

U.F.A. President's Report

The following report was presented to the U.F.A. convention by Jas. Bower, the retiring president

Mr. Bower was later elected Honorary President

To the Officers and Members of the U.F.A. Gentlemen:—

I have now the honor as president to submit to you for the third year in succession an annual report. At the opening of this our fourth annual convention, it is but meet and right that we should express our sense of gratitude and thankfulness to a kind Providence for the many blessings extended to us during the year.

The farmers' vocation, more than the vocation of any other class, makes him dependent on the dispensations of Providence for the results of his labor, and because of the unusual climatic conditions of the past year the results of our labor has not been as profitable as we could have wished, yet as true men we will not grumble at that over which we have no control, but will become more active, more energetic and persistent, in the pursuit of those things that make for the betterment of our condition and our status in treating with, and in our business relationships with the other trades and professions, which go to make up the whole community and nation. We can have no voice in the dispensation of Providence or control of climatic conditions, but we can and should have a voice in the affairs of our nation and a share at least in the control or regulation of our dealings with our fellow men.

During these three years in which I have occupied the office of your president the law of evolution has constantly been at work in connection with the work of our Association, and at no time has this been more apparent than during the last year, so that while the aims and objects of our association are not changing, but fixed, yet to accomplish these aims and objects we are ever face to face with new problems and new aspects of all problems with which we have wrestled for years. The most fruitful and the chief, if not the only cause of these old problems assuming new features, is the shifting of the ground and changing of the tactics of those interests which are best served by controlling ours, so that while these problems are the same yet when we come to the point of solving them and obtaining our ends, the astuteness of the opposing interests finds means of obstructing our work and defeating our purpose if it be at all in their power to do so. When all their powers of invective which they use for the purpose of traducing and defaming the character of our members are played out, when all other tactics which they employ have proven futile, they consistently fall back on what they have proven so successful in the past—that is, any means whereby they can divide our ranks. It is encouraging to know that this old weapon in their hands is not quite so formidable as it used to be, yet it is a deplorable fact that its potency and effectiveness is still very much in evidence as proven by the occurrences of the past year. Our own province of Alberta, being further removed from the sphere of influence of those interests, which have chosen to make themselves inimical to ours, we have as a result, felt to a lesser degree than some other provinces the effects of that vicious weapon. Unanimity of purpose and action has prevailed amongst us to a marked degree in spite of the many malign influences at work.

Since the Siege of Ottawa

Shortly before our last convention the ever memorable pilgrimage to Ottawa took place. The representations made by that delegation to Parliament were endorsed in every detail by this Association and by our sister Associations as well. The aftermath of the work of that delegation has kept your officers in a constant state of activity since that date.

At a meeting of the Canadian council, held at the close of the Saskatchewan convention, your president was elected president of the council, so that your president's work since that time has been largely in the wider field of Dominion affairs.

For this reason in making a report of my actions during the year it becomes necessary for me to report the work in

which I took part in the council, and must be my excuse for inflicting upon you a somewhat lengthy report. Several of the chief planks of our platform as laid down by the delegation to Ottawa were suddenly thrown into the arena of conflict in Parliament. It was plainly evident that it became our duty to move and move quickly. A new grain bill on the lines as demanded by the farmers was before the Senate and Parliament, and all interested parties were called to come and give evidence for or against. Immediately what might be termed a howl of protest was raised by the elevator companies and grain dealers, the large Western millers, the railway companies, the boards of trade and councils of Fort William and Port Arthur, these parties all sending strong delegations to fight the bill. Your president, after consulting with the vice-president of the council, started at once for the seat of war, and was reinforced shortly after by Mr. R. McKenzie, of the Manitoba Association and President Maharg, of the Saskatchewan Association. We were supported there only by the representatives of the Ontario Millers' Association and a representative of the Toronto Board of Trade.



JAMES BOWER of Red Deer
Honorary President, U.F.A.

The fight was taken up first before a committee of the Senate and lasted for nearly two weeks, a report of which was duly printed and is no doubt in the possession of many of the delegates here present. This bill, a copy of which I have here, provided for the appointment of an independent commission who would have practically the sole control of the grain trade of Canada and provided for the taking over of any terminal elevator and the placing of it in the hands of the commission for operation at any time that Parliament had granted the necessary money for the purpose. It also provided that before such time as this had been done in the case of any terminal elevator that it became a criminal offence for any person or company to operate such elevator if such person or company had in any way an interest in the buying or selling of grain, in this way making the elevator purely a storage facility for the public, and giving no personal incentive to the operator for the mixing of grain, which mixing was also made a criminal offence. These were the contentious clauses, the different interests throwing in their whole weight and influence to have them expunged. They also fought, but in a more covert way, for the privilege of mixing in the elevators, some openly advocating that privilege, some contenting themselves with advocating private ownership and operation, which goes without saying gives them that secret privilege. Others again, members of the Winnipeg Grain Exchange, seeking to cover up their desire for the advantage that privilege of mixing would give them, advocated mixing as a means towards establishing a sample market, so that while these different interests approached the question in

different ways yet when one studied the question in the light of the past and by the information gained through the bitter experiences of the farmers in this matter, we were able to see that each and all were fishing to catch that special advantage of mixing for themselves. With some slight modifications the bill passed the Senate and was sent on to the commons, but not fully dealt with before dissolution of the last Parliament. It is now again before Parliament with some amendments which have not been disclosed to us. Your elevator and market committee will recommend some amendments which will be submitted to you for consideration. Meanwhile the council have taken steps to again send a delegation from each province to Ottawa as soon as the bill is taken up.

