

# The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, February 20, 1918

## The Saskatchewan Convention

The present year seems to be one for making new records among the Grain Growers' organizations. The Saskatchewan Grain Growers' convention held in Regina last week surpassed all others in the number of delegates attending, both at the men's convention and the women's. The four days devoted to the work of the convention were occupied by deliberations on questions which will vitally effect the welfare of all Canada. For the past year the members and officers have been considering and studying these questions and their mature judgment was crystallized in resolution form. The Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Convention has come to be one of the very greatest meetings of public importance in that province. It is representative of the people who create almost the entire wealth of the province. The welfare of any province can never be better cared for than by those who till the soil.

It was significant that the great body of delegates in Saskatchewan were of one mind with the sister organizations in Manitoba and Alberta, on the question of controlling the railways and placing farm machinery on the free list. Both these great achievements can be brought about if the organized farmers of Canada are determined upon it. The farmers of Canada have never realized their political strength. Some day they will do so, and there will be a big change in political affairs.

Probably the most significant and encouraging feature of the whole convention was the large attendance at the women's convention. Without in any way belittling the importance of the men's organizations, we believe that in the development of the highest type of civilization in this western country the women will play the more important part. Being less accustomed to public meetings and discussions on public affairs, the women's organizations may not grow so rapidly. They, however, will not only be a factor in the solution of problems which the men deal with, but they will bring to bear a new viewpoint on social, moral and spiritual matters, which is bound to bring about an evolution in the rural civilization of the West. Nothing of greater importance to rural welfare has happened in recent years than the organization of independent associations of farm women. Every well wisher will encourage and aid them in the great work they have before them.

## Democracy in the Balance

Steadily throughout Canada public opinion turns towards the nationalization of railways. There seems now to be a fairly general agreement that the government should take over and operate the Canadian Northern, the Grand Trunk and the Grand Trunk Pacific. These three linked up with the Intercolonial would make a great national transcontinental system. The reason most people favor the nationalization of these roads is that they are a financial failure under private ownership. But the big financial and commercial interests are opposed to nationalizing the C.P.R. They want it to remain a private corporation with increased freight rates to enable it to pay huge dividends and large surpluses. The increase in freight rates as a rule does not worry the big interests, as it is the consumer who finally pays them.

It is of much greater importance to the people of Canada that the C.P.R. should be nationalized than that the other roads should be taken over. Privately-owned railways have always been the enemy of government-owned roads. The C.P.R. as a private corporation would eminently prefer the failure of government roads because its own position would then be more secure. It is natural that

the influence of the C.P.R. would oppose the success of the government system, and it is well known in Canada that the influence of the C.P.R. is mighty powerful. The inclusion of the C.P.R. in the nationalization scheme is really what makes it most desirable. The supporters of the C.P.R. say that public ownership of railways has been a failure. Here is where they lose their case. In Canada the C.N.R. and the G.T.P. have been a colossal failure under private ownership in spite of all their assistance from the public treasury. In the United States the whole system of privately-owned railways has broken down and the government was forced to take them over to save the nation from disaster. The railway difficulty in the United States in the last few weeks has not been due to government action, but instead to the desperate condition of the railways when the government took them over. These outstanding examples of failure under private ownership more than counterbalance any failures under public ownership.

The C.P.R. is the outstanding successful privately-owned railway. But why is it such a success? Simply because the people of Canada have given the C.P.R., out of the public treasury and the public resources, cash, land grants, constructed railways, tax exemptions and other concessions that capitalized today total \$450,000,000. This huge sum is practically enough to build the whole C.P.R. system from coast to coast. In addition to all this, however, the C.P.R. has been allowed high freight rates, to pay ten per cent. dividends on all its capital and to earn in addition no less than \$100,000,000 in surpluses in the last seven years. This explains fully the C.P.R. success which is not due to private ownership, but to the generosity and prodigality of Canadian politicians.

Nearly one-fourth of the mileage of the C.P.R. is in the United States. This portion has already been taken over by the American government without any protest from the C.P.R., as protests would have been useless. A protest is being made in Canada where C.P.R. influence is powerful.

