

Borden in Alberta

Conservative leader met by men who set Laurier right, and told that the people of any country were the best judges of that country's needs

The official presentation of the views of the United Farmers of Alberta was made to Mr. R. L. Borden, leader of the Opposition, by the provincial executive at Red Deer, on Tuesday, June 27. The presentation was made in the Methodist church, prior to the public meeting, and was preceded by a civic reception to Mr. Borden, tendered by Mayor Welliver, who greatly surprised the visiting party, after he had pronounced a glowing eulogy on Mr. Borden, by remarking that he was president of the Red Deer Liberal association. Two memorials were presented, by Mr. James Bower, president of the U.F.A., and Mr. E. Carswell, of Penhold, and these were of particular interest on account of being the first reply that has been made by the organized farmers to Mr. Borden's speeches on the present tour. Beside Mr. Bower and Mr. Carswell there were present as representatives of the executive, Messrs. D. W. Warner, Edmonton; James Speakman, Penhold, and E. J. Fream, secretary treasurer.

Right to the Point

Mr. Bower presented the first paper, as follows:

"To R. L. Borden, Esq., K.C., M.P., Leader of the Liberal Conservative Party in Canada.

"Sir,
The United Farmers of Alberta, through their executive, beg to tender you their warmest welcome.

"As leader of the opposition in the Parliament of Canada your course of action is being carefully watched and considered. We have admired your dignified attitude and courtesy to all, and in the unprejudiced minds of those who are anxiously searching for honest and capable men among their representatives, there has been a cheerful recognition of your personal integrity, honor and worth.

"One of the chief functions of our association is to bring before the notice of our representatives in parliament that which is best for the well-being and good government of the people of the country at large, and especially those who are the producers of the wealth of the country.

"Our views and desires in respect to many of the chief points of interest are well known to you. The matters which we presented to parliament on the sixteenth of December last are still the things our country needs, and still the things which we desire. We regret very much that there has been an effort on the part of some of the people who have been elected to represent us to withhold from the people that which is their desire and their due.

People Know Best

"Let us respectfully impress upon you, Sir, that the time has passed, if it ever existed, when the people of this country would submit to being dictated to as to what is or is not best for them, by those who have been elected to carry out their wishes. The people themselves who have the practical and first hand knowledge of these things, are the best judges, and we respectfully submit that it is the duty of our representatives to carry out the wishes of the people, working them out in detail, and placing them in proper form on the statutes of the country.

"We strongly resent the attempt made during the last session on the part of some individual members to obstruct legislation in our interests and to foist on the country legislation purporting to be in the interests of the farmers, but which is contrary to our practical knowledge of what is best. We also equally resent the open hostility of members who have undertaken to abuse and mislead, calling in question those in whom we have implicit confidence, and who have been chosen as our spokesmen to express the policy of our association, and in friendliness to you, Sir, as a leader in parliament whom we respect, and of whom we are justly proud, we would

warn you that the support of such men will prove a source of weakness rather than of strength.

"As your time with us is to be so short we will not attempt to infringe upon it, but as the chief representatives of 303 local branches of our association, we would ask that you give your support to the things which we have already asked from parliament, namely:

"Reciprocal trade with the United States and an increase of the British preference;

"The passage of the Grain Bill now before parliament, together with an appropriation sufficient to enable the commission to take over and operate the elevators;

"The passage of the amendments to the Railway Act providing for the fencing of the railway lines and payment for stock injured, together with further legislation controlling the rates;

"The inauguration of a chilled meat export trade in the interests of the people;

"The passage of a co-operative law, that those wishing to do so may take advantage of same;

"The speedy construction of the Hudson Bay railway by the government.

"We would also further ask that a redistribution take place before the next general election, thus giving the West their full complement of representatives."

Politicians Rebuked

Mr. Carswell, before reading a paper on behalf of the executive, said he had been chosen to present this memorial because of his standing as one of the stalwarts of the Conservative party. It had been freely charged that the U.F.A. was under the control of Grit heifers and workers, but the association was about equally divided between the two parties and they hoped to bring all the farmers in together.

"It will already be clear to you, Sir, that the farmers' program, which we desire to place before you is what we may call the Ottawa program, which was authorized in Ottawa by a convention of over 800 delegates, representing almost every province in our Dominion; and unanimously endorsed by our annual convention in Calgary in January last. This, then, is the definite policy of the organized farmers, and I may add that the United Farmers of Alberta now number three hundred and three local unions, with 10,337 registered members."

Need Wider Markets

"On close study our program will, I think, be found to contain a well thought out policy, calculated to carry out the chief aim of our organization, namely to improve the condition of our farm business on its commercial side. For this end we need to work along three lines. We need to secure larger and freer markets, cheaper transportation, and such systematic organization of our business as will insure the most economic distribution, giving fair prices for the producer without unduly burdening the consumer. Our Ottawa program works along these three lines, seeking larger and freer markets through our tariff policy, seeking to improve transportation by means of the Hudson Bay railway and of lower freight rates, especially on the Western sections, seeking to organize our business more economically through our schemes for elevators and chilled meat factories, and through co-operative institutions for which we need better legislation.

"We are glad to note that you are in full sympathy with us in regard to the Hudson Bay railway, the chilled meat industry and co-operative legislation.

"We gladly acknowledge your readiness to agree to our principles in regard to government ownership and operation of terminal elevators, and we hope that on the reopening of the parliamentary session you will give effect to the assurances given us on this head by supporting the Government Grain Act

now before the House on the condition that the necessary appropriation for working the elevators as government property should be voted at this session.

