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THE SASKATCHEWAN LABOR'S REALM

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EDITOR.

## Honore J. Jaxon at Farmers' Convention

**Veteran of the Reform Movement Under Two Flags Makes Powerful Appeal for the Protection of the Interests of the Real Producers of Wealth—Advocates United Action by Farmers and City Workers**

When Honore Joseph Jaxon made his re-appearance in the north west, after twenty-two years' absence in the social uplift movement of the United States, he perhaps had little idea that his first work as conveyor of fraternal greetings from the Western Federation of Miners to the 23rd annual convention of the Canadian Trades and Labor Congress would be quickly followed by his getting again into the harness on his native heath. Yet on revisiting the scenes of his early adventures around the now defunct Fort Carlton it would appear that he has again become interested as a settler; and the fact that the Carlton district farmers elected Mr. Jaxon as their delegate to the convention of agricultural society representatives, summoned by the provincial government to meet at Regina during the past month, has led to some interesting exhibitions of the old war horses' understanding of industrial conditions in the Northwest.

One of the interesting episodes of the convention was the introduction of a striking resolution in regard to the Hudson's Bay route—as a safeguard for the farming interests of the province—by delegate Honore J. Jaxon of the Carlton Agricultural Society. In view of the fact that Mr. Jaxon's last sojourn in Regina, some twenty-two years ago, consisted in his being tried for treason on the charge of his having signed, as secretary of the Metis council during the Louis Riel war of 1885, the summons of the Metis to Fort Carlton to surrender, it is a curious instance of the whirligig of fate that on the present occasion he came to the convention as the representative elected by the Carlton society. Another curious coincidence consisted in the fact that while Mr. Jaxon, as secretary of the resolutions committee had been asked to the platform to read and explain the resolutions to the convention, the chairman who sat by his side—President Robert Sinton, of the Saskatchewan Stock Breeders' association—had been one of the soldiers who, a little later on in the Riel campaign, had marched out of Fort Carlton just before Mr. Jaxon and the Metis force marched in. It was very evident from the present cordiality between the two gentlemen that any hostility which might have existed on the former occasion had now become metamorphosed into a very pleasant mutual interest such as might prove a very edifying exhibit for the Hague peace conference; but that Mr. Jaxon's devotion to the "North-West idea" had not become weakened by the lapse of years was satisfactorily established by the wording of his resolution, which ran as follows:

### The Resolution

"WHEREAS, for the proper and scientific marketing of products it is necessary that the producer be able to consign his products to market along lines of transportation free from control by alien interests; and

"WHEREAS it is a matter of common report that in the Canadian parliament there will presently be introduced legislation whereby the boundaries of Manitoba will be so extended as to invest that province with a monopoly of the shore and seaports of the Hudson's Bay and of the routes of access thereto—this result that producers residing in Manitoba's sister provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Athabasca will be shut

out from exercising their rightful share of influence and control over what has long been conceded to be the most direct and economical channel of communication and transport between these provinces and the outside world;

"BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that in the interests of that fair play and even handed justice which alone can furnish a sure foundation for harmony and concord between the peoples of these four sister provinces—which in the absence of such invidious discrimination are naturally united by many bonds of common interest—this convention of representatives from the agricultural societies of Saskatchewan hereby places itself on record as being distinctly opposed to any legislation which shall shut out the producers residing in any of the sister provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Athabasca and Manitoba from their equal and rightful share of control and influence over the chief natural highway of commerce for the products and imports of the Northwest at large."

Introduced by Honore J. Jaxon, Carlton district Agricultural Society. Seconded by G. A. Oles, Redberry district Agricultural Society.

The introducing of the resolution had the effect of bringing out from one of the officers of the provincial agricultural department the protest that the subject matter of the motion was outside the sphere of agricultural society work. The discussion therefore turned to argument upon the question of order rather than upon the merits of the issue raised by the resolution itself, and by a majority of two the motion was placed upon the list of subjects laid over for consideration by the grain growers and similar organizations. Mr. Jaxon, however, expressed himself in private as being well satisfied with having brought the matter to public attention in such a way as to direct the thoughts of all producers in the four provinces to a sinister measure which if persisted in by the promoters, would inevitably throw the country between the Great Lakes and the Rockies into a ferment of discord and internal dissension which would defer for a long period the attainment by the northwest of its rightful influence in the councils of the Dominion. Said he:

### Control of Railway

"As the matter stands, one end, at least, has been attained, in that public attention has been directed to an issue which by many would appear to have been strangely over-looked; the fact, namely, that the control of the Hudson's Bay railway is not a whit less important than the building of it. The farmer in particular, fails too often to realise with sufficient vividness that the railroad which hauls his products to the door of the consumer is in reality an essential part of his farm machinery; that his product is really not complete until the work of transporting it to the consumer has been performed; and that wherever this most necessary link in the work of food production is allowed by the food producers to fall under control of the fellows, who instead of producing real wealth expend their brain power in producing schemes to get title to wealth, it inevitably follows that the food producers, or the farmer's boasted claim to independence becomes a mere self delusion. It is an iron law of economics that if at any point in a chain of production an exploiting class is allowed by direct or indirect methods to exercise that practically monopolistic control which is equivalent to the erecting of a toll gate, so to speak, over the industries involved, then every producer between whose work and the consumer that toll-gate intervenes will sooner or later be forced to accept for his labor the lowest possible compensation that will leave him still willing to live and work and reproduce his kind rather than throw up the game and become a tramp or commit suicide.

