

# Marked Union Progress Noted in Address of Pres. Coaker To Sixth Annual Convention of the Supreme Council of F.P.U.

**M**Y FRIENDS.—It is with pleasure I welcome you all to this Sixth Annual Convention of our Union. Last year we met at St. John's and the Convention was a splendid success. This year we meet at loyal Catalina for the second time, we having met here for our second Convention in 1910.

We have met today under circumstances which cause every man here to reflect deeply, for since the 4th of August, Great Britain has been at war with Germany and Austria, and the great struggle dreaded by humanity for the last thirty years is now being decided, and before it is brought to a close there will probably be three million less men alive than there were on the 4th of August, and the map of Europe will be altered very considerably.

I believe Germany to be the aggressor, and upon the head of the German Emperor must rest the responsibility for this life and death struggle amongst 20,000,000 armed men. I believe that this war will end war, for no people will ever again permit Governments to wage war and every people after this will take the power of declaring war from Kings and Governments and place it in their own hands.

The masses of the world will, in my opinion, be happier than they were before the war, as a result of which Liberty and Freedom will be established every where and the great expenditures of former years for Armies and Navies will almost cease. This vast wealth will then be utilized for the social improvement of the people. These improved conditions for the masses will be secured at a tremendous cost of blood and gold, far surpassing the cost of all former struggles known to history.

This is the Armageddon of Scripture and you must bravely bear the sacrifices which we are called upon to make as our portion of the cost of this struggle. I do not mean only the cost of the Newfoundland Volunteer Regiment, but the extra cost for food and the lower price for produce. Newfoundland's sufferings, although they appear considerable to many of us, are but a small matter as compared with what the European nations have to endure. Let all bear their burden bravely and exercise every economy in the use of money and food. If the war endures a year, our sufferings will greatly increase from month to month.

Few can imagine what wretched conditions will prevail if war continues for one year. The only ray of sunshine to brighten the dreary path which must be trod by all by the 1st of June next is that of permanent peace and universal improvement in the condition of the masses of the world and the great and abiding influence of our Empire and especially the Mother Country for good throughout the world. This war will so transform civilization that wonderful changes will result which must bring about improvements in the life, living and toil of the masses such as will repay a thousandfold the sacrifices all must now make.

The result of the struggle so far proved that our generation is just as brave, resourceful and daring as any in the annals of the history of the race. The British Army and Navy in this war have fully lived up to the best traditions of the glorious British past. If the struggle continues for a year, it is probable that many of Terra Nova's sons will be called upon to uphold the British flag in foreign lands, for Britain must conquer in this fight.

We all pray that this gigantic struggle will speedily end and with honor to our Empire and peace be permanently established, but after the sacrifices all have made and the awful cost, even to date, none will wish for peace until it can be secured on terms which will insure the accomplishment of the aims Britain had in view when she set out to crush the "maldit fist" which had terrorized Europe so many years. Hell must not be let loose upon earth again if Britain can prevent it, and therefore this struggle must continue until the object sought is attained, no matter what the present cost to the Empire.

The Legislature has met twice during the past year. Last winter one of the best fights ever put up by an Opposition Party in Newfoundland took place in the House of Assembly and I am proud of our Party and your decision to establish such a Party in the Legislature, for the result of last winter's work in the House must convince all that the proper representatives for Parliament in a fishing colony are those representing the fishermen, and where Stone, Targett, Winsor, Abbott, Halfyard and Jennings came from, more will be forthcoming. We are not ashamed of the results of last winter's session of the Assembly, and if the Union Party could serve the country so well during its first trial days in Parliament, much may be expected after its four years' apprenticeship expires.

I much regret having to resign my seat for Bonavista, but I believe my action in doing so will prove highly beneficial to our Union.

Mr. Morine will enter the House as an Independent member, but his best efforts will be directed to aid the Union's political aims and he will strengthen the Opposition to a Government now regarded with such great contempt.

