

U.F.A. President's Address

The following is the address of President H. W. Wood, delivered at the opening session of the United Farmers of Alberta Convention held at Edmonton, January 23, 24, 25 and 26

This, the Ninth Annual Convention of the United Farmers of Alberta, and the second of the United Farm Women of Alberta, should prove to be the best in the history of our organization, which is still in the vigor of youth, and each recurring anniversary should mark a normal, perceptible growth. We have much to be proud of in our brief history, but no history can relate more than efforts to reach perfection. Nowhere in the past can we find worthy ideals to guide us in our upward struggle, so we turn our eyes with hope and confidence to the future.

On assuming the duties of president, one year ago, I did so with the thorough conviction that I could not succeed in the work I would have to do unless I could get the sympathetic co-operation of your Board of Directors and Executive Committee. I also realized that in order to get this sympathy and support it would be necessary for me to get and retain their confidence. I have tried at all times to be worthy of this confidence, and I want to acknowledge my indebtedness to the Board and Executive for their hearty co-operation and unfailing support during our year's work together. I desire also to acknowledge the support given me by the Central Office. The secretary and staff have at all times rendered cheerful and valuable assistance.

Viewing The Field

As you know, I had been on the Official Board only two years when I was unexpectedly called to the responsibilities of President. I had no very well defined ideas as to what these responsibilities and opportunities were, but was not very long in finding that they were very much greater than I had anticipated, and that I was but poorly prepared to meet the responsibilities and to make the most of the opportunities. The only claim I feel justified in making for myself is that I at all times did the best I knew.

At our last convention the citizens of Calgary treated us with great courtesy, and seemed to be anxious to express their goodwill and friendly feeling. This attitude was continued after the convention, and I tried to meet it frankly by openly discussing the fundamental principles of our organization when opportunity presented. I feel that some good has been accomplished and that many of the fairer-minded people of Calgary not only understand us better, but have more sympathy for our cause.

Owing to the press of other work I have been unable to accept many of the very cordial invitations to visit locals and local picnics. But most of such visits I have been able to make have been a pleasure and an inspiration. Having to forego so many of these invitations has been a sore disappointment to me. I was thru the Peace River and Grand Prairie districts in June, with Mr. Brown, of the Alberta Farmers' Co-operative Elevator Company. We found the farmers there undergoing hardships peculiar to the first stages of settlement, which were aggravated by a poor crop season. However, they were striving and hopeful, and seemed glad of an opportunity of organizing, and we organized eight or ten locals.

During the year I have attended three meetings of the Canadian Council of Agriculture, all held in Winnipeg. This organization is composed of the Executive Committees of the following organizations:—The United Farmers of Ontario; The United Farmers' Co-operative Association of Ontario; The Grain Growers' Association of Manitoba; The Grain Growers Grain Company; The Grain Growers' Association of Saskatchewan; The Co-operative Elevator Company of Saskatchewan; The United Farmers of Alberta; The Alberta Farmers' Co-operative Elevator Company, also The Grain Growers' Guide, representing in all nine farmers' co-operative, business and educational institutions. These meetings are very valuable in harmonizing and crystallizing thought among the various farmers' organizations, and, while there may be disappointment among some on account of few specific things being accomplished, I am sure they are productive of much good to the Canadian farmers' movement as a whole.

The joint committee of commerce and agriculture is an organization composed of twenty-five members of the Canadian Council of Agriculture, and twenty-five representatives of the various commercial interests, including bankers, mortgage men, manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, railroad representatives, members of boards of trades, etc. The objects of these meetings are to discuss relations between their various interests as they relate to each other. Some of the farmers have had exaggerated ideas as to what we could hope to

accomplish at these meetings, seeming to think we should be able to settle, "off the bat," differences that have been crystallizing for decades. We, of course, have not been able to do that, but we have accomplished good, and the opportunity for accomplishing much more good is great. He who thinks there are not fair-minded men in all business occupations has a very narrow vision. An opportunity to discuss our case with these men is one of which we should be glad to avail ourselves. Not to avail ourselves of such an opportunity is to acknowledge our own lack of faith in our cause, and is also an acknowledgement of our unwillingness to readjust the principles of our cause if we should discover them to be wrong. Our organization cannot afford to be bigoted and narrow-visioned, and should have no principle or policy that will not stand the full glare of any light, and we should welcome every opportunity to stand with



