

PROCEEDINGS

Of the National Farmers' Alliance and Co-Operative Union of America, at Shreveport, Louisiana.

The National Farmers' Alliance and Co-operative Union of America met in regular session in Shreveport, La., Oct. 12, 1887, at 10 o'clock a. m.

The following officers were present: C. W. Macune, president; J. A. Tetts, first vice-president; G. B. Pickett, second vice-president; J. M. Perdue, third vice-president; E. B. Warren, secretary; R. F. Butler, Treasurer; Ben Terrell, lecturer; B. F. Rogers, assistant lecturer; Nat Draughn sergeant at arms.

The president filled vacancies by appointing the following brethren temporarily: W. S. Rushing of Mississippi, chaplain; J. A. Green of Texas, door-keeper and O. M. Wright of Louisiana, assistant door-keeper.

The Alliance was opened in due form.

The president announced the following committee on credentials: McGee of Mississippi, Polk of North Carolina and Jones of Texas.

By consent T. B. Ruff of Tennessee, a member of the Agricultural Wheel, was duly initiated into the Farmers Alliance.

The following committee on order of business, was announced: G. B. Pickett of Texas, Linn Tanner of Louisiana, Oswald Wilson of Florida.

The committee on credentials reported as follows:

We, your committee, find the following brethren entitled to seats in this body. Mississippi, J. G. Hamilton, R. S. Magee, T. E. Grome, Hazlehurst; W. B. Mosely, Chester; T. L. Darden, Fayette, W. S. Rushing, Carthage; T. W. Sullivan, Carrollton; E. L. Martin, Jackson; R. T. Love, Chester; C. T. Smithson, New Port; W. R. Lacy, Carthage.

Arkansas, W. H. Moore, Belfont; John A. Ausley, Prescott; George Martin, Sulphur Rock; Joseph Tisdale, Texarkana.

Florida, Oswald Wilson, Marianna. North Carolina, L. L. Polk, Raleigh.

Alabama, J. M. Robinson, S. M. Adams, I. N. Gresham and J. M. Langston, Six Mile Alliance; H. P. Bane.

Louisiana, J. C. Jones, Ruston; W. M. Vickars, Shreveport; A. T. Hatcher and L. C. McAlpin, Lula; R. L. Tannahill, Winfield; E. McDonald, Rayville; Linn Tanner, Cheneyville; P. F. B. Pratt, Bastrop; J. M. Stallings, Ruston.

Missouri, A. B. Johnson, W. D. Ham, Popular Bluff; J. W. DeSpain, J. Graves.

Tennessee, J. H. McDowell, Union City; A. E. Gardener, Dresden.

Texas, J. S. Massey, F. Hoffheinz, A. M. Turnbull, J. A. Green, W. P. Hancock, J. M. Renick, R. A. Binford, J. J. Fairchild, T. M. Smith, R. P. Briscoe, N. H. C. Elliott, H. C. Maund, C. E. Cade, D. C. Whitman, L. L. Sloss, D. J. Eddleman, C. A. Leverton, Evan Jones, I. Stoddard, R. J. Wallace, R. M. Kay, S. O. Daws, Matt S. Wallace, R. J. Sledge, John O'Byrne, H. C. Maund.

The Alliance adjourned until 1:30 p. m.

1:30 p. m., President Macune in the chair. The Alliance opened in due form.

The committee reported the following order of business:

- Morning session open at 8 a. m.
- 1st. Roll call.
- 2nd. Reading of minutes.
- 3rd. Officers' reports.
- 4th. Introduction of Resolutions.
- 5th. Report of standing committee.
- 6th. Report of special committee.
- 7th. Unfinished business.

Afternoon session open at 2 p. m.

- 1st. Special order.
 - 2nd. Unfinished business.
 - 3rd. New business.
 - 4th. Good of the order.
- Night session opened at 7:30.
- 1st. Special order.
 - 2nd. Unfinished business.
 - 3rd. New business.

President Macune delivered his annual address, which was full of interesting facts and suggestions.

MESSAGE.

