

Saskatchewan President's Address

President Maharg's address at the opening of the Moose Jaw Convention

Ladies and Gentlemen:—In presenting to you my sixth annual address I can assure you it is with a great amount of diffidence that attempt to do so. At a time such as this, when there appears to be influences at work along so many different lines one scarcely knows what to say, as some of these appear to have a bearing on International, National, Dominion and Provincial matters, as well as others of less importance. However, I feel honored to be privileged to again report to you another year of substantial progress, not altogether for what we have done that might be termed for ourselves personally, but more particularly what has been done for our Empire in this her time of great need. I will not attempt to put this into words, rather would I draw your attention to the figures that will be submitted to you and also to our "Honor Roll" which speaks far more eloquently than it is possible for me to do. Look this over carefully, meditate on it; then ask yourself a question—I do not need to suggest what it shall be.

I wish again to thank Providence for the kindly way we have been dealt with in the way of material things, the some parts of our province suffered severely from the elements, yet in spite of this the "bread basket," as presented to His Majesty the King by our association—thru our ever to be remembered secretary, the late F. W. Green—is still overflowing sufficiently to provide for the wants of any who may be in need in this time of severe stress, and it is our duty to endeavor to the very utmost of our ability to maintain this condition, and should we receive the kindly treatment from Nature in the future as in the past, Great Britain and her Allies can rest assured that they will always find the bottom of the "bread basket" well covered.

After-the-War Policies

While it is quite right to be thinking and planning for after the war, yet we must be very careful. I do not believe this is the proper time to attempt to arrive at definite conclusions. We are in danger of being influenced by our prejudices to adopt policies which might be detrimental to the best interests not only of the Empire but to the future prosperity and peace of the whole world. During last summer one of Canada's most prominent public men addressed a large gathering of people in the City of Winnipeg. One of the questions dealt with by him was our trade relations with the United States after the war. The tenor of his remarks, which at that time were received very enthusiastically, was to the effect that after this war is over we should give them very little consideration in so far as trade is concerned. Tho their every action may not have been as we would have liked it to be, yet we must admit that they have given great assistance to our Empire and her Allies, not only by way of money and munitions, many of their citizens have given their lives while fighting side by side with our own brave boys in France, Belgium and elsewhere, in order that the freedom which they fought for long ago, and for which we are struggling now, might be maintained not only for us but guaranteed to the rest of the world for all time to come. Having those things in mind I am convinced that one of the best services we can render to the Empire now and after the war is to cultivate the very friendliest of feelings between ourselves and our neighbors across the international boundary.

For some considerable time there have been individuals advocating an Imperial Parliament for the British Empire. While representation of the overseas dominions in the parliament of Great Britain for the consideration of certain problems may be quite desirable, yet I am convinced that to attempt to govern an Empire so widely scattered and with so varied conditions from one central point would be fraught with the greatest danger and might possibly be the initial step in the disintegration of the Empire. We must not forget the results of a similar policy during the earlier history of Great Britain.

Returned Soldiers

While every effort is being put forth to care for the returned soldier in so far as his immediate wants and vocational training are concerned, yet in so far as the public are concerned, nothing of a definite nature for the permanent solution of this problem has been done. Some suggestions have been offered, chief among which is the building of a great national highway to give them employment, and second, the colonization of returned soldiers on the land.

In regard to the first suggestion it would be very nice to have a great national highway from coast to coast, but what immediate return would we receive from the money invested in such an undertaking. Production and thrift, we are told, is the only way by which we can hope to liquidate the immense war debt that is being contracted.

The second suggestion in a measure is commendable to the extent that it proposes giving assistance in establishing these colonies. However, I am doubtful if this would be a wise policy to follow even should it be satisfactory to the men themselves. Where would this land be secured? True there are government reserves, but either the location or quality of this land is such that it would not be desirable for a movement of this kind. Then we have our homestead land, but the greater portion of this is so far removed from railway communication as to be undesirable for this purpose.

It has always appeared to me that the first thing to do is to consult the wishes of those concerned; to this end a conference of all returned soldiers or their representatives should be called in the not distant future, in order that some definite policy might be decided upon. Should any number wish to settle on the land our Dominion government should immediately take action to facilitate same. I would take this opportunity to remind the Dominion government that there is a large amount of first class arable land purchased at a very low price by individuals and corporations as a specula-



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tion that is still being held out of cultivation. Much of this land is situated in well settled districts and would make an ideal place to settle any returned soldiers who might wish to go on same. Under those conditions they would be able to secure the advice and assistance of those surrounding them, which, I am convinced, would be freely given, and would be of the greatest assistance. Action along these lines would immediately bring a large area under cultivation, thus increasing production which is so desirable and could be brought about without working any hardship on any person.

