

# The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, July 9th, 1913

## GOVERNMENT MAY PURCHASE C.N.R.

Recent reports indicate that the Dominion Government will give serious consideration to the project of acquiring the Canadian Northern Railway and operating it as a public utility. Strength is given to this report by other reports that the Canadian Northern Railway and its bankers are not yet able to find their way through the financial jungle into which the promoters have led them. It is now commonly reported that the \$15,000,000 that the government gave Mackenzie and Mann was not by any means sufficient to relieve these gentlemen and their bankers financially, and that the next session of Parliament will see another gift equally as large and probably further extensive loans at a low rate of interest. Practically all of the provincial governments of Canada have granted extensive aid to Mackenzie and Mann and each of the governments would, therefore, have a certain interest in any move that may be made by the Dominion Government towards acquiring the Canadian Northern. On a question of such magnitude the people of Canada should be consulted in an actual referendum on the question. We believe that the overwhelming voice would be in favor of taking not only the C.N.R. but also the other railways out of private hands and operating them as public utilities. It is well, however, to face the situation fairly as it exists today and to look at the question from these various aspects. It is very doubtful whether Mackenzie and Mann have actually any cash invested in the Canadian Northern Railway, practically all the capital having been provided by various governments through cash or land grants and bond guarantees and the balance secured from British financiers. When we consider the strong grip that Mackenzie and Mann have on both political parties it is entirely beyond reason to expect that the Dominion Government will be able to purchase the C.N.R. at anything like reasonable values. It is altogether probable, in fact almost certain, that if the government does acquire the C.N.R. Mackenzie and Mann will secure a far higher price for the road than it is actually worth. The fact that the people have practically built the road will not enter into consideration in any way. The public has paid for the road once already and if the government buys it they will have to pay for it twice. But despite the terrific extravagance there will be in the purchase of the road and the political mismanagement which will follow it, we believe that in the interests of the Canadian people the Government would be justified in taking over all the Mackenzie and Mann roads and operating them as a public utility. Once the railway system is in the hands of the people, they will watch its operation and sooner or later they will insist on a business administration of their own property. No matter what the road may cost at the outset, freight and passenger rates can be adjusted and an annual deficit of a few millions will not be a serious setback, particularly in a year such as the present when there is a surplus of \$55,000,000 in the Dominion treasury. By acquiring the Canadian Northern the Dominion Government would then have a railway system, in the course of a year or two, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and it would be a very easy matter to regulate freight rates on other railways simply through competition. We believe the day is coming when all the railways in Canada will be operated by the government, and when that comes the most dangerous anti-democratic force in our national life will be greatly weakened.

## CRIME IN CANADA

Agriculture comes out with credit in the Dominion report of criminal statistics just issued. Although about one-half of the whole population is classed as agricultural, only six out of a hundred offenders belonged to the agricultural population. Fifty-six per cent. were laborers, 18 per cent. commercial, 10 per cent. industrial, 7 per cent. domestic and 1 per cent. were from the professions. This, we submit, is a first-class showing. If the whole population were as law-abiding as those who till the soil, crime would be reduced seven-eighths. More than two-thirds, or 67 per cent. of the criminals were single, 31 per cent. married and 2 per cent. widowed. Liquor was used moderately by 63 per cent. and 20 per cent. were excessive drinkers. As to nationality, Canadian-born criminals account for 50 per cent. of the total convictions, British-born 15 per cent., American-born 5 per cent., and foreign-born 12 per cent. For the twelve years ending March 31 last year, immigrants from the British Isles numbered 823,000, from Continental Europe 543,404 and from the United States 752,120. The feature of these statistics is the excellent showing made by the Americans in Canada. They constitute one-tenth of our whole population, even neglecting all who came previous to 1900, and yet they furnish only one-twentieth of the convictions. Here again the explanation may be found in the preponderance of farmers among them, and the Prairie Provinces are much the better off in agriculture, business enterprise and good citizenship for their presence in Canada. The Government report furnishes fresh proof that farmers belong to a class of which they have every reason to be proud.