Brethren of the Farmers' National Alliance and Co-Operative Union of America:

This is indeed an auspicious occasion. It is the first session of this body; and this body is the first organization of the real cotton raisers ever inaugurated on a plan calculated to assist the poor man. It is a time in the history of cotton raising, when the price of that staple is not equal to the cost of producing it. This is a gathering of representative men from States, men who represent the great-

est of all industries, assembled here, not merely for the pleasures or emoluments to be gained by their attendance, but I trust imbued with proper conceptions of the great responsibility resting upon them, thoroughly alive to the conditions of the times, and firmly resolved to work out the proper and true solution of how to relieve the depressed condition of agriculture in our beautiful southland, and when found, to stand shoulder to shoulder in one solid phalanx, till the effort is crowned with victory. As the first legislative body ever convened in the order, you will have a great work to perform, and the future prosperity of this great movement is therefore, largely in your hands. Your attention is called to the causes that combined, created the necessity for this organization. The plan on which organization has been effected comprising the Organic law of the order, both written and unwritten, and the objects and conditions it is expected to achieve, in the event that success attends the effort. The laws to be made by this body will be statutory and will be based upon and explanatory of the Organic law; they should be prompted by the necessities that gave rise to the existence of the order, and executed with a spirit of devotion to the objects we seek to achieve, bounded only by the limit of possibility.

Mr. Garvin, in his history of the Alliance in Texas, says, that it was started somewhere between 1870 and 1875, in Lampasas county by a number of farmers, who associated themselves together in a defensive league, to resist the encroachments of land sharks, who proposed to rob them of their homes. The history of the move from its inception up to 1886, was not attended with much interest. It had grown by August, 1885, to the number of about 700 subordinate Alliances, and had changed its objects and workings, until they resemble very closely those of the present. From August, 1885, to August 1886, a most prodigious growth was recorded; the increase was about 2000 sub-Alliances. Among the reasons for this rapid growth, and probably one of the most potent, was the fact that all other occupations were either organized, or were rapidly organizing, and the farming interest was unable to cope with them, without organization, therefore the necessity for organization for self defense. Again, the results of combination had reduced the price of all products the farmer had to sell to such an extent, that in many cases they would not pay hirelings wages to the one who produced them, and were really grown at a loss. The rule was, that a year spent in the most vigorous labor and rigid economy, would with good management yield a bare subsistence, and in many cases it yielded less; and would finally result in a surrender of the farm to the mortgage merchant, and the addition of one more family to the army of renters. It seems to be an admitted fact, that organization was the only hope of the farmer, and as the Alliance was presented as strictly a farmers organization, its ranks were rapidly filled with all those who felt disposed to unite and resist the encroachment of other organizations, and who realize that it required organization to meet organized power. Such large numbers joining a secret organization in so short a time, rendered proper instructions as to the principles and objects of the order impossible; consequently many joined who were not as well posted as they should have been, and vast differences were entertained, as to the policy to be pursued in order to accomplish with speed and certainty the objects of the order.

Some contended that the only hope was in the ballot-box, and that united political action was the only way for the Alliance ever to accomplish anything; others realizing the danger to American institutions, by the introduction of a secret political party, contended that we must eschew politics altogether, and that the Alliance was a social and benevolent organization, calculated to make a man a better farmer and a better neighbor. Others had different conceptions; some that it would make all farmer's boys orators; some that it would stop horse stealing; some that it would make all its members truthful and honest; and the contention between the different factions was beginning to assume alarming proportions, as a family quarrel, when the called session of the Farmers State Alliance of Texas was held in the city of Waco, in January last. One object of that called meeting was, to devise some plan of extending the work into other States. The Louisiana State Union which had met just prior to that time, had elected and sent to that

meeting a delegate, to co-operate with the State Alliance of Texas in the extension of the work. It was there shown that there was already in existence an organization in the northwestern States calling itself the National Farmers Alliance but that it was a very loose organization, and was non-secret, that the door to membership was to wide for it to meet the wants of the times in the South. It was the prevailing sentiment, that none but those most interested in farming should ever be admitted. It was, after a full investigation, decided that the organization as it existed in Texas, and the other States of the South to which it had spread from and by the authority of the Texas Alliance, could accomplish nothing by joining the National Farmers Alliance of the Northwest, and in view of the fact the cotton belt of America was a circumscribed country, there was a necessity for a National of those residing in the cotton belt, to the end that the whole world of cotton raisers might be united for self protection. This was a grand conception, and one susceptible of results beyond our expectations. It was therefore decided to organize in connection with Louisiana, a National Farmers Alliance and Co-operative Union of America. To make it a strong National order, with the one great battle cry of co-operation as the universal principal upon which all could unite. Co-operation in its broadest sense, that is that we will assist one another, that we will stand shoulder to shoulder in bearing the crosses and burdens of life, that we will intelligently pull together in everything, in buying and selling, in producing and consuming.