The public affairs of the Colony are in a serious condition and possibly worse than at any time since Responsible Government was granted to the Colony. It is therefore our duty to place in Parliament the ablest men available in the Colony, and we believe that the great experience and undoubted

ability of Mr. Morine will be of great benefit to Parliament in the trying days ahead.

I will always closely follow the doings of my friends in Bonavista District and their best interests I shall always strive to advance, no matter what district I may represent.

As for Twillingate, my home is there. My father was born there and my life's work is there; but for having lived there, I should have never been President of a Fishermen's Union. I know that district well, and I know its wants. I shall strive continually to improve the condition of the toilers there. It will be a great pleasure to work in conjunction with Friend Jennings who has already demonstrated that he is well qualified for the high position conferred upon him by the toilers of Green Bay.

Last winter, by request of the loggers, I introduced into the House of Assembly a Loggers' Bill, to improve living and food conditions in the camps, and having altered it to meet some objections from the employers of loggers, it passed through the House without a dissenting vote. It went up to the Legislative Council—known to you as the "Upper House"—and was there treated with scant consideration and killed, without even a second reading being granted it. Some went so far as to say that no one asked for it and no one wanted it and it would be time enough to pass a Bill when people asked for it. This sort of treatment is just what I expect for all measures originating from the F.P.U. and introduced by our Party in the House.

I do not believe in the necessity of an Upper House in this Colony, and as you represent half of the electorate it will be your duty to consider whether the Upper House was justified in killing the Loggers' Bill and whether you are prepared to stand by me and back my efforts to abolish that useless ornament of the Legislature. I believe some steps should be taken at this Convention to define the F.P.U.'s attitude towards the Upper House and to empower the issuing of a petition to be signed by the electorate, asking for the passage into law of the Loggers' Bill.

You will recall that last year this Council passed a resolution in reference to appointing defeated candidates to the Executive Council and to high positions of emolument. You further requested that the vacant Departmental positions be alone filled by new appointees, who were to appeal to the electorate for endorsement of their acceptance of office. You also pointed out, in resolutions presented to the Governor, that failure to do so would be resented as a violation of sound constitutional principle and public right.

Yet, no sooner was the House closed than the Governor appointed Sydney Blanford and R. A. Squires to seats in the Upper House and then to seats in the Executive Council and to positions as Ministers of the Crown. Both of these men had been defeated at the polls four months previously, one by a majority of 1800 votes and the other by 1000.

It is now your duty to

(1) Censure the Governor for allowing the Premier to outrage the Constitution in direct violation of every principle of Constitutional Self-Government and of the public right to approve of appointments to positions of emolument and to decide who were or were not to administer the affairs of public departments, and further to petition for the recall of the Governor because of his action in this matter;

(2) To demand the dismissal of the two men from their seats in the Executive Council which belong to the elected representatives of the people and which have always been assigned to the elected representatives of various sections of the Colony;

(3) To demand from the Governor the dismissal of these two men from the positions of emolument which they occupy as Heads of the Departments of Agriculture and Justice, and that these two positions be filled by appointing men who will appeal to the electorate to endorse their appointments;

(4) To insist upon the strict observance by the Governor of the principles of sound Constitutional practice which denies the right of any to be advisers to the Governor who were defeated at the polls by popular vote.

The whole Colony was aroused over this act of deception on the part of the Governor and Premier as the Governor had been memorialized by this Council which represents the fishermen, and the Premier knew that he did wrong in asking the Governor to make these appointments as soon as the House closed, a proceeding which he would not have dared to undertake while the House was sitting, because of the trouble confronting such an action which would come from his own supporters in the House, as well as the strongest opposition of the Liberal and Union Parties.

If Sir Edward Morris can place two defeated candidates in the Executive and make them Ministers of the Crown, in opposition to the plainly expressed wish of the electorate, he can make a half dozen appointments and thus treat with contempt the principles of representative government. Therefore, your plain duty is to oppose such an action, not only by petition and persuasion, but, if neces-

sary, by the power of the sword, for hundreds of years ago our forefathers freely died in defence of such principles.

