, and we have as a result of the agitation above referred to, an elevator system, which is the admiration of the Western Provinces of Canada. With regard to the Referendum, your readers have only to refer to "Direct Legislation" by R. L. Scott to learn that we have this power and how it is used.

Your readers must bear in mind that Direct Legislation robs the legislature of its authority, responsibility and dignity.

The remedy for the defect I have above referred to, Sir, is Proportional Representation. Have this enacted and you will entice the best men and brains in the community to represent you instead of the puppet put up by the party machine to do its bidding. It will reflect in their true proportions every opinion held by the electorate which is strong enough to elect a member and would, therefore, have its own member on the floor of the Legislature to initiate its legislation and look after its interests.

Lastly, in connection with the details of a bill apart from its principle, the

electorate under the Initiative and Referendum have no chance to vote upon these separately or even suggest anything tending to the efficiency or workability of the bill. There are one or two other points such as the relative value of a vote and the cost of the system and asking the elector to form a judgment on biased opinions instead of his own, but I have gone as far as I dare go in this letter and trust some of your other readers will discuss these.

W. J. B. CANNON.

acklin, Sask.

SUPPORTS THE AFFIRMATIVE

Editor, Guide:—Allow me to congratulate you upon the wise selection you have made in the questions you are submitting to a referendum vote of your readers.

I have frequently been asked, by

reached, there must be discussion, and I hope your referendum will provoke a full and free discussion.

As a Single Taxer, and therefore a Free Trader, I shall answer questions two to six, inclusively, in the affirmative.

The Reciprocity treaty was a very mild proposal, but it certainly raised the ire of the protected interests. They evidently intend to fight hard to keep what privileges they have and if possible to obtain more. They managed to fool some of the people once more with their patriotic bancombe, although how they managed it is a mystery to me.

Anyone who is familiar with the political history of Canada, must know that the interested parties who raised the loyalty cry at the last election have always opposed any increase in the British Preference. The protected interests

expenses, and this should be collected by one tax on the value of land. This tax has several advantages. It is a two-edged sword which will destroy the tariff and land monopoly. With these two evils removed, we shall be in a better position to deal with some of the other problems which confront us.

Land Value Taxation will compel each member of the community to contribute to society according to the benefits he receives from society. This is the only just basis for taxation. At present, the taxes fall most heavily on the industrious members of the community, to the great advantage of the drones. This is a cruel injustice which Land Value Taxation would destroy.

I shall vote, Yes, on number seven, because I believe in equal rights to all and special privilege to none. Railway, telegraph and telephone franchises are special privileges, giving a few men powers which are denied to the rest of the community. This grant of the sovereign power establishes a monopoly. Such public utilities as are naturally monopolies, which require a special franchise for their operation, must be operated by and for the people, in order to avoid injustice.

With regard to number eight, I am most decidedly in favor of ceasing to prevent women from exercising their natural rights. Every sane adult person in the community should have an equal voice in the making of the laws which all have to obey. That, in my opinion, is the fundamental argument in favor of votes for women. We admit women to the tax list, the jail and the gallows. Why not to the polling booth?

Hoping your referendum will promote a profitable discussion of all these questions.

