

A Progressive Convention.

H. Q. Alexander, Pres. N. C. Farmers' Union

The Farmers' Union Convention at Chattanooga, Tennessee, was a progressive convention. This does not mean that it was in any sense a "Bull Moose" Convention. It was strictly a non-partisan convention. But it was really and truly progressive in the broadest and best meaning of that term. It was characterized by progressive thought, progressive talk and progressive action.

It was distinctively a business convention. Every delegate was intensely interested in every proposition that promised benefit to the agricultural class in any way whatsoever.

I will mention briefly a few of the subjects that elicited the most intelligent discussion and action. I will also give some conclusions in the truth of which I am more firmly convinced than ever before and which I hope to press upon the mind of every reader.

The distribution of wealth was alluded to by several speakers. Much less than a century ago the farmers owned nine-tenths of the wealth of the nation. Today they own only one-fifth of it, though they have created about ninety per cent of it. Less than two generations ago a large majority of our population owned their own homes. Today two-thirds of the population are renters. A generation ago the large farm of from one to several thousand acres was the exception. Today there are tens of thousands of farms of a thousand acres or more and thousands of them from ten thousand to ten million acres each. Just think of one man holding ten million acres of land, while two-thirds of the people have no home. He holds that land but does not own it. Real ownership can only result from giving "value received," and no man ever did that for ten million acres of land. The same might be said of the wealth held by the hundreds of millionaires of our country.

A half century ago there were no multi-millionaires in our country. Today there are several thousand millionaires, but not one millionaire farmer who made his million out of the farm; and yet the farm is the source of ninety per cent of our wealth.

A half century ago there were no gigantic corporations in our land. Today corporate wealth monopolizes all the manufacturing industries, all the transportation industries, all of the banking interests and all of the large commercial interests. And now the ill-gotten gains of corporate wealth is being used to monopolize the ownership of the land which is the God-given heritage of all the people.

It was Daniel Webster who said, "No free government can long endure where the tendency of the laws is to concentrate the wealth in the hands of the few and impoverish the many." In the light of the above facts and the well known business conditions existing today, any man would be foolish to deny that the tendency of our laws has been to concentrate the wealth, that the masses are creating, in the hands of the few.

How has it been done? It has been done by organization and combination. But it was made possible by special privileges and class legislation. Who are responsible for class legislation? The corporation lawyers who have dominated our government for a quarter of a century. Who are responsible for their being in charge of our government? The masses of the people who have allowed the politicians to fool them into electing men who represented the class interests and not the interests of all the people. Does that mean that these representatives were necessarily corrupt when elected? Not at all. But because of their environment and for business reason, their

sympathy and interest are closely allied with the classes.

There is another reason why they have served the classes instead of the masses. The classes have kept in close touch with the representatives after election, while the masses go back home and forget what manner of man he is. The representative concludes that it is wise to make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness and he quietly does it.

Now then, the first conclusion is that the farmers and laboring people are largely to blame themselves for allowing their own government to discriminate against them in favor of the few by granting special privileges to the banking interests, the manufacturing interests and the transportation interests; and all to the detriment of the farming interests; and all to the detriment of the farming and laboring classes. What are you going to do about it?

The Chattanooga Convention adopted the most progressive political program that has been adopted by any national convention since the days of the Alliance. This program has been, or will be, published in many of the leading papers of the State. Some men will criticize it because they belong to that aristocratic class that formed our national constitution and who do not believe in the rule of the people. They are always harping on the "rights of the minority," forgetful of the fact that legislation has nearly always been controlled or predetermined by a small majority of Congress. This is also true to some extent in the legislative assemblies of the States.

Others will indorse the political program but criticize the Union Convention for adopting it on the ground that it is "going into politics." And yet there is not a partisan proposition in the program. It is simply an effort to get the farmers to reading and thinking along these lines that may come to understand that real democracy means the rule of the people; and there is little of it in our government.

The second conclusion is that the masses of the people must study politics in a non-partisan way, and thus be able to act intelligently, instead of following political leaders blindly; for it is well known that all reforms in politics originate with the people and never with the professional politicians or law makers.

