

JOURNAL OF PROCEEDINGS

OF THE FIRST ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF
THE FISHERMEN'S PROTECTIVE UNION, HELD IN THE S.U.F.

HALL AT CHANGE ISLANDS, OCTOBER 29TH,
NOVEMBER 1ST, 2ND AND 3RD, 1909.

CHANGE ISLANDS, October 29th, 1909.

THE First Annual Convention of the Supreme Council of the Fishermen's Protective Union of Newfoundland opened here at 7.30 p.m. The President pro-tem presided. Mr. A. J. Hoff, appointed Acting Secretary. Several members of the Supreme Council and Delegates from Local Councils present, as well as a large number of visitors. The test being made the President delivered the following address:—

To the Members of the Supreme Council of the Fishermen's Protective Union of Newfoundland.

MY FRIENDS:—

According to the Constitution, being Chairman of the first Local Council of the Union, the official duties of President fell to my lot, I beg therefore to submit the President's annual report. First, the Union was established and the Constitution adopted at a meeting held at Herring Neck, November 3rd last. This meeting was preceded by two public meetings held by me to submit my idea of treatment accorded to the fishermen of the Colony by traders, fish exporters, and Government, and I asked any present who entertained my ideas to remain and form a Union to defend the rights of fishermen. At those two meetings about 50 remained behind to enlist. Herring Neck has now two Local Councils, one at Herring Neck proper and one at Green's Cove. As soon as the public learnt of the formation of this Union, applications for copies of the Constitution became general, and a large correspondence was entailed in answering enquiries. Over three hundred Constitutions were applied for and forwarded. I had one thousand Constitutions printed which were cleared out during the winter. The demand for Constitutions is great and I had arranged for a 3000 issue, but the tenderers failed to fill the order at that time and I subsequently decided to leave the issue until after the Supreme Council Session, when it would be necessary to revise the Constitution.

From the first we encountered trouble because of the obligation. When we adopted it we had no idea that any one would think we were a secret organization, but such was the case, as His Grace Archbishop Howley publicly intimated. We withdrew in consequence, the clause in the obligation objected to, but it appeared this was not sufficient as further objection was made to taking any oath whatever by members of the Roman Catholic Church, and as

we desired the co-operation of North and South, of Protestant and Catholic, in this mighty fight for Country and Fishermen, I took the matter up with His Lordship Bishop McNeil of St. George's and concluded a "declaration of membership" which was approved by Bishop McNeil and which now takes the place of the sworn obligation. The Roman Catholic people can now join with the knowledge

that former objections have been removed, no objection can now be made to a secret or oath-bound obligation. We must now trust to class feeling and interest, to consolidate and unite our ranks, and I firmly believe the fishermen of this Colony will eventually unite under this Union, as a whole, and great benefits flow from our efforts. From the first I was fully conscious of the mighty work I was undertaking. For many years I had given it consideration, but never imagined that I would be the unworthy instrument of bringing such an organization into being. I had always hoped that some one, who cared for the down trodden fishermen, who possessed unusual ability would come forward and be our Leader. But the awful treatment meted out by the prices paid, and the dishonest cull last Fall, induced me to act without further delay and bring the Union into existence.

Three years previous I had studied a constitution which I had been revising from time to time and as no other man attempted to move, something inspired

me to go ahead, for I considered it better to dare mighty things and win mighty triumph, even though checkered by failure, than to rank longer with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much, or suffer much because they live such lives, that know neither victory or defeat, "Nothing venture nothing have," was the motto that guided me, and to-day, not yet one year from the starting day, we proudly proclaim to all the world that our humble efforts have resulted in the formation of 50 Local Councils with a membership of many thousands. Every member the coming year must be a worker, for we have put our hands to that plough and there must be no looking back. We want all to be interested workers, for our field is a large one and must be covered by end of 1912. By that time we must have 400 branches with 30,000 members, if not more. I have held public meetings at several places and established many Councils. I am thankful for so much progress. It is far greater than I had hoped for when I started. The past has no regrets for me. We must



HON. W. F. COAKER, M.H.A.
President of the F.P.U.