

Saskatchewan

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THE GRAIN GROWERS' CALL

(By Rev. Dr. S. G. Bland)

At the annual convention of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association at Saskatoon, in February, 1913, the chief speaker of the occasion was Rev. Dr. S. G. Bland, of Winnipeg. His address was a magnificent inspirational effort, and aroused great enthusiasm among the audience.

"Saskatoon has eclipsed Winnipeg in one respect," said Dr. Bland, "and that is in its university. You have a good, convenient, spacious site. We in Winnipeg have many sites; you have one and it is better than all of ours together. The University of Saskatchewan has the right idea; it is for the people, close to them; designed for them."

"Let me come at once to what I would like to speak about. I would start with a question. Is there anything in the world so significant today, especially in this era of more progress, more intelligence and more wealthy people than ever before, than the spirit of unrest? In Germany every third voter is a Socialist. The party numbered two in 1871, and twenty-four in 1884, but in the election of 1912, the Socialists secured 110 seats, and are now the largest party in the German Reichstag. That is the party which is pledged to the most thoroughgoing reconstruction of society."

"England during the past two years has had such periods of distress, anxiety and such dislocation of industry as perhaps only a foreign invasion could bring. I refer to the great railway strike."

Conditions in the United States

"In the United States, we have had the spectacle of those trials slowly drawn out to the length of months disclosing the perfectly infernal intensity of the class hatred that has come in that country. You have heard of the book entitled, 'The Volcano Beneath the City.' Beneath every city in the United States today there is a volcano of smouldering discontent; the sense of injustice and the cry for vengeance. Those who were concerned in the grievous and deplorable series of outrages have now been for the most part sentenced to confinement. Does anybody in the United States sink to such utter folly as to think that the trouble is thus ended?"

"Three parties contested the election in the United States last year; two of those parties told the citizen that he was not well off, that he had reason to be discontented, and that he suffered wrongs which ought to be redressed. Two of those parties promised to act as his champion and to secure redress for the wrongs. One party told the people that they were well off; no people in the world were so prosperous, and that there was reason for hope for future perfect and unparalleled prosperity. You all know what happened to that party."

"Canada today has less discontent than many countries. No other country has so high an average of prosperity. It is due not to superior intellect, enterprise, energy, foresight or good sense so much as to the fact that there are but a few of us camping amid unparalleled natural resources. Yet are we content? I take it that this Convention of Grain Growers here tonight is not gathered in irrepressible and exuberant enthusiasm over all things just as they are."

At Turning Point

"A great revolution impending, we are standing at the turning point of history. The people of the future will

point to the passing of the 19th to the 20th century as the water shed, the dividing line. Society is going to begin to assume a new phase which no society has as yet assumed. The change almost coincides with the passing from one century to another. The dominating principle of the commencement of the 19th century was the demand for liberty. In the dark and stormy days following the fall of the Roman Empire there gradually emerged the feudal system; men arranged in ranks in which men first fixed in one rank could not pass from that one into another; kings, barons, vassals and downward in ever sinking ranks until we came to the serf, who was scarcely more than a slave. For centuries the rigid order prevailed, until men were strangling; until it grew intolerable and men rose and shattered the old system with revolution. Such was the glory of the 19th century—liberty. The desire for freedom reigned. Men thought the golden age would come with freedom. They were under the influence of passion for liberty. Impelled by that passion men did some noble things; there was the emancipation of the slave, the driving of the slaver from the seas, the extension of the franchise to the working man.

Some free men today envy the slaves. A man may be free but his daughter be brought up under conditions which make her a prostitute. Men may be free, free for this world, but damned from birth. No country has heard oftener than the United States the high sounding platitude 'this is a free country,' yet after a century and a quarter of so-called freedom the United States is a seething mass of discontent. Freedom is not the gate of paradise, not the millennium of universal desire, but it is proven, however, or will be proven, a stepping stone.

Reaching for Brotherhood

The last or latest stage of this wonderful evolution, this opening of the 20th century brings me to the last stage of the results of the principles of freedom. Is there a freer nation than that of Britain? Yet there are 250,000 families in London alone each housed in one room. Millions are but one week from starvation. Thus the close of the 19th century found the freest nation, convinced that freedom is not the key to the golden age. Falteringly, timorously, one by one, they are reaching out for the attainment of a higher, diviner principle than freedom, reaching out timidly, fearing that it may be folly, that they may be chasing a will-o'-the-wisp. There are those who say that this is visionary, fanciful, but the best men in the dawn of the 20th century are reaching from freedom to the greater principle of brotherhood. There have been scoffers always in the onward march of civilization. There have been those who say man is inherently selfish, that he is only one more in the actual beast of the jungle. So they scoffed at freedom. They said that the people was a many-headed beast which must be chained up and governed with a whip, but the people ventured—and won. Who will now dare dispute the right of the people to govern today? Thus tomorrow all men will believe in brotherhood, and the voice of the scoffer will be still.

