

United Farmers of Alberta

First U.F.A. Convention

THE Edmonton Journal, in a recent issue, says editorially:—

"No person has lived in Western Canada in this past decade who does not appreciate to some extent the vast change in conditions here that has been brought about in that period by the organized movement of the farmers."

"It is made clear that the greatest of the early difficulties which those who originated and carried through to their present standing the various enterprises described had to contend with were furnished by those whom they were seeking to benefit. They had to be given confidence in themselves and in their own powers of initiative."

"It is just 10 years this coming January since the farmers of Alberta were united in one organization, and two officials of

Conducted Officially for the United Farmers of Alberta by the Secretary.

H. Higginbotham, Calgary, Alta.

The Grain Growers' Grain Company visited the convention held in the Mechanics' Hall, on Third Street, Edmonton, at which this union was consummated, and established the first direct connection of the province with the company.

"One of these was E. A. Partridge, whose idea it was to form this co-operative trading concern, and who was the head of it during its first years of struggle. Less than three years before the Edmonton convention it had come into existence

in the little Saskatchewan village of Sintaluta, near which Mr. Partridge had his farm. When he was in Edmonton he was suffering from the effects of a serious accident sustained the previous summer while operating his binder. Some of those who listened to his speech at that gathering, with all its nervous energy, its patent earnestness and its clear phrasing, felt sure that something really big was likely to come from the pioneering task to which he had set his hand.

"Accompanying him was a man of a different type, T. A. Cresser, now minister of agriculture in the Union Government at Ottawa. A tall, fine-looking young fellow, quiet, but forceful in his manner, nothing could be further removed from the old conception of the 'hayseed.' They made an excellent team."

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Origin of the "U.F.A."

An Account of the amalgamation of the old Alberta Farmers' Association with the Society of Equity—By Rice Sheppard, 4th Vice-President, U.F.A.

No doubt most members of the United Farmers of Alberta know that prior to 1909 two farmers associations were in existence in Alberta, one known as the Alberta Farmers' Association, the other as the Canadian Society of Equity. The aims and objects of both were very similar; both were working to improve the conditions under which western farmers and their families were living at that time, and it mattered but little which organization served the farming community. Both were accepted as a means of improving conditions, so that at some points, the Alberta Farmers' Association was operating, and at others the Society of Equity, but this soon caused misunderstanding and some friction and duplication of effort. While the efforts of neither organization were as effectual as it would have been with a united force.

Both organizations were started in the province in the year 1905, and the first few years' work called for the greatest patience and determination. It was fortunate for the farmers that their leaders possessed both, and in spite of opposition and discouragements, they marched forward, battering down barricades, bridging gulfs and straightening many crooked highways. Resolutions and petitions by the score were formulated and presented to both Provincial and Dominion governments, and soon attention was paid to important matters presented.

There were the questions of markets for pork and beef, grain grades, dockage at elevator, transportation facilities, car distribution, loading platforms, the proper fencing of railways, damages for the killing of horses and cattle on railways, proper fire guards, the need of better roads, bridges and ferries, more branch railways for the settlers, etc., etc. All these matters were urgently taken up, and some results obtained, but the campaign was not as successful as it would have been with united effort.

Obstacles in the Way

Some leaders of both organizations realized this fact and put forth efforts at different times to bring it about. The first attempt was made in October, 1906, when a convention of both associations was called at Lacombe, Alberta, but the convention was not successful in bringing about the amalgamation, the principal reason being that the Society of Equity wished to create a Dominion-wide organization, while the

Alberta Farmers' Association wished to confine their efforts to Alberta. Another difficulty was the choice of name. Several of those working for the amalgamation were very disappointed at the failure, and never gave up the hope that some day the two would become one. Two years more passed before it became a real, live question again. A resolution in favor of a further effort at amalgamation was introduced by Strathcona local at the Calgary Convention of the Alberta Farmers' Association. This passed almost unanimously, and a Convention was later called in Edmonton, at which a successful amalgamation took place.

The question of a name was a big one; more time and thought perhaps was given to that question than any other. It was considered of such importance that a special committee was appointed to suggest a suitable name, and present their findings next day. This committee was in session from eight o'clock in the evening until one o'clock next morning, before an agreement was arrived at. All sorts of names were offered such as, "The Alberta Farmers' Equity Union," "The Alberta Farmers' Equity Association," "The Farmers' Union of Equity," and finally, at one o'clock in the morning, the name, "The United Farmers of Alberta, our motto, Equity," was presented, and on the motion of George McDonald, of Olds, who made quite a stirring address as to its merits, it was unanimously agreed that the committee recommend that name to the Convention. The name was accepted by the Convention almost unanimously.

It has been felt by some members of that committee that the amalgamation of these two early organizations was a very important event in the history of the association, and that some day when the history of the association came to be written it should form a part, and so steps were taken to get together photos of the members of the committee on amalgamation so that they could be preserved and reproduced. Two of its members have crossed the Great Divide, Director George McDonald, of Olds, and Director George Long, of Edmonton. Both were enthusiastic members and much beloved by the association. Almost all the rest of the committee are still active in the U.F.A. work, and the hope of all is that the name "United Farmers," will represent the United Farmers of the Dominion of Canada in the near future.



UNITED FARMERS & EQUITY ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA

The Committee representing the Alberta Farmers Association and The Farmers Society of Equity responsible for the Amalgamation of the two associations now known as The United Farmers of Alberta.