

The Grain Growers' Guide

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THE ALBERTA CONVENTION

The steady, firm and well balanced growth of the organized farmers' movement thruout the prairie provinces was clearly evidenced at the annual convention of the United Farmers of Alberta held in Calgary last week. On that occasion one thousand men and women gathered together from every corner of that province and for four days deliberated seriously on the great problems which must be settled for the wellbeing of the people on the land. The business of the convention was conducted in a manner which paid a tribute to the educational work of the past year. Thousands of young men from the farms of Alberta have donned the uniform since last year and are now numbered in the ranks of the allied armies. But the Anglo-Saxon spirit is still dominant among those who are carrying on the work at home and "Business as Usual," which has meant so much in Great Britain, is also the conscious and unconscious slogan of the United Farmers of Alberta. The organized farmers have no intention whatever of relaxing their vigilance on account of the war. They realize that instead of the war paralyzing business thruout Canada that it is reviving rapidly and that those interests which levy toll from the men and women on the land are strengthening their grip day by day. The privileged interests have never relaxed their efforts nor lost an opportunity created by the war to bring into their treasuries more of the wealth created by the common people. The only effective organization in Canada today which is fighting against the rapacity of Special Privilege is that of the farmers. If the farmers were to lay down their arms during this war the result would be to put back the hope of true democracy by a decade.

One of the encouraging features of the Alberta convention was the interest shown by the women delegates in questions which are generally supposed to be outside "woman's sphere." But the women are to have the vote shortly and in all probability the provincial franchise will automatically entitle the women to vote also in federal elections. For this reason there is not now any question of public importance upon which the women should not be as well informed as the men. This very fact will mean a greater interest and a more rapid growth in the ranks of the farmers' organizations in all three provinces.

The proposition for the organization of a Free Trade League was laid before the delegates and received their unanimous approval. It was pointed out that a Free Trade League would give the farmers an opportunity to work directly for the solution of the taxation problem. There was but one opinion among the delegates as to the need for such work and they therefore welcomed the formation of a Free Trade League. The result was that when the usual resolution in favor of a "Third Party" was brought before the meeting it was tabled. The delegates felt that it would be wiser to work for Free Trade thru an organization formed for that purpose than to project their own organization into the dangerous field of party politics. The result will be that as soon as a Free Trade League is organized it will find a warm welcome and hearty support among the farmers of the Western prairie province.

The question of agricultural credit was discussed at great length at the convention. Year by year this question is taking a more important place in the deliberations of the organized farmers. Delegates freely expressed themselves that the present banking system providing credit on three months' paper was not satisfactory. Even if the credit were sufficient and the rate of interest satisfactory, the three months' note system placed the

borrower completely at the mercy of the local bank manager. There were many statements to the effect that such short time loans were often called in and were only paid by the farmers by the sacrifice of stock at less than a fair market price. Ex-Governor Leedy, of Kansas, who eight years ago took up a homestead in the Peace River country and has become a Canadian citizen, gave an address on the Kansas system which had provided suitable credit to the farmers of that state and had brought them prosperity. Mr. Leedy declared that he had no fault to find with the Canadian banking system for commercial business, which was what it had been organized for, but he advocated a supplementary system of smaller banks to meet the needs of the farmers and stockmen. The convention passed a resolution asking the Provincial Government to provide a co-operative credit system and another asking for an amendment to the Banking Act permitting banks to loan on the security of livestock on the farm. The banking system of Canada is now being tested. In the opinion of the farmers of the West it does not meet their needs. If the bankers cannot adapt the present system to the needs of these three great agricultural provinces they must be prepared for a supplementary system that will provide the facilities required for the development of a prosperous farming community.

