

FARMERS AT OTTAWA SEEKING LEGISLATION

Last February representatives of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association, the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association and the Alberta Farmers' Association met at Saskatoon and organized themselves as the "Inter-provincial Council of Grain Growers' and Farmers' Associations." They took up questions affecting the farmers of the three Provinces, and after having fully discussed them and passed resolutions thereon, asked that two delegates be sent from each Province to Ottawa to present their demands for legislation. The appointments were made by the several associations: Mr. Rice Sheppard going from Alberta, Messrs. Langley and Partridge from Saskatchewan, and Messrs. Henders and McKenzie from Manitoba.

Unfortunately, for the success of their mission there are not a baker's dozen of practical farmers in the House. Of the few that are there, not one-half of them will take the time to seriously study the questions bearing upon the farmers' prosperity, their own prosperity generally mainly depending upon some other source of revenue besides the farm. Their own knowledge on these matters being so limited they naturally never think to go to other farmers for information, but consult those who live upon the farmers and who are always ready to volunteer suggestions for legislative remedies for the farmers' troubles.

At the conference at Ottawa in which grain men of various species, railway officials, and bankers took part along with the farmers, it was a matter of common comment that the farmers had the best of the argument, but when it came to the drafting of Bills providing for amendments to the Grain and Inspection Acts the effect of the presence of the farmers' delegation was scarcely to be discerned. Perhaps the only thing which the farmers' delegation accomplished was of a negative character. They gave such crushing proof that the car distribution clause was not responsible for the car shortage that the government did not amend this clause, at the request of the grain men, the bankers and the railways who played the game together at the conference. Probably the most effective way to improve the situation in regard to securing legislation desired by the farmers is suggested by the cartoon on previous page.

The farmers' delegation made a request to lay their case before the Minister of Trade and Commerce. They were not informed that there was to be a conference.

When they reached Ottawa, however, they found the grain men, the railway officials and the bankers there to meet them. Some one had evidently taken the trouble to keep the interests posted as to what farmers were doing and they had sent their officials down to counteract any case before the Minister of Trade and Commerce. They influence the farmers' delegation might exert.

Below are the two documents which were put in by the farmers and also the amendments proposed by the Royal Grain Commission with enough of the original Acts to make these intelligible. Following this we give the bills as lately introduced in the Senate showing how little heed was given to the farmers' requests.

Also Mr. McIntyre's Bill and the Grain Exchange resolution, both proposing amendments to the Inspection Act re the grading of oats. Mr. McIntyre is a Western M. P. speaking for the Alberta farmers. His bill was endorsed by the farmers' delegation from the three Provinces affected, but the resolution coming from the Grain Exchange is the one embodied in the Bill.

OTTAWA, April 10th, 1908.

The Rt. Hon. Sir Richard Cartwright, K.C.M.G.,

Minister of Trade and Commerce,

Rt. Honorable Sir:—

Ottawa, Ontario.

We the undersigned members of the delegation representing the organized farmers of the three prairie provinces, at the request and on behalf of the whole delegation, beg to submit the following re statement of the requests and recommendations made by us on behalf of our people at the conference held last week, with a view of putting them and

the arguments advanced in their support, in a more orderly and concise form.

At the outset it is proper that we should state whom we represent, the circumstances which led up to a delegation being appointed and our mission to Ottawa.

There are three large organizations of farmers in the West, The Grain Growers' Association of Manitoba, The Grain Growers' Association of Saskatchewan and Alberta, The Alberta Farmers' Association, the aggregate membership of which is in the neighborhood of ten thousand. But we do not represent these alone. As the direct representatives of these ten thousand organized farmers, who embrace the most intelligent and articulate portion of the farm population, we claim the right to be regarded as representatives of the whole body of western agriculturists.

Our presence as a delegation at Ottawa is the outcome of a conference of the representatives of the above mentioned farmers associations, which met at Saskatoon last February and which after passing a number of important resolutions, arranged that two delegates should be sent from each association to press for the legislation required by these resolutions.

We may add with respect to all the important resolutions (see "Extracts from minutes of meetings of conference, etc." attached) passed at the conference, that they had been thoroughly discussed in approximate forms and agreed to by each of the provincial associations prior to being dealt with by the conference, so that most emphatically they represent the sentiments of the Western farmers as a whole. Also the determined attitude of our delegation in resisting any change in the Grain Act with respect to the distribution of cars is fully representative of Western sentiment. Further the stress laid upon color in the grading of wheat, which has the effect of excluding so much high class grain from the highest grade, is most unfavorably viewed by the majority of Western farmers.

The most important resolutions and the ones which induced the Conference to the length of asking the several associations to send delegates to Ottawa, were (1) the one urging the Dominion Government to acquire (which may be by construction, purchase or lease without interfering with the essential feature) and operate the terminals at Fort William and Port Arthur. (2) The resolution growing out of this asking that the Dominion Government acquire and operate the transfer elevators and (3) another providing for the special binning of grain at the terminals in order that a satisfactory sample market might be developed in Winnipeg to the mutual benefit of the producer and miller.

The government undertakes to classify Western wheat into grades according to certain specifications. The safeguarding of the producer of that grain as well as the millers of Ontario and Britain requires that the Government surround that grain in transit with such protection as will ensure its delivery at points of destination as inspected by the Chief Inspector.

There is a growing and well grounded conviction among growers of grain in the West that existing conditions at the terminals at Fort William and Port Arthur and the transfer elevators between those terminals and the Atlantic seaboard, afford opportunities for manipulation detrimental to the best interests of the country. This conviction is borne out by the report of the Royal Grain Association. On page 18 of the report the following statement appears:

"Say there is a possibility of the elevator operators mixing grain contrary to the Grain Inspection Act—in some cases samples were produced to us that would lead us to believe that there had been either manipulation or serious mistakes made somewhere."

This shows that the existing conditions not only afford an opportunity for mixing grain contrary to this Act, but that mixing and adulteration actually does take place. Again on same page we read: "There is a very general complaint throughout Ontario that they did not get the regular grades of Manitoba grain, of wheat especially in as