

A Call to Arms

The following inspiring address was delivered by Mr. W. J. Tregillus of Calgary, the retiring vice-president of the United Farmers of Alberta on the opening day of the annual convention held at Edmonton on January 16, 17 and 18. Mr. Tregillus was afterwards elected President of the U.F.A.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:—
In addressing you at this, our annual convention, I will endeavor to be brief, but there are a few thoughts, suggested by the past year's work and experiences, that I should like to put before you, with the hope that they may be of interest and the hope they may be helpful. Those of us who are in the habit of attending these conventions consider them of inestimable value, and it is encouraging to see such general interest and such a large and representative gathering. I sincerely trust that this convention will prove as helpful and invigorating as any of those held previously, and to ensure the success of this gathering it is necessary to carefully review the past and to be equally careful in laying our plans for the future.

Last year we had to report the greatest organized effort of the farmers that the world has ever known, that never-to-be-forgotten trip to Ottawa, and although we have no such outstanding feature to recall this year, yet there are many matters of real progress which are most satisfactory and encouraging to those of us who have the interests of this association at heart.

Those who attended the convention held in this hall two years ago cannot but be forcibly impressed with the advance this association has made during the interval, and this will appear in the various reports which will be presented to this convention. The noticeable advancement of our association is a most encouraging feature. Our members have multiplied, our experience has grown, our influence has spread, our education has developed, our power has tremendously increased, and, best of all, our faith is stronger than ever. Today the organized farmers of the Prairie Provinces are the most potent force in the way of reform, and the strongest agency working for true democracy in the whole Dominion, and are exerting a powerful influence throughout the civilized world. Our central office has done inestimable work, which has been very far reaching in its character of helpfulness and education.

Direct Legislation

With regard to the important question of Direct Legislation, special attention has been given to this, and much good work accomplished. Literature has been available for all desiring it. The question of Direct Legislation has been brought, by our central office, forcibly before our legislators, many of whom admitted they had given the matter no previous attention, but have promised to study it and deal with it on its merits when it comes before the House. Whether any definite step is taken during this session of the legislature or not, the time cannot be long delayed—provided we are faithful in our work—when the province of Alberta will have a statute on her books incorporating this form of government into its constitution. When we consider the success of this form of government in Switzerland, where it has been more or less in operation for three-quarters of a century, and in many of the American states, where it has been more recently introduced, we must do all in our power to hasten its establishment.

When we realize the wonderful reforms possible through Direct Legislation and can, in matters of national and human importance, give up party feeling and develop a truly Albertan feeling, and, through Direct Legislation, have the power of expressing our feelings, we shall be surprised how quickly Alberta will own its government, its public utilities, such as railways, express, telegraphs, insurances, etc., and also its natural resources.

The Single Tax

The wonderful progress toward the adoption of Single Tax in Alberta is a

great satisfaction, and most encouraging, and Albertans take a pardonable pride in the fact that their province is in the lead. When our constitution includes Direct Legislation and direct taxation, most of the evils from which we are now suffering will be found only in history, and if history states facts, much of the credit of the bettered conditions will be given to the organization known as the "United Farmers of Alberta." We have accomplished much, but we have fallen short of what we had hoped to attain. I would like, in



W. J. TREGILLUS
The New President of the U.F.A.

as few words as possible, to show our present position and the immensity of the work that lies before us.

We are living in an age of marvelous development. Astonishing changes are taking place; some of us here can remember the time when most of the grain crops were cut with the cradle and bound by hand, when much of the hay was cut with the scythe and gathered with the hand rake, and the general mode of life throughout the farm corresponded. How different are conditions today, but, notwithstanding the progress we have made, we are only just on the eve of an era of development more wonderful than anything that has hitherto astounded the world in other departments of investigation and endeavor; an era in which experience, learning and invention will transmute into wealth the results of the labor that is bestowed upon the land, as never before.

Production and Distribution

What advantage, however, will accrue to the farmer if present economic con-

ditions continue? It is roughly estimated that of the agricultural wealth produced only about thirty-five per cent. finds its way back to the producer, while distribution claims some sixty-five per cent., a condition totally unfair both to the producer and the consumer, and I venture to state that even if every farmer in Alberta were to adopt all the modern methods of farm practice that have proved to be successful, and were thereby enabled to double the output of their farms, we farmers, on the average, would have no more to show for it at the end of each year than we now have. This cannot be allowed; something must be done. Is it not deplorable that in this twentieth century we permit ourselves to be in this economic and political bondage?

