

# The Nonpartisan Political League

*First Formed in North Dakota---Spreads to Canada---Development in Saskatchewan and Alberta*

The Farmers' Nonpartisan Political League of Canada is an outgrowth of a similar organization which had its birth about two years ago in North Dakota. A number of farmers in that state felt that the economic and political conditions under which they labored demanded radical changes which could only be brought about by independent political action. They therefore established the Farmers' Nonpartisan Political League for purely political purposes. A spectacular campaign of organization was instituted. Automobiles were purchased and membership canvassers put into the field. An organization was rapidly built up with a membership fee of \$9.00. At the outset of the campaign the league established its own journal, *The Nonpartisan Leader*, at Fargo, which has now a circulation of over 50,000 weekly. A convention was held, at which a platform was adopted. The policy followed was for the farmers to capture the party conventions and to have candidates nominated who were pledged to support the platform of the league. In the elections on November 7, 1916, the league was successful in electing a farmer governor, farmer representatives on the supreme court bench, and a majority of the legislature, besides filling many of the minor offices. A strong fight is now being waged to enact the farmers' platform into law. The league confined itself largely to state questions in connection with the grain trade, the state ownership of elevators being one of the chief planks in its platform. The movement has spread to other states and organization work is being pushed rapidly.

## The Movement Spreads to Canada

Some of the men connected with the movement were from Saskatchewan and on their return last summer they inaugurated a similar movement in that province, with headquarters in Swift Current. A league was organized and E. E. Haight, one of its moving spirits, was elected president. Organization work was pushed with great vigor. Automobiles, of which the league has now thirteen, were purchased, and canvassers, working on commission, were put into the field. The membership fee was placed at \$15.00, of which canvassers using their own cars received 25 per cent, and those using cars furnished by the league, 20 per cent. The fee is an initial one, the annual cost of membership being still undecided. Of each fee collected, \$2.50 goes for a subscription to *The Nonpartisan Leader*, established a few months ago at Swift Current and edited by Sidney Godwin. It now has a circulation of over 5,000 weekly. The league grew rapidly during the political activity preceding the recent Saskatchewan election, and now has reached a total of approximately 5,000 members.

The program which was adopted for Saskatchewan is as follows:

- 1.—Provincial Terminal Elevators, Flour Mills, Stockyards, Packing Houses, and Cold Storage Plants.
- 2.—Direct Legislation, including the Recall.
- 3.—Provincial Purchasing of Machinery.
- 4.—Provincial Inspection of Dockage and Grading.
- 5.—Rural Credit, Banks Operated at Cost.

The items of this program, which is much the same as that of North Dakota, were selected, not because they were the only demands, but because they immediately "lead up" to the main issue—"the political supremacy of the common people." There has been no official explanation of the platform, nor of how it is purposed to carry it into effect, though Mr. Haight has given it as his personal opinion that the league will continue its work until it has captured the legislature in Saskatchewan and installed a farmers' government. This government would then proceed to borrow \$100,000,000 on the credit of the province, using a part of it to install

the various government owned utilities included in the program and the balance for purchasing farm machinery. He states this as his personal view and not binding on the league.

## The Federal Platform

Up until February, 1917, it was stated as the intention of the league not to enter the federal political field, but at that time the executive committee of the league drafted a political platform which is as follows:

- 1.—Nationalization of Banking and Credit Systems.
- 2.—Nationalization of Railroads, Telegraphs, Telephones and Steamship Lines (registered in Canada) and all other means of Public Transportation and Communication.
- 3.—Nationalization of all Industries which are organized on a National scale, and in which competition has virtually ceased to exist.
- 4.—The Extension of the Public Domain to include all Coal Mines, Water Powers and Forests.
- 5.—A Federal Direct Legislation Act including the Recall.
- 6.—Equal and Unrestricted Suffrage for both Men and Women.
- 7.—A Graduated Inheritance Tax Law.
- 8.—A Graduated Income Tax Law.
- 9.—The Abolition of Official Charity; and in its place the enactment of a National Compulsory Insurance Law covering Accident, Illness, Old Age and Death.
- 10.—The Free Administration of Justice.
- 11.—The Abolition of the Canadian Senate.
- 12.—No Court to be Legally Competent to declare as Unconstitutional any Act of the Parliament of Canada.

