

# **THE FARMERS IN POLITICS**

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The farmers in politics by William Irvine

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**WILLIAM IRVINE**

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By  
William Irvine

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## FOREWORD

BY REV. SALEM G. BLAND, D.D.

Here is a fresh, vigorous, constructive, and Canadian contribution to the solution of our social and political problems.

It is significant and, perhaps, prophetic that it comes from Alberta. Perhaps nowhere in Canada to-day is more interesting and vital thinking going on than in the most western of the three prairie provinces, most western, perhaps, in spirit as in position.

I have followed the career of the author with keen interest since his college days. He has been finding his own way. I believe his dominant passion is devotion to the common people. No one who reads these pages can fail to find sincerity, vigor, and a passion for justice.

Some of the author's *obiter dicta* will not find universal assent, but his analysis of present economic and political conditions in Canada is keen and not easy to refute. The main contribution of the book, however, and, in my judgment, a very considerable one, is the defence of the position the United Farmers of Alberta

## THE FARMERS IN POLITICS

seem to be taking in regard to political action—that the farmers should not try by association with other progressive and democratic thinkers to form a national party, but should seek entrance into all the legislatures distinctively as a farmers' party, not, however, to secure class legislation, but by co-operation with other class groups to work out policies that would be truly national. In short, this book is a defence of the group system in politics as the only method that is truly democratic. Mr. Irvine is convinced that the party system is no longer adequate for the growing complexity of modern society, and that it is destined to give way to a legislature and cabinet representative of all considerable classes in the community and elected by Proportional Representation.

Political organization, in his judgment, should crystallize not around ideas but around economic interests, the most substantial and enduring basis of common action. The farmers, he thinks, should frankly admit they are a class organization, but not one seeking class domination. Let every group that has a common economic interest similarly organize. Only out of a conference of such groups can a truly national policy emerge.



## FOREWORD

I question if any more constructive and distinctively Canadian contribution has yet been thrown into the discussion of our national problems.

S. G. BLAND.

Toronto, 1920.



## PREFACE

The views put forward in this book are not to be understood as an official pronouncement by, or on behalf of, the farmers' movement. They are rather the earnest and sincere effort of a student of current events to afford some elucidation of pressing questions of economics and politics in Canada at the present time. The farmers' movement has come recently into the limelight, and while it stands, therefore, in little need of introduction, it can only gain by some measure of explanation, not only to the general public, but also to the very many farmer friends who will be glad to be made better acquainted with it.

The farmers' movement is only one phase of the greater democratic movement that is sweeping over the world at this time. Part I. of this volume is an attempt to get a true perspective of that great awakening of the common people which properly forms the background of the farmers' organization. Part II. is devoted to the economic history of the organized farmers, including their political aims, and the efforts