

FARMERS' PROPOSALS DRAWN UP

Drastic Tariff Revision, Reciprocity with United States, Free Trade with Great Britain, Recommended—Land Tax and Progressive Income Taxes—Council Declares for Public Ownership in Some Cases—Claim of Returned Soldiers Recognized

COMPREHENSIVE resolutions were drawn up by the Canadian Council of Agriculture, which met in Winnipeg, Manitoba, on Friday, November 29th. The council represents farmers of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

The resolutions, most of which relate to economic questions, constitute a political platform, not of one party, but rather of one interest. Hon. T. A. Crerar, Minister of Agriculture, was in attendance at the meeting of the council, of which he is a member.

The platform adopted reads as follows: The Canadian Council of Agriculture hereby recommend the following measures, adopted at their meeting in Winnipeg on November 29th, 1918:

(1) A League of Nations as an international organization to give permanence to the world's peace by removing old causes of conflict.

(2) We believe that the further development of the British Empire should be sought along the lines of partnership between nations free and equal, under the present governmental system of British constitutional authority. We are strongly opposed to any attempt to centralize Imperial control. Any attempt to set up an independent authority with power to bind the Dominions, whether this authority be termed Parliament, Council or Cabinet, would hamper the growth of responsible and informed democracy in the Dominions.

Agriculture Should be Promoted.

(3) Whereas Canada is now confronted with a huge national war debt and other greatly increased financial obligations, which can most readily and effectively be reduced by the development of our national resources, chief of which is agricultural lands;

And whereas it is desirable that an agricultural career should be made attractive to our returned soldiers and the large anticipated immigration, and owing to the fact that this can best be accomplished by the development of a national policy which will reduce to a minimum the cost of living and the cost of production;

And whereas the war has revealed the amazing financial strength of Great Britain, which has enabled her to finance not only her own part in the struggle, but also to assist in financing her allies to the extent of hundreds of millions of pounds, this enviable position being due to the free-trade policy which has enabled her to draw her supplies freely from every quarter of the globe, and consequently to undersell her competitors on the world's market, and because this policy has not only been profitable to Great Britain, but has greatly strengthened the bonds of Empire by facilitating trade between the Motherland and her overseas Dominions—we believe that the best interests of the Empire and of Canada would be served by reciprocal action on the part of Canada through gradual reductions of the tariff on British imports, having for its object a closer union and a better understanding between Canada and the Motherland, and at the same time being about a great reduction in the cost of living to our Canadian people;

Criticism of Tariff.

And whereas the protective tariff has fostered combines, trusts and "gentlemen's agreements" in almost every line of Canadian industrial enterprise, by means of which the people of Canada—both urban and rural—have been shamefully exploited through the elimination of competition, the ruination of many of our smaller industries and the advancement of prices on practically all manufactured goods to the full extent permitted by the tariff;

And whereas agriculture—the basic industry upon which the success of all other industries primarily depends—is unduly handicapped throughout Canada, as shown by the declining rural population in both Eastern and Western Canada, due largely to the greatly increased cost of agricultural implements, and machinery, clothing, boots and shoes, building material and practically everything the farmer has to buy, caused by the protective tariff, so that it is becoming impossible for farmers generally, under normal conditions, to carry on farming operations profitably;

And whereas the protective tariff is the most wasteful and costly method ever designed for raising national revenue, because for every dollar obtained thereby for the public treasury at least three dollars pass into the pockets of the protected interests, thereby building up a privileged class at the expense of the masses, thus making the rich richer and the poor poorer.

And whereas the protective tariff has been and is a chief corrupting influence in our national life because the protected interests, in order to maintain their unjust privileges, have contributed lavishly to political campaign funds, thus encouraging both political parties to look to them for support, thereby lowering the standard of public morality;

Recommendations—Tariff Proposals.

Therefore, be it resolved, that the Canadian Council of Agriculture, representing the organized farmers of Canada, urges that as a means of remedying these evils and bringing about much-needed social and economic reforms, our tariff laws should be amended as follows:

(a) By an immediate and substantial all-round reduction of the customs tariff.

(b) By reducing the customs duty on goods imported from Great Britain to one-half the rates charged under the General Tariff, and that further gradual uniform reductions be made in the remaining tariff on British imports that will ensure complete free trade between Great Britain and Canada in five years.

(c) That the reciprocity agreement of 1911, which will remain on the United States statute books be accepted by the Parliament of Canada.

(d) That all foodstuffs not included in the reciprocity agreement be placed on the free list.

(e) That agricultural implements, farm machinery, vehicles, fertilizers, coal, lumber, cement, illuminating fuel and lubricating oils be placed on the free list, and that all raw materials and machinery used in their manufacture also be placed on the free list.

(f) That all tariff concessions granted to other countries be immediately extended to Great Britain.

(g) That all corporations engaged in the manufacture of products protected by the customs tariff, be obliged to publish annually comprehensive and accurate statements of their earnings.

(h) That every claim for tariff protection by any industry should be heard publicly before a special committee of parliament.

(4) As these tariff reductions may very considerably reduce the national revenue from that source, the Canadian Council of Agriculture would recommend that in order to provide the necessary additional revenue for carrying on the government of the country, and for the bearing of the cost of the war, direct taxation be imposed in the following manner:

Direct Tax on Land Values.

(a) By a direct tax on unimproved land values, including all natural resources.

(b) By a graduated personal income tax.

(c) By a graduated inheritance tax on large estates.

(d) By a graduated income tax on the profits of corporations.

(e) That in levying and collecting the business profits tax the Dominion government should insist that it be absolutely upon the basis of the actual cash invested in the business, and that no consideration be allowed for what is popularly known as watered stock.

(f) That no more natural resources be alienated from the Crown, but brought into use only under short-term leases, in which the interests of the public shall be properly safeguarded, such leases to be granted only by public auction.

(5) With regard to the returned soldier we urge:—

(a) That it is the recognized duty of Canada to exercise all due diligence for the future well being of the returned soldier and his dependants.

(b) That demobilization should take place only after return to Canada.