

Henders' Presidential Address

The following is the address of President R. C. Henders at the opening session of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Convention held at Brandon, on January 10, 11 and 12

The year, which is drawing to a close, has been one of somewhat unusual experiences. Last winter because of its many storms, the severity of the weather conditions, and the many times which the roads were blocked, it was very difficult to carry on our propaganda of work. In fact, week after week, meetings were announced, which, owing to the above referred-to causes, had to be cancelled, speakers not being able to fill their engagements. During the spring and summer months, scarcity of farm help made itself manifest, so that there were times when the outlook from the central office was somewhat discouraging. Men who had taken a deep interest in our association work in former years were so pressed by their own business because of scarcity of help, that they were forced to work overtime.

It was not an uncommon thing at this office to receive a letter in which the statement was made "I am attempting to do the work of two men, being obliged to take my full share of the daily labor and at the same time conduct my business, which under ordinary circumstances, should demand my full attention." This being the case, at some points our Grain Growers' Associations during the summer months, while the summer rush of work was on, were not able to hold regular meetings, and we entertained some fear as to what effect this would have ultimately on our movement. It is therefore with feelings of gratitude that I refer to the fact that we have come thru the experiences of the year with not only an increase in membership, but the spirit and enthusiasm manifested in our local branches indicates that there never was a time when they felt the importance of our movement more deeply and displayed greater loyalty to our cause, than at the present time. In fact, from present indications, we are looking hopefully forward to this being a very successful convention gathering, and to the year upon which we are about to enter one of unusual prosperity in our organization.

Now is the Time for Self Sacrifice

'Tis true, here and there, one who has taken an active part has fallen out of the ranks, a few thru indifference, some thru the weight of years, and some to whom the Stern Reaper has come, and the sheaves have been gathered. But in place of these, others have been raised up—men from middle life and of younger years are pressing into the ranks, are realizing their duty and responsibility, are feeling the importance of this work to such an extent that we are assured that this movement which means so much for the plain people, both as an educational force, as a social factor in rural life and a promoter of legislation that makes for economic justice, has before it many years of activity and usefulness. Never was there need of greater self sacrifices and determination than at the present time, never was there need of more perfect organization than now.

Our directors' report covers the general work taken up by the board during the year. It will fall within the scope of my address to deal at some length with a few of the important questions, more of a public character, and having a bearing more particularly on our social, economic and trade conditions, with a view to the introduction of some thought, the tendency of which will be to make better living in the nation, the family and the individual.

Our National Honor at Stake

Much as we abhor war and believe that we ought to have reached a stage of civilization that such a thing as "war" would be impossible, yet, because of our false economic system, the tendency of which is to create a spirit of jealousy and distrust, first in national and then in the international life, rather than the growth of the spirit of brotherhood, we find ourselves in the throes of the most gigantic war the world has ever known. Most of us have a clear understanding of how we, as a nation came to be participants in this war, the conferences held by representatives of Great Britain with the representatives of the belligerent nations, and the communications which passed between them are matters of history and show beyond all doubt, why we are in this war. Our honor, our very soul as well as the national liberty were at stake, and we could not stay out of it except at a loss of these. The principles of democracy, principles which we cherish even more than life, were assailed, there was therefore no other course open for us. This being the case, our duty was plain, we must be prepared to put into this war both of men and money until we see the triumph of the principles which we so highly prize.

I have no sympathy with the position taken by certain individuals who, because there are certain things in connection with the administration of war affairs, or the methods made use of which they deem unfair or unjust, will therefore refuse to do

anything to help win the war. There may be good ground for complaint, some of us think there is, the party political game has been and is altogether too much in evidence. The making use of the opportunity which the war has afforded to capitalists for the purpose of piling up profits in their business and declaring unusual dividends is also a cause for uneasiness among the masses of the people. When the people are struggling heroically to supply men, when many homes are feeling the pinch of poverty, as well as loneliness and the loss of loved ones, it is not a time for all those who are in possession of peculiar advantages, to make use of these advantages for the purpose of securing personal gain. There is some cause for complaint along this line, tho not sufficient to justify the position taken, that because there is a wrong perpetrated in this direc-



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tion, there is found in that wrong a justification for shirking from duties and responsibilities which must be apparent to all.