If the proper representatives of the King will not act in response to the peoples' demands for safeguarding the principles of Representative Government, so dear to all Liberty-loving people, and will permit offences against those principles to continue with impunity, then it behoves all who love free government and the right of popular vote to decide who must represent the people as a Government and to defend those principles, even at the cost of their lives.

Governor Davidson has proved to be an enemy of popular election and has trampled under foot practices followed by all former Governors. If he can do so with impunity, we may as well tear up the Colony's Constitution and make Sir E. P. Morris a Dictator.

We believe the Home Government will not tolerate such conduct in a Governor of a self-governing Colony, and when such conduct is brought to the notice of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, steps will be taken to prevent a re-occurrence of such outrageous conduct.

The country was horror-stricken when it learned of the death of 78 of the "Newfoundland's" crew from exposure on the ice during the blizzard of March 31st and April 1st, and many homes mourned the death of a father, husband, son or brother. The facts of the terrible catastrophe are well known and need not be repeated by me. The utmost indignation was aroused by the failure of the Crown to properly investigate the disaster and get down to the root of the causes of the loss of so many valuable lives.

The one predominant feature of the Newfoundland Tragedy was the conduct of the Master of the sealer "Stephano," whose lack of good judgment and failure to take ordinary precautions are principally responsible for the heavy loss of life on that occasion. Captain Kean's conduct on that occasion is universally condemned, and while no one believes that he would leave anything undone to rescue the men had he been convinced that they were exposed to the blizzard, yet there is no doubt that he could have saved all the men had he taken proper steps and been guided by ordinary discretion and the dictates of common sense.

It is hard to account for Captain Kean's failure to make a thorough search that evening and to conclusively prove whether the men reached their ship or not, or why he did not remove all doubts under such serious circumstances by calling on the steel ships in his immediate vicinity to aid him in making a search. The failure to do so is what caused the loss of these 78 men and the permanent maiming of about a dozen others.

It becomes our duty, as those representing the sealers, to make sure that all possible preventatives of such a disaster happening again are adopted and that sealing masters are brought to a realization of their responsibility to the country for loss of life through blundering such as occurred in the case of the "Newfoundland's" crew. I therefore suggest that you take action during the sittings of this Convention to prepare a petition which can be signed and presented to the House, asking for what you believe will be necessary laws to safeguard, as far as possible, the lives of the sealers in future, and to take what action you deem proper respecting what should be done in Captain Abraham Kean's case, in order to bring home to the Masters a proper realization of their responsibilities to the country for the loss of life under such circumstances as surrounded the massacre of 78 of the "Newfoundland's" crew.

Last February I had the honor of introducing a new Sealing Bill embodying the agreement entered into by the steamer owners and myself on your behalf, in 1912, which provided for better food and accommodation for sealers. That Bill passed the Lower House unanimously and was considerably amended in the Upper House. These amendments in some cases, greatly interfere with the successful operation of the measure, and I would like you to review the whole Act and draft amendments in view of making the new law more effective and workable, as well as to propose additions to the Act, calculated to reduce the possibilities of loss of life from exposure on the ice in future.

I am convinced that the right of property in panned seals must be prohibited and that the owners should pay \$1000 for the loss of every man dying from exposure on the ice. In my opinion, the enactment of two such provisions would remove the possibility of such disasters as overtook the crews of the "Greenland" and "Newfoundland." The loss of the "Southern Cross" with all on board during the blizzard on the 31st day of March was the hardest blow the Colony ever experienced and one which we trust will never be repeated.

We shall have to provide for a survey of wooden ships by a Committee of shipbuilders and sealers, and prevent any ships from prosecuting the sealing voyage of which there is any doubt respecting their stability. Shipowners must also be compelled by law to insure the men's share of seals. The fact that nothing has been done by the Government to investigate the loss of the "Southern Cross" and to thoroughly enquire into the loss of 78 of the "Newfoundland's" crew is a deep reflection and standing disgrace to the Government, and should not be lightly passed over by this Council. There is no proper excuse for the inaction of the Government, except that of its indifference to the interests and rights of the toilers and its un-

willingness to give no offence to those otherwise interested.

