

# Canadian Council of Agriculture

**A** FULLY attended meeting of the Canadian Council of Agriculture was held in Winnipeg on Friday and Saturday of last week. Representatives were present from the three prairie provinces and from Ontario. The latter province was represented by Secretary Morrison of the U.F.O., H. B. Cowan, C. W. Gurney and Colonel Fraser. The chief subject of discussion was the situation that had been created, especially in the farming industry, by the order-in-council of April 21, cancelling exemptions of young men from 20 to 22 years of age. With the serious situation of the western front carefully in view, a resolution was passed outlining the council's attitude with regard to future drafts, so that these might be made with the least disturbance to essential industries, while at the same time providing adequate reinforcements for the Canadian Expeditionary forces. The attention of the board of grain supervisors was drawn to the serious seed grain situation which may arise in certain parts of the west owing to the unfavorable prospects for the 1918 harvest. Conferences with the Credit Men's Association and with representatives of the banking interests, were dealt with and left in the hands of the executive to arrange. Mr. Norman P. Lawbert, of The Guide editorial staff, was appointed secretary of the Canadian Council of Agriculture, his duties to commence immediately. Questions relating to taxation were also discussed, and it was felt that this matter would require full and careful consideration by the Council at a future meeting. Roderick McKenzie gave an interesting report of his recent tour through eastern Canada, stating that the prospects for rapid extension of the farmer's movement in Quebec and the maritime provinces were very promising.

## The Military Situation

President H. W. Wood explained that many requests had been coming in from farmers that a meeting of the Canadian Council of Agriculture be called to deal with the situation which had arisen as a result of the cancellation of exemptions under the Order-in-Council of April 20. The executive had therefore decided to call a meeting. There was, he said, a sentiment among the people that the Council should come together and take some responsibility regarding the matter which was agitating the minds of farmers throughout Canada. Referring to his visit to the Ontario Farmers' Convention at Toronto, Mr. Wood stated that he went there to assure the farmers that the executive of the Council was not going to antagonize their action. There was, he said, no difference of opinion amongst the farmers as to the carrying on of the great enterprise to which the resources of the country in men and materials had been pledged. There should, however, be a statement by the council regarding its position on the further cancellation of exemptions.

## Ontario's Position

Secretary Morrison of the United Farmers of Ontario stated that the Ontario farmers had accepted what Mr. Wood said in Toronto, and wished to maintain the friendliest relations with branches of the movement in other parts of Canada. The sentiment had spread to the back concessions, however, that the western farmers were not with them in their representations to the government on the military question. It was difficult to get at all the farmers because they had no official organ, and the city press was prejudiced against them. The U.F.O. was doing its best to eradicate the wrong impression as rapidly as possible.

The reason why Ontario had acted was explained by Mr. H. B. Cowan, of Farm and Dairy, a publication which is strongly backing the movement in that province. Last fall, he said, the government had given definite assurances regarding the exemption of men who were so situated that drafting them would seriously curtail production. This

## Important meeting held at Winnipeg—Effect of Draft thoroughly reviewed—Recommendations made to the Government—Matters affecting agriculture dealt with

had been followed by flooding the country with literature in which the pressing need for foodstuffs was strongly emphasized. The farmers had been told that two million Italian soldiers were being kept out of the war on account of the impossibility of feeding them and that four million people had starved as a direct result of the war. The government's assurance regarding the exemptions and the campaign for greater food production had had its effect. Farmers had laid out money to improve their equipment and had done everything to increase their acreage and yield. Many young farmers had married on the strength of the exemptions which had been granted them. Everyone was buckling down to do what they had been told was their part.



Norman Lambert,  
Newly appointed secretary of the Canadian Council of Agriculture.

in winning the war. Then suddenly, in the middle of seeding the exemptions of thousands of men were cancelled, with the result that agricultural production on hundreds of farms had been demoralized. The Ontario farmers had no members of parliament to bring these facts to the attention of the government. First they had acted by sending a deputation to Ottawa. They believed that the government, engrossed in its work, did not know the effect the call would have on the production of foodstuffs. To members of the government they stated that they were ready to fight or to produce. The result of their reception decided them to make their demon-

## Resolution of the Canadian Council of Agriculture re Cancellation of Exemptions

The Canadian Council of Agriculture in meeting assembled July 5 and 6, 1918, in the City of Winnipeg, desires once more to place on record its conviction that the supreme work of the Allied nations is the winning of the war, and that in this work, Canada should continue to bear its part in the most effective way. In this declaration, the Council believes that it voices the opinion of those engaged in the great agricultural industry of Canada.