Reciprocity Controversy

At the same time that the Grain bill was before the Senate the debates in the Commons on another plank of our platform waxed fast and furious. It was very evident to one on the ground that a supreme effort was being made by those interests which fatten at the expense of the farmer to win back the ground the farmers had gained in their fight for reciprocal free trade between the United States and Canada.

Resolutions and petitions were laid on the table from manufacturing, industrial and mercantile interests, transportation companies and boards of trade, the gist of which were that it would reduce their profits and benefit no one, stating that no one was asking for reciprocal free trade, and the opponents of it daring anyone to come forward and do so. Our different associated bodies having made such a decided pronouncement on this matter, it became my duty to ask them to re-affirm their views and get such support as they could without delay. Responses very shortly came flooding in from our locals all over the country, particularly this province, re-affirming their stand and asking for reciprocity. The result you know. The question now is whether it is for us to bow the head and bend the back in meek submission to these interests, or whether we fight the harder for our emancipation. It is for you to say. In the meantime the council have been standing firm and while reciprocity for the time being is out of the question we are asking for a general reduction of the tariff and an increase of the British preference.

The Railway Act

Another of the planks of our platform, over which a conflict took place, was amendments to the Railway Act, centering most on the point on which only the farmers and the railway companies are interested, namely:—fencing the right-of-way and liability for stock injured. Having no support from any other interest and no doubt because only a small percentage of the whole farming community are personally interested, I found it a hard matter to induce the government to take the matter up, but being importunate in our demands the minister finally called a meeting of the interested parties in his office; there were present the railway representatives, the chairman of the conservation commission, the chairman of the railway commission, and Mr. McKenzie and myself as representing the farmers. After the question had been debated and the farmers had shown their knowledge of the subject and the justness of their claims, the minister suggested that the chairman of the railway board draft an amendment covering the ground. To this we gladly assented, the commission having already supported us in all our claims. When this was done I caused a circular letter to be sent to all the members asking in the name of the farmers that they support the amendment. These amendments were embodied in a bill together with a number of other amendments and only reached the House on the last day of the session before adjournment, which proved to be dissolution. They were most strenuously opposed chiefly by two men, one a lawyer

who was father of the present useless but litigious clause, and the other, also a lawyer, who is the father of another amendment now coming before the House which makes the Act more useless and litigious than before. Had it come to a vote these men would have been powerless but by continuing the debate as they had a right to do they could keep it under discussion and in that way obstruct the passage of the whole bill to which there was no opposition except these two clauses. As a result a compromise was effected whereby the bill was passed with the exception of these two clauses but with the understanding that they would be brought up again when Parliament would re-assemble. The political upheaval of course changed all that. Our council has again asked for the introduction and passage of these amendments.

Chilled Meat Question

I also took steps while in Ottawa to impress upon the government's attention the chilled meat proposition and by repeated conferences with the minister of agriculture was able to get a fuller consideration of the subject than at any time previous. He professed to be very favorable to our scheme of municipal abattoirs as feeders to a government export system, and was finally able to at last grip the thought that we were not advocating the bonusing or guaranteeing the bonds of a meat monopoly, and I would strongly advise keeping that fact prominently before the eyes of the government lest they lose sight of the fact or lest they forget, and do that very thing so that the last state of the meat industry would be worse than the first. The promise to give assistance may be easily construed to mean assistance to a company.

Sample Market and Mixing

On my return from Ottawa a meeting was held at Winnipeg consisting of members of the council and the Grain Exchange. The question before us was nominally the establishing a sample market but in reality to provide means whereby interested dealers would practice mixing in the elevators to their own profit and to the detriment of all others shipping under the grading system. We were hopelessly divided and nothing was done.

An after meeting consisting of the council alone discussed several matters of general interest, and made a recommendation to the Manitoba and Saskatchewan Associations to make application to the railway board, as Alberta had already done, for no increase but rather a decrease of the minimum weights of car loads both of farm products and general merchandise. This, these associations have not yet done.

The outcome of this, together with the outcome of several other questions of transportation, legislation, beef chilling, pork packing, elevators, and other matters of chief interest and with which I had to do, will more properly come before you in the different reports of the several committees appointed to look after these. I have had a communication from Mr. Desjardines, M.P., who has been actively promoting the passage of the co-operative bill in Parliament for years and asking the assistance of the council; this I submitted to the council, and they have endorsed the principle of the bill and taken the steps suggested towards its passage. I am sorry, however, that on account of the tremendous pressure of other questions during the year this bill was not re-drafted making it more applicable to, and understandable by the farmers.

I received an invitation from the Manufacturers' Association to be present as representative of the Organized Farmers of Canada at their banquet held at Toronto at their fortieth annual convention. I replied stating my inability to be present and wishing them in the name of the farmers, every measure of success and prosperity compatible with legitimate trade and fair dealing. On the accession of the Hon. Mr. Borden to the office of prime minister I addressed

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