

The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, March 1st, 1911

PREMIER SCOTT'S INDICTMENT

In the Mail Bag of this issue we publish a letter from Hon. Walter Scott, Premier of Saskatchewan, in which he levels at us most serious accusations. We feel in duty bound to reply to Mr. Scott's charges. He calls us some very hard names for intimating that he even unintentionally misrepresented the Manitoba elevator system. Yet in his own letter he admits the truth of our statement. We had reference only to the fact, which he admits, that he quoted the receipts of the ten worst points in Manitoba to illustrate the working of the Manitoba system. He admits that he did this but that it was unintentional and that he corrected it next day in the legislature. We gave him full credit for his honesty of purpose, but we cannot be held responsible for the fact that Mr. Scott did not give out all the figures on the first day, even though he intended to. Surely Mr. Scott would not care to have his whole administrative record judged on the basis of his ten worst blunders. As for the figures Mr. Scott gives in his letter, we made no reference to them in our article. We are holding no brief for the conduct of the Manitoba system. It has its drawbacks, and plenty of them, but we want to see it judged fairly, and we want to see it become a success. The fact is Mr. Scott made a mistake in not giving out all the figures he intended to and blames us for calling attention to the fact. But he further states that The Guide during two or three years has "teemed with unfairness towards the Saskatchewan government" and to himself. This is news to us. We have been led to believe by the Winnipeg Telegram, which is the recognized mouthpiece of Premier Roblin and the Manitoba government, that The Guide was nothing else than an organ of the Saskatchewan government. Mr. Scott says we have been unfair and have sneered at his government for two or three years. Premier Roblin on the other hand, or rather his organ, the Winnipeg Telegram, which we understand says only what Mr. Roblin thinks, said on April 2, 1910:

"Presumably the only way the Manitoba government could have earned the approval of the Grain Growers' organ (The Guide) would have been to . . . appoint a royal commission to investigate, like the government of Saskatchewan."

This is the opinion of the organ of the gentleman to whom Mr. Scott refers as "my friend Roblin." On April 9, 1910, the Telegram said further in reference to The Guide:

"How can the organ (The Guide) get away from the fact that it had nothing but praise . . . for the Saskatchewan government which promised the farmers a commission of investigation into the matter?"

But even at a later date The Telegram thought it saw that The Guide would never criticize the Saskatchewan government. On November 25, 1910, it said:

"The farmers of Western Canada were no doubt curious to know what the Grain Growers' Guide would have to say about the Saskatchewan elevator commission . . . but its editorial columns bore no trace of an expression of an opinion, favorable or otherwise. . . . The farmers of Western Canada . . . will simply assume that the nules of The Guide's editorial sanetum have run away with the ammunition wagons, and pending their capture, the Saskatchewan elevator commission will go unpunished and unscathed."

But The Guide has still been favorable to the Saskatchewan government, according to Mr. Roblin's organ, which on February 9, 1911, said:

"Premier Scott, of Saskatchewan, has roundly condemned the principle of govern-

ment ownership. . . . In order to support his condemnation he made a vicious attack upon the Manitoba system. . . . Wherever he got his figures the Telegram is satisfied that they are entirely unauthentic, inaccurate and misleading."

That is the way the Telegram, with the approval of Mr. Roblin, presumably, regarded Mr. Scott's speech in the Regina legislature on the day before the Grain Growers' convention at Regina. In the same article the Telegram said:

"When it is remembered what tremendous denunciations were launched by the organ of the Grain Growers' Grain Co. (meaning The Guide) against the Manitoba government . . . what must be in store for Mr. Scott? . . . But Mr. Scott may have some means of putting on the 'soft, soft pedal' and modifying the booming of the organ. It would not be surprising. There have been others."

But let us come right down to the editorial article in The Guide of February 15, 1911, on which Mr. Scott bases his letter. Dealing with that same article the Telegram says:

"After carping and scowling at the government ownership of interior elevators as boldly adopted as its policy by the Manitoba government, the self-constituted organ of the Grain Growers (meaning The Guide) gives its approval to the policy of the Saskatchewan government . . . The reason of course lies in the different political complexion of the two governments. . . . The farmers of Saskatchewan received a gold brick in their government's elevator policy. They knew it was a gold brick when it was handed to them. . . . There was far more political manipulation about receiving their approbation than spontaneous feeling, and the organ's (The Guide's) utterances have been part of the manipulation."