Recognizing that the government, because of the needs of the military situation at the front, deemed it necessary to cancel all military exemptions as provided for in the order-in-council of April 20, and understanding that the government is prepared to bear the full responsibility for its actions, the Council, because of its intimate knowledge of the agricultural situation throughout Canada, desires to call attention to the following:

First: That because of the large number of voluntary enlistments from the farms of Canada and the extreme labor shortage due to this and other causes, the action of the government in cancelling exemptions has very seriously interfered with production, and will further materially reduce the production of livestock, grain and other products of the farm during 1919.

Second: That the indiscriminate calling of young men bears with exceptional hardship upon the agricultural industry inasmuch as the young people of our farms have been trained for farm work almost from infancy, and therefore are qualified to undertake responsible tasks on the farms at a much earlier age than is the case with young men who enter special occupations in urban centres, and further, the older sons having left the home farms, the responsibility for conducting the farm operations in many cases rests entirely on these young men.

Third: That the desire of the government that leave of absence should be granted in cases of extreme hardship has not been achieved in a large number of cases as a result of the ill-advised and arbitrary actions of minor military officials, which has led to much unrest throughout the country, and we would instruct our executive to lay the situation thus created fully before the government, with the object of preventing further miscarriages of justice such as have occurred in connection with the drafting of young men between the ages of 20 and 22 years, and of ensuring leave of absence, as provided for by the government, to those entitled to that right.

Fourth: That before making further changes in the Military Service Act, or calling up men of the 19-year-old, and 23 to 26-year-old classes, at present on leave of absence, thus affecting the labor supply of the country, in essential industries, the representatives of organized agriculture should first be given an opportunity to lay full information before the government in regard thereto.

Fifth: That young men who were granted exemption as long as they continued to be engaged in an essential occupation, and who got married after the date of their exemption, and before the government's action in cancelling such exemptions, shall be treated as married men, and be granted exemption until the married men are called.

Sixth: That so far as possible, provision be made to continue military training in the military training depots of the respective provinces in order that leave of absence may be granted to suitable men to assist with the harvest.

Seventh: That provision shall be made by the government for the appointment of a trustee or trustees in each province with power to administer the estates of men engaged in military service, where application for such assistance is made.

the United Farmers of Ontario's commercial activities, also dealt with the activities of the deputation, of which he had been a member, at Ottawa. They had not asked for wholesale exemptions but had requested that managers or keystone men on farms be granted leave of absence; that young men who were the sole owners of farms be also granted leave of absence, and that young men who had married on being granted exemptions be placed in the married men's class. They had been assured by one cabinet minister that their representations were in line with representations that were being received by the government from other farmers. The acute situation that had developed by the time the Toronto meeting was held had been aggravated to a large extent by the action of the military authorities in ordering drafts to move while leave of absence proceedings were being conducted.

Colonel Fraser, an old military man, stated that the recent developments had marked an epoch in the farmers' movement in Ontario. Ontario farmers were looking to the Canadian Council of Agriculture to go on record as to its attitude regarding the military situation as it applied to farmers.

## The Council Goes on Record

As a result of the discussion a committee of the Council was appointed to draft a resolution to be presented to the government embodying the views of the Canadian Council of Agriculture on how future drafts should be made. At a later session a tentative draft of the resolution was submitted. It was then thoroughly discussed, the time of two sessions being largely devoted to it. During the discussion on the resolution the fact was emphasized that farmers were not opposed to a strong war policy, nor to doing their share in carrying such a policy out. It was stated, however, that greater care should be taken in making the drafts if the morale of the people, and particularly that of farmers, was not to be demoralized. The chief objection was not raised to the Military Service Act or to the Order-in-Council which cancelled the exemptions of men from 20 to 22 years of age, but rather to the action of minor officials who had been entrusted with carrying these measures into effect. Some of the members of the Council are actively engaged on leave of absence boards. They stated that many cases had come to their attention of gross injustice being perpetrated by minor military officials. Commanding officers, it appeared from the statements made, were, on the whole, fair in their attitude. One of the greatest difficulties was to get leave of absence for those who were entitled to it under the Order-in-Council. Many young men did not know how to go about securing leave of absence and it was an easy matter for minor officials to put obstacles in their way. Evidence was not lacking that drafts were being moved before there was any opportunity for instituting proceedings for the men included in them who were entitled to such leave of absence. In some cases they had been successful in having such drafts held. After a very full discussion the resolution which appears on this page was passed unanimously and forwarded to the government.

One of the points emphasized, especially by the representatives from Ontario, was that though the scope of the press of the country was strictly limited in criticizing the government and its actions, no limit of law, truth or reason were recognized by the daily press in reporting the proceedings of the big farmers' meetings in Ontario. Those held both in Ottawa and Toronto had been grossly misrepresented in the reports that had been published broadcast. The speeches of the most extreme men in the meetings, made under the stress of great excitement, and which had met with no approval of the conventions, had been made to appear as voicing the attitude of the meetings.

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