

A Farmers' Government

The Saskatchewan Government—Its Aims and Achievements

Big Farmers' Questions, Demanding Special Recognition

The Liberal party has been entrusted by the people of Saskatchewan with the duties and responsibilities of government for the past twelve years. The vast majority of the farmers there have brought their enthusiasm and attached themselves to the Liberal party, being in no small measure responsible for the Government's long tenure of office. Why did they do it? The reason is not far to seek. Agriculture being the predominant industry of Saskatchewan the Government set itself the task of inaugurating great progressive movements calculated to bring prosperity to the people generally and to the farmers in particular. Co-operation has been its watchword, and the farmers of the province do not need the historian to tell them that the Liberal record to date is a magnificent story of progressive, enlightened and courageous legislation in favor of the agricultural classes. We venture the assertion that never in the history of any province has a government and party had such a record of progressive achievement to present to the farmers on the eve of an election as have the Liberals of Saskatchewan.

Of the eight Members of the Saskatchewan Cabinet there are four who started farming on homesteads, and having their experienced the trials and struggles of pioneer life on the prairie, can view agricultural problems in a sympathetic and practical manner. These four Ministers, Hon. W. R. Motherwell, Hon. George Langley, Hon. A. P. McNab and Hon. C. A. Dunning, need no introduction to the farmers of Saskatchewan. They are men by long toil and long experience now skilled in the science of farming, and who, having made a careful and practical study of farming, can bring to their duties a remarkable store of knowledge, and in an especial degree can advise and assist in developing the many progressive agricultural policies formulated by the Liberal party. Needless to say such men have the best interests of the farmers completely at heart, and with such a large representation in the Cabinet, with a large following in the Legislature, the farmers are assured that the necessary support and assistance required is always at hand ready to deal adequately and effectively with the agricultural matters as they arise from time to time. The record of achievement in the past constitutes the best guarantee of what Liberalism will do for the farmers in the future.

Constructive Commissions

Many of the important measures passed by the Saskatchewan government have emanated from the farmers themselves. In the handling of agricultural subjects the Liberal party has shown beyond all shadow of doubt that it is first and foremost the farmers' party, and subject in no manner to the influence of corporations. Before attempting to legislate on any subject of outstanding importance affecting the agricultural industry, the government went to great pains and expense to first of all ascertain the views of the farmers in the country. Royal Commissions were appointed on which leading agriculturalists were employed. There was the Elevator Commission on which Dr. Robert Magill, Hon. George Langley and the late Fred W. Green acted as Commissioners. From this commission sprang Saskatchewan's world-renowned elevator system. Later the Agricultural Credit Commission was appointed to enquire into ways and means for providing cheap money for farmers, and Hon. C. A. Dunning acted on this commission. Appointed at the same time was the Grain Markets commission to study the whole grain problem in Europe as well as on this continent for bettering the position of Saskatchewan grain on the European market, and Hon. George Langley acted on this commission. There followed the Farm Implements Commission and in the handling of the farm implement question the Saskatchewan government achieved one of its most far reaching triumphs. Hon. W. R. Motherwell and Mr. Maharg were two of the commissioners, and it is of interest to note that W. M. Martin, now Premier Martin, acted as counsel for the farmers before the commission. The last Royal Commission to be appointed was the Livestock Commission, which has been for some time past investigating all matters surrounding the livestock industry of Saskatchewan. When the Livestock Commission has finished its work it will doubtless be found possible for the government to enact legislation solving many of the intricate livestock problems with which farmers are today confronted.

Summed Up.—During the twelve years in which the Liberal party has been in power in Saskatchewan they have dealt with many large and intricate problems and in not a single instance have they failed to achieve the objects desired to meet the wishes of the organized farmers.

Agricultural Activities of Government

For progressive, intelligent, and genuinely good work, attended with splendid results on behalf of the farmers, the Saskatchewan government has rightly been given great credit and praise.

Agricultural policies have been framed and developed so as to make, so far as it lay in the power of the government, the rural population on the farms happy, contented and prosperous. The record of the government through its agricultural branch has been one of great activity in fostering and aiding agricultural pursuits in the province.

The following figures of expenditures give some idea of the importance attached by the government to the necessity for spending large sums of money for the development of agriculture.

1906	\$102,450	1910	\$220,670	1912	\$720,320
1907	112,345	1911	342,960	1914	282,230
1908	195,320	1912	433,740	1915	320,720
1909	211,470			1916	358,100

For the year 1917 no less than over half a million dollars has been voted, including sums for the purchase and sale of livestock and livestock products under the Agricultural Aids Act.

Principles of Co-operation

When Saskatchewan was created a province in 1905, organization among the farmers for business purposes was practically unknown. Within the few years in which the Liberal party has been in power the province has made wonderful progress along many lines, but in no direction has greater or more important development taken place, than in the organization of her agricultural industry along co-operative lines.

Saskatchewan is recognized as the leader among the provinces of Canada in the application of the principles of co-operation, and is not surpassed in that respect by any state in the United States. This pre-eminent position has been attained in a few short years because of the active sympathy and support of the Liberal party in Saskatchewan. Whereas in the past, parties and governments here, as a rule, have been antagonistic to such movements, opposed them, and retarded their growth the Liberal government of Saskatchewan has not only given them every encouragement and financial assistance, but has actually taken the initiative in inaugurating the adoption of co-operative principles and methods in the agricultural pursuits of the province.

The work of the government along co-operative lines as regards elevators, creameries, and the production and marketing of farm products, purchasing of farm supplies, etc. is too well known to require any elaboration. Suffice it to say that by the operation of these co-operative enterprises thousands of dollars have been put into the pockets of Saskatchewan farmers.

