

## IN CANADIAN PRAIRIELAND.

Ceylon, Saskatchewan.

Western Canada is an acute sufferer from the high cost of living. Added to this, the congestion and demoralization of her freight traffic has well-nigh produced a crisis. Only Anglo-Saxon staying power, combined with the well known Western adaptability and dauntless optimism, prevents a crisis.

Canned goods sell at almost prohibitive prices; even dried fruits are a near-luxury. Home-produced meats, butter and eggs, depending on the local market, vary in price, from nothing to the utmost limit of the pocketbook. Cotton goods are said to be higher than in any other civilized country, and lumber is as high and farm machinery 30 per cent higher than across the border. The price of draught horses takes your breath, and freight rates make you dizzy.

Now, don't take it from this that the back trail is lined with disheartened settlers. The toe marks all point westward and northward, and the procession still continues. But this terrible drain has caused Western optimism to pause and consider. Some of our troubles will disappear with a more symmetrical development that is bound to come later, but inefficient service and greedy monopolies are problems that call for special treatment. And the lines that self help has taken in these matters are both interesting and instructive.

The first fight—some dozen years ago—and the perennial struggle ever since have centered about the grain trade. The elevators and flour mills are the basis of Winnipeg's aristocracy. In the grain trade we have seen individualism rampant (on a monopoly foundation), government supervision, co-operation, and now we have the promise of government ownership. The signs point to a union of these last two as the final solution.

In the early days of robbing-elevators and irresponsible commission men a happy genius proposed a commission firm of farmers. The Grain Growers' Grain Company was the result, and now it is one of the largest dealers on the Winnipeg Exchange; its stock is held all over the prairie Provinces, and it is planning an entry into the lumber and other industries.

The Manitoba government has established a system of government (local) elevators, but these merely store and ship grain; they do not buy. Last year, in Saskatchewan, a co-operative company, backed by a 20-year government loan of 85 per cent of its capital stock, started business with 48 elevators, buying about a million bushels and shipping another million for the farmers. This year they hope to build a hundred more, and do a much larger proportionate business.

The Alberta farmers, after watching the two systems, have decided in favor of the co-operative system with government aid.

The present Federal ministry went into power last fall with a promise to acquire and operate as a public utility the great terminal elevators. That was conceded to be the only efficient preventive

of the mixing of low-grade wheat with higher, which is so profitable to the mixer but injures the wheat's reputation abroad and depresses the market at home. Now the Borden ministry find either that the job is too big or that the pressure of elevator interests is too great; for they have announced their intention to acquire some of the terminal elevators, a plan that the farmers assure him is perfectly unsatisfactory.

The Hudson Bay Railway, the long-cherished if somewhat dubious outlet to the sea, still claims our attention, but the West has steadfastly demanded that it be government built, owned and operated.

The Alberta farmers have long wanted to secure chilled meat plants to enable them to get their beef, pork and mutton to foreign markets. Private enterprise has neglected it, co-operation has not risen to it, and the Provincial government has fought shy of it. Last fall this was included in Borden's election promises. He hasn't got to it yet on the docket.

The three prairie Provinces have bought out the great Bell telephone system, and are operating the lines, for the most part successfully. Rural lines, groups of ten farmers, are encouraged to form co-operative units, leasing the poles of other groups to connect their wires with the long-distance.

A bill is now before the Saskatchewan legislature (a similar one has been asked by the farmers of Alberta) to provide government hail-insurance. The local governing divisions (rural municipalities) are to decide, each for itself, whether they shall take advantage of the protection afforded.

The Provincial governments have been very successful in their employment bureaus, by which every summer they distribute immense numbers of transient laborers to the harvest fields where they are needed. They have also undertaken to import farm laborers and domestics for permanent employment.

It is only a question of time when the general and bitter complaints of railway inefficiency and extortion, whether merited or not, shall crystallize in a demand for government railways. I believe a general acquaintance with the Australian system would bring about that consummation in five years.

Many of these problems, and at least one other, that of retail distribution, could be solved in a better way by co-operation—co-operation, so much talked of and so little practiced—but co-operators, impatient or discouraged at their slow progress, take the short cut and appeal to the government.

This is the Western way.

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## JUDGE-MADE LAW—BRITISH AND AMERICAN.

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In the recent discussion over the recall of judges, several correspondents, and perhaps the editor of The Public, made one statement not quite strictly true. In commenting upon the relative satisfaction