### Independence or Monopoly

Take, for example, the case of the modern mechanic. In the old days of hand labor with simple tools such as he was able to own himself, the mechanic was enabled by the possession of these tools to make direct bargain with the consumer of his product; and this possibly always ensured him respectful treatment whenever he sold his time to the small contractor or other middlemen who had risen to the rank of "master mechanic." With the advent, however, of the days of labor saving machinery the monopolising of the fruits of invention by a favored class led inevitably to the establishing of the big factory or the large contracting firm which monopolizes all direct contact with the consumer and leaves the mechanic no alternative to the selling of his time to an employer. Being thus left without an alternative he naturally lost his former position of freedom and became a mere wage slave, dependent upon the big concern which monopolised his only channel of employment; and since these big concerns naturally combine with each other in the matter of wages offered—just as the railroads have common understandings in regard to freight rates and freight classifications—it has followed that the only palliatives which the mechanic has obtained since the introducing of labor saving machinery have been such concessions as he might extort by means of "collective bargaining" through some form of trade union.

Now just as the monopolising of labor saving machinery by the big concern or corporation has deprived the mechanic of the independence which he formerly enjoyed through ability to deal directly with the consumer, and has therefore forced him down to the lowest wage scale compatible with his powers of collective resistance through the influence of trade unions, or with his individual willingness to still keep working and living so also the monopolising of the railroad—which is part of the labor-saving machinery brought in by the age of invention—has deprived the farmer of the independence which he has enjoyed when he was enabled to come into direct and personal contact with the consumer of his product; and, since it is the openly boasted policy of railroad owners to charge "all that the traffic will bear," and to extort "the last possible dollar," it follows that this tendency of modern life to establish "monopoly in the tools of production and distribution," tends ever to reduce the farmer also to the lowest possible standard of life compatible with his power of collective resistance through grain growers' associations or other forms of farmers' trade unionism, or with his individual willingness to keep on working and living. In other words, the advent of the railroads as a part of the labor-saving machinery of the inventive age has reduced the farmers also to a position of practical serfdom—the only difference being that the farmer instead of working like the average mechanic "by the hour" has been inveigled into a position where he works "by the piece"—a form of labor which mechanics trade unionism has repudiated as a form of serfdom even more undesirable than hour labor, since it tends not only to drive the workers to the point of physical exhaustion to make up for the constant reduction of price per piece, but also and for the same reason, to drag the wives and children of the workers into the treadmill also.

### The Farmers' Position

This last condition of wife and child labor is exactly the condition to which many farmers have already been reduced by the pressure of monopoly and the consequent struggle to "make both ends meet." Only the evil with the farmer is more insidious; since from his natural distaste for book-keeping he neglects to count in the money value of the help which he gets from his own family. Were he to face the facts, courageously, and charge up the labor of his wife and children at even the lowest factory prices, he would in most cases be disagreeably surprised to learn that as a matter of strict and accurate accounting he himself is receiving less for his hard and long hours of physical toil than does the average city

mechanic whom he has been accustomed to regard as less fortunately circumstanced because of his not generally possessing a title to the home in which he lives. Indeed, and as a matter of fact, this distinction of being endowed with a land title is itself a very shadowy and deceptive one, for just as the mechanic who does enjoy a title to his own home is by that very fact tied so much the more mercilessly to the chariot wheel of the neighboring manufacturing corporations for which he works, so also under the present system of railroad monopoly the farmer's title to his farm ties him all the more securely to the service of the owners of the railroad monopoly. Instead of the farmer owning his farm, it may truthfully be said that his farm owns him—in other words that the title-deed to his farm is the neck-yoke by which the owners of railroad monopoly keep him bound to the task of filling their freight cars with produce (made by the piece) over whose ultimate selling price he has no more control than has the employee of a shoe factory over the ultimate selling price of the shoes which he has made "by the hour."

