

In 1913 the constitution of the United Farmers of Alberta was amended to admit women into the organization with the same privileges as men. In 1914 farm women assembled with the men in annual convention. In 1915 a still larger number of women were present, and this time the majority of women met in separate convention.

In 1916 the women who attended the annual convention of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association with their men met for a couple of sessions by themselves. In 1917 they elected a board of directors to carry on what work arose for the coming year. It was not until 1918 that the constitution of the association was so amended as to provide machinery for the Women's Section. An absolutely unanimous standing order in favor was the appreciation the Women's Section received from the men of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association. Since that time the little band of women leaders has increased many fold, and there is every indication that before another convention there will be 100 Women's Sections.

Interprovincial Council

At the 1918 conventions of the Women Grain Growers and of the United Farm Women steps were taken to nationalize the organizations. Since the United Farmers in three provinces only have women's sections the nationalization of them has naturally not extended beyond those three provinces. The Inter-provincial Council, however, is preparing to take in the representatives of the other provinces as soon as they organize. The personnel and the representation on the Interprovincial Council of Farm Women is as follows as closely as possible the lines already followed by the Canadian Council of Agriculture. Provision is made for two representatives from each province excepting one and one from the Grain Growers' Guide. This board has not yet become fully organized, but when it is it will have the purpose of uniting work and objects of the women's sections, and to direct the activities of all the farm women along similar lines. Many times in the past there has been demonstrated a diversity of such unity. Before next winter's conventions this board may have something to do in standardizing still more work of the women's sections of the associations.

Some Achievements

The most lasting achievements are those whose which can be described adequately. They are the increased interest of one another and the sympathy and understanding for the other woman's position. The monthly meetings are looked forward to because they relieve the loneliness of the prairies. Last winter the writer attended the three provincial conventions of farm women. When one heard of women driving 30 miles to attend a meeting then one realized that the value of the club was beyond our understanding. One who is in close touch with the changing viewpoints of farm women can not but be conscious of the influence of the farm women's clubs.

But there are many very real and tangible achievements of these farm women through their club work. Three W.C.T.U.s are sponsoring the franchise work, temperance work and the public health campaign. In 1914, when the Saskatchewan women became thoroughly conscious of the need of securing the franchise work for the provincial and municipal franchise. The Women Grain Growers, therefore, recommended to the women who were also working for the franchise, and to the suffrage associations then in being, that they, the Women Grain Growers, appoint representatives to a state board who would have charge of this work. This was considered advisable by all and the first meeting of the Board was held in February of 1916. Mrs. Haight was the Women Grain Growers' representative on that board, and has given long and faithful service in that capacity, being still a member of the board. In May of 1916 the board, with other representatives of those organizations which

were advocating that the franchise be extended to women, waited upon Premier Scott regarding such extension. The Grain Growers' Association was represented by Mrs. Haight, Mrs. McNaughtan and Mr. Musselman. Of this representation, Mrs. McNaughtan said, "As I was in the House and attended the large and influential gathering, it came to me that, were it not for our association the country women would have been unrepresented that day."

In Alberta the U.F.A. co-operated with the W.C.T.U. The petitions were circulated were taken over by the U.F.A. and the U.F.W.A. for the country districts, with the result that more than 40,000 names were secured to the petition. At various times, when delegations waited upon the government to ask for the franchise, the president of the U.F.A. was a member of the delegation and spoke for that organization. It is doubtful if Alberta could have sufficiently assured the provincial government that women really wanted the franchise had it not been for the farm people's organization there.

Nor have they ceased work along the lines of extension of citizenship when the bills were passed. The farm women's organizations are vigorous in campaigning for a higher standard of citizenship and have put on a big educational campaign this end. At the 1918 convention of all the associations resolutions were passed asking that the federal franchise be extended to women on the same terms as men.

Temperance

From the beginning both the Saskatchewan Women Grain Growers and the United Farm Women of Alberta gave their undivided support and assistance to those organizations which were already working for temperance. Saskatchewan's representatives were on the famous committee of one hundred which did such effective work in that campaign. When it was discovered that the dispensary system was not working out as advertised by the United Farm Women of Alberta, the United Farm Women of Alberta, the United Farm Women and the Local Improvement Association. For two years at least the women of Alberta have asked for public health nurses and for the formation of a board of health with wide executive powers. After five years such a board was formed under the provincial secretary's department. Already the board has in the field five public health nurses. They are not as yet assigned to particular districts but are to go where the need seems greatest for them. They are largely in the nature of an experiment at the United Farm Women are even now making sure that they shall be a permanent institution and that their success will be so marked that their numbers will shortly be greatly augmented. Gradually these women's organizations are seeing the things they are striving for being placed on the statute books of their respective provinces. It is easily seen that the goal they will ultimately reach will be free medical treatment and hospital treatment for every man, woman and child on the prairie.

In Manitoba there has been a distinct agitation for free child welfare clinics. Mrs. E. C. Weneke, the recent secretary of the Manitoba Women Grain Growers, has been working on this for some time. It is gratifying to know that public opinion in that province is now strong as to encourage the department of health in its advanced schemes for free clinics. A number of them are now in operation and others in course of preparation. Nurses and doctors will be in charge. They will be not only for the benefit of the school children but for every child who can reach its doors.

