

## United Farmers a Force to Reckon With

(Continued from page 9.)

Essex, was most encouraging. The earnings amounted to \$2,343.95, composed of a balance from 1915 of \$182.73, dues for 1916 of \$1,827.10, funds received from the United Farmers' Company, \$50, and a balance from the trading account of \$180.15.

The expenditures amounted to \$1,585.04. These included office expenses, \$100; telephone, \$40; salaries, \$65; expenses of directors' meetings, \$142.85; printing, postage and exchange, \$121.88; organization account, \$110.64; district conventions, \$140.58; affiliation fee with the Canadian Council of Agriculture and delegates' expenses, \$183.75; and expenses connected with the previous annual meeting, \$569.24. This left a net excess of earnings over expense of \$859.94.

The assets included a bank balance of \$213.54; cash on hand, not deposited, \$228.25; accounts receivable, \$592.26; unsold buttons on hand, \$116.90; total, \$1,051.94. The only liabilities were accounts due the United Farmers' Cooperative Company of \$192.40.

### Officers Elected.

The officers for 1917 are as follows: President, R. H. Halbert, Melancthon, Dufferin county, re-elected; 1st vice-president, E. C. Drury, Barrie, Simcoe county; 2nd vice-president, W. C. Good, Paris, Brant county. Directors: L. H. Blatchford, Oxford county; E. A. Van Allen, Aultville, Dundas county; W. H. Hunter, Varney, Grey county; T. H. Adams, Essex, Essex county; Peter Porter, Burford, Brant county; Auditor, Wm. Moore, Guelph.

### President's Address.

President R. H. Halbert, in his annual address, asked for a square deal for every farmer; no more, no less. When farmers secure it, every business in Canada and the nation at large will share their prosperity. The relative importance of the agricultural industry was shown that during 1916 the exports from Canada's mines, fisheries and forests amounted to \$138,580,000, while the exports of agricultural products amounted to \$337,620,000.

In Canada we are supposed to have government by the people, but corporations and subsidized interests rule Canada more absolutely than autocrats rule Russia, Germany or any other monarchical country. From time immemorial the tiller of the soil has borne the burden of the race. Only by cooperating will the farmers of Canada be able to redeem their position.

### Convention Proceedings.

The convention opened promptly Wednesday morning, Feb. 28th, with a few words of greeting by President Halbert. This was followed by the appointment of the committee, followed by the reading of minutes and communications. The most interesting announcement was that all the notice of the Provincial and Dominion governments had taken of the resolutions passed at the last convention which had been sent them, was that they would be given "most serious consideration."

On the suggestion of President Halbert and Secretary Morrison a motion was introduced favoring the election of a legislative committee to watch the legislative measures. It was proposed to form a committee separate from the directorate. After discussion it was decided that this would not be wise. The directors were authorized to appoint such a committee.

### District Reports.

Secretary Morrison reported that he believed that it would be a benefit to the organization if the province could be divided into nine groups, arranged

largely according to railroad connections, and representatives appointed for each district already represented by directors of the association. This suggestion was approved, and on motion of Mr. W. C. Good, of Paris, the directors were authorized to form these districts.

Mr. Gordon Waldron, who has shown his interest in the movement by furnishing his legal services free of cost to the association and the United Farmers' Company for several years and has given up much personal time to the work, reported to the meeting to the bill recently introduced in the Ontario legislature by the government, proposing certain changes in the act governing cooperative societies and amendments thereto, was commendable in some respects and decidedly dangerous in others. Were it to be carried as first introduced it would place the United Farmers' Company largely under the supervision of the government. The government would be forced to distribute its surplus and would be necessitated submitting its financial statement to the government for inspection.

The announcement made by Mr. Waldron provoked a lively discussion. Mr. Good wanted to know where the government had asked the farmers if they wanted such legislation. This question was not answered. President Halbert considered the bill a sign that the farmers are at last beginning to amount to something. Dr. Drury was enthusiastically applauded when he said that the governments seem all together too much inclined to interfere with the work of farmers' organization and this was so simply because the government did not understand farmers. He said his one part he would rather that the farmers should make mistakes than that they should be over-regulated.

Mr. Wylie in Prescott, Mr. J. Stewart in Guelph, and others took part in the discussion. Finally a committee composed of Messrs. E. C. Drury, chairman; Elmer Lick, Oshawa; W. C. Good, Paris; Mr. Plick, Col. J. Z. Fraser of Brantford, and Mr. Lammerman of Woodstock, was appointed to examine the bill closely and confer with Mr. Waldron and take such action as might be necessary.

### The Tariff Discussion.

The consideration of the national farmers' platform as recommended by the Canadian Council of Agriculture, was to have been opened at the Wednesday afternoon session by Col. J. Z. Fraser, of Burford. A full report of the discussion by the delegates of the platform appears on page 10 in this issue and a copy of the resolutions as passed, on page two.

Economic conditions in Canada were discussed by Secretary Rodrick McKenzie of the Canadian Council of Agriculture, who said that these are so unjust to both the eastern and western farmer that they have been driving farmers from the land by tens of thousands. The issue at stake is not one between Grit and Tory but one between farmers and capitalists. Farmers, therefore, should clearly understand the nature of the issue in which they are engaged and forget that they are Grits and Tories by uniting in a common effort.

