

THE INDUSTRIALIZATION OF THE FARM

The rise of the political party of the farmers in Canada is a phenomenon which is puzzling many people. For many years the farmers remained more or less quiet. Now they are in political ferment. The explanation is to be found in the material basis of farm productivity.

When the farmer was able to carry on farm operations with a few animals and simple instruments such as a hand scythe, a hand flail, a hand operated corn grinder and the like, the farmers were not liable to concerted action politically. They were individualistic and could not understand the actions of trade unionists who were acting in a collective manner to get what they wanted.

A change has come over the scene. The farmers now act unitedly. They formulate policies, meet in convention, agree on political platforms, and are attempting to gain political power. Yet should we talk with the majority of farmers, we find their ideas are hazy. They utter certain standard phrases which they have gleaned out of their farm papers, without knowing much what those phrases imply, and they think that the principles involved in those phrases, if applied, will bring them their desired heaven of economic independence. If the history of city industry is repeated in the farm industry, the small farmer will not be relieved by the triumph of what he thinks he is fighting for, for he will find his small farm will not bring him in the rewards he expected. He may find he will have to quit his farm and hire out to some big farmer, or else seek a job in the city as an industrial wage worker in order to gain a living.

This change in the status of the small farmer is being brought about because of the following facts. The farm is being industrialized. With the advent of farm machinery, the labor cost of production is falling and farm commodities can be produced at lower prices. The lower prices of the farm produce is concealed behind the apparent increased money price because of the cheapening of our money tokens, but the falling cost of production is there. The hand farmer, or the small tool farmer cannot compete in productive cost with the large machine farmer. Wherefore the small farmer feels the pinch. He is seeking a way of escape.

The more successful farmers, the ones with the start in the race for the industrialization of the farm are looking ahead. They are in the scramble for more capital to operate their farms. They are in the fight to make their farms more productive with less labor. They have the time and the energy to go after they want. The small farmer, with no farm hands, who is tied to the farm through the necessity of milking his eight or ten cows night and morning, cannot get away. He has not the time nor the surplus energy to fight for his political advancement. He is tied to his daily routine.

It is a well known fact that the vast majority of people have been guided and directed by the active minority. The active minority claim to represent the interests of the people, talk about the welfare of the public, and are all the time thinking of their own economic advancement.

The big farmers, therefore, are the active minority that are swinging the farm party to power.

The accepted views

These ideas go clean counter to the accepted views of the farmers themselves. No doubt many farmers will feel like answering these ideas, and if they did, they would argue as follows. The farm movement is a spontaneous one among the farmers at large. The movement has established co-operative grain selling companies, eliminating the middlemen and giving more revenues to the farmers. They have established other co-operative selling agencies and purchasing agencies. These benefit the little farmer as well as the big

farmer by giving both more revenues. As a conclusive argument against the ideas we are setting forth they will point to the present struggle going on over the distribution of the electric energy being developed by the Ontario publicly owned hydro-electric Commission.

This Commission by the end of 1922 will have borrowed a hundred and sixty million dollars and will have developed one million horse power of electrical energy. Of the amount at present developed over ninety-nine and one-half per cent is going to serve urban communities, only the small balance being devoted to rural districts. The leaders of the farmers are demanding that a tax of \$2 per horse power, calculated to raise \$1,000,000 per year, be levied on the city consumers, and the funds thus raised be devoted to building power transmission lines to deliver electric current to the farms. In this way, it is triumphantly claimed, all farmers will benefit. For the city users will be taxed for the benefit of the country consumers, and all farms, great and small, will have electric light in the house at a cheap rate, and cheap electric power, and all will be benefited.

But it does not work out that way at all. A little investigation will prove this. If co-operative selling of wheat nets the farmer ten cents a bushel more on his wheat sales, the farmer with 1,500 bushels of wheat to sell will gain \$150 per year, while the larger farmer with 15,000 bushels of wheat to sell will gain \$1,500. With co-operative purchasing agencies, the one farmer will save in his purchases \$150 while the other will save \$1,500, or \$300 for one and \$3,000 for the other in the two items. The smaller man is apt to spend his \$300 per year in a little better living for his family, while the bigger farmer will use the \$3,000 for more machinery to reduce the labor cost.

If electric power should come, the smaller farmer could use little of it, for electric power to be employed means motors and large farm machines. These are beyond the financial ability of the small man. The little farmer will take the power for house lighting and the like, but the big farmer will take it for power.

Should the larger farmer be in a position to utilize twenty electric horse power, and the saving over farm horses be \$100 per year each, the saving effected will be \$20,000 per year. The little man is just breaking even, while his big competitor is forging ahead rapidly.

