

GRAIN GROWERS' POSITION

The series of articles of which the first two are printed below has been prepared as stating the position of The Grain Growers in regard to certain problems that have been before Western Canada for a number of years. They are an attempt to sum up the opinion and desire of The Grain Growers' movement in regard to these much discussed questions.

Introductory

The Grain Growers welcome the opportunity of free and full discussion with the other interests, of those aspects of current economic conditions with which they have relationships in common. The position they have taken and consistently maintained from the earliest period of their organization is that their case is one which they are ready to submit to the most searching scrutiny, since they seek nothing which cannot be shown to be equitably theirs and nothing which does injustice in any degree to any other interest.

They insist, however, that conditions as they have been in the past, and as they very largely remain today, discriminate unjustly to the disadvantage of the man on the land. They desire to state in plain terms the nature and bearing of this injustice, and to suggest certain measures of readjustment and reform which they believe will make for fuller justice to all concerned.

1. Decadence of Rural Life

The first phase of the situation to which they draw attention is the fact of decadence of rural life and its significance. The movement of rural population towards the cities during recent decades has been checked in no country except Denmark. In Canada it continues as strongly as ever. In 1901 the rural population was 3,349,516 and the urban population 2,021,799. In 1911 the rural population had reached 3,925,502 and the urban 3,281,141—the increase of the rural population in ten years of 17.16 per cent., and of the urban 62.25 per cent. In Ontario, in the five years 1911-1916, the rural population decreased 167,565, and the urban population increased 224,543. In actual area under crop there has been a corresponding change. In 1910 there were under crop in Canada, 23,288,117 acres. In 1916 the total had fallen to 23,115,507 acres—a reduction of over two million acres in six years, and it is to be noted further that the decrease was gradual from year to year. The decrease of cultivation in the prairie provinces is especially marked. The acreage of 8,312,956 in 1908 was increased to 17,488,117 in 1911, but the area under crop last October (1916), according to the Census and Statistics Monthly, was only 16,374,380. In Manitoba 5 per cent. of the farmers were tenants in 1901. In 1911, 10 per cent were tenants. Such figures indicate what is really a failure of the agricultural industry. In the face of increasing demands for the products of the land, agriculture has not been able to continue the cultivation of fields which once were tilled. For such changes there must be some cause. The failure is not due to climate nor to lack of fertility, nor to inadequacy of agricultural methods. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the cause is purely economic. The rewards of labor expended on the land have been going to others than the workers. Artificial conditions created without considering the interests of the farmers, created with the definite purpose of advantaging other classes, continue to make farming comparatively unattractive and unprofitable.

The Grain Growers urge that the situation here presented is nothing less than a national tragedy. It is an evil vitally detrimental to national well-being and an organic wrong urgently requiring to be righted. No nation can be truly prosperous while the fundamental industry is handicapped by artificial conditions; no class in any nation can be permanently happy or satisfied while they fail to receive reasonably adequate returns for their labor.

How shall the wrong be righted? The farmers do not seek special favors nor the establishment of special conditions in order that they may prosper. They would unanimously repudiate any suggestion to levy tribute upon any

other class for their advantage. All they seek is that existing restrictions and impositions be withdrawn.

2. Protection Fundamentally Vicious

Primarily the Grain Growers protest that the protective principle as it has been in operation in Canada is essentially inequitable, immoral and vicious, in the following respects:—

1. It artificially restricts and hampers the exchange of products—exchange which is natural, legitimate and of mutual advantage to the parties interested—each country by exchange securing the advantage of using commodities produced more readily elsewhere, in order that some favored industry may be protected and advantaged.

2. It takes large sums of money from consumers generally without any possibility of their knowing how much is taken, into whose hands it passes, or for what purpose it is expended. That kind of practice will not long be tolerated in the twentieth century once its real nature is recognized.

3. It leads business and manufacturing interests to depend upon arbitrary enactment and not upon the natural economic conditions and necessities for their industrial progress and thus opens a door to political and economic intrigue and corruption. P. W. Ellis, at the convention of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association at Vancouver, September 21, 1910, said: "There is such an amicable condition existing between ourselves and the department at Ottawa that it is of the greatest possible advantage to every one of us." And the principle underlying his statement is that which was expressed with startling clearness by the author of the National Policy 32 years before when he said to the manufacturers in Hamilton, Ontario: "I cannot tell what protection you require. But let each manufacturer tell us what he wants and we will try and give him what he needs." The system panders directly to class selfishness and the corruption of the Government.

4. Thus by the object lesson method—the most effective of all modes of instruction—it teaches the ordinary citizen that if he can only place himself in a certain relationship to the powers that be, he may get something worthwhile and this tends directly to the warping of the individual and public conscience and to the debasement of industry and business and political life to a common and conscienceless game of grab. The moral sense of Western Canada revolts at the abominable tendency.

5. It is a system so vicious in its fundamental essence that through all its history in this country and in other countries it has invariably been found lending itself to frequent manipulation by class interests for their advantage at the expense of others. For example, since 1879, we have had in Canada a system of "drawbacks" applied to raw materials of manufacture. That is to say, the manufacturers secured free trade where they found it would advantage them while the home market was still "corralled" for them by the protective tariff. At first the drawback applied only to materials used in manufactures which were being exported, but in 1907, while the duties on certain lines of manufacture were reduced from 20 to 17½ per cent. the system of drawbacks was quietly extended to certain manufactures for home consumption as well. Orders in Council are issued when called for adroitly varying or extending this system, placing this or that article used by manufacturers as raw materials on the free list. The same type of manipulation is seen in the history of the British preference. The original standard of 1897 was varied by special exceptions to woolens as early as 1904, and in the revision of 1907 further changes were made which to a degree

nullify its effect. A system which not only lends itself to such manipulation, but invites it as the protective system does, is a system too dangerous to be trifled with in modern democracy. Grain Growers are convinced that it is rotten at the core and in every respect worthy to be abolished.