A simple explanation of how the tariff works was given by Mr. Kenzie. When a merchant or manufacturer brings goods into this country, they pay the customs tax at the point of importation. The tax is added to the cost of the goods and when the farmer buys the goods he pays the tax, although he does not know it. Any light increase in the tariff, but the vigorously opposed by farmers, but the tariff tax they pay is ten times as great as the municipal tax. If their

municipal tax is increased, they soon want to know the reason why, but if the tariff is increased they are willing to agree that it is a benefit to the country.

The importer is not content to simply add the tariff tax to the goods he sells, but he expects to make a profit off that tax as well. When a farmer's wife says she has been to town and purchased goods costing \$42 she is the actual cost of the goods was about \$30 and the balance represented the customs tax. Mr. McKenzie described how the farmers' organizations in western Canada have been importing agricultural machinery. A drill costing them \$69 was valued by the government at \$72, a duty of \$19 was added, the freight came to \$5.50 and the cost to the company came to \$94, to which their profit had to be added. When farmers bought these implements they realized that they were paying such a large duty. Several other lines of implements were mentioned and the duty on each line given. It was a fact that farmers paid these large taxes without knowing it. This explained why farmers were not more profitable. There are 180,000 farmers in Western Canada and 11,000 retail dealers or one dealer to every 17 farmers.

### An Old Conservative Talk.

Col. J. Z. Fraser, of Burford, continued the discussion of the tariff at the evening session. For 25 years he had been closely identified with the political parties and had been known as a dyed-in-the-wool old Tory. He said he was speaking, however, not as a Tory but as a man who had reached a time of life when he desired to serve the people and let them know the facts. The tariff had always been made a political issue without any reason that it should have been. But the question how farmers should feed their pigs. The real reason was because the interests that benefit from the tariff desire to blind the eyes of the public, including the farmers, and to set one man against another in order that they may secure what they want. Farmers are expected to vote at election time, but they have no say in determining what the policies of the party shall be. Before an election the men behind the railroads, the manufacturing industries and other interests look over the field and decide which party it will cost them the least to elect. They then prepare to support that party if it will agree to give them what they want. Blind to all this, true, good farmers who are ready to help each other at threshings, silo fillings and on other similar occasions, begin to get suddenly suspicious of one another about election time and soon go to the polls to cancel one another's votes because they don't realize that they have been fed.

### Taxing Land Values.

One plank of the proposed national farmers' platform provided that in the event of the Dominion government lifting a large measure of the burden of taxation from farmers by lowering the tariff the farmers would be willing to submit to a direct tax on land values to enable the government to raise sufficient revenue in this way to offset the revenue they might lose by lowering the tariff. As Ontario farmers are not as well posted on this question as the farmers on the prairie provinces, an address explaining the principles involved in the taxation of land values was given by H. B. Cowan, Editor-in-Chief of Farm and Dairy.

In opening Mr. Cowan explained that farmers should realize that a tax on land values is an entirely different thing from a tax on land. Farmers have lots of land, but little land value. One acre of land at the corner of King and Yonge streets in Toronto is worth nearly as much as all the farm land in the county of Dundas. It has been

said that the land values in the city of Winnipeg are greater than the values of all the farm land in the province of Manitoba. Thus while farmers have nothing to fear from a tax on land values.

Land values always increase more rapidly where population is dense, thus the greatest increases in values take place in the cities. Within a few years recently the land values of the city of Toronto increased \$140,000,000, while the values of the farm lands in the province during the same period did not increase one-quarter as much as the land values in Toronto alone. Where did the \$140,000,000 of increased land values come from? A speaker assured the audience that they did not drop from heaven, but came for the most part out of the pockets of the farmers and the pockets of the people of the cities and went into the hands of a comparatively few wealthy people.

### The Income Tax.

Mr. Gordon Waldron, Editor of the Weekly Sun, spoke in favor of the graduated income tax, and said that after the war the debt of Canada will probably be \$1,500,000,000. In addition the provinces have debts of practically \$70,000,000 and the various municipalities debts of \$250,000,000. This means that after the war the people of Canada will have to be very heavily taxed to pay interest on their debts alone to say nothing of pensions to soldiers.

While there were features of the income tax to which exception might be taken, he was inclined to think it was probably as fair a tax as any proposed. It is important that taxes shall be laid so as not to hamper industry. Taxation must relieve agriculture as much as it does industry. The farm population continues to decline Canada's situation will be serious. The convention later approved of this form of taxation also.

### Railway Nationalization.

The nationalization of railways was discussed by H. J. Pettipiece, of Forest, Ont., who said that outside of America the railways in 51 out of 63 countries are state-owned or state-controlled and all with satisfactory results. Highways are built to serve the public and just as much belong to the people as should the railways. Service should be the main consideration aimed at, not revenue. Canada has given over \$1,000,000,000 to her railways. This is equal to \$30,000 a mile for every mile of privately-owned railway in the Dominion and represents over half the entire railway capital of the country, including watered stock, debts and everything else.

Farm property is taxed approximately eight times on the dollar, but the value of Canada pays for three railways on the dollar or \$86 a mile. Of 398 miles of Canadian owned railways in the United States, the average tax is \$500 a mile. The Grand Trunk railway pays \$180 a mile on its lines in Michigan and \$1,200 a mile on its lines in Indiana and Illinois. Other figures of the same kind could be given. We allow our own Canadian railways to carry freight in the United States through Canada at lower rates than we charge our own people for similar service.

The initiative and referendum was explained by Mr. F. E. Ellis, B.S.A., president of the Campbellville Farmers' Club. He shortly to re-join the staff of Farm and Dairy and said that he had attended many conventions organized for the farmers, but this was the first one he had spoken at which no farmer was asked of turning his farm over to a hired man for four or five years to do what