The most important matter that engaged the attention of the Chattanooga Convention was the question of economic marketing by means of the farmers warehouse. And only second to that in importance and interest, that of co-operative farmers banks. Some splendid speeches were made on each of these subjects. It was very clearly shown that speculation in farm products is due to the fact that the products are forced on the market too rapidly; that the demand is oversupplied. The storage warehouse will solve the problem in marketing the staple non-perishable crops, while equitable transportation rates and proper distribution will find a remunerative market for all perishable crops. An attempt was made to have the convention indorse a national warehouse company but it failed. That will be done later, after the several States have established a complete system of warehouses covering every county. I believe that every county union should take up this question at once and never give it up until a stock corporation is formed and a warehouse built. The state company in the North Carolina Union will work for the establishing of warehouses at a few central railroad points. But the stock for these will have to come largely from the counties in which they are located.

I believe the North Carolina Farmers' Union should adopt the Charter granted by the last legislature and thus become incorporated as a business organization. We are operating under a fraternal charter of the State of Texas which the Texas State Union has already repudiated and secured a business charter. With this business

charter our State Union could put active, experienced solicitors to work in the counties to promote county warehouses; the State Union taking stock in each county warehouse so promoted to the extent of the cost of promotion. In two or three years time we would have suitable warehouses in every organized county in the State. This would strengthen the State Union by making it a stockholder and part owner of valuable real estate throughout North Carolina.

There are other reasons why this State Charter should be adopted which will be fully explained if this question comes before the next State Union Convention.

Co-operative farmers banks elicited much interest and some very intelligent discussion. The delegate from the State of Washington, a native born German, gave a very interesting and instructive lecture on this subject. He convinced the convention of the advisability and feasibility, yea of the absolute necessity of backing-up the warehouse system with farmers co-operative banks. He showed that even with a complete chain of warehouses throughout the Union, the farmers would still be at the mercy of the money trust, which controls the volume of the circulating medium. Prices would be forced down just as they are now, by contracting the currency while the crops are moving. Outstanding loans would be called in and new loans would be limited in time and quantity, thereby compelling the majority of farmers to sell their crops in three to five months time instead of extending the sales over a period of twelve months.

The farmers of North Carolina have money enough on deposit in our State and national banks to establish a farmers' co-operative bank in practically every county in the State. The farmers would then control their own finances and promote the prosperity of the agricultural class. Through the medium of the storage warehouse, supported by farmers' banks that were not subservient to the money trust, or other classes, the farmers could put their prices on non-perishable crops and hold them until the demand became great enough to move the crops at the price fixed. A remunerative price for perishable crops would be established and maintained by proper grading, packing and labeling in the local warehouse, and then by proper distribution to the consumers.

Let every county and local discuss these questions.

* NOTICE OF MEETING OF TOBACCO *
* FARMERS. *

Notice is hereby given that there will be held in the Carroll Hotel, Lynchburg, Va., October 16, an Inter-State Meeting of the tobacco farmers of Virginia and North Carolina. All county organizations in the Tobacco Belt are requested to send representatives. The meeting will be held at 10 o'clock.
H. Q. ALEXANDER,
President North Carolina Division.
D. M. GANNAWAY,
President Virginia Division.

* NOTICE OF MEETING OF EXECUTIVE *
* COMMITTEE. *

The Executive Committee of the North Carolina Farmers' Union is hereby called to meet in the Carroll Hotel, Lynchburg, Va., October 16 for the purpose of selecting a place for holding the Annual Convention and the transaction of such other business as may come before the meeting.
H. Q. ALEXANDER, President.
W. B. GIBSON, Chairman of Committee.

* APPOINTMENTS OF H. Q. ALEXANDER. *

Elizabethton, Bladen County, Saturday, September 21st.
North Wilkesboro, Wilkes County, Tuesday, September 24th.
Ernul, Craven County, Thursday, September 26th.
Warren Grove Local, Person County, Friday, October 4th.