This platform is modelled very much after the farmers' platform drafted by the Canadian Council of Agriculture in December, 1916, and adopted unanimously by the annual convention of the organized farmers in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

## The League and the Saskatchewan Election

The Nonpartisan League nominated seven men and one woman to contest the Saskatchewan election held on June 26 last. Some contend that by so doing it violated its claims to nonpartisanship, becoming thereby a third party, but the league officials maintain that the method of nomination and election followed in the province made it impossible to follow the example set in North Dakota. Only one of the nominees, D. J. Sykes of Swift Current, succeeded in obtaining a seat. The conditions surrounding Mr. Sykes' election were exceptional. He is a man of strong personality, a good platform speaker, and of unimpeachable character—an ideal farmers' representative. The league convention nominating him was the first held in the constituency for the purpose of nominating a

candidate for the last election. The two old parties, seeing that it was impossible to defeat such a candidate, also endorsed him, and Mr. Sykes became the nominee of all three conventions. He, therefore, secured the seat without a contest, being the only candidate in the election to be so honored. He is a staunch independent and as such, may be relied upon to keep himself untrammelled by political ties. The other league candidates fared badly at the polls. Many of them lost their deposits. Mrs. Haight, a daughter-in-law of the president of the league, had the distinction of being

the first woman candidate in the province and of being the only woman to contest the election. W. S. Simpson, one of the league's standard bearers, is well known as a champion grain grower, having several world's championships to his credit.

## League Conventions

Two provincial conventions have been held by the Nonpartisan League in Saskatchewan. The first was held on October 12 last and adopted a provincial constitution. At that time the membership was small, and it has since transpired that the constitution adopted does not voice the sentiments of the league as it now stands. The second convention was held on July 11, about 500 members from different parts of the province being present. The gathering proved to be a stormy one. Much opposition to the work of the executive developed, and what practically amounted to a reorganization of the league was accomplished. The constitution passed at a previous convention was thrown out, and a committee on which the executive is without representation was appointed to draft a new one. A new executive was elected. One of the striking developments was the resignation of D. J. Sykes from membership in the league, though this was not accepted, and he was later elected a member of the committee to draw up a new constitution.

The cry that if the league was successful it would destroy the work of the Grain Growers' movement was one of the reasons given by president Haight for the failure to secure the election of candidates. He strongly disclaimed any intention on the part of the league to oppose the Grain Growers, declaring that such an organization as the Nonpartisan League was necessary to give political effect to the Grain Growers' demands. The short notice given of the election, the fact that it was called before the league had time to organize the provinces, the opposition of the two old party machines, the adverse town vote and the disaffection of some members of the league when put to the test, were also given as reasons for the poor showing made.

## Members Expelled

The first business of importance taken up by the convention was the expulsion of members who had abandoned the league in the recent provincial elections. These were Mr. Gamble of the Nottaweg constituency, Percy Hopper of Abbey, P. L. Craigen, a director of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, and John F. Weibe of Herbert. All except Mr. Weibe, who had abandoned the league to run as an independent candidate, were present, and each had a strong following of sympathizers who had come ready to support him at the convention. Sharp division of opinion developed in dealing with these cases. According to the old constitution, the executive had the power to suspend a man for working against the league in a political campaign. The charge was then handed to a committee, with instructions to report the case at the next convention. As soon as the case came up, the pot began to boil. The convention demanded that the accused men be each given twenty minutes for defence. Mr. Gamble's case was the first to be called. He gave no reason for working against the league, evidence that the executive had attempted to interfere in his home constituency with the selection of a nonpartisan candidate. This he claimed to be a violation

Continued on Page 24



Mrs. LOUISE CRUMMY-MCKINNEY, M.L.A.  
Nonpartisan member of the Alberta Legislature for Claresholm. The first woman legislator to be elected in Canada.



JAS. WEIR, M.L.A.  
Newspaper man, farmer and writer. Second Vice-President of the U.F.A. Elected to the Alberta Legislature on the nonpartisan ticket for Nanton.



War's Dredges. Sunk German Torpedo Captured on the Western Front.