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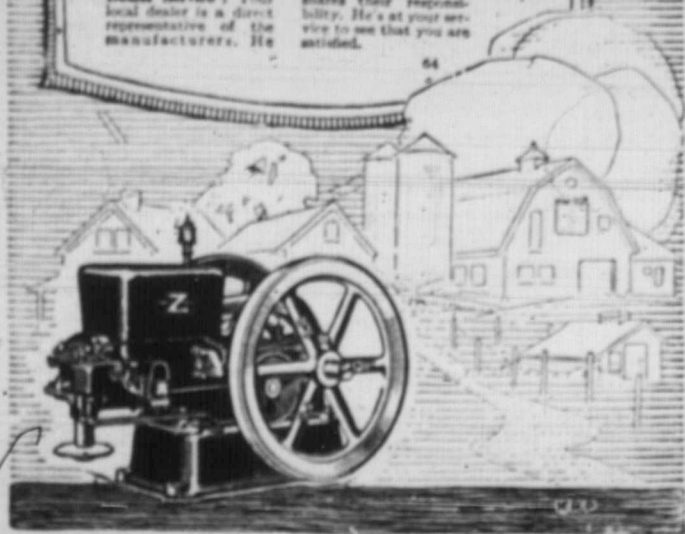
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Ontario Farmers' Meeting

Impressions of the Convention held in Massey Hall, Toronto, on June 7—By Roderick McKenzie

THE mass meeting of farmers held in Toronto June 7th was the most significant gathering of farmers held in Canada in this generation. Whatever will be the effect, the immediate cause for the gathering was the cavalier manner in which the deputations of farmers from the eastern provinces that waited on the government and parliament in May was received.

In the call sent out by the secretary of the U.F.O. for the meeting, the following significant question among others were asked:—

"Why does the government treat the farmers' interests different from any other?"

"Why is it that they will not see your viewpoint?"

"Why does the daily press ignore or ridicule your efforts?"

While the effect of the paralyzing of production by the conscription of farm boys and farm labor under the Military Service Act received much attention, the keynote of the meeting was, how to effectively solve the questions asked in the secretary's circular.

The thoughtful members of the convention in their talk, regardless of the subject matter that brought them to their feet, invariably reverted to that one subject, and while many suggestions were made as to how those questions should be answered, organization, getting together, looking after your own business, relying on ourselves, not on governments or members of parliament was the solution offered.

Great Enthusiasm

There was great enthusiasm throughout the two days of the convention. I have been at many enthusiastic meetings but the enthusiasm displayed at this meeting was different to anything I have seen. It is not an unusual thing for people at mass meetings being taken off their feet by fervent oratory when the only object of the orator was to augment the collection when the hat was passed around, or to get the people to place their common sense in cold storage, and place their mind and judgment in the care of others till the election was over.

The enthusiasm of the farmers at the convention was not of the effervescent kind, it was the result of a growing sense of injustice caused by years of burden-bearing for the benefit of others. The episode at Ottawa was the last straw. That episode awakened in them a sense of their position in relation to the government of their country. When the government invited other industries to give them the benefit of their views on the needs of their industry in the most critical times in the history of the country, not only did they not invite the leaders of the farming industry to give them the benefit of their experience, but absolutely turned them down, when they volunteered at their own expense to go to Ottawa to give them. The farmers may not have adopted the approved methods of approaching governments, nor of making their proposal

with the finesse of financiers or practical politicians. They were conscious of that shortcoming. Speaker after speaker at the convention referring to the question and the reception they received concluded with "it is our own fault."

They came to the meeting roused by recent events, deeply conscious of their inferiority to government and parties in the past, and that they have been regarded by election agents as "voting fodder" to which they meekly submitted. "No more of that for me," is their verdict.

Organization, the Watchword

Organization was the watchword. As far as an onlooker could gather, every one of the 3,000 delegates went home determined to do his "bit" to that end. In addition the delegates instructed the executive to engage an organizer at once to devote his whole time to direct the movement from the Central office.

The convention was not devoid of thrilling incidents. There was evidence that an attempt was made to stampede the delegates. At the afternoon session of the first day, at an opportune time, when feeling was running high, a well-dressed gentleman wearing a U.F.O. button undertook to explain some of the provisions of the last order-in-council amending the M.S.A. Act. His explanation did not accord with the experiences of men all over the hall, and they told him so. Getting in a tight corner, he introduced a man in khaki to substantiate his statement, but the crowd would not be convinced. They "knew" what they were talking about. The incident was closed by the chairman appointing a committee to wire the Minister of Agriculture to get the proper wording of the amendment at issue. The reply of the minister was read at the subsequent session, but did not verify the explanations of the man wearing the U.F.O. button and the good clothes. Calls were made for the gentleman, but he could not be found. He did not remain to hear the minister's wire. Another gentleman rose from the audience and read a news item from the Morning Globe which stated that a certain gentleman who was a prime favorite with the farmers was appointed as agent to look after exemptions for the farm boys. That man suddenly rose in the audience and denied any knowledge of the appointment.

Castigation of the Press

One of the outstanding features of the convention was the castigation given the daily press of Toronto for ridicule and general misrepresentation of farmers and their movement. The "spanking" given the "Toronto Globe" was especially good. The first morning of the convention, The Globe, on the editorial page accused the secretary of the U.F.O. of stating what was not true in his reference to the attitude of the daily press in the "Convention Call," and asked the convention to



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