

The Farmers of Ontario Are Well United

The New Movement in Ontario Agriculture Has Made Rapid Progress--A New Spirit of Union and Uplift Evident--Some 5000 Farmers Now Organized.

Second Annual Convention Held Last Week in Toronto--Important Resolutions Passed--Plans Laid For The Future.

THE second annual convention of the United Farmers of Ontario held last week in Toronto revealed the fact that a new spirit is moving in the rural districts of Ontario. Ontario farmers are organizing rapidly. Some five thousand of them are now united in local organizations, which in turn are connected with the provincial organization, The United Farmers of Ontario. The enthusiasm which was manifested when this Association was organized two years ago was even more manifest at last week's convention. In consequence, plans were laid for the future, which should result in an even more rapid extension of the work than has taken place in the past.

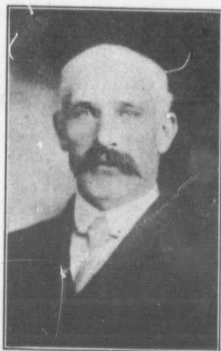
The delegates who attended the convention were impressed with the character of the proceedings. Many had never attended a meeting of the provincial organization before. These men were hardly prepared for the spirit of optimism and enthusiasm which was manifest throughout. Announcements were heard from them of their intention to return home and set to work more earnestly than ever to extend the work in their districts. In order that this may be done more effectively and that the spirit which pervaded the convention may be carried back to the locals more effectively, the directors of the Association decided after the convention to hold four district conventions, one east of Kingston, one between Kingston and Toronto, and two at points in western Ontario some time during the next few months, to which the local clubs will be invited to send delegates, and at which the best speakers possible will deliver addresses. In this way they hope to reach thousands of farmers who were unable to attend last week's convention in Toronto.

The proceedings were held in the Parish Hall, Church Street, on Wednesday and Thursday. The character of the delegates, of whom there were about 300, was of the highest. They included wardens, ex-wardens, Reeves, and numerous members of township councils, as well as well-to-do farmers, Farmers' Institute speakers, and other men experienced in public affairs. The ability they displayed in the discussions and the intelligence with which the proceedings were followed, revealed their calibre. All the sessions were well attended.

These Are Serious Times

The speeches and discussions revealed the fact that there was a general realization that we are living in serious times. This came out during a discussion on recruiting in rural districts, in which it was shown that the young men on the farms of the province are willing and ready to enlist, but that the point has been reached in many districts where further enlistment may work an injury to the country instead of a benefit. It came out again in the speeches of T. A. Crerar, of Winnipeg, and W. L. Smith, of Orono, when they warned farmers that after the war there is almost certain to be a great slump in the prices paid for farm produce, owing to the impoverished condition many nations will be in, and that taxation may be expected to be higher than ever known before. In addition, a great effort is certain to be made by the numerous firms now making millions of dollars in Canada and the United States from the manufacture of war supplies, to load both countries with an immense

army and navy in order that their profits may not be interfered with. The thought was brought out repeatedly that unless the farmers of On-



R. H. HALBERT
President of the United Farmers of Ontario.

tario and of Canada are thoroughly organized and prepared to resist these conditions they, as well as the country at large, will suffer in consequence. Again and again it was emphasized that the success of the movement is going to depend on the clearness with which the individual members of the organization realize their responsibility and do their part to extend the movement. Even the most capable leaders, it was said, will be powerless to accomplish anything worth while unless the individual farmers on the back concessions and side lines support them loyally in the work that has been undertaken.

That the movement has already made a deep impression on the country was brought out when speakers warned the delegates that should this movement to organize the farmers of Ontario fail, it will be impossible to revive such a movement for many years to come. At the same time, it was shown that even greater difficulties may have to be overcome in the future than in the past. The interests which oppose the organization of farmers at first looked on the movement with indifference. They are now beginning to take steps to break it up. Secretaries of local clubs gave instance after instance where large manufacturing firms which a year or more ago refused absolutely to sell goods to any local farmers' organization, have now commenced to offer the local clubs lower prices on these goods than the central organization in Toronto can obtain. In this way it would seem that they desire to prevent the central company from doing business and thus to disorganize the whole movement when later they will be able to advance prices to former levels. Secretaries reported that they were offered inducements by the agents of these concerns to send the orders of their clubs direct to them, and thus cut out the central company. That these efforts of opposition interests are bearing some fruit was shown when it was stated that difficulty is sometimes experienced by the locals in keeping their members loyal to the

central under these circumstances. It is a great game the business interests are playing, in the case of some firms at least, and unless the farmers become wise to it, the movement is likely to be considerably retarded. That the delegates present were in earnest in their determination to push the movement was shown when 53 of them subscribed for stock in the Central Company.

Resolutions Adopted

A number of important resolutions were adopted. These are published on page 2 of this issue. The proceedings throughout were conducted with despatch. This was due in a large measure to the fact that President R. H. Halbert, of Melancthon, proved himself a capable presiding officer. The delegates showed their appreciation by re-electing him president for another term. That some of the speakers were not accustomed to addressing such large audiences was shown by their nervousness when they attempted to speak. Those in the audience were able to sympathize with them, and on different occasions words of sympathy were called out to them. These little incidents tended to draw the delegates closer to one another.

Convention Features

Features of the convention included a particularly able address by Mr. T. A. Crerar, of the Grain Growers' Grain Co., of Winnipeg, which showed that the farmers of the west have had to overcome the same class of difficulties as now confront the farmers of Ontario. Another speaker from the west was Mr. W. H. English, of Harding, Manitoba, a director of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association, who told how the western farmers had met and overcome obstacles, and explained why it is imperative that farmers should organize at this time if they are to escape the exactions of the better organized business interests. The discussions this year were largely business in character. They dealt largely with such topics as the financing of local organizations, methods of extending the organization, live stock shipments, and similar topics. It was felt by some that not enough time was left for the consideration of matters more general in character.

Much interest was taken in a new method of electing the directors which was adopted, on the motion of Mr. W. C. Good, of Paris. Ballots were distributed among those present, which enabled every delegate to nominate whoever they might choose for president, for 1st vice-president, for 2nd vice-president, for auditor, and which gave them a right to nominate a first and second choice for directors. Later, these nominating ballots were sorted out and the names of the parties who had the largest number of ballots were placed on the black board and were voted on. The system did not prove perfect, and can probably be improved another year, but it saved many of the tedious nomination speeches, that usually take up so much time of the conventions, it prevents the necessity of a nominating committee, whose decisions so often cause dissatisfaction, and in other ways showed that it had commendable features. It was an experiment in the widely discussed use of the "preferential ballot," which may in time be attended by important results.

The President's Address

Pres. R. H. Halbert, in his presidential address,
(Continued on page 17.)