The Church is Dying

"The day is coming which will usher in the era of fellowship in an order founded upon the deepest, most enduring and divinest passion possible in human hearts, the passion of brotherhood. The twentieth century will be consecrated to brotherhood, and the law of the jungle will give place to compassionate feeling and human sympathy to the grace of One whose glory is never extinguished, One who said, 'Because of this all shall know that ye are my disciples.'"

"There are those today who say that the church is dying, that church attendance is giving way to pleasure, and that the thought of the age is to ignore the church. It's true; the church is dying, and I for one rejoice that it is dying. Yes, she is dying and she is being born again. You will see out of the rotting stump springing the fresh and vigorous sapling."

"The church is so much more alive today than ever before that she must win brotherliness and fellowship or perish. She must inspire brotherhood, or both God and men will reject her. She must heal the breach, she must reach deep into the sense of wrong and injustice, she must pluck out of men's hearts this grasping remorseless materialism, or be trampled underfoot. The vision is seizing her, and in the next ten years you will see great years, for men are seeing that Christianity means nothing if it means not brotherliness and sympathy. It is coming into the movement to take this mere destructive rage and exalt it, construct it into an uplifting, ennobling and redeeming force in the moulding of national character."

Canada's Low Ideal

"The next step must come from you; you must move forward boldly. Canada is waiting for a new ideal. When we think of Canada we think of much that is fair and great; mighty rivers flowing to the sea, mountain ramparts towering to the sky, the flare of lonely sunsets over vast, silent plains, homes smothered in orchards or set like islets in seas of golden grain, villages, towns, cities humming with industry like hives of bees, vast natural resources, a people unsurpassed for energy and enterprise. But do we see any national ideal? We read of increase in bank clearings, of increased acreage, of increased production, larger building permits, increase in population and in real estate values. Does one Canadian in one thousand ever speak of a goal? Does one in a thousand cherish any ideal for Canada? Is anybody thinking of any contribution Canada is going to make to history? Is anyone asking what Canada stands for?"

"I confess that in so far as I know Canada has no ideal save prosperity, measured in grossest material terms. The deepest chord has never been touched. If we are to be unified in this country of lakes and wilderness, of scattered peoples living upon the plains, of diverse races, languages and faiths, we must teach all men that Canada stands for something no other

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nation stands for. If politics is ever to be uplifted and glorified, it will never be by changing the government.

A New Political Party

"Politics seems to me to have sunk to the lowest depths to which politics can sink, and before we can be a nation we must stand for something. And is there anything left for us to stand for that no other nation has? Yes, Canada for the people, not an acre, not a stick of timber, not a water power but that should be developed for the whole people."

"We shall never get the right men into politics, we shall never get the rascally men out of politics, until we have a new political party, inspired by the new ideal of a national life, born, like that new progressive party in the United States, out of a passion for justice—a square deal."

"Can you conceive of giving your life for the Liberal or Conservative party? I cannot, but can you not conceive of a cause for which you would lay down your life. I can. Out of the depths of defeat will come the resurrection and the victory."

"The day is coming when politics will be a holy thing in Canada and when a multitude of men will rise from the Atlantic to the Pacific and drive out these jackals of politics—the heeler, the briber, the grabber of franchises, the seeker of privilege, the plunderers of the poor, the man who can be cajoled or bribed or bullied by the few to the betrayal of the many."

"The cause of the people calls for a new party, born of the people, consecrated to the cause of the people. Such a party may seem feeble at first. It will experience defeats. It will not have the unscrupulous machines, the swollen campaign funds that have seemed such irresistible forces in Canadian politics, but it will have what is stronger far, what neither of the other parties today commands—it will have the immeasurable and resistless force of moral passion."

"Grain Growers of the West, the call comes first to you. By your own experience of intolerable wrongs, by your sense of justice, by your love of brotherhood, by your faith in Canada's high destiny, you are summoned to lead in this new crusade, this holy war, this uprising of a new and nobler Canada."

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