The Real Truth

So far, the little man has benefited as well as the big man. The little fellow has been able to give a little better living to his family, and has electric lights in his house. But now comes the testing time.

Only fifteen per cent of our western agricultural land is being tilled. Vast stretches of land in other parts of the world is barely scratched. Population is scarce in these granaries of the world, consequently the food-stuffs produced must be shipped abroad. In war time of course food was scarce, but now it is becoming plentiful again and the world markets will be flooded with food-stuffs.

Competition in the consuming markets from the various producing markets will cause prices to fall. The little farmer and the big farmer will both suffer a reduction of income. The big farmer, with a cushion of many thousands of dollars between his cost of machine production and his income, can afford to have that income reduced by many thousands of dollars for a few years. The little farmer, just breaking even, cannot afford to stand any reduction of prices. Low prices for a few years will cause him to become so involved in debt as to have the sheriff sell his farm at the instance of judgment creditors and thus separate him from his job as a food producer. The market he formerly supplied will increase the little farmer as well as the big

thus grows more powerful by the failure of his neighbor.

This process is going on now in a limited way. How often the complaint is heard of abandoned farms. Go into the Eastern Township of the province of Quebec and in some localities places will be pointed out where there used to be farms of fifty acres supporting families. Now the population has diminished the small farms being thrown together to make larger ones. The cry is raised in Ontario that there is danger from the dwindling farm population, while on the other hand we hear of the bonanza farming of the west.

Another echo of the pinching out of the little man is the cry of the little farmer against the outrageous prices farm labor is getting. The city is blamed because the country landless men go to the city to obtain work. The little farmers attribute this trek cityward to the bright lights and the movies and the big pay. It is true. If anyone has wandered round a drafty cowbarn at night with the thermometer below zero, the only illumination being a dim lantern, and then return to bunk for the night in an unheated attic chamber, and all for \$25 a month and board, he will sympathize with the farm hand who strikes to the city, learns a trade, joins the union and gets his seventy-five cents or \$1 per hour.

Industry in the city can afford the wages because the small industries of the cities have been driven out for the big, economically conducted, power-operated, machine-employed plants. Farm industry can pay the same wages when the inefficient, man-and-a-boy farms give place for the big, economically conducted, machine-using farms.

In the mean time the farmers' movement is with us. The little farmers are cheering for farmers' governments and electric power, little realizing that by so doing, they are hastening the day of the highly capitalized, economically managed farm which will put the little fellows out of business.

The North Dakota Bank

The State of North Dakota has gone extensively into public ownership and state industrialism. It has provided public hail insurance and saved the farmers six millions of dollars last year. It has established a state flour mill state elevators and state loans to home building associations. It has established a bank. North Dakota has the most advanced compensation act on the American continent. It is curbing the land speculators.

The State of North Dakota elected to power a majority of legislators belonging to the Nonpartisan League. It has been endeavoring to carry out reforms for the benefit of the people.

Now we hear of trouble. We hear that the enterprises of the State of North Dakota are failures. We hear that the Bank of North Dakota cannot meet its liabilities and its funds in other banks are being garnished by judgment creditors. The inference is drawn that public ownership is a failure and that the people cannot run business collectively and make it a success. An explanation of the reason for the trouble, therefore, will be interesting.

The trouble is that the institutions founded for profit and those persons who derive profits from exploitation are endeavoring to bring about the wrecking of the North Dakota bank both by non-co-operation as well as by active hostility. With this bank wrecked, it is hoped that the other state ventures will be wrecked also.

A bank is an institution that lives off the interest of its debts. It receives deposits from the public, which the public can get back at any time the depositors want by simply making out a check for the whole amount and asking the bank to cash the check. The bank lends the money deposited to borrowers and takes the notes of the borrowers payable in three months time. The bank keeps a margin of deposits over money loaned in order to pay checks that depositors may issue against their deposits. But if a majority of the depositors should go together to a bank and ask the bank to pay them all the money they had deposited, the bank could not do it without assistance, for the bank has lent out a lot of the money to borrowers on time.

When people get frightened and go in large numbers to withdraw funds, it is said there is a run on the bank. A run on the bank is the nightmare of all bankers, so bankers usually help each other in such cases. When a run on one bank starts, other banks rush funds to the banks called upon and take all measures possible to aid the bank until the public fear is allayed.

Governments are quite frequently borrowers of the banks. Governments need money and prepare bonds to issue to people who want to invest in government securities. Pending the issue and purchase by the people of such government bonds, the government borrows from the banks and when the bonds are sold use the proceeds to pay off the bank loans. During the last Victory bond campaign in Canada, the Dominion government had borrowed heavily from the banks. Had runs been started on the banks in Canada at that time, many of them would have had difficulty in paying out money, not

because of any insolvency, but because they had lost so much money temporarily to the people as represented by the Dominion government.