Register Wealth and Man Power

We believe the proper course to pursue, is to do all we can to bring the war to a successful conclusion, and if this can be done by the registration of man power, we believe that everyone should avail himself of the opportunity of registration. I am however of the opinion that the registration of wealth should proceed side by side with the registration of man power, and people who are in a position to give of their substance, should come forward with as much eagerness to make their contribution along this line as the people come forward to register personally for service. We are further of the opinion that the best results will not be gained in the prosecution of this war until a course is pursued in Canada, similar to the one which has been pursued in Great Britain, that we have a National Government, composed of men irrespective of their party affiliations, who because of their ability will win the confidence of the people to such an extent that every British subject will gladly serve in whatever capacity the constituted authorities may decide.

Farmers' Generous Patriotic Contributions

It is with much pleasure that I refer to the record made by the Agricultural Interests along the line of service for their country. In proportion to population I believe there is no class that has come forward more willingly or that has been drained so completely of its superfluous men of the agricultural class. I am of the opinion that while here and there you will find a family where one, or perhaps in a few cases, two sons could be spared for active service, you will find in a great many instances the industry of agriculture will be seriously impaired because sons occupying responsible positions have enlisted. So serious have conditions become in many parts of the country that productivity is being impaired, and the future along lines of "feeding the nation" is looking anything but encouraging.

It is with pleasure I refer to the interest that has been taken from a financial standpoint, by the farmers of our province. Our Patriotic Acre scheme

afforded an opportunity to contribute to the different funds necessary for the carrying on of the war program. From time to time we have made disbursements from the central office, until up to the present, the farmers in the province have in a special way contributed approximately \$30,000 to the various funds. What we have done in this regard is some feeble expression of the interest we are taking in this war, and yet in view of the enormity of the responsibility and the issues that are at stake, it seems to me we are only beginning to realize our responsibilities. Let us hope to go out from this Convention with a determination to unitedly stand for the policy and program that may be mapped out, until the conclusion of that program is reached, so definite and decisive as will usher in a day when the end of all war shall come.

A number of very interesting meetings of the board, known as the Canadian Council of Agriculture and Commerce have been held during the year. Many important questions of a trade nature have come up for discussion, and we believe that while we have not always seen eye to eye, and perhaps on one important matter we have not made a great deal of progress, yet in some ways a clearer understanding has been reached and a feeling of mutual confidence has been inspired that has been very beneficial in this nature. We are encouraged to believe that more and more we may expect good to come from these conferences. We are getting their viewpoints of commercial interests and they are getting ours, and as far as I am able to judge, there seems to be an honest endeavor to face the problems that confront us with a desire, and I may say a determination, to secure that which will bring the greatest good to all. Of course we have many differences, and some very sharp discussions, but the best of goodwill has prevailed at all times and there has been shown a respect for the opinion of others, even tho they have differed very widely from our own.

High Cost of Living

I have little faith in the work done by appointed commissions as long as they pursue the policy which up to the present time has been made use of, they are dealing rather with the effect than with the cause of the high cost of living, and I sometimes wonder if there is not design in their method, the intention being to draw the mind of the public away from the real issue. All of their work is too superficial. It may bring a little relief here and there but the wrong is too deeply imbedded to be cured by any such method. I would like to ask—what then is the cause and what is the remedy?

The first cause I would suggest is a false system of land tenure. The earth is the Lord's and not the landlords. Successful land speculation or the blindly fortunate ownership of the land which rose to great values is responsible for a large number of our owners of fortunes. The first economic exercise of the power of the strong over the weak was the acquisition of land. Then they made laws to guarantee their title using the state to maintain the strong arm. This is the beginning of class legislation and economic injustice. The concentration of ownership of land is increasing in city and in country. This process of private appropriation of increase in land values has developed here faster than in any other country. On account of our unparalleled development, it is safe to say that less than 200 people own the larger portions of the land value of the city of Winnipeg. Lots which sold forty years ago at from \$500 to \$1,000 are now held at \$1,500 to \$2,000 per foot while people who did not contribute one dollar towards the making of that land value, are, by a system of taxation able to keep the users of such land in a state of bondage worse than that of the African slave for all of their life. The same condition prevails to a large extent in the country. That this power to levy tribute is by law rather than by force of the sword does not make it any more just. A slave holder in Vermont was once asked to show a Bill of Sale signed by Almighty God—some day the same demand will be made upon those who claim title to land. This form of injustice is of long standing. The Hebrew Law endeavored to prohibit it. Behind all of their regulations was the seventh year of fallow, and the fiftieth year of release, thus holding to the principle that the earth belonged to the Lord, and that it was held in trust from God for all of His people. After a time commercial development came, the primitive land system was lost. Independent farmers became impoverished by taxes laid on to pay for wars. The land was taken, the farmers became serfs, economic ruin and social degradation followed. This is why the Prophets cried the wrath of God upon those who

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