
EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

THE FARMING CLASS IN WESTERN CANADA.

Ceylon, Sask., Feb. 20.

Last week, in Regina, was held one of the three big Provincial conventions of farmers that have become a regular institution in the Canadian prairie Provinces.

The real meaning of this gathering is not indicated by the mere fact of the meeting of the 800 delegates and visitors, nor by the further fact that the Grain Growers' Association in Saskatchewan has over 10,000 members and is aggressively pushing its organization. There is a deeper significance in the fact that the affiliated farmers' organizations, both east and west, are viewing the big public questions from a national standpoint, and are laboring earnestly to break the thralldom of party politics.



The Grain Growers' Association is a class-conscious body, laboring to solve the problems of the Canadian agriculturists; but, perhaps because it stands for the interest that outranks all others combined, it has taken the democratic position on every public question, as the enemy of privilege.

If Canadian manufacturers can meet foreign competition abroad, it asks, why do they need protection at home?

But it goes farther and declares the farmers ready, if the lowered tariff asked for renders revenue insufficient, to bear their share of a direct tax.

It asks for government ownership of the terminal grain elevators, as the only possible means of preventing the debasing of Canadian export wheat, but at the same time it has fathered two immense co-operative schemes to protect the producer till he gets his wheat to the terminals.

In asking for government farm loans it only desires that the privilege now enjoyed by the banks and railroads be broadened into a right in which all shall share.

And it went on record as repudiating the English Tory plan of a discriminating duty against non-British wheat, which "would increase the price of the poor man's loaf."



Party insurgency, as it exists in the States, has scarcely begun here, but it is a promise of better things to see an organization of national proportions stand consistently for the right as it sees it, and in so doing administer a rebuke to both the parties to which its membership belongs.

When Laurier made his Western trip in the summer of 1910, he was astonished at meeting at every stop west of Winnipeg, instead of a crowd of gaping admirers, an earnest body of farmers who knew what they wanted and were determined to place him on record as favoring or opposing the measures they demanded.

The Conservatives were delighted, but only a year later they sang to a different tune when they saw

their own leader administered a dose of the same medicine.

It is to such influences as theirs to which governments must learn to bow if Canadian statesmanship shall ever outgrow the narrow limits of political parties.



It is an interesting speculation whether the time has arrived when the agricultural interests of a country shall become permanently united in an organization that shall guard the interests of the farmer in all matters of public policy.

There are some things that would indicate it. The farmer today finds it increasingly necessary to study the science of agriculture, to follow market tendencies, to practice good business methods, and to take an active hand in politics. These activities impel, nay, they compel, association to an extent never known before.

Whether the present affiliated associations of Canadian farmers shall strike root deeply and be cultivated wisely enough to weather future storms, may be a question, but if they should fail their successors will be placed nearer success by their existence.

GEO. W. ATKINSON.



ECHOES FROM THE NEW ZEALAND ELECTIONS.*

Wellington, New Zealand, December 12, 1911.

The forces of monopoly and privilege scored heavily at the recent elections for the New Zealand parliament. The questions of local and national Prohibition confused issues very much and quite eclipsed the land question. It was encouraging, however, to notice that a larger number of candidates supported the taxation of land values in their addresses, and gave prominence to it, than ever before.

Arthur Withy, one of our land-value-tax leaders here, fought an energetic campaign. Although defeated, he polled 50 per cent more votes than any other advanced Liberal who faced, as he did, not only the unscrupulous hostility and lavishly corrupt expenditures of the liquor trade, but also the antagonism of supporters of the Government and of the Opposition. Under the circumstances we are well satisfied with his 2,461 votes.

Mr. Withy has done excellent propaganda work throughout his Auckland campaign and is now free to devote himself to spreading "the new evangel" throughout the country. We have numerous requests for his services in country districts, and I have no doubt of encouraging results for land value taxation at our next general election.

Mr. Fowlds had to face a second ballot. He came in at the head of the poll on the first ballot, but without a full majority. As the Opposition was third, Mr. Fowlds' contest at the second ballot was with the Socialist candidate, who had come in second. At the second ballot the Socialist was supported by reactionaries, and Mr. Fowlds was defeated by 31 votes—3423 to 3454. His defeat was

*See current volume of The Public, pages 151, 154.