There is a necessity for enlightened co-operation in everything; leaving local issues for local or State Alliances to settle. The necessity for the extension of the work lay in the fact that other States were in as bad a condition as Texas and Louisiana, and that as the interests of the cotton producer were identical, and the evils from which they were suffering generally, the greatest good could not be effected without uniting the whole cotton belt. It was necessary to the local business experiments already commenced, that they be made general and be participated in by all of our class, in order that they prove a greater success. Single towns or counties could not inaugurate a move that would affect the cotton business much, and a whole State could not accomplish as much acting alone as it could in conjunction with the other ten. It will be seen then that in the organization of this National Association, the object was to organize the agriculturists of the cotton belt for business purposes; and that purpose has been carried out, and has been found to give sufficient scope to the ability of all, and that the dissensions spoken of in the early history of the order, in regard to politics and other subjects have entirely died out, and given place to an enlightened effort to accomplish something grand—a business organization.

If we look back through the history of this and other countries, we will see that some branches of industry have always been knocking at the doors of legislation, and when weak, begging for class laws that would assist their business efforts; if they were strong, they would either demand or buy such favors; but in either case they have too often been successful. It is proverbial that the other two great classes of production, the manufacturing and the commercial, which includes railroads and transportation lines, have been largely built up to their present condition of wealth and prosperity by government favors and assistance. Now if this be true, at whose expense has the government done this, as there are only three classes of producers? It must evidently have been at the expense of the third class, which is the great agricultural. The agricultural class then, has not only received no government favors, but has been bled to enrich other classes. This is now fully realized, and is productive of a determination on the part of our people to submit to such wrongs no longer. But in spite of the necessity for action, many of them realize, and those who do not should be taught a lesson by those who have been successful in procuring favorable legislation. They do not organize a new political party to carry out their plans, they call upon the government to correct the evils, or provide protection as the case may be. It is realized that class legislation is a great evil, because it builds up two classes at the expense of the third. Then either let the third class be the recipient, or do away with class legis-

lation. If a party was organized for that purpose, the party would die when that purpose was accomplished. Under our system of government, we should not resort to a new political movement to carry out every reform necessary. We have the two great principles and conceptions of the genius of our institutions as contended for by John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, as a basis for a division into two great political parties, that should suffice; let every one carry his ideas of reform to the party to which he belongs from principle. And as the agriculturists comprise a large majority of all the voters, he will necessarily comprise a majority in each party. But his greatest influence in politics can be brought to bear, not at the hustings, but in the halls of legislation, by the proper and judicious exercise of the right of petition. There they step forward as Alliance men strong and united, and demand that the government redress wrongs committed by it, but in partisan politics, the members of our order should participate, not as Alliance men, but as citizens; because politics is for the citizens. Let the Alliance be a business organization for business purposes, and as such necessarily secret, and as secret necessarily strictly non-political. This is somewhat of a digression but is made in order to show the ideas that were entertained at the time this National Association was launched forth on the sea of experiment as a business organization of the farmers of the cotton belt. The plan on which organization has been effected is to some extent new, and while it perhaps contains nothing original, it is experimental, in that it combines the features of several different systems. Being a secret organization, it is necessarily to some extent like the father of all secret organizations, monarchical in form; but being a chartered association, under the law of our country for business purposes, and being composed of a people who are familiar with, and devoted to a republican form of government, its written law is in conformity to that system. You will therefore find in the construction of a code of statutory law that you must provide for a membership who occupy a qual relation to the order, that is, the constitution is the written organic law, and outlines a republican form of government. The secret work is the unwritten organic law, and is co-ordinate with the written, and outlines a limited monarchy. By keeping these ideas in view, you will avoid confusion, and will find questions of law much easier of solution.