The irrigation problem also came up for consideration and the delegates present from the Gleichen district made it absolutely clear that things are not as they should be in that section of the C.P.R. irrigation area. They were prepared to submit to a practical demonstration of the value of irrigation on their land, but until such demonstration had been made they demanded that they be not compelled to pay for water which they declared they did not need. It would seem that the farmers in that particular part of the irrigation area are entitled to their demands and the convention passed a resolution in favor of them.

A large volume of important business was transacted by the delegates and the new board of directors and officers were instructed to carry the resolutions to the proper authorities and request that they be given effect to. Backed by the organization which is behind them the directors are certain to receive attention and the stronger the organization becomes the closer the attention they will receive.

FULFILLING THEIR PLEDGES

The people of Manitoba who believe in progressive legislation have watched with a great deal of gratification the proceedings of the Manitoba Legislature since it assembled on January 6. The present government came into power on a very progressive platform, including woman suffrage, direct legislation, compulsory education and prohibition subject to referendum. There were many people of course who predicted that the Norris Government, like most other governments, would forget all its promises as soon as it attained power and would proceed to legislate for the benefit of the corporations and the special privileged classes just as their predecessors in office did and most other Canadian Governments have done. Many of those who supported the government even were a little dubious and it has therefore been most refreshing to witness the manner in which the new government has set to work to carry out its pledges. Bills carrying into force the promises of the government on all of the questions mentioned above are already well on their way and there appears to be no doubt whatever that they will become law within the next few weeks. The 13th of March has

been fixed as the day on which the Macdonald Prohibition Act will be submitted to the voters of the province, and according to the bill as it now stands, a bare majority of the votes cast will decide whether or not the liquor traffic will be banished from Manitoba on the 31st of May, 1916.

One feature which is causing a good deal of dissatisfaction, especially among the women of the province, is the fact that women will not be able to cast their votes on the prohibition referendum. Strong representations have been made to the government to allow the women to vote, but it is pointed out that this would necessitate the compiling of a new voters' list, which would not only cost considerable money, but would make it necessary to delay the taking of the vote and the coming into force of the temperance act in the event of its carrying. We certainly sympathize with the women in their desire to help slay the dragon of the liquor traffic, but there is not much doubt that the vote of the men will be sufficient to carry prohibition by a large majority.

LESS DRUNKENNESS IN SASKATCHEWAN

The result of the banishing of the bar in Saskatchewan is being closely watched by those interested in the temperance question thruout Canada. Predictions were made before the law went into effect that the closing of the bars and the sale of liquor in government dispensaries would be followed by more drunkenness than before and many other evil consequences. Experience has shown those prophecies to be false. The Public Service Monthly of Saskatchewan, which is published by the Provincial Government, gives in its current issue figures taken from the police court records of the province, showing the number of cases of drunkenness which came before the magistrates in Saskatchewan cities and towns during July, August and September, 1915, and in the corresponding months of 1914. The figures which are given below should be conclusive evidence that the banishing of the bar has greatly reduced the amount of drunkenness in the province of Saskatchewan.

Town—	1914	1915
	Cases	Cases
Moose Jaw	294	74
Regina	249	58
Saskatoon	137	64
Prince Albert	61	16
Swift Current	41	1
North Battleford	35	8
Melville	22	nil
Weyburn	35	15
Humboldt	15	nil
Estevan	19	11
Rosetown	4	nil

Manitoba and Alberta will undoubtedly be able to furnish similar records in the latter half of 1916.

PATRIOTIC TAXES

The question of imposing taxation for the purpose of raising money for the Patriotic and Red Cross Funds is being very widely discussed and the proposal is meeting with a good deal of support. There is, however, considerable difference of opinion as to the method of taxation which should be applied in raising funds for these purposes. A country weekly published in Manitoba objects to the proposal made in The Guide that the taxation should be upon land values, on the ground that this would place an unfair burden upon the farmers. It is pointed out, and truly, that the owner of farm land would not be able to shift the burden on to others by raising the price of the commodities which he sells. It is contended, however—and here our country contemporary is in error—that the owner of city land would