"We must add, as we fail to find any reference to Western terminals in your addresses so far, that we regard the establishment of the Western terminal facilities as absolutely necessary to us.

Railway Problems

"Perhaps the thing in the recent parliamentary proceedings which had struck us most painfully was the action in regard to the amendments to the Railway Act, which were intended to give the farmers relief from losses sustained by reason of their stock being killed upon the track through the defective fences and guards provided by the companies. The files in our central office are full of complaints received from the farmers during the past five years for stock killed upon the track, for which they have been unable to secure compensation, and at nearly every executive meeting we have had cases of that kind to consider. The amendment in remedy of all this was drafted by the chairman of the Board of Railway Commissioners, and very carefully considered. There is nothing whatever of a party nature in the question, and we cannot understand on what grounds the amendment was talked out. We hope at this meeting to get your assurance that you will support us in this matter, so that the amendment will become law at once.

"Perhaps the most important of all these planks in the Ottawa platform, certainly the one causing the most discussion throughout Canada, and that has secured the approval of most Canadian farmers, is the tariff plank, the part designed to open wider and freer markets both for selling and buying.

"Shortly summed up our tariff proposals are:

"Immediate increase of the British preference to 50 per cent, and perfect free trade with Great Britain within ten years.

"Reciprocal free trade with the United States of a number of natural and manufactured articles, with the proviso that every trade concession granted in this way to the United States must at once extend to Great Britain, and with the further suggestion that such an arrangement with the United States should take the form not of a binding commercial treaty but of a simple agreement by which each country would keep perfect control over its own tariff laws.

"In regard to our proposal concerning trade with Great Britain, we have not yet seen any answer from you.

Firm for Reciprocity

"We regret your stand on the reciprocity agreement, and must frankly say that after having carefully read all the arguments against the reciprocity agreement we are still firmly convinced that this agreement would be a great step in the right direction, and are earnestly desirous of seeing it ratified.

"We, of course, do not claim that in an organization counting over ten thousand members there cannot be found individuals here and there who are opposed to the reciprocity agreement, but the facts are as follows:

"When the agreement was put definitely before the country we counted 245 local unions, and sent out 245 circulars submitting the agreement to the consideration of these unions. Out of these, 195 have reported; 193 in favor of the agreement, 1 definitely against, and 1 asking for further consideration, leaving 50 of these unions out of 245 that have not yet reported. Since these 245 circulars were issued we have organized 58 more unions that have not formally reported in regard to reciprocity. We know that the large majority of the farmers of our unions are in favor of reciprocity. Two large

district conventions, embracing a large number of unions, including many of the new unions, have been held since the agreement was first announced, and at each convention reciprocity was unanimously endorsed.

Always for Reciprocity

"Reciprocity with the United States, not, of course, in the present form, was discussed and endorsed at our convention held in Edmonton in January, 1910, and there is therefore no foundation for the statement that this reciprocity agitation is the part of a few individuals, but there is a sincere demand for reciprocal trade relations.

"We are sorry that there is not time to enter into any detailed statement or discussion of the objections to the reciprocity agreement, but you have done us the honor of paying us a visit to this country, as we understand, partly with a view of becoming familiar with the sentiment of the Western people, and we, therefore, have felt that it was due to you that we should honestly put before you the views of the farmers as we have gathered them by means of our organization."

Borden's Reply

Mr. Borden expressed his thanks for the welcome which had been extended to him by the U.F.A., and asked that he might be permitted to take up the points they had mentioned one by one in the speech he would deliver later. There was, however, a reference in the address which Mr. Bower had read with respect to some abuse or traducing of the United Farmers of Alberta. He trusted he was not held to be among those who had taken that course, as he did not think he had spoken in any but the kindest terms of the members of the Grain Growers' Association of the United Farmers of Alberta.

Mr. Bower at once disabused Mr. Borden's mind of the idea that he was accused of speaking in a derogatory way of the organized farmers. The statements of which they complained, he said, had been made not by any party but by individuals, on the floor of the House and elsewhere. If he was asked he could give names, and they were not all on one side of the House.

Perley Set Right

Mr. George H. Perley, in the course of a speech against reciprocity, said reciprocity had not been asked for by the farmers when Sir Wilfrid Laurier was in the West last summer, and Mr. Bower called attention to the fact that Mr. Perley was in error in making this statement. A resolution in favor of reciprocity with the United States was passed by the annual convention of the U.F.A. in January, 1910, and a request that such an agreement should be entered into was presented to Sir Wilfrid Laurier during his tour last summer.

In his speech later in the evening, Mr. Borden replied to the requests made by the U.F.A., repeating his promises for the speedy construction and government ownership and operation of the Hudson Bay railway, government ownership of terminal elevators, and government encouragement of the chilled meat industry.

British Preferential Tariff

Dealing with the British preference and the request that it be immediately increased to 50 per cent of the general tariff, with free trade with Great Britain within ten years, Mr. Borden pointed out that the British preferential tariff is not at present on a straight 33 1/3 basis. On dutiable goods alone, he said, the average tariff was 24 1/4 per cent on goods imported from Great Britain, and 24 1/4 per cent on goods imported from the United States, while on all goods dutiable and free, the average duty collected was 13 per cent on United States goods and 18 per cent on British goods.

"I would deal with the tariff," said

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