

Saskatchewan President's Address

The following inspiring message was delivered by President J. A. Maharg at the Opening of the Fourteenth Annual Convention of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association at Regina, February 9, 1915

Ladies and Gentlemen:—It is a very great pleasure for me to welcome you to this, our fourteenth annual convention, and to be permitted to present to you my fourth annual address.

This pleasure is greatly increased by the fact that never in the history of our organization have such wonderful progress and development taken place as during the past year, our membership during that time having more than doubled, while almost a similar condition obtains financially. While no doubt our trading operations have been responsible for a portion of our development, yet there are other factors which have contributed largely toward this success. Among these factors, one which it pleases me to see so much in evidence, is that the agriculturists are beginning to realize more fully their responsibility in the moulding of the destinies of this Dominion of ours, and of which no part is more anxious and willing to assist than is the province which we represent here today. This is a duty which we owe to ourselves and our country, a duty which we cannot afford to shirk in any way. Agricultural products comprise approximately seventy-five per cent. of Canada's exportable surplus, consequently they pay that proportion of Canada's debts, regardless of how they are contracted. This being the case, our views should receive at least a fair measure of consideration by those entrusted with the government of our country. Should our views not receive this consideration, then it is our duty to devise some means to make our influence more effective.

Another factor which has contributed very largely to our success, and one which I feel it my duty to mention, has been the untiring efforts put forth by our secretary and his very loyal staff. Extra time and energy have been at all times freely given in order that the progress of our organization might not be retarded. There are many other causes for our phenomenal growth which I will not enumerate here, but which will no doubt be brought out during discussion.

Co-operation

Acting on the resolution passed at our last convention, and on instructions received from the board of directors, the executive undertook to act as a purchasing agent for those of our members who were in a position to take advantage of the facilities offered, and a large amount of business has been done, details of which will be given you. In connection with this work, we have been considerably handicapped thru the lack of capital and facilities, also other matters over which we have no control. Strong opposition to our entering this line of business has developed in certain quarters, evidently the object being to try and stifle our efforts in this direction. However, we need have no fear. If this convention decides on a co-operative policy, and you give it your hearty support in the country, we can overcome any opposition. We have the market within ourselves, and the whole world, if necessary, from which to draw our supplies. Opposition is a wholesome check, which sometimes helps things along. In our case it has and will continue to help us along, as our organization is something like the British nation in time of war—we require a reverse or two to sharpen our ambition.

Personally, I believe the more opposition we receive during the early days of our trading activities, the better it will be for us, as we will lay our foundations accordingly. We are not anxious for a quarrel with any of the established lines of business, and would much prefer to do business with and thru them, providing satisfactory arrangements can be made, rather than have to duplicate present facilities which someone will have to pay for. However, we

have received opposition enough to know what to expect, and believing that the best way to lessen trouble is to be prepared to meet it, we decided some considerable time ago to lay before you constitutional changes and resolutions which, if adopted by this convention and heartily supported by our members thruout the province, will place us in a position to withstand the most strenuous opposition.

"Made in Canada" and True Patriotism

Who is responsible for this "Made in Canada" campaign? Whether right or wrong, the manufacturers are being given credit for this, if credit is due, their strong argument being that this will give employment to Canadian workmen, which is a very desirable thing. This seems to be their ideal of true patriotism in our present crisis. However, I am convinced that until they—the manufacturers—will make this an Empire-wide campaign, and will openly advocate tariff changes to make this practicable, their sincerity will be very much questioned. Should they do this, I think the Canadian public will give them credit for at least a measure of sincerity. If freer trade within the



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Empire is not desirable at this critical time in our history, I am convinced that it never will be. There may be some who will consider this as talking partizan politics. To such as may hold this view, I may say that if advocating anything that will bind the units of our Empire closer together, and in any way assist, especially at this crisis, will be construed as political, then I am prepared to bear any stigma which may be attached to me thru such an advocacy.

Increased Production and Greater Efficiency in Farming

During the last few months we have heard a great deal on increased production and greater efficiency in farming. Increased production is very desirable, but why is it so necessary? True, the war is a large factor at present, but had there been no war, the necessity would have been almost as great. What is the cause? Some say it is caused largely thru inefficiency and wastage on farms. This is published far and wide, but nothing is said about the wastage caused by empty houses, business blocks, office buildings, warehouses, partially constructed buildings, also the thousands of almost useless, and in

some cases worse than useless, power machines we see standing around machine warehouses in the cities, towns and villages of Canada; street railway deficits, extravagant municipal expenditures, and numerous other unnecessary expenditures. These all bear the marks of inefficiency quite as plainly as agriculture. We hear very little about these wastages, yet because the agriculturalists are not producing enough to pay for all these wastages, they are accused of being inefficient and wasteful. The inefficient—as they are justly called—are, in the majority of cases, victims of circumstances over which they have very little control, most of them having started with very little capital, and in many cases none at all, buying most of their requirements on time, contracting to make payments for such, which necessitates immediate cultivation and cropping of their land. In their desire to meet this obligation, and having been told by immigration agencies, land speculators and others interested in getting them on to the land, that crops would grow under almost any kind of cultivation, every acre possible is put under crop, the results in almost every case being disappointing.