To think that we, who till the soil and bring into existence that which did not previously exist, and on whom all other forms of human industry depend, that we, who comprise sixty-five per cent. of the population and should be dominant, allow ourselves to be bound by those who are really dependent on us! To show what I mean, let me explain. In the United States there are ninety million people and eighty-three million of these are dependent on the skill and industry of the other seven million, who are agriculturists. I cannot give the exact proportion in Canada, but out of the eight million population about seven and a quarter million are dependent on the labor of the other three-quarter million, who form the agricultural community.

Notwithstanding the fact that we are indispensable, we are hardly allowed to live, for we are taxed at every turn, almost everything we eat, wear or use is taxed by the people who have induced the legislators to make robbery legal.

Economic and Political Bondage

In Canada there are about three thousand manufacturers who levy toll on the entire population—eight million. Last year we paid into the Dominion treasury sixty million dollars, but into the pockets of the protected interests we paid about two million dollars. What is this if not economic bondage? In this progressive century we, in the province of Alberta, are being governed by a form of government that has neither mandate nor endorsement from its people. Such a condition is impossible to duplicate anywhere on this continent. What is this if not political bondage? We can truly say with the prophet Isaiah, "Therefore my people are gone into captivity for lack of knowledge," and just as in the case of Isaiah's people, the few with knowledge took the many—who lacked knowledge—into captivity, so have the few—about three thousand manufacturers—who know what they are about, taken the many—who have hitherto lacked knowledge—into economic bondage and

levied tribute on them. Surely we are wearing bonds that we should burst and chains that we should break and be free, and this can only be accomplished by removing the cause of our bondage—lack of knowledge. Knowledge is power, gives light, independence and freedom; while lack of knowledge—ignorance—is weakness, darkness, dependence and bondage. We are all governed by one or the other; some men cannot be brought into bondage because they read, study, think and observe, while others cannot be kept out of bondage because they prefer ignorance.

Organization and Co-operation

Our only means of combatting the combines, trusts and organized capital which exact tribute from productive labor without as much as "by your leave," is by organization and co-operation. Agriculture, unorganized, uncooperative, must inevitably become the common prey of organized forces. From these consequences there can be no escape. The touchstone of success is organization. When we producers are thoroughly organized, there is nothing on this earth that can come between us and complete emancipation. Let us, therefore, make a more determined effort during this year for an entire and exhaustive organization of the whole province, and so be ready for the fight which must of necessity be fought before we can claim our freedom. The financial interests have so long enjoyed protection—afforded by our tariff walls—behind which they have been enabled to form combines and mergers, enabling them to advance the prices of practically everything the farmers and laboring classes use, that we cannot expect them to give up without a struggle, and, I repeat, organization is the only weapon with which we can fight combination. We are prepared, of course, as soon as we begin more active operations, to be told that we are working for class legislation, and party politicians will leave no stone unturned to prevent our progress, but that need not trouble us for we know ours is no class movement. Ours is a great world movement which will make a nobler civilization and a higher type of manhood. We are in the midst of a great civic, a great national awakening; a silent revolution is in progress throughout the whole civilized world.

A Great Awakening

In every country we find conventionalities, distrust of innovations, privilege and reaction ranged against advancing and progressive democracy. This great awakening which is stirring the continent from ocean to ocean, will lose its force and usefulness unless we establish some platform representing the progressive spirit around which to rally. Never in the history of Canada was there greater need for true statesmen than at the present time. We need and must have, as statesmen, men who will not make the fatal mistake of forgetting that eventually the people must and will rule, men who must recognize that agriculture, the fundamental industry, must not be neglected.

The United States department of agriculture at Washington spends annually fifteen million dollars to find out the secrets of nature and impart them to the farmers for the benefit of agriculture. What is our department of agriculture spending on us? Not very much, but quite as much as we can expect considering the representation we have in the Houses of Parliament.

A Comparison

Gentlemen, I have listened to debates in two provincial Parliaments, also at two provincial conventions of organized farmers, and I do not hesitate in saying that for grasp of subject, clearness of understanding and ability of expression, the farmers' conventions were decidedly

U.F.A. Officers, 1912

The officers and directors of the United Farmers of Alberta elected at the Edmonton convention Jan. 16-18 were as follows:

Honorary President for Life
JAMES BOWER, RED DEER.

President
W. J. TREGILLUS, CALGARY.

Vice-Presidents
First, A. Cochrane, Stettler; second, D. W. Warner, Edmonton; third, M. E. Sly, Strathmore; fourth, J. Quinsey, Noble.

District Directors
Victoria, P. S. Austin, Ranfurly (re-elected); Edmonton, George Bevington, Spruce Grove; Strathcona, J. R. Pointer, Strome (re-elected); Red Deer, E. Carswell, Penhold (re-elected); Calgary, H. Sorenson, Strathmore; MacLeod, G. W. Buchanan, Cowley (re-elected); Medicine Hat, W. S. Henry.