

Alberta

This Section of The Guide is conducted officially for the United Farmers of Alberta by
P. P. Woodbridge, Secretary, Calgary, Alberta

AN OPEN LETTER TO FARMERS

Calgary, Alta.,
Sept. 18, 1913.

Gentlemen:

A short time ago a special circular was issued from this office advising all farmers that as a result of representations made by the U.F.A. the Grain Growers' Grain Company had consented to open up a produce department on the Public Market, thus providing the farmers with a reliable medium of getting in direct touch with the purchasing public of Calgary. Last Saturday, following my usual custom, I was one of the six or seven thousand people who visited the Calgary Public Market for the purpose of buying good clean eatables for home consumption. I walked all through the market and noticed particularly the general good quality of the goods offered for sale. I had almost completed the round when I came to the stall with the name of the Grain Growers' Grain Company over it, and which is supposed to represent the U.F.A. My feeling of satisfaction suddenly ceased to exist, and for the first time since I have been connected with the organization I was ashamed of the position I held. Offered for sale on that stall, which nearly every citizen of Calgary knows has been started for the U.F.A., and which they, therefore, take as representative of the produce of the U.F.A., were a number of articles, which for the sake of the lesson which must be driven home, I will describe one by one:

First of all I noticed a pile of radishes. They had been shipped in a gunny sack. They were dirty and on closer investigation proved to be soft and pliable to the touch. Next was a pile of lettuce. This also had been shipped in a gunny sack and was badly bruised and wilted. Following that were some turnips of the green top variety, huge clumsy things, very dirty, malformed in their growth and all shapes and sizes. Next to that was a pile of carrots, also very dirty. The carrots were of the giant variety, clumsy in appearance and certainly very far from tempting. There were also some beets of fair quality, likewise some eggs, which on the whole were not too bad, though some were not exactly clean. A little further on was a stand claiming to represent one of our prominent Unions. On this stand was poultry of uncertain age, scalded and the skin badly broken. The crop of the bird, full of grain or other matter, had assumed a nasty green tinge. On any Old Country market the birds would have been condemned out of hand. All these things were offered for sale to the public of Calgary, who were there at the market in their thousands with the idea of purchasing something to place on their tables, possibly to be eaten by some visitors whom they had invited to lunch.

A little further on was a stall run by a Japanese colony of small farmers living just outside the city. Beautiful fresh lettuce, brought to the market in crates. Radishes washed and neatly tied in bundles. Carrots of a small, tempting variety, washed and put up for sale in the same way. Beautiful white eating turnips of uniform size and formation, likewise washed and tied in bundles. Turnips of the yellow swede variety even in size and shape. Beets and a number of other things in a similar condition. Everything done to make the articles as tempting and nice looking for the purchasing public as possible. What a comparison! The exhibit of the despised Jap, the "Chink," as he is often called, and alongside it the exhibit of the Alberta farmer, the exponent of co-operation, representing the foremost agricultural organization of the West, the United Farmers of Alberta.

The farmer throughout Western Canada casts longing eyes at the distant markets. He thinks if he could only get them he would make all kinds of money, yet here in the city of Calgary is a direct opportunity for him to use an open market and sell direct to the consumer without any middle man, and the above stuff, faithfully described, is what he sends for exhibition on that market. Is it any wonder that the wholesaler and retailer will not accept shipments of Alberta stuff when they are liable to be loaded up with rubbish of that kind as the Grain Growers' Grain Company was last Saturday? With the possibility of being favored with such stuff as that, one cannot blame the wholesaler and the retailer for going away down to far off California, Oregon, Washington and B.C. for stuff which can be grown equally well or even better in Alberta, the only difference being that in those States the wholesaler knows he is dealing with men who will ship nothing but the best, who will put it up in good shape and pack it carefully so that it will not be damaged in a journey of even thousands of miles, whereas, if one may judge from last Saturday's exhibit—but enough has already been said about that. If last Saturday is to be taken as representative of what the Alberta farmers can do, the sooner the U.F.A. ceases to work for the establishment of open markets and co-operative distributing centres, the better for the reputation of the province.