Nor were Manitoba farm women behind those of the sister provinces in fighting the evil of the traffic. Manitoba had some excellent arrangements in that campaign especially in the country districts, and in these our farm people co-operated to the utmost of their ability. The result in Manitoba again evidenced the influence so independent and powerful an organization can exercise when directed in channels for the betterment of its people.

When the agitation was afoot for the intervention of the Dominion government our farm people were not less zealous working for the franchise than were the other organizations. On the whole our farm organizations may take to themselves a great deal of the credit for the very advanced temperance legislation which is now on the statute books of Canada and particularly of those of the Western provinces.

Public Health Campaign

Perhaps the Women's parts of the organization have never and never will again achieve such notable results as they have along the line of better medical facilities for rural districts. And yet the campaign is merely in its infancy. The women in the two Western provinces have undertaken very definite and explicit work and recent legislation in both provinces would lead one to believe that it has not been in vain. Manitoba women are lining up behind any movement which means better attention to the health of the Manitoba rural people.

As early as in 1914 the United Farmers of Alberta discussed this question in their annual convention. When the United Farm Women became organized they took over this part of the work. Rural hospitals became the keynote of their endeavors in this line. At the session of 1916 in Saskatchewan a bill was passed providing for the erection of hospitals in municipalities or in a union of municipalities. The result is that there are twenty hospitals in Saskatchewan, either already in operation or in course of construction.

The following year the act was amended to make it more workable. In 1917 the Alberta legislature passed a bill to provide for rural municipal hospitals. It was found that the municipal divisions of districts was not always best and this year the act was amended to make hospital boundaries more flexible and the act more workable. The act in Alberta was the direct outcome of agitation by the United Farm Women of Alberta, the United Farm Women and the Local Improvement Association. For two years at least the women of Alberta have asked for public health nurses and for the formation of a board of health with wide executive powers. After five years such a board was formed under the provincial secretary's department. Already the board has in the field five public health nurses. They are not as yet assigned to particular districts but are to go where the need seems greatest for them. They are largely in the nature of an experiment at the United Farm Women are even now making sure that they shall be a permanent institution and that their success will be so marked that their numbers will shortly be greatly augmented. Gradually these women's organizations are seeing the things they are striving for being placed on the statute books of their respective provinces. It is easily seen that the goal they will ultimately reach will be free medical treatment and hospital treatment for every man, woman and child on the prairie.

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This is only a beginning. There is much ahead for Manitoba in this line.

Rural Education

Our farm women have been giving a great deal of their attention also to the bettering of the rural schools. Many sections are directly responsible for consolidation and for the school grounds and buildings. Others have worked and have established hot lunches at school. Still others are installing play ground equipment. Many rest rooms have been established in towns for the benefit of the farm women, May have traveled or permanent libraries. A number of the sections have actively participated in co-operative buying. Others have beautified cemeteries, have built community halls, have promoted the social side of farm life by having picnics, debates, literary evenings, lectures and amateur plays. But through all this diversity and variety of work runs the common thread of striving after greater economic freedom. The women are not lessening their efforts but they are making themselves to become a part of the men's organization, and they thought such a course was best because they wished to confer their short time on the wheel that will eventually turn round to better farming conditions in the Canadian West. The Women's Sections are heavily paid for the benefit of the women members of the association to discuss those things in which men do not generally interest themselves, but which are a part of the scheme for better rural conditions.

Increasing Recognition

Each year sees the women's action of the organized farmer's association growing in influence and recognition. At the recent conference of the women in Ottawa on March 1 our farm women were perhaps as well represented as any other organization of women in Canada. Four or five women were there, Mrs. Parley, Mrs. McNaughtan, Mrs. Haight and Mrs. Wood. Perhaps no representatives contributed quite so much to the success of the conference as did our own representatives. That conference provided an opportunity for our farm women to all such a place of importance and prominence as they little dreamed of before. It has focused the attention of all Canadian women on the women of our Western farm homes. Nothing of moment in national affairs can ever again be considered by Canadian women without our farm women taking their full and just share.

Perhaps no movement is so much a democratic evolution as that of the organized farmers in Canada, including the women's work. The farm movement has been quite so good for those who are a part of it as has been that of the organized farm women. Those who were in attendance at that first convention were far from being the self-satisfied, efficient, public-spirited women citizens that they are to-day. They were in most part unaccustomed to taking their rightful share in public affairs or discussions. Many of them were unused to organization routine and form. Many had never before taken part in an open meeting before. To-day we have in our farm women's organizations these women who are the leaders of women, not only farm women, Canadian women as a whole. We have those women whose opinions are respected and whose suggestions are of thought to-day as it has never been molded before. The hearts of Canadian women are more generous and guidance to those among our farm women who have in the past few years risen from obscurity to the first place in national thought. They have risen not of themselves, but of a consuming impulse and desire to make rural life in the west, safe and secure, and just, for each other, for themselves, for their children, and for those generations that shall yet people our wide prairies. They see that organization was the open door to that security and betterment. They entered only to find greater possibilities than they dreamed of, and having entered they will go on and on till the people on the land have achieved that social, economic and political freedom, which belongs by right to those who make up the world's basic industry.