Then there are those, and they are numerous, who say Canada could not take over the C.P.R. because of its tremendous cost. This argument is ridiculous. The government would merely have to assume the liability for the \$260,000,000 capital stock of the C.P.R. and the payment of interest on bonds. It would be a far easier and a better business proposition than taking over either the C.N.R. or the G.T.P. In fact it is the only good argument in favor of taking over these two poverty-stricken railroads. The huge profits on the C.P.R. would more than make up the losses on the other two roads and there would be no need of any increase in freight rates. Every country on earth except Canada has nationalized its railways. Canada would do the same were the C.P.R. not so powerful. There is a grim struggle now going on to determine whether the government will own the C.P.R. or the C.P.R. own the government. Every local Grain Growers' and United Farmers' organization should put its views into shape and forward them to the government at Ottawa immediately. The government is hearing arguments on the case on the first day of March and the question no doubt will be settled within a few weeks. Prompt action is necessary to see that it is settled right.

Sir Joseph Flavelle, who made the huge profits out of war orders on pork, still holds his job as head of the Imperial Munitions Board. Why the government does not insist on a change it is hard to understand, but Joseph still holds his job, his title and his pork.

## Fighting Starvation

To encourage food production and help avert starvation in Europe the Dominion government has taken the duty off farm tractors. This applies to tractors costing not more than \$1400 at point of shipment in the United States. This would include tractors selling up to \$2200 or thereabouts in Western Canada. The duty on tractors has been 27½ per cent. The removal of the duty will lower the retail price probably about 22 per cent, or rather better than a fifth. A reduction of from \$250 to \$400 in the price of tractors will greatly increase the sale and will bring more land under the plow. The government has made a big step in the right direction and deserves credit for its action.

Somebody should have been present at Ottawa, however, to tell the government that a tractor is not much good unless it is hitched onto a plow and that plows are still taxed 27½ per cent. duty. The same truth applies to all other agricultural machinery. If the government is seriously in earnest it will place all other agricultural machinery on the free list at once. A large importer of agricultural implements gave us the following figures showing the cost of the duty. A twelve-inch gang plow, now selling at \$118.00 would sell at \$93.00 if the duty were removed. A double disc drill now selling at \$204.00 would sell at \$161.00 if the duty were removed. A farm wagon now selling at \$154.00 would sell at \$117.00 if the duty were removed. A small gas engine now selling at \$63.00 would sell at \$47.00 if the duty were removed. These are merely typical figures to show what the duty costs the farmer.

Some thoughtless people remark, "Oh, farmers are prosperous, they can pay these prices." True, some farmers are prosperous, but there are tens of thousands of them struggling between success and failure. The extra \$25.00 tax on a plow will prevent hundreds of farmers from buying and the extra \$43.00 tax on a seeder will mean many less seeders in use. The cheaper the machinery the more will be used.

The food required cannot be produced without the use of the machinery. The government has recognized this fact by purchasing one thousand tractors which it is announced will be sold to farmers at cost, plus freight, or about \$800 each. This government action will result in increased acreage and a bigger yield of grain, but every indication points to a great food shortage no matter how big is Western Canada's crop, and in 1919, war or peace, the shortage will be even greater. The farmers of the West will do their part. Women and old men will be working on the farms of the West this year in greater numbers than ever before. But the tax on agricultural implements will reduce the yield by some millions of bushels. It will mean starvation to some unfortunate people in Europe. Is the government of Canada prepared to starve human beings in order to retain the duty on agricultural implements?

## Polish People Are Starving

Probably no part of Europe has suffered so much as Poland from the ravages of the war. It is said that nearly all children in Poland under five years of age died from the hardships and exposure of the first two years of the war. Today the Polish people are being starved by the enemy to force their sympathies against the Allies. There is a big Polish army fighting in France, and another is being recruited in Canada and the United States today. While they are fighting for the Allies, ten million of their people at home are facing starvation. The Guide will accept and forward