THE CHILDREN'S FAVORITE

others, any others and all others, in the full glare of the most searching light. We are a class organization (it is true, but we are the basic class and, I am sorry to say, have suffered many wrongs at the hands of other classes. These wrongs must be righted, every one of them, but we must remember that two wrongs do not make a right, and we must be ever ready to show to all that we are willing to adjust our relationships with all other legitimate classes on the basis of right and justice. Of course any class that does not give a needed service to society has no rights. The only way to accomplish readjustments of wrong relationship is by conflict or treaty. Conflict is clearly justifiable when treaty fails. But I take it that no clear-thinking man will justify conflict until treaty has failed. In these joint meetings your President has tried faithfully to treat fairly and frankly all other interests, and has hope that much can be accomplished, but when the last necessity requires, he will willingly and zealously take his part in the conflict till farming has the recognition that every self-respecting farmer or farm woman is demanding.

Farmers' Interests and Amalgamation

One of the first meetings I attended after our last convention was one to devise ways and means to bring about a close federation of the commercial institutions of all the western farmers' organizations, including The Grain Growers' Grain Co., the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Co., and the

Alberta Farmers' Co-operative Elevator Company. There were several meetings held to bring about this federation, but they all failed in practical results. The only lines of difference that seemed to be impassable were between the Saskatchewan interests on the one side and those of the other two provinces on the other. Some of the Alberta men, seeing that it would not be possible at this time to bring all three provinces together, and, believing that the longer we built on purely provincial lines, the probable tendency would be to drift further apart, thought it would be wise, if possible, to bring the interests of Alberta and Manitoba together at once and begin at once to build on the strong, firm foundation of mobilization and co-operation. Your official board endorsed this idea at its meeting in March, and your president has done what he could to accomplish this end by co-operating with the Alberta Farmers' Co-operative Elevator Company in working out a plan in detail with The Grain Growers' Grain Company, whereby our interests could be consolidated.

After very much consultation and thought, we unanimously decided that complete amalgamation was the simplest, strongest and in every way the best form of union possible. This plan has been adopted by the Boards of the Alberta Farmers' Co-operative Elevator Company, and The Grain Growers' Grain Company, also by the delegates at the annual meeting of the Alberta Farmers' Co-operative Elevator Company, and by the shareholders of The Grain Growers' Grain Company in their annual meeting, by the U.F.A. Board and by the Manitoba Grain Growers' Board.

It seems to me that every member of the organized farmers of Western Canada should use his influence to promote this amalgamation, because the strength of every movement depends on the union of action. The monied business interests amalgamate to get more profits from the people. The people's interests must amalgamate for the purpose of giving better service to the people. If we amalgamate for the purpose of getting larger profits out of the people, we have solved no real problem and have done no good, but if by amalgamation we can give better service to the people we will be acting in harmony with every principle of our organization.

The United Farm Women of Alberta

I have watched with much interest the growth of the organization of the U.F.W.A. This organization has not had so rapid a growth as we would have liked to see, but its year's work on the whole is very encouraging. When we remember that the women now have the franchise, and that not only their domestic, social and economic interests are identical with ours, but that their political interests, as well as responsibilities are also identical, we will begin to realize how important it is that they should be thoroughly organized on identical lines with the U.F.A., advising, counselling and acting with the U.F.A. in everything.

Any organization of the farmers that does not include farm women will be weak and imperfect. Any attempt to mobilize our class strength and influence that does not include our women in our purely class organizations will fail. If the farm women want to assist in the farmers' struggle for better farm conditions, better social, economic, educational and spiritual conditions, better homes, better living, better life, they should realize that they can do it in no other way so effectively as through a strictly class organization, acting in the closest co-operation with the U.F.A.

U.F.A. Sunday

Our last annual convention set apart one Sunday as U.F.A. Sunday. The idea was to make it a kind of religious rally day on which to measure up the aims and objects of our organization by the standard of Christianity, as well as to investigate the ability of the church to help us in our upward struggle. May 21 was decided on by our Board of Directors, and much interest was manifested, and much thought was given to the connection between the social and the religious problems that are persistently knocking at our door. The old idea that Christianity is a kind of helpless infant that must be guarded with care and strictly quarantined from the contaminating contact of social, political and economic things, is rapidly giving way, and in its place is developing the idea that the social and economic body is diseased, but that instead of Christianity being a helpless infant to be quarantined, it is the capable physician, able to heal all the ills

Continued on Page 22