It is a great pleasure to be able to congratulate you on the rapid extension of the work under the plan outlined. There are now State organizations in States, and in many States the work is progressing in a very satisfactory manner, as the report of the secretary will show. The plan of organization seems to meet the necessities, with perhaps a few modifications. There appears to be no prominent defects in the plan as a National enterprise, and as complete jurisdiction is surrendered to the State Alliances when organized, it rests with them to make laws to meet local conditions. There is a feature of the Alliance that is very important, and has always been a part of the unwritten work, that it might perhaps be well to introduce some laws and regulations in the written work, in order that it may be more universally understood. That is the trade system, and the co-operative efforts being made to act in harmony in the sale of products and purchase of commodities. On the success of this feature much of the prosperity of the order depends; hence some general laws and recommendations should be in print, in plain and easy-to-be-understood language, so that all may understand, and tend towards one and the same object. Much might be said as to the future of this great movement, and still it is all expressed in the single sentence, "There is no limit to the possibilities." However, I call your attention to the fact that our people, owing to money pressure, and the fact that cotton is our great money crop, are disposed to rely too much on it, and purchase many things that should be produced at home; therefore this body should strongly recommend more diversity of farming, to the end that our people become self-sustaining, and therefore less dependent.

State Alliances should be called upon to take steps to assist their members in procuring the facilities for diversifying their products, and to assist them in the sale of their surplus; and, further, these States raise 7,500,000 bales of cotton yearly; a little over two thirds of this enormous crop is sold in

Europe, and the price not only for that, but for all that is used in America, is fixed in Great Britain, and yet our government does not allow one yard of cotton cloth imported without a tax of about 60 per cent. of its value. This enables American spinners to undersell the British looms, and prevents the importation of British cloth, but does not prevent British spinners from discriminating against American cotton in every conceivable manner, and in constantly crowding the price of the staple down, so as to enable them to compete with the American spinner. The condition simply is, that the British spinner fixes the price on every pound of cotton raised, and the effect of our laws is to make him virtually interested in reducing the price of our cotton. Were it not for this tariff-law discrimination against him by an *ad valorem* tax, he would as soon see cotton high as low; and would, perhaps, prefer it high.

Our people occupy the ridiculous position of not only paying the New England spinner about 50 per cent. more for the cotton cloth than it is worth, but they, by submitting to that law, allow conditions that very naturally reduce the price of every pound of cotton they raise.

It is not claimed that as cotton planters and Alliance men we should demand the abolition of all tariff, that would not be our province in that capacity. We may do that as citizens, if we choose, but as cotton raisers and an Alliance business organization, we have a right to demand the correction of evils that afflict and sap the very life blood from our business. Merchants, bankers, insurance men and all others do the same. But in so doing we should be careful that we do not inflict wrongs on others, or on other interests.

It is claimed by many intelligent and honest thinkers, that if we reduce the tariff on manufactured cotton goods, that we would ruin American manufacturing; and we might with propriety reply, which is the most essential, that the few American factories keep on paying a dividend, of from 20 to 45 per cent. and that the many farmers become tenants, serfs and slaves, or that the manufacturer be placed upon a level with the agriculturalist, and that each be allowed the fruits of his own labor and a fair interest on the money invested? But our object is not to show the effect that a reduction of the cotton tariff would have on the mills. In the first place there is no surplus of cotton raised in the world, and this is proven by the fact that there is no accumulation of it. Now it is that the old doctrine of price being regulated by demand and supply holds good in this instance, but in a country where every seventh person is either a pauper or is the recipient of public charity in some shape, the demand is very materially modified by the ability to purchase; and that whenever the ability to purchase is enhanced, the demand will be very materially increased.

Now, if by reducing the tariff, English cotton goods were introduced cheaper, goods would increase, the ability to purchase and the increased demand would act upon the limited cotton supply by increasing the price of the raw cotton, which would in turn again raise the price of the cloth to its present price, or, perhaps, higher, and still keep up the increased ability to purchase by the increased amount of money put in circulation by the cotton producers, who would be receiving an increased price for his cotton. Therefore, the result would be not to lessen the price of cotton goods, but to increase the price of raw cotton; and it is held that the increased demand, as far as justice is necessary, compensate the mills for the loss of profit.

In conclusion, it is hereby recommended, that this body formulate some plan of universal co-operation among our people, whereby each Sub-County and State Alliance shall have an agent, and that the National agent be chairman of a board composed of the different State agents, and that a system be established for conducting the production and disposition of the cotton crop. Such a board could have accurate and reliable information every month as to the condition of the crop in every neighborhood in the eleven Southern States. They could negotiate and consummate arrangements tending to an increased price, and should all negotiations prove of non effect, they could adopt a graduated scale for the reduction of the cotton crop, which would be an injustice to none. This plan is simply offered as a suggestion, and it is hoped that something of this character will be adopted. C. W. MACUNE.

[To be continued next week.]