

THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE

AND HOME MAGAZINE

* AGRICULTURE, STOCK, DAIRY, POULTRY, HORTICULTURE, VETERINARY, HOME CIRCLE. *

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Editorial.

Misinterpreting the Grain Act.

It is seldom that any legislative enactment affecting the commercial interests of the country has met such unfair, if not unintelligent, criticism as the recent amendments to the Grain Act. In his address at the annual meeting of Winnipeg Board of Trade, the retiring President in referring to the Grain Act, said:

"I would be failing in my duty did I not call the attention of this board to one of the provisions of the Act which deals with the distribution of cars for the loading of grain at country stations. The provisions of this clause are such that any person owning and operating an elevator at any station can, under the law, only have the certainty of receiving one car during the season of marketing before the close of navigation. The owner of the elevator may be willing to buy grain and pay full market prices therefor, provided there is a reasonable certainty that he will receive cars for moving forward grain that is purchased by him from time to time. Should he be unfortunate enough to fill his elevator with high-priced wheat early in the season, it is more than likely that he will be prevented from shipping such wheat to the lake front, by reason of the farmers, from whom he made his purchases, making application to the railway companies for cars, and although the farmers' applications are made subsequently to the application by the elevator company, the law is such that the farmers' applications must be filled in their entirety before the elevator company can receive a second car."

It is indeed surprising that any individual representing an institution so important and influential as the Board of Trade of Winnipeg, should attempt such a contortion of facts. The act is clear; it is explicit and easily understood by any intelligent person. It would be, therefore, unfair to leave the misrepresentation at the door of ignorance. It is unreasonable to state that the provisions are such that an elevator man can have only the certainty of receiving one car before the close of navigation, but when it is said that farmers' applications for cars, although made subsequent to those of elevator men, must first be filled in their entirety before the latter can receive a second car, there is an absolute misrepresentation of the case.

Where there is failure at any shipping point to fill all orders as quickly as required, the Act provides that the following order of distribution shall be observed: Beginning at the top of the list and proceeding downward to the last name entered, each applicant shall receive one car as quickly as they can be supplied. Then beginning at the top of the list of unfilled orders and proceeding downward again to the bottom of the list, giving each person whose name appears on the order book as having unfilled orders one car; and the above method, beginning at the top of the list of unfilled orders and proceeding downward to the last name entered on the list, shall be followed until all orders have been filled; it being understood at all times that no applicant shall receive more than one car in any one round.

This ought to be clear enough to anyone who is satisfied to face the facts. The working of the Grain Act during the last season has not proven

that it is unfair to any class, and if anyone has objections to raise they can only expect sympathy from intelligent men of moderate views by an absolute adherence to the unadulterated truth. We would suggest that interested parties who are not yet perfectly familiar with the much-talked-of Grain Act procure a copy without delay and study it.

The West and the Railway Commission.

That the Government has seen fit to appoint a Railway Commission must be a source of satisfaction to all true Canadians; it is, however, unfortunate that the Commission is made up of Eastern men solely. Individually, perhaps, the appointments may be beyond criticism, but a very serious mistake has been made by the non-recognition of the country west of Lake Superior—the portion of Canada that has lacked railway competition in the past, and has suffered severely as a consequence. Only a Westerner can be expected to fully understand Western conditions and needs, and while the gentlemen appointed are undoubtedly bright, brainy men in their respective walks of life, they are all lacking in a knowledge of the conditions existing in the West. Such a knowledge cannot be acquired by a week's trip through the prairie country. The Eastern part of Canada has, in addition to the farmers, a large manufacturing community, with organizations, such as Boards of Trade, carefully watching their interests, in the way of legislation, rates, etc. As a result, grievances, when existing or supposed to exist, have usually been remedied with comparatively little delay. Not so in the West! So acute have been the troubles arising out of our transportation problems that governments have risen and fallen thereby. Improved transportation has been the slogan of both political parties. There remains, however, much to be done, and it is hoped that the Commission will be able to throw all the light necessary on this great problem, on which the welfare and progress of the West is dependent. The members of the Commission have the opportunity, by the full exercise of the legal powers, in redressing grievances, etc., with which they are clothed, to demonstrate to Western as well as Eastern Canada that although they are laboring under the disability of lack of knowledge regarding the West, they can produce results so that the country as a whole will be satisfied that the money laid out on commissioners' salaries, expenses, etc., will have been money well expended.

Canadian Wheat in England.

It is stated by The Miller, the leading periodical of the English grain and flour trade, that a marked improvement is noted in the quality of samples of Canadian wheat recently to hand there. "We have taken," says our contemporary, "the trouble to examine a number of recent arrivals and compare them with made-up standards, and in the majority of instances, especially in No. 2 Northern, arrivals are much superior to the standards. We have proved to our own satisfaction that wheats bought on Winnipeg inspection are entirely to be relied upon, and it now remains for individual buyers to make their demands accordingly. In the last three years our imports of Canadian wheat have advanced in value from £2,216,000 to £3,700,000, and of wheat meal and flour from £600,000 to £1,200,000, while in every instance the corresponding imports from the United States have declined."

Are Farmers "Kickers."

At the recent convention of Grain-growers held at Brandon, one of the speakers remarked that farmers were "kickers." The idea is by no means a new one; in fact, it is very old, for we have been accustomed to hearing as far back as we can remember, those who are not farmers, speaking, from a self-assumed standpoint of superiority, of farmers as a lot of grumblers. Why farmers should be regarded as grumblers above all other classes is a question which requires some thought to answer. That farmers are kickers in the sense meant we regard as a libel. That they are as a class struggling manfully for just recognition of their claims and their place in commercial and social circles, and for liberty of action and independence, is a circumstance which their intelligent actions in united organization has in later times been brought prominently before the world.

The amount of attention directed to the subject is, perhaps, one of the chief reasons why farmers are regarded as kickers. There is, however, a deeper and a more concrete reason why certain classes should regard agriculturists as grumblers; that is, in the sense that they make demands which they are not reasonably entitled to make. The concessions now made to the industry by legislative corporations from the council to the government, compared with the position fifty years ago, proves that at that period the lot of farmers must have been a most unjust one. Previous to that tillers of the soil were barely regarded as belonging to the genus man. Education was regarded as unnecessary to the followers of the occupation. In older countries landlordism prevailed with an unjustness and a tyranny which could only be practiced where ignorance gave consent. The march of civilization and progress, however, reached all classes; the schoolmaster got abroad, and his influence has been felt ever since. Those in commercial circles who ate the fruit which the farmer sowed, nurtured and reaped, were made to relinquish what they had regarded through long usage as belonging to them by right. The claims of the industry of agriculture, and the individual claims of those engaged in it, are now becoming recognized to an extent compatible with justice. The recognition of these claims was not gained, however, without energetic efforts on the part of farmers, nor without strenuous organized opposition from those who were thereby losing that part of their income which was demanded by agriculturists as their just right. They designated farmers a lot of grumblers, and tried to make an argument of the designation to the effect that there were no just grounds for such grumbling. So it has gone on ever since. American slang has been borrowed to substitute the older epithet in Canadian journalism, and elevator men, grain buyers, pork-packers, and dealers in every article produced on the farm, take up the cry whenever farmers make a demand for just treatment.

We do not mean by this to glorify farmers above all or any other class; but we maintain that they as a class have made no demand which is unreasonable, and the fact that nearly all demands made in a regular and organized way have been conceded proves this to be the case. There is, of course, amongst farmers cranks and kickers, as there is in every other class, but that they are kickers above all other classes is untrue, and is a libel originated and spread by those whose business policy it is to give such an explanation of agricultural demands.