F. J. DIXON.

ANOTHER REPLY TO MR. ROBERTSON

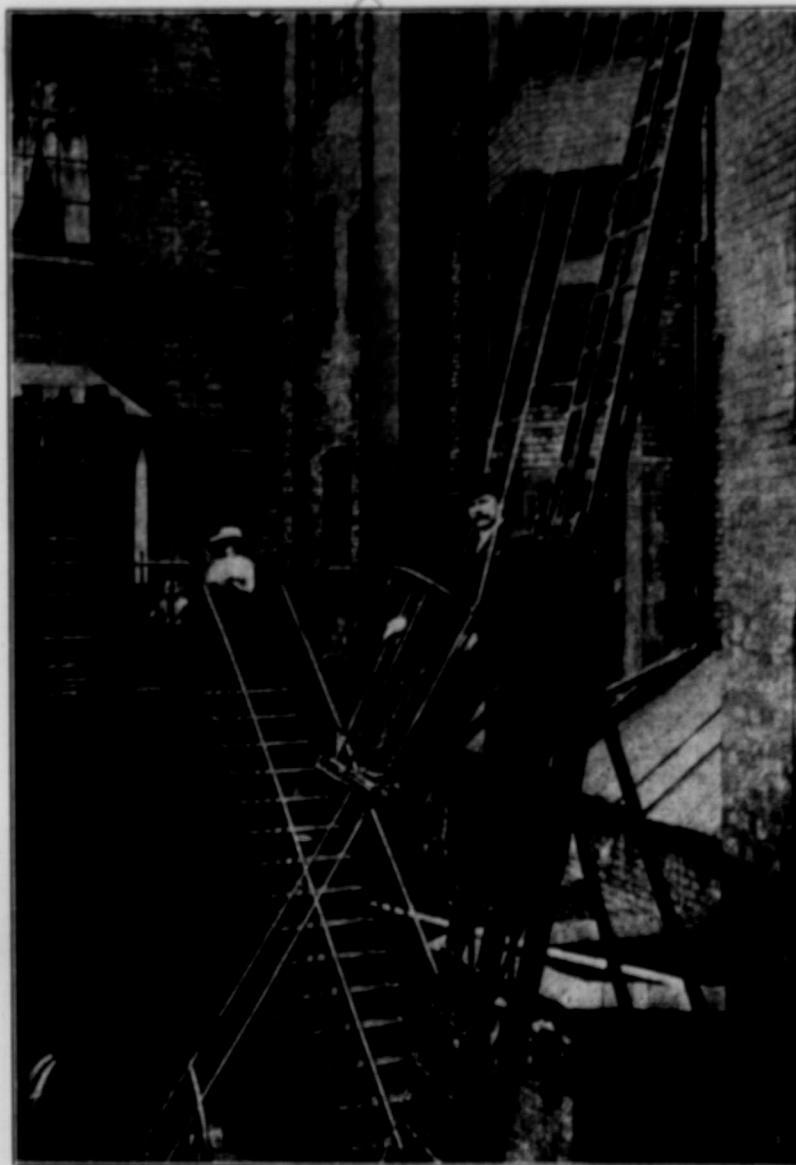
Editor, Guide:—In your issue of July 31 there appears a letter in favor of protection from Mr. John Robertson, of Bradwell, Sask. This letter exhibits great confusion of ideas. From the tone of the communication it may be inferred that Mr. Robertson, before coming to Canada, farmed in England with little success, but the argument he founds on his failure in the latter country, and his subsequent success here is utterly erroneous. In England he failed in farming, in Canada he succeeded. England enjoys free trade, Canada is protected; therefore he concludes that his success in Canada is due to protection, and his failure in England was due to free trade. This line of reasoning is enough to make a logician's hair stand on end; it is the well known fallacy of "post hoc ergo propter hoc." If he were to look below the surface of things and consider the circumstances a little more deeply, he would see that prosperity has come to him in spite of protection, not on account of it.

Seeing that Mr. Robertson has farmed at home he ought to be able to form a comparison of the condition of things in both countries. Let him compare the prices of agricultural implements there and here; let him compare the cost of the necessities of life; let him compare the cost of clothing; let him compare the cost of anything. With very few exceptions he will find that prices rule higher in Canada; in fact, he could buy in England almost any of the exports of this country, and pay less for them than he does in Bradwell.

Now, let Mr. Robertson glance at the other side of the ledger, and compare the prices he gets for the products of his Canadian farm with those he got at home. Does he contend that the English farmer receives less than his

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, though not necessarily for publication. The views of our correspondents are not of necessity those of The Guide.



A NEW LIFE-SAVING APPARATUS

In Birmingham recently a demonstration took place of a new life-saving apparatus, consisting of a cradle for carrying persons from the upper storeys of burning buildings to the pavements below. This apparatus is worked as follows: Cables are attached to the head of the fire escapes, up and down which the cradle is drawn by means of a rope which passes through a pulley at the head of the escape. Attached to the cradle is an automatic brake, which immediately comes into action by the weight of the person if the hauling rope should break. The cradle then at once becomes fixed on the guiding cables. The above picture shows the cradle as it would look if the hauling line broke.

members of Grain Growers' associations, to suggest topics for debate. The questions you have selected, are admirably suited for this purpose, and I hope they will be thoroughly discussed at Grain Growers' meetings during the coming winter.

I am in favor of Direct Legislation, which is embodied in the first question, because I believe in the rule of the people. Democracy will never be truly established until the people have the power to make or unmake the laws which they have to obey. But if the people are to make and unmake laws, they must agree upon the measures which are necessary to establish justice. Before an agreement can be

are just as much opposed to Free Trade with Great Britain, as they are to Free Trade or Freer Trade with any other country. They will prate about "the flag that for a thousand years has braved the battle and the breeze" when they think such action will safeguard their dividends, but a cheaper rate will speedily induce them to place \$100,000,000 of insurance under the Star Spangled banner. At present this piratical crew is sailing under false colors. The flag they should sail under is the "Jolly Roger." I am in favor of Free Trade, which means, liberty to buy and sell where I want to buy and sell.

A revenue is necessary to pay public