

GOV. FRAZIER'S OWN STORY OF THE NON PARTISAN LEAGUE: North Dakota ...

By LYNN J. FRAZIER (Bain News Service.)

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GOV. FRAZIER'S OWN STORY OF THE NON PARTISAN LEAGUE

North Dakota Executive, Twice Elected by Farmers in "Anti-Capitalist" Movement, Describes Benefits and Economies Derived from New Form of Government

By LYNN J. FRAZIER

IN North Dakota we have had co-operative organizations for a number of years. We have more co-operative farmers' elevators in North Dakota than in any other State. They have been quite successful because so many of them have been organized and because wheat raising has been the principal industry of the North Dakota farmers.

The co-operative elevators acted as agencies to buy the wheat from the farmers. We found that it was necessary to have a selling agency as well as a buying agency, and the Equity Co-operative Exchange was organized, which was to establish a selling agency at the Minnesota terminal.

The Minneapolis Board of Trade refused to sell our co-operative organization a membership. Therefore, an independent selling agency was established at St. Paul. We had a hard time getting successfully started because of the opposition of the grain combines of the Twin Cities. Even after we got going and began to make a little money suit was brought against this farmers' co-operative selling agency, instituted by the members of the Board of Trade at Minneapolis and brought by the Attorney General in the name of the State of North Dakota, in an effort to put this farmers' organization out of business, to have a receiver appointed, asserting that the Equity Co-operative Exchange was bankrupt.

The case was tried in the District

Court at Fargo, but owing to the interest of the farmers, who attended the trial in large numbers and packed the court room at every session during the hearing, the case was won for the farmers' organization. But it cost a great deal of money and hindered the work of this selling agency. It also proved to the farmers that if they were to succeed with their co-operative organization they must go into politics and enact laws for the benefit and protection of the co-operative movements.

After the people of the State had voted for State-owned elevators at two general elections our State Legislature refused to enact the necessary law to carry out the wishes of the majority.

It was then that the farmers organized what was known as the Non-Partisan League and in the 1918 election gained control of the State administration and our State Legislature enacted into law practically the whole program of the farmers' organization, which included State-owned terminal elevators and flour mills, a rural credit bank to be operated at cost, State hail insurance at cost, the exemption of farmers' improvements from taxation and a fair and just grain grading act.

The Bank of North Dakota has saved 2½ per cent. on the interest rate for first mortgage real estate loans to the farmers, and up to date has made a saving of at least \$30,000.

The State hail insurance law, which operated during the season of 1919, made a saving, according to the report of the State Insurance Commissioner, of \$5,400,000.

Dr. E. F. Ladd, President of the North Dakota Agricultural College, has estimated that the Grain Grading act has saved for the farmers of North Dakota \$10,000,000 or \$12,000,000.

The State Bonding act, which bonds all public officials, has made a saving of at least \$60,000.

State insurance on public buildings has made a saving of over \$30,000.

The Mill and Elevator Association, through the purchase of a 125-barrel mill, which has been in operation since last August, also has been a great saving to farmers selling their wheat there and to those who purchased the flour and mill feed.

This mill paid on an average 12 cents per bushel more than the other elevators and mills in the State, and at the same time sold the flour at 50 cents per barrel less than the other mills sold flour of the same grade. It also sold the mill feed at an average of \$7.50 per ton less than what the other mills sold it for. It is safe to say that at the present rate it will have saved at least \$40,000 by the end of the first year's operation.

A 3,000-barrel mill and a 1,500,000-bushel elevator is now in the course of construction at Grand Forks. This mill will handle over 4,000,000 bushels of

wheat per year. At the same rate that the smaller mill is giving, it will save at least \$1,000,000 to the producers and consumers of the State each year.

Summing these savings all up, it is very easy to see why certain financial interests are bitterly opposed to our organization, and are fighting it in North Dakota; because we are cutting off some of the easy profits that have been made by these interests in the past.

About That Fargo Bank.

