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WHEN WRITING TO ADVERTISERS PLEASE MENTION THE GUIDE

Alberta

This section of The Guide is conducted officially for the United Farmers of Alberta by P. P. Woodbridge, Secretary, Calgary, Alberta, to whom all communications for this page should be sent.

DUNSTABLE ACTIVE

John Livesey, secretary of Dunstable Local Union, No. 345, reports six new members were enrolled at their regular meeting held on August 26, but only four paid up. This gives them a membership roll of 47, 45 of these being fully paid up members. More are expected to join at the next meeting. Owing to the busy time their meetings during the summer time have not started upon schedule time, and therefore non-members and those interested in the entertainment only have arrived during the meeting and upset matters considerably. They have now, therefore, set a specified time upon which the entertainment must start, which gives them two hours in which to hold the meeting.

They have also passed a resolution that any non-member who attends twice must become a member. This had to be done owing to the fact that a large percentage of those present were non-members, some of which came without refreshments, making use of our union for the sake of a good time and paying nothing into the treasury.

The secretary thinks it would be a good idea for the secretaries of the various unions to write the provincial secretary—same to be published in the Grain Growers' Guide—giving the systems upon which their respective unions are run. The members are now beginning to talk about the shipment of hogs and cattle, so there is no doubt they will be busy this fall and during the winter.

ANNUAL REPORTS APPRECIATED

Leith Union, No. 591, held a very successful picnic on July 12, in spite of bad roads. The day turned out beautifully fine. The ladies provided an excellent dinner and supper. J. L. Sparrow gave a very interesting and instructive address. Jas. Benner, one of the members, also gave an eloquent address on controlling the supply and demand of farmers to ensure better prices for their produce and lower prices for machinery, etc. During the afternoon a full program of sports was given, the close competitions causing great excitement. The shooting gallery claimed quite a lot of attention, bringing out a lot of dark horses in the handling of the rifle. The football match between the local farmers and Daysland town also created a lively interest. The farmers won by one goal. The members had an ice cream stall on the grounds, with all kinds of candies, etc., to be had at nominal prices, which was well patronized, and the small profits covered the expenses of the day. During the year the union has handled large quantities of gophericide, formaldehyde, salt and twine, and is about to order a carload of apples. The membership has reached a total of fifty-eight. The fifty annual reports which the union purchased some time ago were distributed to the members and were greatly appreciated.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

In resolution No. 9 passed by the convention last January, being a declaration of principle, the second clause which was endorsed reads as follows:—

"An Act to establish proportional representation."

At the time a number of questions were asked as to what this important reform really meant, and in the few minutes at my disposal I was able to do little more than arouse the interest of some of our delegates. A considerable number of requests for further information have reached the office since, and in order to save some correspondence on this matter and at the same time deal with it more fully than I could do by letter, I am publishing herewith excerpts from a pamphlet issued by the Proportional Representation Society of Canada, which gives the main features in a nutshell. Personally, after several years study, I believe that the question is one of the most important that we could possibly study and offers a solution to many of the political evils from which we suffer

at the present time. If any of our unions should care to take this matter up and organize a debate on it for the coming winter, I should be glad to send them further literature and material for organizing the discussion.

People Must Rule

All parties agree in accepting the principle that the "will of the people" must prevail, and there is also a general agreement (whether for great crises the referendum be adopted or not) that in ordinary circumstances and in modern times a popularly elected representative assembly, such as the House of Commons, is the necessary organ for the expression and the carrying into effect of the will of the people.

If the House of Commons is for any reason not truly representative, legislation and the control of government cease to be in harmony with the popular will. The popular mind is thereby disconnected from Parliamentary Government, and is impelled to seek a solution of its difficulties in extra-parliamentary action. There is, further, a real danger lest self-government be replaced by an undemocratic and unrepresentative form of Cabinet government, and the House of Commons become merely an assembly for the registration of decisions formed without its deliberative assistance.

With just and fair representation the more powerful the House of Commons, the more certain is the carrying into effect of popular demands. With unfair, unjust representation, the unchecked power of the House of Commons may be dangerous to democracy and reduce self-government to an illusion.

It is then plain that the proper constitution of the House of Commons is a vital interest of democracy.