Immigration is something that is of secondary importance at present; our first effort should be to secure the return and settlement of those who, on account of the war, have left us—not the slackers who have left for fear of having to do their bit, they are the most undesirable. This will take considerable time and during this period if the proper course is pursued we will have established a policy that will bring to us the most desirable class of immigrant, as on the treatment given our returned soldiers will largely decide the extent of our immigration for some considerable time, hence the necessity for immediate action.

National Service Registration

This is a question that has caused considerable dissatisfaction, especially among the labor organizations. Their attitude towards this matter was, I think, to say the least, unfortunate, yet every fair minded man must admit that they had a certain amount of justice on their side.

The manner in which they placed the responsibility for their refusal to sign at the door of the National Service Commission must surely receive the consideration of that body, as it is scarcely

British fair play to expect the laborers to place their services entirely at the disposal of the Commission without the Commission first having given them the assurance that any sacrifice they were making would not be taken advantage of by individuals or corporations for private gain. If a portion of our wealth is going to be conscripted surely it must apply to all as labor is the key to all wealth.

Prohibition

This is a matter that is still in a very unsatisfactory condition. Something further must be done, otherwise our work so far will have been wasted. Sir Robert Borden says the provinces have not yet exhausted their powers. If this is so, why does our provincial legislature not act, or at least make it plain wherein they lack the power. The people have spoken in no uncertain sound and are in no mood to receive even a very mild dose of sophistry from Dominion or Provincial government. What they want is that the governments get together in some way to give total prohibition.

During most of the time since our last convention we have been treated to what might be termed a demonstration of "smearing and washing linen." We have had commissions and commissions; have spent upwards of \$100,000 of provincial money; serious charges have been made against public men, some have been withdrawn, some not proved, some half proved, others proved. Our legislature has been sitting nearly three weeks and practically all of the time has been occupied discussing commission reports and individual members of the house, and the end is not yet. It appears to me as tho it may be necessary to appoint another commission to interpret the commission reports already presented and to decide who is entitled to sit in the house and who is not.

In conclusion, I may say that there are resolutions coming before you that will require your most careful consideration. Probably no more important matters have ever become before you than that of hail insurance and confederation or amalgamation, as some term it. These two questions should be given the most thorough discussion in a calm and unbiased way.

ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE OF WOMEN

One of the outstanding things that has come to light in this war is the joy of British women over their economic independence. The calling of the women to the munitions factories, as well as the replacing of the men in field and shop, has brought them such a sense of freedom and independence that it attracts attention upon every occasion. For untold generations women have followed submissively in the ways marked for them by men. Such privileges as they have enjoyed have been theirs by courtesy, and not by right. Suddenly a change has come. The clamor of a few for the suffrage is swallowed up by the demand of the government for hands to turn out munitions, which has meant work at wages far above what they had ever before been paid. Women of all stations in life, from the lowest to the highest, have responded. Patriotism was the initial motive; but as the days lengthened into months and years new sensations have come. Women who had been subjected successively to father, husband and son, found themselves in an atmosphere of freedom.

But touching as are these manifestations of delight over their newly found liberty, their fear lest they lose it is even more affecting. Scarcely a writer or publicist takes up the question of industry at the return of peace who does not mention in some form the fact that woman is not likely to surrender willingly her economic independence. And why should she? Will there not be countless tasks to be done? Cannot any comprehending person, man or woman, endowed with the gifts of civilization earn an abundance in England or elsewhere? Given free labor and the natural elements, and there need be no fear but that the frailest woman can maintain her freedom. It is not unlikely that this freedom of those who labor may necessitate the curtailment of the license of some who idle; for it is becoming daily more apparent that there is a close, in fact, an inseparable connection between the unearned incomes derived from the ownership of British land and the unrequited toil of British labor. Doubtless an effort will be made to serve both; but this cannot be done. Whatever is given to one must be taken from the other; and the sooner those in charge of affairs arrive at a conclusion as to which must yield, the workers or the idlers, the sooner we shall know whether the war in Europe is to be followed by a peaceful revolution, or one of violence.—The Public.