A special word however must be said with regard to the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company.

The Co-operative Elevator Company

Never was there a more splendid vindication of the principles of Liberalism, involving legislation for the masses against monopoly, and trust in the ability of the farmers to manage their own affairs without interference save in the nature of government financial assistance, as is afforded by the creation of the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company Limited. The Conservative party took the opposite stand in favor of government ownership of elevators and expressed a lack of belief in the ability of the farmers to operate successfully so large a business undertaking. Whereas the Manitoba government-owned elevator scheme has proved a failure in so far as rendering satisfactory service to the farmers, and also financially the Saskatchewan system enjoys the distinction of being the most efficient grain marketing system yet devised and the largest initial grain handling concern in the world. Financially it is as strong as the back of Gibraltar.

Other Agricultural Activities

The Department of Agriculture organizes and pays legislative grants to agricultural societies.

It assists the farmers in securing domestic and farm help, especially at seeding and harvest time.

It pays scholarships to domestic science students from Saskatchewan attending eastern institutions.

It operates better farming trains.

It maintains district representatives in outlying districts to keep in touch with the farmers.

It instructs Non-English speaking settlers in farming practice through their own press. It watches over and seeks to further the interests of Saskatchewan farmers generally through ever changing conditions from year to year.

Railway and Telephone Extension

Saskatchewan is rightly proud of its record in railway and telephone extension work. No province in Canada can equal it for the same length of time. Though much has been done, much still requires to be done and the Liberal party has adopted policies to bring about the desired results. These policies are well known, and they meet the demands of the situation.

Big Farmers' Questions Demanding Special Recognition

As was natural and only to be expected the outstanding issues of the Saskatchewan election campaign are questions, and big questions too, of vital importance to the farmers demanding careful study and special recognition. These big questions are:

1. The settlement of vacant lands.
2. The carrying out of a policy whereby all farmers can secure the funds they require on satisfactory terms.
3. The relieving of the producers from unjust and burdensome market restrictions and tariff taxation.
4. The lessening of the cost of farm machinery and other things essential to grain and livestock production.

Land Settlement

Saskatchewan needs more settlers and must have them. With denser population will follow improved social conditions, better schools, lower taxation, increased railway facilities, rural mail delivery and a hundred and one other things that tend to make life on the farm more attractive and more profitable. The Liberal party has a scheme to encourage settlement, the Conservative party is silent on this big question.

Cheap Money

The settlement of the lands, however, while of primary importance is not everything. The settlers must be surrounded with facilities and conditions that will enable them to increase production and reap the just reward of their labors. They must therefore be enabled to secure the necessary monies to increase their holdings, to add to their stock and plant, to provide necessary fencing, buildings and other improvements and to carry on their reasonable operations. The government has already assisted the farmers in this direction by the organization of the Farm Loan Board through which, by government assistance, the farmers will be enabled to secure farm loans on most favorable terms, repayable in 30 years or earlier if desired. Having thus disposed of the question of long term credit, there still remains the question of short term credit. In this connection the Dominion parliament alone has jurisdiction over banks and banking, and the Liberal party has declared in favor of formulating a demand on the Federal authorities for the necessary changes in the Bank Act to enable the establishment of local agricultural banks in close touch with local conditions and with the needs of the farming industry.

Tariff Reforms and Wider Markets

After settling the lands and furnishing the settlers with the necessary money to enable them to carry on their operations, we are face to face with the fact that the farmers' struggle is far from over. Our farmers are compelled to carry tariff burdens and to struggle against market restrictions that enormously reduce their profits and force them to pay tribute to the commercial and big interests of Eastern Canada.

In this connection the line of cleavage between the Liberals and Conservatives is clearly drawn. The Conservative party stands for the protection of the manufacturers and corporations of Eastern Canada. They are opposed to free implements. They object to the farmers being placed in the position where they can purchase their machinery and plant where they can get it cheapest and will not permit the farmers to sell their produce where they can get the best prices. They defeated reciprocity. They are always true Conservatives and High Protectionists. First, last, and all the time. They sacrifice the people for their party. The stand of the Liberal party on these important issues is definite and clear cut. At their grand convention held at Moose Jaw they unanimously and enthusiastically declared in favor of the following—

- Free access for the grain products of Saskatchewan to the markets of the United States and of all other countries willing to grant such free entry.
- The admission into Canada, free of customs duties, of farm machinery and all things essential to the raising of grain and livestock products.
- A general lowering of the customs duties on all necessities of life.
- The immediate reduction of the customs duties on all goods imported from Great Britain to one-half of the rates charged under the general tariff, and a policy of further gradual reduction with a view to the elimination of all trade restrictions within the Empire.
- The settlers for our farm products and especially a speedy completion of the Hudson Bay Railway, owned and operated by the government of Canada, and that provision be made for the operation of suitable steamers to be run between the Bay and Great Britain.

Farm Machinery

The Liberal party holds that the farmers should be placed in a position where they can buy their machinery in the cheapest market. They believe that the farmers have an absolute and undeniable right to get their equipment or plant at the lowest possible cost, and claim therefore that the farmers should not be forced by high tariffs to purchase their requirements at an unreasonable price. Further, apart from the question of customs duties, the Liberal party maintains that the price of farm machinery is too high, and if again elected they will provide for a complete and exhaustive investigation into all the complicated and involved questions that enter into the cost of farm machinery with a view to reducing the present high prices and thereby saving millions of dollars to the farmers of the province.

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