### The Government's Attitude

The upshot of all this is that a direct and genuine control over the railroad which hauls their produce to market is a vital necessity and prerequisite if the producers of the northwest are to receive their full reward of their toil and their proper share in the gains and honors of advancing civilization; and the application of this truth to the question of the "Hudson's Bay Route" is to be found simply in the undeniable facts,

(1) That from the time when the Ottawa government first took control of the northwest railway building operations of the country have been conducted primarily with a view to turning northwest trade to the benefit of Canadian merchants and manufacturers, and to giving control of northwest lands to Canadian land syndicates; and only secondarily for the interests of the northwest settlers who have been saddled with a land system astutely calculated to compel them to repay many times over the sums thus expended without their advice and even against their protest;

(2) That, while vast sums have been thus obtained by ruinously extravagant methods of financing for the building of railroads uncommercially directed along "pan-handle" routes, the natural and primary railroad outlet for northwestern commerce, the route by way of Hudson's Bay, has meantime been subjected to lethargic doses of desultory talk unaccompanied by positive action; and,

(3) That now, when the northwest has at last become so powerful that action of some kind cannot much longer be delayed, the producing classes of the northwest are tendered a stone instead of bread by a proposal to give the key of the Hudson's Bay route into the hands of the legislature of a province whose controlling city is not only the main seat of all the local interests, for whose sake the interests of the whole northwest have been sacrificed, but has itself been a chief beneficiary of the policy of the Ottawa government in deflecting north western commerce from its natural channels.

For the railway system constructed by Canada with a primary view to the deflecting of north western commerce by a circuitous route through eastern seaports has had the incidental effect of making sure that Winnipeg shall be the gateway city of the northwest, so long as that unjust and uncommercial system shall remain dominant; and while there is every ground for confidence that the spirit of fair play possesses the farmers and mechanics—the town and country workers—of Manitoba, a confidence strengthened by the fact that as legitimate producers of real wealth they have no interest in obstructing the prosperity of their fellow producers residing in the sister provinces of the northwest, yet it must be obvious to every experienced person that men whose real estate has been advanced to a fictitious value through the giving of unfair precedence to a railroad system beneficial

to the east, rather than to the north west, will be under very strong temptation to support that powerful coterie of men residing in Winnipeg who have received even more direct favors from Ottawa at the expense of the northwest, and can, therefore, be depended upon by Ottawa to continue to uphold, with both shrewdness and fanaticism, a policy, "by which they have great gain."

And that such exerting of combined influence, by the real estate interests of Winnipeg, and the "big business" men making their headquarters in that city, will be able to so control the Manitoba legislature as to secure the use of that legislature's power against the handling of the Hudson's Bay route in such a manner as to secure its greatest possible benefits for the real producers of northwestern wealth, is precisely the reason for the present proposal that at this critical time when the building of a Hudson's Bay railway cannot be much longer delayed, the boundaries of Manitoba shall be so extended to give the Manitoba legislature a dominating control over the chartering and building and operating of railroads to Hudson's Bay by any of Manitoba's sister northwestern provinces, or by the producing classes therein resident. That a few financially powerful men are able, under present social conditions, to exert an influence far out of proportion to their numerical strength is sufficiently notorious, and that they are only too willing to use their strength in the interests of the system which has made them strong is equally notorious. Even in the western provinces outside of Manitoba we know that in their struggle for justice the real producers are too often held back by the influences of these men who have been made powerful through the operation of those special privileges which enable the few to levy tribute upon the many. In nearly all of our leading towns there are men who have acquired riches which in some cases run into the millions as a result of their having been granted town site favors or tracts of timber or deposits of coal or other valuable natural resources, or the operating of some public utility—all of which should have been handled directly for the benefit of the producing class rather than as a means of enabling private individuals to extort exorbitant prices from them. And the fact that these men have thus been made beneficiaries of the same blindness which tends to confirm the "big business" men in their strangle hold upon the land and railroad and manufacturing interests of the country, makes it morally certain that with very few exceptions there will be a doubtful ring in the utterances of members of the specially privileged class residing in even the sister provinces now threatened with this scheme to invest Manitoba with sovereignty over the shore and seaports of the Hudson's Bay. If the producers of the northwest are to conserve their right to exercise control over the conditions which will govern the price of their products, they must unite in town and country to assert that right themselves. The privileged classes will not plead their cause for them.

### The "Unearned Increment"

It has been asserted, by way of excuse for apathy and indifference in this matter of investing the privileged class of Manitoba with control of the key to the prosperity of the producing class in Manitoba's sister provinces, that the situation is sufficiently safeguarded by the reported intention of the Dominion government to build, and possibly operate a railroad to Hudson's Bay. To say, however, that the rights of the north western producer will be conserved by such a substitute as this is not only to trail a red herring across the track of the real question—which is the necessity of leaving the door open for north western producers to build and operate for themselves as many roads as they shall find need for—but is also an insult to the intelligence of any northwesterner who has made even a casual study of the methods and motives underlying Ottawa enactments

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