Let us turn to the brighter side of the question and see how easily all this can be changed with very little additional trouble to the farmer, which will pay him over and over again, and at the same time establish a reputation for him in his home market, which will first banish the imported stuff from that home market and at the same time provide the opportunity

for him to invade the foreign market. The farmer's radishes on being pulled could be swilled in water, perhaps left in water for a couple of hours to make them crisp and firm, then packed in crates, which would protect them from bruising and at the same time permit of the circulation of air. Under such conditions, radishes would reach their destination as if fresh picked, though the train journey might last three or four days. The same can be done with lettuce, and it is sold in the stores here in Calgary from far off California almost as if it had just been picked from the garden, when as likely as not it has taken a week to get here. Instead of ugly, malformed, green top turnips, the farmer can grow white or swede turnips. He can go through his fields, pull the moderate sized turnips of the best shape, place them in running water and send them to market in a gunny sack if he likes, but let that be clean and he can compare with any that is grown. The balance of his field, consisting of the big turnips and the malformed ones, he can keep at home and feed to his cattle and hogs. The same applies to carrots, beets and other roots. His eggs can be made clean and attractive and will easily bring him five cents a dozen more if he will only see that the nests have a little straw or clean material in them for the hens to lay on. If he will only keep brown eggs as brown eggs and white eggs as white ones, marketing only those of a uniform size and keeping the very large or very small eggs for home consumption. Poultry must be starved twenty-four hours before killing and must be hand picked, for scalding prevents them from keeping in good condition. If scalding has to be resorted to, it can be done in such a way that the skin will not be broken and the feathers will come away quite easily. I have sold scalded birds of my own on the Calgary market, twenty-four hours after the scalding had been done and after having covered thirty miles of frozen road in a wagon, and none but an expert could have told them from the other birds in the same boxes which had been carefully hand picked. All these things can be done with very little trouble at the initial stage. They mean more money to the farmer who does it and it means the first step in the regaining of the home market which you have lost and which must be regained before access is won to the foreign market.

I have heard one of the highest officials in the city make a statement at a public meeting that the majority of the farmers of Alberta did not know the first thing about farming. At the time I rose somewhat heatedly to my feet on the platform and denied the statement. Since last Saturday I would be afraid to do it for fear I should be referred to that particular exhibit. We who are trying to fight your battles in the city would prefer to be able to answer such statements by pointing with pride to our exhibit on the Calgary Public Market and effectively shutting the mouths of our critics with an exhibit which cannot be equalled.

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this particular Saturday certainly cannot be accepted.

What are you going to do about it?

The following report has been received from the Onoway Local Union No. 131:

Our September meeting was quite a success and we again feel more contented over our Union's future. We do not agree with Cornucopia's resolution re primaries, but would support a resolution asking for legislation which would give more time between dissolution and nomination day. The resolution, as worded, includes the political machine, something the U.F.A. does not like. We are entirely in favor of the pork packing proposition, so please send along blanks to be filled up.

The following resolutions met with our support—

Strathmore Union No. 58 re C.P.R. lands and school districts, etc.

Cowley Union No. 497 re defective cattle guards.

Blackfoot Union re surtax on land held by speculators.

A. A. BROWN, Secretary.

The pork packing proposition seems to be meeting with general favor and a large number of inquiries have been received from all over the province. We have just received a new supply of agreements for the supplying of the hogs, and are in a position to send any number which may be required. We have also received a further supply of reports of the commission on this matter and would be glad to send additional copies of these wherever required.

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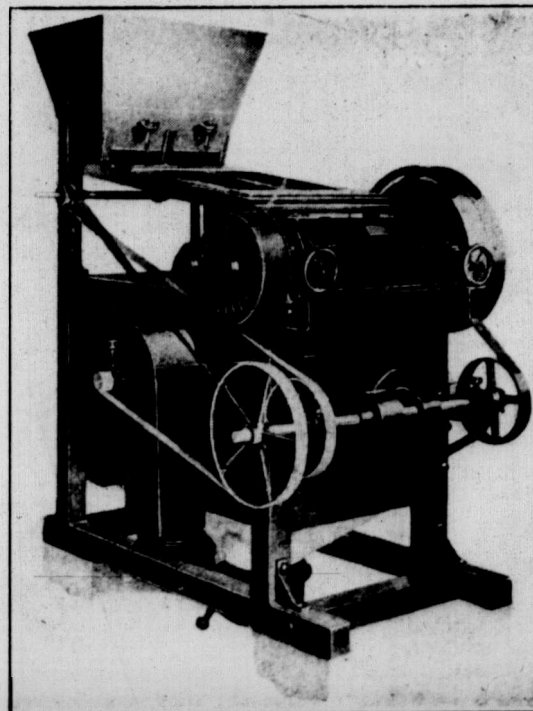
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