

THE CO-OPERATIVE POLICIES OF SASKATCHEWAN

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CO-OPERATION is a word of frequent occurrence in the story of Saskatchewan's progress. British Columbia may have its phenomenal railway guarantees, Alberta its single tax, and Manitoba its "Million for Manitoba" movement, but the Province of the middle West banks largely on the success of its co-operative enterprises. They are for the most part peculiar to itself, children of its own begetting, in which the people take a not unnatural pride. Evolved as solutions of difficulties into which the rapidly expanding Province found itself plunged, they have seemingly justified the fond hopes entertained by their originators and have established themselves as assured remedies.

Up to the present time this co-operative cure-all has been applied to four principal public services—telephones, elevators, creameries, and hail insurance. It has had its greatest utility in the case of the first two, the success of the telephone and elevator policies of the Province being most marked. That it will be applied as a sort of legislative soothing syrup to allay the growing pains of the young giant of the prairies, whenever need arises in the future, may be taken for granted, for experience has apparently justified all the glowing testimonials which have been written regarding its efficacy.

Co-operation as practised in Saskatchewan is a species of compromise policy. It stands between state own-

ership on the one hand and a riot of individualistic enterprise on the other. It gives state countenance and support to undertakings of a semi-public character operated by individuals. It is a mild and reasonable form of paternalism, putting it up to the people to manage their own affairs with the least possible interference from the Government.

Saskatchewan gave the policy its first serious try-out in the case of telephones. Of course there is state-ownership of this great public utility in Saskatchewan as there is in Manitoba and Alberta, but in the case of Saskatchewan it is only partial. The trunk lines and the urban exchanges are owned by the people, as these could obviously be operated successfully, but not so the rural lines. There was some wisdom shown by the Government in not attempting to supply rural districts with telephonic communication when the expense of construction, maintenance and operation would have hung a dead weight about the neck of the entire provincial system.

"We are quite prepared to manage the main lines and urban systems," announced the Government, "but we are not going to involve the Province in a hazardous enterprise by stringing lines out across the prairies to every homestead that clamours to be connected up with town. If the farmers want telephones, they will have to go into the telephone business themselves.