MACDONALD CONVENTION

Macdonald district association met in Carman on Thursday, December 27, the president, C. I. Barager in the chair. The temperature outside was in the region of the proverbial "40 below" and hence the attendance was not large, but there was representation from Holland on the west, Quross on the east and Pomeroy on the south.

W. R. Wood, secretary of the provincial association addressed the meeting emphasizing the community value of the Grain Growers' movement and instancing some of the phases of district work which are being successfully handled in various parts of the province. Andrew Graham, district director gave a brief address on the effective power which the association is able to exert on legislation in Western Canada at the present time, and the possibilities which this fact places before the movement for general well being and progress. W. J. Lovie, district vice-president spoke on various features of the work of the associations emphasizing that the association should be self-supporting and aggressive, and showing that even with a comparatively small membership wide and effective influence is being exercised.

Resolutions Passed

The following resolutions were passed and required to be forwarded to the provincial association for action at the forth-coming convention:

Whereas it is desirable that all reasonable effort be made to clear our land of noxious weeds and to keep it clear;

And whereas under present legislation it is impossible to charge the clearing of noxious weeds as taxes against the land, this district association puts itself on record as requesting such amending legislation as shall make it possible to charge any expense legally incurred in clearing weeds so as to make it collectable as ordinary taxes.

This district association memorializes the provincial association to enact that the annual dues of the association shall be \$2.00 per annum, of which \$1.00 shall be devoted to provincial association work, 15 cents to district work and 85 cents to the work of the local branch.

This district association urges that action be taken toward securing a reduced freight rate, or a revised classification for fence posts and fencing material in order to encourage the production of livestock.

This district association suggests as constituent elements in a law for a real conscription of labor for the maintenance of food production the following:

First, a maximum wage of \$3.00 a day for threshing and harvesting, and \$50 a month, by the month, for summer work.

Second, the requirement from every man that he perform a man's share of efficient labor in this time of special necessity for production of food.

The election of officers issued, as follows: President, C. I. Barager, Elm Creek; vice-president, W. J. Lovie, Holland; secretary-treasurer, Thomas Wood; Elm Creek; district director, Andrew Graham, Pomeroy.

PORTAGE DISTRICT CONVENTION

Portage district held its annual convention in Portage la Prairie on December 7. The forenoon was occupied by a discussion on hog production, led by Mr. Bell, the local agricultural agent, and a discussion on the farm labor problem. After lunch Mrs. James Barrett of Bagot gave a very interesting paper

on "Why we need the Women's Grain Growers' Association." This was followed by a discussion, in which A. J. M. Poole of Springhurst and J. B. Wood took part.

John Kennedy, of the United Grain Growers addressed the convention, advocating a larger membership fee. He explained the relationship between the association and the United Grain Growers Limited, and emphasized the need of strengthening the association. He urged that the platform of the Canadian Council of Agriculture should be put into effect. We can get anything from our provincial legislature so long as it is within reason, but it is at Ottawa that we get turned down. He also showed how the Grain Growers' Association had had a great influence in getting the vote for women and prohibition of the liquor traffic.

Mrs. Dick then addressed the convention, showing how the widows were being helped all over the province, also giving a clear idea of how much better it would be if we had free hospitals and free medical care.

To Increase Livestock

President Reynolds of the M.A.C. then spoke on increased production of livestock. He stated that there were 113,000,000 less livestock in Europe than before the war and asked the farmers to produce hogs to assist in helping to win the war. After a lengthy discussion the following resolution was moved by Jas. McKenzie, seconded by Jon Bennett: "Resolved that this convention, realizing something of the seriousness of the food situation in regard to Great Britain and her Allies, agree that we pledge ourselves to do our utmost to present the situation to the whole people in order to secure immediate action in increased livestock production."

Mrs. Taylor then spoke on the work being done by the Red Cross, and asked for support from the district.

The following resolution was moved by J. McKenzie, seconded by J. Bennett, and "resolved that we, the Portage District Grain Growers' Association, endorse the action of the Women's Civic League of Winnipeg in asking our provincial government to raise all money necessary for the maintenance of our institutions, and for all charitable and relief purposes by taxation, preferably a graduated income tax, with all wards of administration responsible to the government." On motion of P. Metcalfe, seconded by W. Miller, it was "resolved that, in the opinion of this convention, all labor should be conscripted and a price set not to exceed a fair wage."

It was moved by P. Cameron, seconded by B. Richardson and carried, "that whereas, the government has taken over the C.N. Railway to be operated in the interests of the public, whereas, the people have paid through the public treasury the cost of construction of privately owned roads, and whereas, the people are now paying interest on the cost of privately owned railroads, therefore be it resolved that in the opinion of this district association, there should only be sufficient freight passenger and express rates charged to pay for the up-keep of the road and running." W. R. Wood, secretary of the provincial association, who arrived late in the afternoon, addressed the convention briefly. The election of officers for the district issued as follows: President, C. H. Burnall, Oakville; vice-president, J. Bennett, Pine Creek Station; secretary-treasurer, Ben Richardson, Beaver.

BEN RICHARDSON,
Sec. Treas.

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