

The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, July 7th, 1915

MANITOBA AND PROHIBITION

From the fact that registration of voters has taken place in Winnipeg and other city constituencies of Manitoba, it is a safe presumption that a general election will take place in that province within the next few weeks. Premier Norris, owing to the resignation under unusual circumstances of the late government, is in the peculiar position of being at the head of a government which has not the support of the majority of the members of the legislature, and he has evidently come to the conclusion that in order to obtain the endorsement of the people and to secure a majority in the House, it is necessary that the legislature should be dissolved and an election held before the House meets again. Two important investigations are being held at the present time before royal commissions in Manitoba, one investigating the over-payments in connection with the construction of the parliament buildings and the other a charge that a corrupt deal involving a sum of \$50,000 was made at the time of the change of government. These commissions will no doubt conclude their labors and the public will be in possession of the full facts of the case before the appeal to the people is made, and if this is so there will be few people who will not admit the entire propriety of the new government in calling an election. The Liberal party under the leadership of Mr. Norris came before the people a year ago with a very progressive platform and all believers in Democracy are anxious to see that platform crystalized in legislative enactments. Mr. Norris and other members of the cabinet have asserted their intention of putting their platform into effect when the legislature meets and if they succeed in gaining the support of the electors of the province, as seems entirely likely, the next session of the Manitoba legislature will be one full of interest. It is not necessary for the government to wait, however, until the House meets in order to begin putting its platform into effect. The pledge has been given to hold a Referendum on the question of prohibition and we would suggest to the government that there would be no better time for the holding of this referendum than at the coming provincial elections. If the referendum is delayed until after the House meets, either a special election will have to be called or action will have to be delayed until the next provincial elections which may not be for another four or five years. By taking a referendum at the time of the provincial election a great deal of expense will be avoided and in fact the cost will be practically nothing, except the printing of a special ballot paper. We submit that in following this course the Norris government would not only be giving the people an opportunity to get rid of the liquor traffic if they so desire, but it would also be giving a most substantial proof of its determination to carry out the other planks in its platform. There are those who remember that the Conservative party got into power in Manitoba on a prohibition platform, but once it had secured office it lost its temperance zeal and neglected to carry out its promise. There are also those who believe that the Liberal government will hesitate to carry out its promises and the holding of an immediate referendum to enable the people of Manitoba to say whether or not they desire to see the sale of liquor abolished in the province would do much to create confidence in the new government.

The Prohibition Bill in Alberta is misnamed "The Liquor Act." To vote for prohibition Alberta electors on July 21 must vote "yes" in answer to the question; "Are you in favor of the Liquor Act?"

FLEECING FARMERS ON WOOL PRICES

Farmers with wool to sell will have noticed that some juggling has been going on recently in the wool market. Early in May the Canadian government placed an embargo on all exportation of wool from Canada to countries other than Great Britain, her colonies or protectorates. Immediately this went into effect manufacturers and wool dealers in Canada dropped their prices from eight to ten cents per pound. Why should they do this? Canada imports wool and at the time of the placing of the embargo several manufacturers were buying wool at from 26 to 30 cents per pound on the American market. Evidently patriotism does not play a very important part in the manufacturers' policy whenever the chance of profit is in sight.

The placing of the embargo on wool was a splendid opportunity for wool manufacturers to increase their stocks at the expense of the farmer and this they promptly did. On May 31 the complete embargo was lifted and arrangements were made so that shipments might be made to the United States subject to the approval of the customs authorities at Ottawa. This did away with the excuse which manufacturers had for lowering prices, but little immediate change in price took place. It was extremely unfortunate that the time chosen for placing this temporary embargo upon wool exports was just when the Eastern clip was being marketed and manufacturers were contracting with Western farmers for their season's offerings. There seemed, at the time of putting the embargo into effect, to have been reasonably good grounds for this governmental action altho two or three weeks later, after pressing representations had been made by farmers' organizations showing the harmful effect of the order, the complete embargo was raised. But the way in which prices were dropped and later kept down when not even the hollow excuse of government intervention was tenable has no justification whatever. Thinking men realized long ago that farmers were being fleeced in a great many more ways than by depressing wool prices. How long will it take the farmers as a body to awake to the various ways in which they are being imposed upon?

AN AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

The appointment of a royal commission to investigate the question of increased agricultural production in the Dominion is announced by the Dominion government. The commission is being appointed as a result of the request made by the conference of mayors held at Ottawa some weeks ago and it is stated that Premier Borden himself recommended the appointment of the commission to the cabinet. The personnel of the commission has not yet been announced, but the lines along which the investigation is to proceed have been outlined by the government, and it is suggested that consideration should be given to the instruction of farmers with a view to the adoption of improved methods of production, the adoption of a type of immigration which would aid in insuring a large and permanent agricultural population, the stimulation and encouragement of co-operation among the producers and the provision of cold storage and abattoir facilities. The transportation question and the securing of wider markets will also come within the scope of the enquiry. The government is acting wisely in the appointment of this commission, and it can only be regretted that the step was not taken last November when the request was made by the representatives of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association and the organized farmers. In order that

good results may be achieved the commission must be composed of able, broad-minded men who will conscientiously seek to discover the solution of the question and not merely to bring out facts which will support ideas to which they have already made up their minds. It is to be presumed that the sittings of the commission will be held in public and that the commissioners will sit in various parts of the country and hear the evidence and arguments of all those who desire to appear before them. There is just one feature of the statement issued by the government that we do not altogether like the look of. It is the observation that "no proposal which would deter capital from seeking investment in this country or which would unfairly affect that already invested under established conditions would in the final result assist Canadian producers in any branch of industry." From this declaration it is to be feared that the government will not be prepared to receive any recommendations which may endanger so-called vested interests. It is recognized by all reasonable people that land speculation is one of the greatest obstacles to increased agricultural production, but the stock argument of the apologist of the land speculator is that nothing must be done by way of taxation or otherwise which would tend to make speculation unattractive or to lessen the profits of the man who has bought land in this country and expects to reap large returns without putting the land to productive use. It should be pointed out in this connection that if agriculture is made more attractive and more profitable by improved methods of cultivation, by co-operation, by the improvement of transportation or the securing of better markets, the immediate result will be to increase the value of the vacant farm lands of Canada and thus make profit for those who are standing in the way of progress by holding vacant lands for a rise in price. It would seem to be reasonable that if land is increased in value by the wisdom of the government or the industry of the farmers, the community at large should get the benefits resulting, but under present conditions a very large proportion of the benefits would go into the pockets of land speculators, and there is a serious danger that the immigrants who are attracted to this country after the war will be held up as soon as they attempt to buy land and made to pay an exorbitant price for it.

THE GUIDE CROP REPORT

The first crop report, which was filled in on May 29 by over 750 local secretaries of the Grain Growers' Associations and the United Farmers of Alberta was a great success. The completed report was commented upon most favorably from a number of influential sources and the object of the scheme received commendation from all quarters. A report issued actually by the farmers themselves covering crop conditions in every part of the three Western Provinces will, in time, be recognized as absolutely reliable and will thus do away largely with the manipulation of the grain market to the detriment of the farmer. The second blank crop report form has been sent out and every secretary will have received one before this issue of The Guide is published. The plan followed in filling out these reports in many instances is for the secretary to discuss the various questions each contains at the regular meeting of the local Association. Thus every member can offer his opinion and an unquestionably accurate report is the result. Of course, each reader will realize that the value of the report depends directly upon the number of individual local Associations heard from, so that to make this second report a complete