

# The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, January 27th, 1915

## THE U.F.A. CONVENTION

It is indicative of the steady growth of well informed public opinion among the farmers of Alberta, as well as the other two Prairie Provinces, that there were more than six hundred farmers in attendance at the annual convention of the United Farmers of Alberta, held at Edmonton last week. Every corner of the province was represented and there were a large number of men who had never attended one of the central conventions before. Quite a number of those who took part in the discussions made their first appearance before a large audience and in the future it is safe to predict that some of them will be numbered among the leading farmers in the organization.

The death of President Tregillus was keenly felt by all the delegates present, all of whom realized the great work he had done for the organization, and to many of whom he was a warm personal friend. The convention fittingly recognized the splendid efforts of the deceased president and he will long be remembered by the farmers of his province for whom he labored.

Three days' discussions centred around problems which vitally affect the farmers throughout the province and decisions were arrived at which will tend steadily to improve conditions. On the question of taxation the delegates were unanimously of the opinion that the best method of raising the revenues necessary for the government of the country was by the taxation of land values, as it would bear equitably upon all classes in the country, be cheap and easy to collect and could not be evaded. The convention also declared in favor of supplementing the taxation of land values by an income tax which would compel those who have accumulated riches through special privilege to pay a part of their incomes into the public treasury for the benefit of the people as a whole. On the temperance question the convention stood shoulder to shoulder with the sister associations to the east and declared heartily in favor of the abolition of the liquor traffic. As there is to be a referendum under the Direct Legislation Act, on the question of provincial prohibition, on July 21, the United Farmers of Alberta have an opportunity to do some excellent work for the cause which they advocate before that date. A powerful temperance organization is now being completed throughout the whole province to educate public opinion before the election is so that there will be no doubt that the province going dry when the people have an opportunity to express their opinion upon that question alone. The farmers in each rural community will be the biggest factor in deciding the question and it is to the interest of every man and woman who has the interests of the province at heart to see that the liquor traffic is ended for once and all.

The farm women of Alberta attended the women's convention held in Edmonton in goodly numbers for the beginning, and organized themselves into the Women's Auxiliary of the U.F.A. The men's convention cordially invited the women to take part in the work of the organization and voted them a grant of money for organization work during the next year. There is no one act that

the organized farmers will feel more proud of in the future than that they have encouraged and assisted the women of the farm homes to take an interest in public questions, organize for educational work and thus become greater factors in moulding the affairs of the province and country in which they live. The men's conventions have repeatedly declared in favor of woman suffrage and are now giving a tangible expression of their belief in the cause which they have advocated. As the women in each of the local communities throughout the three Prairie Provinces develop their organizations and take a more active part in the educational work the effect will certainly be a great uplift in the moral and intellectual life of the community. It will also put an end to the already weakening forces of the anti-suffrage movement. The women will show that they are as capable as the men and the franchise cannot much longer be withheld from them.

## REAL EDUCATIONAL WORK

Some of those who are not of the farmers' organizations have attempted to ridicule the organizations because of some of the resolutions which are brought before the annual conventions for discussion. It is true that some of the resolutions which are brought before these conventions are far from what they ought to be. But it must be remembered that the farmers' organizations are democratic to a degree which is almost unknown in other organizations and certainly never dreamed of in legislative halls in Canada. All that is necessary in order to bring a resolution before the annual convention is to have it endorsed by a local branch of the association. There is no doubt but that there are resolutions passed by some local branches that are not carefully considered, and which if their true meaning were realized would not be passed. But the annual convention is a safety valve for just such resolutions, and when delegates bring them before the convention there is always someone ready to show the weakness or danger in them and they are voted down or disposed of in a manner which shows that the body of men who compose the conventions are, as a whole, thoughtful, well balanced and far-seeing individuals. We would not for a moment encourage local branches to pass idle resolutions, but, in case they do pass them, the summary way in which they are handled by the convention will have a valuable educational effect upon the branch in which they originated. At the same time it must be remembered that some of the very best resolutions which have ever come before any of the conventions have originated in the brain of some man who, though he may live a long way from the big centres of population, is thinking and studying the big problems which confront our people. It is the duty of the convention to sift the wheat from the chaff in such cases and no one will dispute but that the legislative work performed by the conventions in the three days of their deliberations will compare very favorably with the legislative work of our legislative bodies. It is also beyond dispute that our legislative bodies might well follow the example of the farmers' conventions in studying the effect of their resolutions

upon the country as a whole before pressing for their enactment into statutes.

## THE SURTAX IN SASKATCHEWAN

The rural municipalities of Saskatchewan in the month of December collected a considerable portion of the taxes due to them for the year 1914. This is the first time that the surtax of \$10 a quarter section on vacant land has been collected and some of the municipal treasuries are in a particularly healthy condition as a result. One municipality of which we have heard collected over \$5,000, in addition to the ordinary taxes from non-resident speculators, and there are others, no doubt, which have benefited even more by the surtax. Of course, the speculators have been benefiting for years from the hardships and pioneer work of the settlers and have made handsome profits without doing anything to earn them, so no one is likely to shed many tears because they have been made to pay a little more taxes than those who are actually farming the land, contributing to the progress and development of the country and producing food for the Empire. The municipalities in which the Hudson's Bay Co. still owns land have, however, been unable to collect the surtax from that corporation. The Hudson's Bay Co., when it sold its original rights to the Dominion, retained one section and three-quarters in each township south of the Saskatchewan River, and still has something like 2,500 sections of vacant land in Saskatchewan. Under the surtax law the company is therefore liable for approximately \$100,000 a year. It has refused to pay this, claiming that a clause in its deed of surrender exempts it from payment of such a tax. The case will probably go to the Privy Council before being finally decided. In the meantime, of course, the municipalities will not be able to collect. Without the Hudson's Bay Co.'s contribution, however, very substantial and useful sums are being brought in by the surtax, and the question might be asked, what are the municipal councils going to do with it? The additional revenue secured from the speculators may, of course, be used to relieve the taxes of the resident rate-payers. This may be a wise policy in districts which were hit by the drought last year, or where money is exceptionally scarce, due to other special conditions. In the more prosperous districts, however, the additional revenues might well be used to provide facilities which are not now available, such, for instance, as free medical attendance, municipal hospitals and nurses, or free legal advice. One feature of the surtax is that it is in the most sparsely settled districts that it produces the largest revenues, provided, of course, the land is all in private hands and assessable. In a municipality of nine townships, having an average of fourteen vacant sections to a township, the surtax produces \$5,040, while if half the land was liable to the surtax \$6,480 would be produced by the extra tax levy of \$10 per quarter section. The possibilities which open up before a rural municipality with \$5,000 or \$6,000 a year to spend, in addition to the ordinary revenues raised in the past, are very pleasant to think about.