

The Achievements of the Grain Growers' Movement

Since Sir Wilfrid Laurier was in the prairie provinces in the summer of 1910, and Canada as a whole for the first time then became informed of the Grain Growers' movement and its aims, there have been at least three tributes to the effectiveness of the well-organized movement in the West for freer trade with the United States and Great Britain. The ready acceptance by the late Liberal government at Ottawa of President Taft's proposals for reciprocity was the first and most important of these tributes. Another was Mr. Borden's promise, made to the Grain Growers in the summer of 1911, of a tariff commission; and a third tribute to the influence which this movement is having on the Dominion is to be found in the official report of the Toronto convention of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, which was circulated among the members of the association during the first week in December. The change in the attitude of the association towards the tariff, easily discernible in the official report of the proceedings at the Toronto convention, is quite remarkable when the history of the association from the Halifax convention of 1902 is recalled. The Fielding tariff of 1897 was then on the statute book; and the full preference of thirty-three and one-third per cent. in favor of all imports from Great Britain had gone into effect a few months before the Halifax meeting. It had caused much uneasiness to many of the members of the association, and in particular to the members who were in the woollen and cotton industries. Moreover, after the enactment of the Fielding tariff at Ottawa, the Dingley tariff, with its unprecedentedly high rates, had been enacted at Washington; and as a result of these two new conditions, the Halifax convention, from the point of view of the protectionist movement in Canada, was the most important in the history of the association.

The developments at the Halifax convention were: (1) the adoption of a resolution defining the attitude of the association towards the preference for Great Britain; (2) the beginning of an agitation for the curtailment of the preference on woollens; and (3) the beginning of an agitation for a new tariff with protective duties as high as those in the Dingley Act. The resolution with regard to the preference—a resolution which still expresses the policy of the association—affirmed that while the tariff should be framed primarily for Canadian interests, it should, nevertheless, give a substantial preference to the Mother Country, "recognizing always that under any conditions, the minimum tariff must afford adequate protection to all Canadian producers."

The movement for the curtailment of the preference begun at the Halifax convention was soon attended with success; for in 1904 the wool schedule was so revised by the Laurier government as to leave British manufacturers with an advantage of only five per cent. over non-British competitors for Canadian trade; and there has been no change since in rates of advantage to British exporters of woollen goods. In the same session of Parliament at which the first curtailment of the preference was made, partial success also attended the agitation of the Manufacturers' Association for a revision of the tariff with rates on the Dingley level. The government announced in this session of 1904 that they would revise the tariff; and when Mr. Fielding, who was then minister of finance, made this announcement he made a statement which warranted the Manufacturers' Association in concluding that something approximating to Dingley rates were to be conceded to them. Hence at every session of the tariff commission of 1905-6 members of the association pressed for Dingley rates, and the association as a whole in its memorial submitted at Ottawa in February, 1906, supported these pleas. The case for Dingley rates as urged on the commission was that as the United States imposed duties so high that Canadian manufacturers could do no business with Americans, rates in the Dominion tariff should be correspondingly high to prevent American manufacturers doing business with Canada.

The government, at the revision in the

session of 1906-7, did not wholly ignore these demands for more protection. Nearly every member of the Manufacturers' Association who had appeared before the tariff commission was conceded something to compensate him for his trouble. These increases ranged from two and a half to seven and a half per cent. They were worth while in a country in which manufacturers exact from consumers the last cent that the tariff will permit. But the second Fielding tariff—the tariff of 1907—was by no means on the Dingley model; and at the Toronto convention of the Manufacturers' Association in 1907, there were many expressions of disappointment that the new tariff had not pushed rates much

nearer to those of the Dingley Act. One Toronto member, who had been especially insistent on higher duties to equalize railway rates and to enable him to hold the trade in stoves in the prairie provinces against American competition from St. Paul and Minneapolis, went so far as to demand that the association should continue its agitation for higher rates, and declared himself in favor of a tariff as high as Haman's gallows, if a tariff so high was necessary to exclude American manufacturers from the Dominion.

The official report of the recent Toronto convention makes it clear that in spite of the fact that a Conservative government is now in power at Ottawa there is for the present at any rate to be no attempt at a renewal of the demand of the association of 1904-7 for a tariff on the Dingley model. There was no mention of Dingley rates or of a tariff as high as Haman's gallows. There was much less insistence on higher duties

than at any of the annual conventions of the association held between 1902 and 1910. By 1910 the Grain Growers' movement was influencing opinion in Canada; and its influence was traceable in the proceedings of the convention of the Manufacturers' Association that was held at Vancouver in that year. Then the argument was that the Grain Growers must be conciliated and educated to realize that protection was of advantage to them in enlarging the home market for Canadian grown grain and farm products. Much argument to the same effect was advanced at the Toronto convention, where so far as the tariff was concerned, the pace was regulated by the president's statement that he was not going to advocate a higher tariff or even a high tariff, and that the association would be ill-advised to ask for material increases in the existing rates of duty. "The vote of the people," he added, in alluding to the general election at which reciprocity was defeated and

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