Curiously enough, those who have been shouting inefficiency in agriculture are the people who, for the last few months, have been advising the sowing of every available acre during the coming spring. This advice, if followed, would only intensify the present condition, as the sowing of a greater acreage than can be properly handled will not only lessen the yield of the present year's crop, but will also have a similar effect on the following years. The whole trouble lies in the fact that the agriculturists have got to become efficient enough to liquidate the tremendous financial burden thrust upon our country by the very inefficient management of a great many other lines of business and the unnecessary duplication of facilities.

The War

We are now engaged in the most desperate struggle the world has ever known. It is not necessary to dwell on why we are in it, suffice it to say that the honor and high ideals of the British Empire were at stake. An innocent was being crushed! What is our duty? What does it mean to us that the British navy commands the sea, not only to us but to all the people of the Western Hemisphere, and a large portion of the Eastern Hemisphere, as well? Were it not for this fact, conditions in Canada would be a thousand times worse than they are today. Our overseas markets would have been entirely closed to us, and instead of the splendid price we are receiving for our cereals, we would have been unable to dispose of them at any price. It is not necessary for me to dwell on this; you have recognized your duty long ago and have nobly risen to it. Fathers and mothers have sent their sons and daughters, wives their husbands, sisters their brothers and sweethearts, all for a common cause, and it devolves on us who are left behind to do all in our power to provide liberally for those who have gone to the front and also for those dependent on them. In trying to do this we must always remember that it is not acres but bushels that count, and, to use a homely illustration, always remember that an extra stroke of the harrow not only benefits us financially but is also an additional guarantee that the rule of Democracy will triumph over that of Autocracy.

Liquor Traffic

During our last convention a resolution was passed asking that the retail sale of liquor in our province be abolished. While we were sure our action at that time was fully justified, I think you will agree with me that the justifi-

cation was tremendously increased several months ago, yet in our province nothing has been done of any importance by way of legislation along this line. We hear a great deal about the unnecessary waste being responsible for our present hard times. If this is true, then the liquor traffic is to a very great extent responsible for our hard times, as I am satisfied that the wastage caused by it in our province far exceeds that of all others combined. This being the case, and agriculture being practically the only industry in our province, it behooves us as agriculturalists, if for no other reason than from an economic standpoint, to do all in our power to free ourselves from this awful curse. But when we think of the misery, hardship, want, crime, humiliation of the innocent, premature deaths and scores of other deplorable influences caused by this traffic, what is our duty? I leave it with you, feeling confident that you will deal with it in a manner commensurate with the ideals of our organization.

Agricultural Conditions

In referring to this subject in my address to you a year ago, I made the statement that what was wanted was "a general recognition by all classes of the importance of agriculture, and an honest endeavor by all to place it in the position to which it belongs." The importance of agriculture is now fully recognized, it being admitted by all that only thru the prosperity of agriculture can our country as a whole be prosperous. What is being done in the way of permanent assistance? Very little. However, there is an abundance of advice from almost innumerable sources, and no doubt of good intention, yet of such a conflicting nature that the farmer has about come to the conclusion that he had better follow his own dictates. Mixed farming has been the cry—raise hogs, etc. What do we find in connection with the marketing of hogs? Exactly the same conditions as with wheat. In marketing our wheat some twenty-five years ago there was practically only one grade—the production was small—everything went. The same condition applied to hogs until quite recently. Now they have inaugurated a grading system which, from present indications, is in a fair way to out-rival our grain grading system, in so far as number of grades and terms is concerned. They have the different grades, the weight per hog, which represents weight per bushel; also insurance charge, which represents shrinkage. No doubt the next thing to be added will be dockage, under another name. This may seem a little overdrawn, but I believe the time is not far distant when it will be necessary for an independent arbiter in the matter of marketing fat stock, especially hogs. I just mention this to let the trade know that we are not entirely ignorant of the significance of some of those things.

As your representative on the advisory board of the College of Agriculture, I have been in close touch with the work of our provincial University, and I have no hesitation in saying that it is doing a splendid work, a work which I fear is not being properly appreciated and taken advantage of by our farmers to the extent that it should. The dean of the College of Agriculture is very anxious that all the agriculturalists of our province should receive the benefit of its demonstrations, and he would be very pleased to co-operate in any way with our organization for the dissemination of such. I believe it would be well for us to take advantage of this and to rely more on results attained by demonstrations conducted in our own province, rather than on advice given by individuals and institutions outside. Notwithstanding this there is a work

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