Present Method Defective

But the present plan of electing the House of Commons and Provincial Parliaments is grossly defective. The country is cut into a number of arbitrary divisions called constituencies, in each of which (with the exception of a few places which return two members) the majority of the electors elect a member of Parliament. Now, it has been amply proved by the electoral statistics of this and other countries that a system of single-member constituencies such as this will not give just and adequate representation to all the elements of national life. It has the following grave faults:—

1.—Majorities and minorities in the House of Commons and Provincial Parliaments are not in proportion to voting strength in the country.

2.—The minority in each constituency is disfranchised.

3.—Large minorities all over the country have no representation.

4.—In many districts of the country political life is dead, because one or other party has no chance of electing a representative.

5.—A majority of the electorate has no security. A minority of the whole body of electors may secure a majority of seats. This happens where one party is concentrated mainly in one part of the country, and its opponents are more widely and evenly spread so as to have small majorities in many places, though actually a minority of the whole electorate.

6.—A light turnover of votes has a quite disproportionate effect. This encourages political corruption of all kinds.

7.—A small displacement of the boundary of a constituency may alter the political representation.

8.—The choice of the elector is limited as a rule to only two candidates and so his right to be represented by a man of his own opinion is destroyed.

9.—Party machinery is given a mischievous hold over politics. The party managers can usually secure the exclusion of any member who has shown too much independence, by running a third candidate against him.

10.—The House of Commons is not open to men of new ideas in advance of current opinions.

11.—The country is deprived of the services of many able men of high character who are too independent to bind

themselves to the acceptance of the whole program of any political party.

12.—Some of the best men in politics may be defeated at the outset of their careers by much inferior opponents thru a comparatively small turnover of votes, owing to some temporary cause.

13.—Legislation is rendered unstable—too rapid advance is followed by too violent reaction.

Democracy Unfairly Discredited

In the result the principle of democracy is often charged with faults which are really the effects of a defective electoral system. The evils above mentioned are inherent in any single-member system. Neither the second ballot nor the alternative vote could remove them; on the contrary these methods have additional defects of their own. They involve a struggle between two candidates for the support of a third party with which neither agrees. This is both immoral and inconvenient. It is immoral to send an M.P. to Ottawa to represent views that he does not hold, and it is as inconvenient for three parties in a constituency to be represented by one man, as it would be for a man with three arms to wear a coat with a single sleeve.

Proportional representation is the only method of curing these evils. It does not appeal to any one party as a party measure, for its aim is to do justice to all parties and shades of opinion. In the many countries (Switzerland, Belgium, Sweden, Wurtemberg, South Africa, Tasmania and elsewhere) where it is in operation it has given freedom and independence to both electors and representatives; it has rendered legislation more stable and popularly acceptable; it has softened racial, religious, party and other sectional differences; no country which has experienced its benefits would dream of reverting to the evils and absurdities which are inseparable from any single-member system.

Proportional Representation Explained

Proportion representation involves:—
(a) The substitution of large constituencies returning on the average about five members for the present single-member constituencies. (b) The apportionment of the seats in these larger constituencies among the different parties, classes and opinions that exist in the community in proportion to their numerical strength in the electorate.

Proportional representation secures:—
Freedom for the elector; independence for the representative; strength for the House of Commons; power for the people.

Proportional representation has been objected to on the ground that it will weaken the executive; but the growing power of the executive and its independence of national opinion is a real danger. It is therefore an argument in favor of proportional representation that the control of the House of Commons over legislation will be strengthened. Proportional representation will not, however, diminish the stability of governments. For this stability depends upon the capacity of the executive to interpret public opinion; a truly representative House enables the executive to do this more easily and more surely.

The Proportional Representation Society of Canada urgently appeals to everyone who desires a safe and healthy development of the national political life to ponder these matters, and, on realizing their importance, to give practical assistance to the propaganda work of the society.

REDUCED RATES ON STOCK

Following up our letter of last week re special rates on feeders and stockers, I quote herewith in part a letter from the Freight Tariff Bureau, Canadian Pacific Railway Company, Winnipeg. The special tariff is therefore now in force, and the certificates referred to can be secured from the Central Office.

"In accordance with instructions received from Mr. Lannigan, I am publishing tariff W. 3763, effective September 18, showing reduced rates from Calgary, Edmonton, Moose Jaw, Saskatoon and Winnipeg to farmers in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, for breeding, feeding or finishing, on production of signed certificate as described in tariffs. The certificate arrangement will be the same as that outlined in the seed grain tariffs, that is, they will be signed by the local secretary of the Grain Growers' Association, in the district in which the consignor is located, countersigned by the provincial secretary, and signed by the farmer to whom the cattle are consigned."

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