I availed of the columns of "The Mail and Advocate" to express your opinion on these matters last Spring, and my endeavors in that direction were rewarded in a manner which has taught you that more than the Sealers' Laws require amendment. We must not lose sight of these facts and you must not think that our endeavors to secure a square deal for every man will be accomplished without much determination, ceaseless toil and agitation.

I offer my heartfelt sympathy to all who lost loved ones on the never-to-be-forgotten March 31st and April 1st, 1914, and feel sure that you will join with me in the hope that God will comfort them and lighten their bereavement as much as may be.

The collection taken up for the relief of those distressed through the disaster amounted to \$300,000, which is ample to provide THE UNION RELIEF FUND, until they can support themselves. Sufficient funds for all purposes are at hand. The F.P.U. Disaster Fund amounts to \$5000, and you will determine how what is to be done with the money. All but a little over \$1000 was given by the members and connections of the F.P.U.

A gentleman who has taken quite an interest in our work, and who is well known to many of our Green Bay friends, gave \$1000 to the collection and he has informed me that he is willing to allow this Council to allocate that sum as it thinks proper, as long as it is devoted to relieving suffering in some shape.

I am of the opinion that we should establish a Permanent Union Fund to relieve distress ensuing through disaster to life or property and all Councils contributing annually to the Fund should be alone eligible for assistance from the Fund.

Since we last met, twenty-nine Local Councils have been established, viz.—Red Head Cove, Rose Blanche, Kelligrews, Holyrood, Conception Harbor, Petty Harbor, Port-Councils, Ugal Cove, Branch, Riverhead St. Mary's, North Harbor, Burin, St. Lawrence, Fortune, Grand Bank, Lamaline, St. Jacques, Wood's Island, Curling, Witless Bay, Penguin Arm, Lark Harbor, Plate Cove, Dark Cove, Shamblers' Cove, Harry's Harbor, Birch Bay, Jackson's Cove, Burnt Head, Frenchman's Cove.

Friend Stone visited Burin District and established the Councils now operating in that district. I had hoped to visit Burin and Fortune Districts during this month, but owing to the conditions brought about by the war, I could not spare the necessary time from St. John's. When I can find time I shall visit these districts and establish District Councils.

During the past year I visited and addressed the Councils at Petty Harbor, Portugal Cove, Kelligrews, Grate's Cove, Catalina, Bonavista, Cape Preels, Cat Harbor, Tilling, Joe Batt's Arm, Twillingate and Leading Tickle. I also visited Port Rexton, Greenspond, Safe Harbor, Wesleyville, Newtown, Doting Cove, Seldom, Boyd's Cove, Herring Neck, Pike's Arm, Moreton's Harbor, Exploits, Change Islands, Fogo, Little Bay Islands and Nipper's Harbor, and at all these places I found the Councils working harmoniously and making steady progress.

Number of Councils in Operation. The following Councils are in operation:— District—Port de Grave... 6 St. Barbe... 21 Fogo... 16 Bay de Verda... 15 Harbor Grace... 6 Bonavista... 42 Twillingate... 37 Trinity... 40 Burin... 5 Other Districts... 18 206

During the past year about 2,300 members enrolled. Last year our roll contained about 17,700 names. We have now over MEMBERSHIP. 20,000 members enrolled in the 206 Councils and we have twenty applications for Local Councils which I have refrained from establishing because of the disturbed conditions growing out of the war.

During July I visited the North as far as Nipper's Harbor in the Motor Boat "F.P.U.," inspected all the stores, and held a number of meetings. We had on board VISIT TO THE NORTH, for a time the motor engine expert, Mr. Trenholm, who attended to the adjusting and repairing of scores of engines. The "F.P.U.'s" motor driver, C. Bryant, also attended to the wants of a large number of engines which were brought to be attended to. The boat worked well and the engine gave splendid satisfaction. We made the round trip in a month and called at about fifty ports. My return was hastened by the war situation. I arrived at St. John's the day after the war was declared.

The boat is not large enough to be safe in all weathers when on long runs between ports, and I have decided to dispose of the boat if a buyer presents himself. In that case, a larger boat will be required and I suggest that you make provision for this purpose.