Now, Mr. Roblin is Mr. Scott's friend because Mr. Scott says so. It is not our assertion, but Mr. Scott's. Mr. Scott can see how his friend, Mr. Roblin, regards him and his government, and the attitude of The Guide towards them by reading the Winnipeg Telegram. Now, if Mr. Roblin as a friend of Mr. Scott could make or approve of the Telegram's statements we can hardly see how Mr. Scott can regard us as an enemy. We think it would be well for Mr. Scott and Mr. Roblin, being "friends," to get into harmony with each other. Judging by their remarks about each other's administration when they are "friends," we think The Guide should be regarded almost as a brother by them both. Now, Mr. Scott makes a number of other serious charges against us. He practically says the truth cannot be found in our columns. He says that the proposal made by the interprovincial council of Grain Growers to the provinces "was a proposal for a system of government elevators on a monopoly basis." Mr. Scott says we have never admitted the truth of that statement. Why? We will merely quote extracts from the statement of the Interprovincial Council of Grain Growers in reply to the three premiers:

"We submit further that legal monopoly is not necessary to safeguard the financial interests of the provinces. Hence, no constitutional difficulty presents itself in that regard. The government system will have a virtual monopoly because of the impracticability of the present system . . . remaining in the field in opposition to the government. Nor do we consider that it would necessitate any heavy financial responsibility on the part of the several provinces, as the full expense of the system will be chargeable to the grain passing through the elevators."

This shows why we have never admitted that the Grain Growers demanded a government monopoly. They have officially stated that they did not. They certainly know what they asked of the three premiers. We have their word against Mr. Scott's. We are willing to let it rest there. The same reply of the Grain Growers deals with the

"constitutional difficulty" question. Mr. Roblin has adopted government ownership of elevators which is another answer to the "constitutional difficulty" question. Would Mr. Roblin do anything unconstitutional? Let Mr. Roblin answer. We deny that we showed any "gross unfairness" towards the three premiers. We made light of the "constitutional difficulty" obstacle and it soon disappeared. Is not that justification? In the last paragraph of his letter Mr. Scott makes a most grave charge against us of a wholesale character. Coming from a man in his high and responsible position it is most serious. We challenge Mr. Scott to prove the truth of his assertions. Mr. Scott does not give us credit for one single good intention or motive. The Manitoba government and its organ the Winnipeg Telegram adopt the same attitude towards us. We would never go so far ourselves in criticism of any government or politician. Now we have good reason to believe that Mr. Scott does not really mean all that he says when he practically denies that we ever tell the truth. We have the best reasons for thinking that his zeal ran away with his judgment in leading him to make such statements. What is our proof of this contention? We get it from the Regina Leader, a journal which was formerly owned and edited by Mr. Scott, and which is still the recognized official organ of Mr. Scott and his government. In the Morning Leader of February 20, 1911, there is a very able editorial article based upon the same article in The Guide of February 15, 1911, which Mr. Scott uses as the text of his letter. The article in The Leader is intended to be a complete annihilation of Mr. Haultain and his party in the legislature. In fact the editorial in Mr. Scott's organ, the Leader, hardly leaves Mr. Haultain and his party in any recognizable shape. We have not the slightest objection to the two political parties in the Saskatchewan legislature pummeling each other, but the point of the whole article in the Leader is that it proves its statements to be correct on the authority of The Guide. Here is one extract from the Leader:

"The Haultain party are accusing the Grain Growers of inconsistency, of having been 'manipulated' and having 'swallowed their convictions.' They base their accusations on the assumption that the Grain Growers asked for government ownership of elevators, whether the results to be derived therefrom are good or bad. The Guide completely disproves the correctness of this statement and shows that in asking for a commission of inquiry in 1910 they were approaching the subject with an open mind, desirous of obtaining that solution which would realize the object for which they were striving."

Thus at the same time as Mr. Scott was framing his indictment against The Guide and declaring that The Guide had "parrot-like repeated a cheap partizan reflection which was made use of at Regina some days ago to pad the speeches of men unable to find in the Government elevator bill enough to find fault with," the editor of his organ, The Leader, was using The Guide to prove that Mr. Scott, as it says, with "calmness of judgment and statesman-like capacity" was working in the interests of the Grain Growers. At the same time the editor of Mr. Roblin's organ was proving from the same article in The Guide that The Guide was the organ of Mr. Scott's government. It would appear to be necessary that Mr. Scott and Mr. Roblin, together with the editors of their organs, should hold a caucus meeting and find out who's who and what's what. We certainly do not understand them. We never knew before that The Guide stood for so many things at the same time.