

ALBERTA FARMERS ON FINANCE

Hail Insurance Discussion—Tariff Policy Attacked—Organization Has Grown Rapidly

The United Farmers of Alberta, who met in Edmonton at their eleventh annual convention on January 21st, had before them an extensive program, including 139 resolutions. Presidential addresses were delivered by President H. W. Wood, of the men's section, and President Irene Parbly, of the women's section. Hail insurance was one of the foremost topics.

The United Farmers of Alberta have incorporated during the year, and one of the objects of incorporation was to give the United Farmers of Alberta the power to act as agents for hail insurance. The executive had found it impossible to make satisfactory arrangements with any live company, they said, and had then asked the United Grain Growers to see what they could do. They had secured the agency of a satisfactory company, but on their representative presenting his credentials to the board of underwriters he was confronted with the following clause in their constitutions, which had been passed that day in anticipation of his visit: "That no member may appoint as its general or local agent any individual partnership, company or association of any kind or any official or representative thereof identified with any body or combination of organized farmers with the end in view of inducing or securing applications for hail insurance through permitting or offering, either directly or indirectly, benefits from the commission thereon."

The United Farmers adopted a new hail insurance scheme for the organized districts of the province which was submitted by E. H. Malcolm, secretary of the Provincial Hail Insurance Board. This is what is known as the farmers' own scheme, and eliminates certain objectionable clauses of the act as it has operated for the last five years. The districts included are all those south of the North Saskatchewan River, and including a block of land north of the river to township 59, and as far east as the line between ranges 21 and 22, west of the fourth meridian.

The bill presented to the legislature last year found some objection from members of that body. Those living generally to the north of Edmonton objected to having the act apply there; other objections came to having the act apply without the ratepayers of the various districts voting upon it. These suggestions were agreed upon and the new plan presented, which shows changes in principle only, and little serious objection had been found. The board had covered a wide range of territory, and had taken advice from many quarters.

Since the legislature had demanded a vote, a date for polling was set in 145 districts for February 27th. If approved in forty-five or more of these districts the act will become operative, and the general district is formed of those approving the plan. On March 3rd the minister of municipal affairs will call a meeting in Calgary of the various districts, when directors will be elected. These directors will be called the Hail Insurance Board, and will have authority to borrow money, make by-laws and carry on the business as they see fit.

Crops Automatically Insured

In the whole hail insurance district, save where a farmer definitely withdraws his lands, all crops of grain will be automatically insured. In addition, any person outside the district and in another that is not organized may apply for insurance. Early in the spring blanks will be sent out to every farmer, asking for reports on his different kinds of crops, whether he wishes to withdraw, and whether he wishes a \$6 or an \$8 insurance. Mr. Malcolm believed the plan was very flexible, for by it a man may insure his wheat at \$8, his oats at \$6 and leave his barley unprotected, or he may make any other combination. Under the old plan he had to insure everything whether he wished to or not, whereas now he pays only on the acreage actually insured.

In regard to premiums, the law provides that the rate to be levied shall be only on the crops reported by the farmers. After the year's losses are found the amount is added to the administration expenses, and provision is made for levying for a small surplus, not to be less than 10 per cent. nor more than 20 per cent., depending upon the size of the losses, and this move is intended to keep premiums at a level. The number of acres insured is divided into the total, and the rate so struck. All losses and administration are to be paid each year. The tax levied must be paid by the secretary of the municipal district, and is payable by December 1st.

Administrative Powers

Among other powers granted by incorporation was that of administering estates. Having gained the powers, the executive of the United Farmers of Alberta, for what seemed to them good and sufficient reasons, turned this business over to the United Grain Growers, to be operated as a special department. This action was questioned by James Weir, the non-partisan member of the legislature, and he brought in a resolution to have this action of the executive rescinded and the work of administering estates returned to the United Farmers of Alberta. The resolution was tabled by an overwhelming majority.

Protection Policy Assailed

A definite attack on the federal policy of a protective tariff was launched at the afternoon session. In addition to endorsement of the tariff plank in the platform of the Canadian Council of Agriculture, the central board of the United Farmers of Alberta submitted a resolution, and no less than seven resolutions from various locals demanding a lowering of the tariff was sent to the convention by the resolutions committee.

Another important resolution was presented by Rice Sheppard, of Edmonton, with respect to live stock and transportation problems, mostly dealing with express charges, which the report declared were excessive. Vice-president P. Baker, in a report dealing with the dockage of light hogs, said the committee, in consequence of a visit to the local packing plants, was satisfied that certain animals were justly due a dockage. They were, however, not prepared to say what terms in cash should represent this dockage, and recommended the appointment of an official grader to grade all animals not agreed on as select.

The annual address of President H. W. Wood advocated a fixed price on wheat for the 1919 crop, saying, "Surely, if it was just to hold the price down in 1918 when adverse influences were forcing it up, it is just in 1919 to hold it up when adverse influences are forcing it down."

The report of the board of directors suggested an increase in membership fee from \$2 per year to \$3, or even \$5. An outstanding point of the morning session was the passing of a resolution to pay back to the government the \$2,000 grant received last year. The motion declared that the time had come when the United Farmers of Alberta should be independent of all outside help.

Jean Masson, of Montreal, secretary of the national inter-provincial committee, composed of representatives of the organized farmers of Ontario and Quebec, gave an address to the convention on the working out of inter-provincial farm problems and co-operation.

Banks are Criticized

Declaring that four great banking institutions in Canada held in their control every bit of money and credit in the Dominion, and that a majority of three on the quorum of five of the Bankers' Association could do as they liked with the prosperity of the country, J. W. Leedy, former governor for two terms of the State of Kansas, declared that the Canadian banking system was not suited to the needs of the Canadian farmers.

Mr. Leedy contended that the bank system, as it at present existed, was hurtful to the general welfare of the