Twenty permanent Union Stores are now in operation. Two new stores were opened this year— Bay Roberts and Scilly Cove UNION STORES. Owing to conditions created by the war, which affected the demand for goods, we closed a few of the small stores, all of which will be again operated when conditions of trade become normal.

The Trading Company has taken over the store formerly used by Mr. J. M. Devine, and when the war terminates, will operate it as a retail store for St. John's.

The "Kintall's" name has been changed to "Can't Lose." When the war broke out she was laid up, her insurance being out and freight demands slack, it was thought best not to re-insure and operate the ship until war rates were reduced.

The experience of the past three months has revealed the existence of a bitter antagonism to the Union amongst business and public men that a square deal will not be ours if we depend upon any aid but our own. Firms which under every principle of honor should have been ready to treat us squarely have been most active for our destruction. Their opinion was that we could not live through the troubles of such a war as that now operating in Europe. They believed their opportunity had come to smash the Union and they resolved, one and all, to kill the Trading Company, and thereby the F.P.U. You will learn further particulars of this matter as we proceed with business.

I mention the action of Harvey & Co. and Job Bros. as illustrating what supposedly friendly firms were ready to do to assist us. Harvey & Co.'s action is fully explained in the following communications which passed between that firm and the Trading Company, during the latter part of September and which reveal some interesting facts respecting the financial standing of the Trading Company, which is as good as the best firms or companies in the Colony, and the treatment we had to contend with during the most pressing financial crisis since the war began.

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Letter to Messrs. Harvey & Co. From Trading Co. September 26th, 1914.

Messrs. Harvey & Co., Ltd., St. John's.

Gentlemen,—Mr. Thistle received over the phone today a demand from Mr. Gosling for payment of some flour that has come in recently and more which was only received today and was also given to understand that notes coming due were to be paid in full. In view of the manner in which we have transacted business and the prompt way in which we have paid our account, we consider Mr. Gosling's message insulting, extremely unfair, and in view of the manner in which he delivered the message, very detrimental to the Company's business.

There was no reason for such action, except one which should have no connection with business. We are now meeting any obligations which we have with you and will close our account, as well as publicly showing up your attempt to injure us, and, if possible, to embarrass the Company.

Your attack has been upon 1,700 men who compose the Trading Company, who are all fishermen. That fact you may yet remember with regret.

Yours truly, THE FISHERMEN'S UNION TRADING CO. LTD. Per W. F. Coaker.

With this letter was sent a cheque for Fifty-eight Hundred and Thirty-five (\$5,835.00) Dollars, which covered all the Trading Company's obligations with Messrs. Harvey & Co.

Letter From Messrs. Harvey & Co. to Trading Co. September 28th, 1914.

Messrs. the F.P.U. Trading Co. Ltd., City.

Dear Sirs,—Yours of the 26th is before us. It really seems unnecessary to say that we are not attacking the F.U.T. Co. Ltd. As regards the conversation referred to over the phone, we would remind you that the subject of finance has frequently been discussed with you in this same way, both as regards payments, renewals, etc., etc., similarly to the recent conversation advertised on by you, and that you have never expressed any unwillingness to discuss these matters. Had we any reason to suppose that such discussions would have been in your opinion detrimental to the F.U. Trading Co.'s interests, you are quite aware that they would have been religiously avoided by us.

The simple facts in the present case are that goods sold to you for prompt cash have not been paid for and that numbers of notes maturing have not been met and have had to be renewed. On Saturday, we found that two, if not three cars of flour delivered you had not been paid for. These cars were as follows:— 250 bbls. "Pillsbury" delivered Wesleyville, Sept. 19. 250 bbls. "Pillsbury" delivered St. John's, Sept. 19. 200 bbls. Neptune delivered St. John's, Sept. 25.

Mr. Thistle seemed to think that the latter was not due, and while we would not press for payment for a few days, you will understand that when we gave you an order to get delivery, the flour was yours to all intents and purposes whether it had been carted or not.

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