

MUST BE ABOVE SELFISHNESS TO SOLVE PROBLEM

Premier J. G. Gardiner Stresses Need for Co-operation

(Special to The Leader)

PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE, Man., March 9.—"Transportation is Western Canada's outstanding problem, as it has been the great problem of the American continent since it was first opened up for settlement, and the only way in which a successful solution can be worked out is by the people of both Eastern and Western Canada rising above selfish feeling and local interests and working shoulder to shoulder for the policy which would be of the greatest benefit to Canada as a whole." This was the message brought to the United Farmers of Portage la Prairie at their annual banquet by Hon. James G. Gardiner, premier of Saskatchewan and guest of honor in the province to which he came 25 years ago as a farm laborer.

Premier Gardiner deprecated the worship of wealth in America, which by a queer distortion of perspective, did not give proper due to men who had indeed made money, but had given in return great and lasting service in building up large railway systems. Quite a number of those who showed that initiative and that willingness to apply themselves very rapidly amassed considerable fortunes.

"Each one of you," he said, "can remember that in your boyhood the chief pastime of young men everywhere on this continent was to read the lives of men who had gone into the great industrial centers, amassed enormous wealth and gained positions of authority and influence such as were scarcely dreamed of in any other place at any other time. Not more than two decades ago, the names most widely known throughout the Dominion of Canada were those of J. J. Hill, Lord Strathcona, Lord Shaughnessy, Mackenzie and Mann.

Humble Beginnings

"These men started out from very humble beginnings, seized the opportunities which the conditions presented, and reaped honor for themselves while doing a great and lasting service, particularly to the Central West of the continent upon which we live. They did, indeed, make wealth for themselves, but the wealth which they made for themselves was infinitesimal as compared with the wealth which they made for the countries in which they lived and labored. The fact of the matter is that they added more cents value to every bushel of grain produced in the western part of this continent by creating the efficient transportation systems which they developed, than those systems will ever be permitted to take out of the wheat which will be produced here from generation to generation.

"When we examine closely into the condition which exists today and compare with it the condition which would have existed were it not for the great developments I have been speaking of, we are bound to admit that the benefits accruing to us individually because of those developments are much greater than the charges that are made upon us by the men who have become enormously rich. In other words, the produce of our mines, our forests, our fisheries and our farms has been so great that a very small toll taken upon each unit of that produce and spread over the great mass of those engaged in its production affects the individual producer very little, but creates enormous fortunes for the comparatively few individuals who have been engaged in the organization of industry, the organization of transportation and the organization of finance. That is the reason why so many of us have been disappointed.

Find We Are Wrong

"After we have listened to agitators or reformers going about the country crying down the enormous wealth of what they are pleased to term vested interests and insisting upon our taking this or that action in order to bring greater wealth to ourselves, we eventually discover that after taking such action we individually are not very much better off than we were before, and we are inclined to apply our criticisms to whole sections of Canada or to whole classes of our people, forgetting that the great mass of those who are engaged in transportation, in industry or in our financial institutions are laborers like ourselves.

"After having wandered over a considerable part of this continent, and after having been a farmer or farm laborer on three different occasions, and after having had a little experience in educational, political and other matters, I am inclined to think that the most independent, the most healthy, and possibly the best nourished class in the Dominion of Canada today are its farmers, and particularly its western farmers.

"It is even best to be fair in politics many opinions to the contrary notwithstanding.

"Back in 1904 we were inspired with new hope when the second transcontinental railway was projected. Not only were we given new hope but the road was to be truly national in the sense that Quebec was to be famed throughout the world not only as the only walled city on the North American continent, but as the great summer grain port of the eastern coast, while Halifax would serve as the winter terminals of the all year round outlet for our grain. A wonderful national project keeping the best paying tonnage our railways have to haul on Canadian lines and passing it through Canadian ports, giving employment to Canadian labor!

Has Not Been Tried

"Why has our hope not been realized? We are not yet convinced that the thing cannot be done. It has never been tried. Because it has not been tried there is rankling in our minds, a feeling that the selfishness of those living along the great waterway from the city of Fort William to the city of Montreal have been placed upon a pedestal while the national good has been sacrificed to the god of personal greed.

"In 1903 our hopes were raised a second time. One of the policies advocated was the construction of the Hudson's Bay Railway. Again we were to have an all-Canadian route with a western port bringing us eleven hundred miles nearer our Liverpool market.

"A new government came into power, investigated the whole project, in the spirit that one political party naturally investigates the work of another, decided that the project was feasible and ordered the contractor to proceed. The contractor did proceed. For six years the money of Canada was lavishly spent. The grade was built to the Bay. Steel was laid to within 92 miles of the Bay. The decision was reached to go to Fort Nelson. An artificial island was built. An enormous steel bridge was built from the main land to the island. Six million dollars was spent upon the harbor alone. Every steel girder, every bag of cement, every spike, every machine and tool for the enormous expenditure I presume was shipped in through the straits. Yet some men contend that never a bushel of grain can go out by that route. I personally know nothing about it, but with the weight of evidence produced by two opposing political parties in its favor with the assurance that the expenditure of 20 million dollars of Canadian money gives, I am compelled to remark that there must have been tremendous influences existing to stop construction in 1918 when the war was over.

Sacrifice National Interest

"The national interest is being sacrificed to the selfish interests of a few individuals living along the established trade route leading from the western wheat fields to our national Canadian ports.

"I do not condemn eastern interests or big interests or organized interests or organized farmers, or the farmers' government of Manitoba. I condemn that attitude of mind in Manitoba which would permit you to tax our wheat if it passed your exchange but would deny us an equal freight rate to ship our wheat east and west. I condemn the attitude of the Alberta professor who comes into Saskatchewan and condemns the Hudson's Bay Railway now that they have the Pacific route. I condemn the attitude of mind in both Alberta and Manitoba which under regulations permit your people to drink home-made beer but under regulations, prevents your people from drinking Saskatchewan beer. If I were a drinking man I would just as soon get a 'kick' out of Saskatoon as out of Winnipeg.

"The most harmful slogan ever introduced into the consideration of western public matters was the cry, 'down with eastern vested interests,' which has developed into an attempt to organize the east against the west and the west against the east. Members of the party to which I belong in the past were responsible for the introduction of that cry, and I pledged myself as a leader of that party to put forth every effort to remove from the appeals of the organization to which I belong, any such unworthy sentiment.

Strength in Unity

"What is the solution for our western problem? The old solution: 'In unity there is strength.' Let all those who believe that the development of the east means prosperity for the west and the development of the west means prosperity for the east stand shoulder to shoulder. Under such conditions we will not all become enormously wealthy but we will transfer to our children and our children's children the only heritage which pioneers have ever been able to pass on, namely, comfortable homes, clean minds and bodies, a contentment and directness of purpose such as any nation would be proud to build upon for the future.

"My hope is that every organization interested in the betterment of the condition of our farmers will prosper in its endeavors. My opinion is that a western government should be a farmer's government in the sense that its every effort will be for the improvement of its citizens, who are largely, if not altogether, dependent upon agriculture."