One of the erroneous reports about the Non-Partisan League is the story of the so-called failure of the Scandinavian-American Bank at Fargo. Many publications received the impression that it was the Bank of North Dakota that had been closed. The Scandinavian-American Bank is an ordinary farmers' State bank, which had been friendly to the farmers' movement and which had helped to finance various farmers' organizations. The opposition to the Non-Partisan League movement, including the Attorney General of the State, who had turned traitor to our organization, tried to discredit and put out of business this farmers' bank. It was illegally closed, as was shown by the Supreme Court decision, which finally reopened the bank. It is still doing business and should never have been closed.

The nation-wide coal strike which was called for Nov. 1, 1919, naturally affected the coal mines of North Dakota. We are said to have the coldest State in the Union. Our Winter last year started about a month earlier than usual, snow covering the State from one to two feet by Oct. 20, and if the mines had been closed long would necessarily have worked a great hardship and caused a great amount of suffering to the people of our State.

A conference was called between the operators and the miners for the purpose of trying to arrive at some compromise whereby the mines could be kept open. But after a lengthy discussion no agreement could be reached and the miners were called out.

After the mines had been closed for two days I issued a statement notifying the coal operators that unless they could reach an agreement with their miners to operate within forty-eight hours the mines would be taken over and operated by the State. No agreement was reached and the mines were taken over under martial law and placed under the authority of the Adjutant General, who swore in nine returned soldiers and sent them out to take charge.

The miners returned to work for the

State at their previous wage scale and in two days' time were producing their normal output of coal. The proclamation stipulated that the mines were to be operated by the State until such time as an agreement was reached by the

the coal mines was that the coal was produced, suffering was prevented, and in all probability many deaths from freezing were prevented. Another result will undoubtedly be that the next session of the Legislature will make

trouble in North Dakota since the farmers got control of the State Administration. There has been less I. W. W. trouble in North Dakota during this time than in any other State where that kind of labor has been employed. We are firmly convinced that all the laboring men want is a square deal; and as a result of our giving them a square deal, there has been nothing but appreciation shown by them.

The farmers' Legislature passed some very progressive labor laws in 1919. Our workingmen's compensation law has been pronounced by experts the best in the United States. We enacted a minimum wage law and an eight-hour day law for women and minors.

Real Test of League.

The organization and success of our movement is largely due to the work of its national President, A. C. Townley, who has built the largest and most successful organization of its kind in the history of the world. We have now more than 200,000 members scattered over more than a dozen States. We have in North Dakota two daily papers owned and controlled by the farmers and more than fifty weekly papers owned and controlled in the same way. The slogan of our newspaper organization is "Carry the Truth to the People," and it has been the means of informing the people of the facts of the political and economic situation of our State.

If this industrial program which we are putting into operation in North Dakota is not a success, if it does not directly benefit the majority of the people of our State, it will die a natural death and no man or any group of men can possibly keep it going. Then why is it necessary for the opposition to spend thousands upon thousands of dollars trying to discredit a movement which cannot possibly survive if it is not a benefit to the rank and file of the people?

On the other hand, if our movement is a success, if it is a benefit to the majority of our people, it is a good thing and should continue. If it succeeds in North Dakota it will spread to other States until it covers the entire nation. In my estimation, that which we have started in North Dakota is the one hope of putting the government of the various States and of the nation into the hands of the people. It is the one hope of reducing the high cost of living, of preventing profiteering, of quieting the unrest that is prevalent throughout the country. This change can be brought about in a true American manner by the use of the Non-Partisan ballot.



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operators and miners of our largest mine. The men reached an agreement within five days and the property was turned back to the operators.

This largest mine is known as the Washburn Mine and is owned by the Washburn Flour Mill people at Minneapolis. Their attorney has threatened to bring suit against the State to recover the profits made during the five days the State operated their mine.

The effect of the State's operating

provision for a State-owned and operated coal mine.

The organized labor of North Dakota has affiliated with the farmers' organization and has organized a Workmen's Non-Partisan League. Their dues are one day's wages, which pays for their organization work and pays the campaign expenses of men they endorse for the Legislature or of State officials, used in conjunction with the farmers' dues. We have had no labor