

That Alberta Telegram

How it Came to be Prepared, What it Said and Why it Was Sent to Ottawa

EVER since the famous farmers' delegation that waited on the Dominion Government in Ottawa in May in an effort to have the Government reconsider its action in cancelling the exemptions of farmers' sons between the ages of 20 and 22 there has been a keen desire for full information as to how it was the executive of the United Farmers of Alberta sent the telegram to Ottawa, that was read at the meeting in the Opera House by Premier Borden, and which seemed to approve of the Government's action, and to oppose the desires of the United Farmers of Ontario. President H. W. Wood, of the United Farmers of Alberta, partly explained the mystery at the meeting of farmers held in Massey Hall in June. However, there was much that he was unable to deal with at that time.

A complete explanation of the whole situation was given at a meeting of the Canadian Council of Agriculture held in Winnipeg recently. This meeting was attended by four representatives of the United Farmers of Ontario—Messrs. Col. J. Z. Fraser, of Burford, Ont.; C. W. Gurney, Paris; J. J. Morrison, Toronto, and H. R. Cowan, of Farm and Dairy. The matter was brought up for consideration because of the desire of the Ontario delegates to have it dealt with. However, the representatives of the United Farmers of Alberta were fully as ready to make explanation as the Ontario delegates were to ask for them. Three members of the Executive Committee of the United Farmers of Alberta, who were present at the meeting when the telegram was prepared, were present also at the meeting in Winnipeg. These were—First Vice-President P. Baker, Ponoka; Third Vice-President J. W. Leaky, Wilfrid Cord, and Fourth Vice-President Rine Shepherd, of South Edmonton. Their explanation of the situation was as follows:

Alberta Conditions.

As soon as the Government's action in cancelling exemptions became known in Alberta there were immediate protests from farmers in all parts of the province, just as there were in Ontario. Locals of the United Farmers of Alberta began to meet and pass resolutions condemning the Government's action and calling upon the central organization to take some steps in the matter.

These protests became so numerous that a meeting of the Executive of the Association was called to deal with them. It happened that this meeting was held the day before the Ontario farmers waited on the Government. It had been expected that President Wood would be present, but he was detained in the United States and did not get back in time to attend. At the time the Executive met the Association had received twenty-five resolutions from locals condemning the Government's action, and only one resolution supporting the Government.

Realizing that the country was at war, and that probably the Government had some very urgent reasons for taking the stand it had, the Executive did not feel like condemning the Government's action out of hand, because it knew that if it did the resolution might be published in papers all over the country and ultimately find its way into the enemies' hands and lead the enemy to suppose that Canadian farmers were not willing to support the Government, and possibly lead them to think that Canada was getting disheartened with the war. They felt also that such a telegram might be misunderstood by our soldiers overseas. At the same time the Executive did not feel that it could support the Government because of the effect the Government's action was likely to have on increased production and in other ways. After considerable discussion, it was decided that the best thing that could be done was to prepare a non-committal resolution, which, while not

condemning the Government, would not support the Government in the stand it had taken, but place the full responsibility for the Government's action upon the Government. At that time the full effects of the action of the Government would have on production were not known or the Executive might have passed a stronger resolution.

The Famous Telegram.

1. That we recognize that the Government, in possession of the full facts in regard to the military situation and the need for increased production, would not have issued this order, which has since been ratified by Parliament, had not the need for men been urgent and imperative.

2. That this Executive recognizes the fairness of the order in that it applies to all classes of citizens of this age, irrespective of their position or occupation.

3. While there will undoubtedly be a considerable loss of production resulting from the calling of these men at this time, this Executive believes that this having considered this aspect of the situation the Government accepts the responsibility.

4. This Executive expresses the belief that good work has been done by the agricultural representative in this district in helping the military to secure adequate reinforcements with a minimum of disturbance to production, and further recommends that cases of special hardship be referred to the Government through him with a view to some relief being granted.

5. This Executive expresses the hope that farmers will loyally abide

AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT.

AN important announcement concerning the efforts of the farmers to organize a paper of their own appears in the full page advertisement on the back cover of this issue of Farm and Dairy. Every farmer who is interested in the farmers' movement should read this announcement carefully.

by the decision of the Government, and that those remaining at home will endeavor to see that production is retarded as little as possible by the calling out of this class.

Later Action.

The famous telegram was passed by the Executive on May 13. Within three weeks complaints from the farmers in Alberta over the Government's action had become so numerous that a full meeting of the directors of the United Farmers of Alberta was held to deal with the matter. At this meeting a much stronger resolution was passed, and it was decided to send it to Ottawa by President H. W. Wood, in order that the president might lay the situation before the Government fully. This was the reason that President Wood was unable to say more than he did at the meeting in Massey Hall, as he had not yet waited on the Government, and it would have been a discourteous action on his part to disclose before at a public meeting in advance the facts which he had been instructed to take to Ottawa and lay before the Government. He felt that he would be more likely to have a favorable influence on the Government if he went down more as a friend seeking to advise the Government against the danger of its action than if he went down as a critic, having discharged his broadside in advance at the public meeting of the farmers in Toronto.

A Second Resolution.

The resolution passed by the full (Continued on page 2.)



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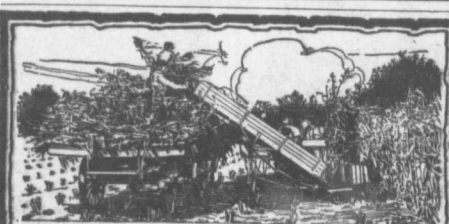
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