With this short explanation of banking, it will be clear how the beneficiaries of private profit are acting to wreck the bank of North Dakota. To build the elevators and mills, and for funds for the home building associations, all sound investments, required much money. To cover such costs the State of North Dakota has issued six millions of dollars of state bonds to sell to the public. As is usual in such transactions, the State of North Dakota borrowed the money from the bank of North Dakota, and as security, pledged the bonds to the bank, the bonds being themselves secured by the three billions of dollars worth of property in the State.

With the money of the bank tied up in a state loan, the private bankers of North Dakota did something which broke all rules of banking conduct. They started a run on the bank of North Dakota. If they had funds deposited with the bank, they withdrew them. Other capitalists with deposits demanded their money, whether they needed it or not. This was the direct attack to wreck the bank.

The bank was not afraid. It was short of cash but could meet all liabilities and have a handsome surplus when the State paid up, and the State would pay up when the bonds were sold.

When the State immediately attempted to sell its bonds, it found itself up against what the British government is up against in Ghandi and his followers, namely, non-co-operation. Wall Street would not sell the bonds, nor would it permit any institution it controlled to sell them. North Dakota turned to Chicago institutions to sell the bonds to the public and was told it could have all the money it needed if it would abandon its elevators and mills and all its progressive attempts to substitute service by the people for the people in the place of service by the few for the profits of the few. North Dakota has refused. With the refusal has come lawsuits and trouble and turmoil and publicity on the part of the States opponents to break the present government and its works.

In this crisis, the State has appealed directly to the people. It has appealed to the labor unions to place their funds in the State bonds. It has appointed the Public Ownership League of North America as a financial agent to sell the bonds and to get depositors to place money in the bank attacked. The farmers are rallying to the defence of the bank, but the farmers have themselves been hard hit by the slump in prices.

This is the people's opportunity. The Public Ownership League has been struggling along on insufficient revenue. It has pledged itself to sell the bonds. With the sale of the bonds, and the usual commission, the Public Ownership League will hardly know itself for affluence. It will have established a clientele among those sympathizing with public ownership that will allow it to sell other bonds of publicly owned enterprises.

Owing to the refusal of the old line financial houses to handle the bonds, in order to wreck the publicly owned bank and other industries, there is being formed a public willing to finance the public ownership, and an organization to do the financing. The old line institutions would have been better advised had they let the question well enough alone, put the bonds through in the ordinary course, and pocketed the usual financial agents' fee.

CHILD POVERTY ONLY KIND THAT MATTERS

"Child poverty," said Bernard Shaw, on one occasion, "is the only sort of poverty that matters. The adult who has been poor as a child will never get the chill of poverty out of his bones; but he will die and make room for a better nourished generation."

"The principal business of a policeman at present is to prevent hungry children from obtaining food. The proper primary business of a policeman is to seize every hungry child and feed it, to collar every ragged child and clothe it, to hand every illiterate child over to those who will teach it to read and write."

WHAT IS NECESSARY

It is no use talking of output without knowing what is to be labor's share of it, and whether hard work one day is to be the cause of no work another.—J. R. Clynes, M.P., Chairman British Labor Party.