## WATCHING THE CROPS

If there is any one who doubts that the Grain Growers of the Prairie Provinces are one of the most important factors in our national life, the situation today will convince him. From the Atlantic to the Pacific the leading business men of Canada in every branch of our commercial life are watching the wheat crop of the prairies. In Winnipeg and Prairie cities naturally the interest is very deep, but in Toronto and Montreal and even in St. John and Halifax the business houses of Canada at this season are literally "sitting up nights," with the Western wheat crop. Commercial travellers find that business now is comparatively dull and will be for the next two or three weeks until the crop is assured. A general crop failure in the three Prairie Provinces today would wreck hundreds of concerns in every city in Canada, because they have built their business on the expectation of sharing in the profits of the wheat crop of the prairies. There could not be a better illustration of the important position which the much-abused Grain Grower occupies in the economic fabric of the nation than the anxiety expressed on all hands as to the crop outlook. The Grain Growers are called "agitators," "wheat miners," "bonanza farmers," "blacksmith-shop politicians," "selfish," "ignorant," "narrow-minded," and pretty nearly everything else in the vocabulary employed by our high-minded politicians. When the Grain Growers during the winter are carrying on a campaign for better conditions and a square deal they are "miserable fellows" who are enemies of the nation; but in the summer, when they are sowing the seed and reaping the harvest they are the "finest men" that Canada ever produced. The Triple Alliance and the politicians they employ would be glad to have the farmer stick to farming all the

time if he would only be quiet and respectful and submit to being plundered without making any noise about it. But the farmers have a duty to perform aside from wheat growing. They must see that they get full value for their wheat and proper conditions for the families they are rearing and, for that reason the organization and educational work they do in the winter time is quite as important as the farming they do in the summer time.

## REAL BANKING REFORM

Comparisons may not be the most pleasant way of bringing out the truth, but for effectiveness they are hard to beat. Very few Canadians, we venture to think, relished the last few glimpses they got of their representatives at Ottawa. To see those members, in the last hours of the session, hurriedly sanction huge grants to railway magnates and then scamper away on vacation, afraid lest they be compelled to spend a couple of hot days in Ottawa, was a sight not calculated to inspire the man on the street or on the farm with a deep respect for our self-sacrificing representatives. But when on the top of this, President Wilson tells Congress that they are in duty bound to revise the banking and currency system in addition to cutting away the artificial props of a protective tariff, and to do all this in the heat of midsummer, the contrast between the ideas of public duty in the two capitals looms large.

"There are occasions of public duty," declared the President, "when the work to be done is so pressing that we know we are not at liberty to weigh against it any point of personal sacrifice," and among these sacrifices he names "personal convenience, comfort and even health."

That is one striking difference between the spirit of the national leader at Washington and that which the recent session has shown prevails at Ottawa. Another contrast is in the purpose behind the banking changes. At Ottawa, as the country now knows, it was the interests of the bankers which our politicians were so anxious to safeguard. The ordinary business man or farmer counted for little. If President Wilson's bold stand is supported, the American Congress will do something very different and vastly more helpful than the recent so-called revision which must satisfy the Canadian people for the next ten years.

"Our banking laws," the President told Congress, "must mobilize reserves; must not permit the concentration anywhere in a few hands of the monetary resources of the country or their use for speculative purposes in such volume as to hinder or impede or stand in the way of other more legitimate, more fruitful uses. And the control of the system of banking and of issue which our new laws are to set up must be public, not private, must be vested in the government itself, so that the banks may be the instruments, not the masters, of business and of individual enterprise and initiative."

Canadian and American banking systems, of course, differ widely. In both, however, the need for reform has been recognized by the nation. Canada got a revision which means little, if any, relief from the extortionate rates of interest allowed by law. We hope the American people fare better at the hands of their federal representatives, and under President Wilson's firm leadership, the chances look bright for real banking reform.

The public will be anxious to know whether Arthur Meighen, as Solicitor-General, is still in favor of reducing the tariff on agricultural implements, or whether that able speech he delivered two years ago was only intended to tickle the ears of his constituents?