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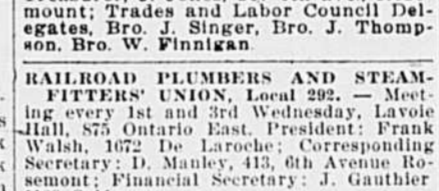
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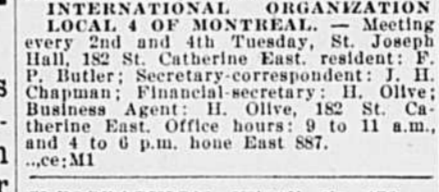
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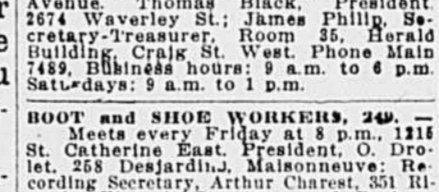
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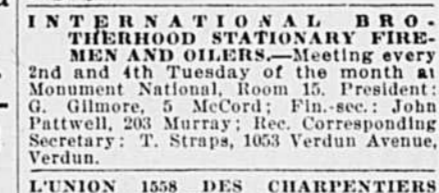
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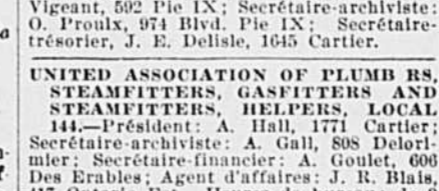
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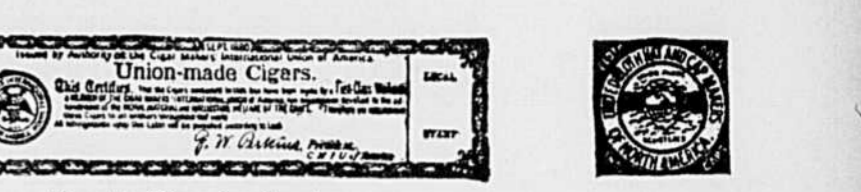
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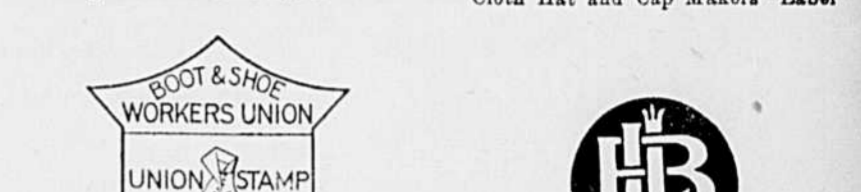
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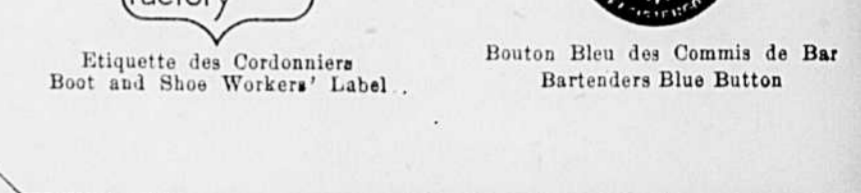
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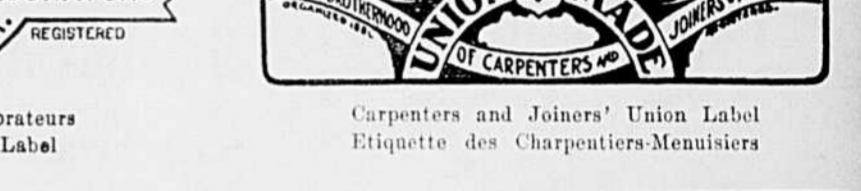
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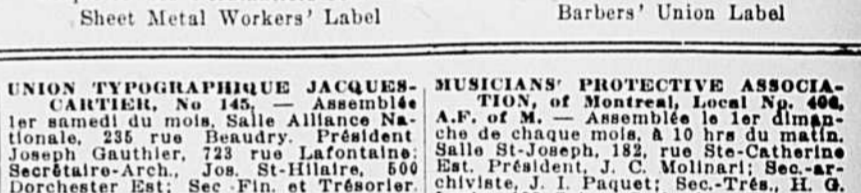
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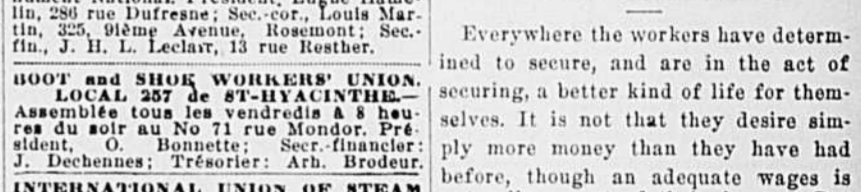
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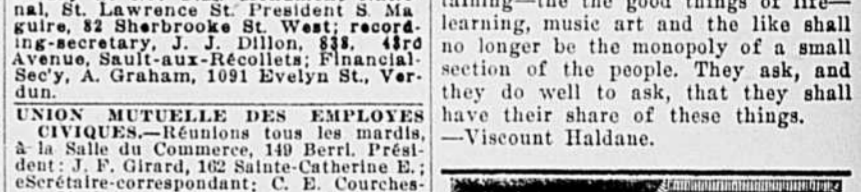
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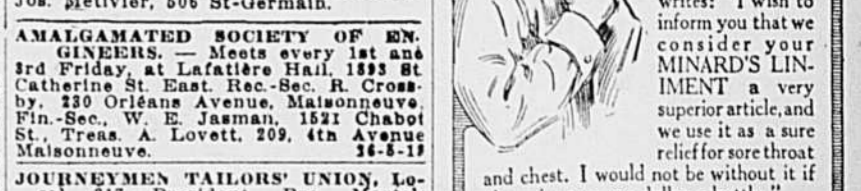
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