

THE FARMERS' CO-OPERATIVE STORE

Wetaskiwin, Alta.
Jan. 27, 1911

Dear Comrades:

I am pleased to send you a report of the workings of our Co-operative stores as run here. Though we have just fairly started we are in a very fine position to do another year's business. The annual meeting of shareholders was held today, and every one seemed to be satisfied with the showing made. One store has been run a whole year or more and the other two including the largest and central store here have been in operation but 7 months. There have been difficulties to contend with this year, but these have been overcome very largely and provision made for just such emergencies another year.

Shares are sold at \$20.00 each, and only 10 shares can be bought by one man, though he may buy shares for his children, which carry no voting powers till the child comes of age. One man one vote is the principle of this company. Last year a man might pay his share by a note, and the bank promised to advance the value of the notes on the endorsement of the manager of the company. This however was not lived up to by the bank, which advanced only about one half the amount of the notes, which was very considerable. This crippled the buying capacity of the company, and there appeared to be a conspiracy of the other merchants of town with the bank, and wholesale houses to defeat the object of the company. But they have been unable to do anything along that line as their opposition has only made the farmers of this community more determined than ever that this co-operative work is going to succeed. New stores are to be organized at once in adjoining towns. The merchants of the towns around are alarmed lest the farmers organize in their own towns.

The movement has started and as notes negotiable are to be obtained for shares not paid for in cash there will be no difficulty in purchasing goods for the stores. The Central Store is at this division point of the C. P. R. and goods for all surrounding stores will be ordered with goods from the store. Arrangements have been made for the handling of the farmer's produce. Consumer's Leagues will be encouraged in the cities which will buy direct from the Farmers Stores. It is even thought wise to start shortly co-operative stores in large cities like Calgary and Edmonton. These stores can serve in the same way the city people as the Consumer's League advocated by the U. S. Secretary of Agriculture. City folk like the farmers can subscribe for stock in the stores and receive rebates every 4 months, thereby saving to themselves all the profits of middlemen, excepting that necessary to pay the actual cost of handling goods.

About half the profits are handed back to the individual shareholders, at the expiration of every 4 months. These are on goods the individual shareholders purchase for themselves so that the more such individual buys at the co-operative store the more he receives in rebates. The goods are sold at the same prices that prevail in other stores, so non-members can not profit by the stores.

This is not Socialism of course but it is a step in clearing the way for the Socialist state, by eliminating first the large number of middlemen, who will always oppose Socialism so long as they are in the commission business. Once they take their proper place as producers they too will join the Socialist ranks voting for their class interests.

Then the field will be cleared for action between the manufacturers and money manipulators, and the producers of wealth, the workers. We shall keep on eliminating and educating the classes to their great needs, and the advantages under the Co-operative Commonwealth, till they shall vote themselves just what they want.

At the annual convention of the United Farmers of Alberta we proposed the following resolution, which while not carrying received about 2 votes out of every 5, showing the strong feeling felt by the farmers that there is only one possible way whereby they may have their interests served by members of Parliament. The fore part of the resolution would have overwhelmingly carried, but the Secretary thought that it was making a political boss out of the United Farmers of Alberta Executive to ask them to comply with the resolution. You will see that this is not so once thorough consideration is given the matter. Here is the resolution.

"Resolved that this convention recommend that the various unions concerned request that each candidate for either the legislature or the Dominion Parliament irrespective of party affiliations, pledge his support for the initiative, referendum and recall and that said candidate be further requested to hand the secretary of the United Farmers of Alberta his written resignation dated ahead and beyond the date of election, to be held at the disposal of the executive of this association, and who are hereby instructed to forward the same to the speaker of the house to which such candidate may be elected, should 25 per cent of the voters of the constituency concerned so petition."

This empowers and commands the Executive committee of the U. F. A. to hold and forward the said resignation, when 25 per cent of the constituents concerned so demand over their signatures that said member be recalled, and his seat declared vacant. The real boss in this case is not the executive of the U. F. A., but the constituents concerned. And who has a better right to be the boss than the said constituents?

Here we have the recall right now in our hands to exercise at once at the next election. Why hesitate to take this ground, and plead and work with members of parliament to give us the Initiative and Referendum, as some deem wisest. You cannot fool the politicians. They already know from past experience that once the Initiative, and Referendum is granted that the recall will follow as then the people will initiate such a law, and there is no use now waiting for sentiment, when we can have the recall now, and which will make us able to compel the members to give us the other two features of the measure at once. You may be sure that there will be enough unscrupulous men elected to office who will do anything to evade their promise and delay such reforms for one or more terms of office. Why not compel them in the way suggested by the resolution to get busy and give the reform suggested. We will gain four or five years time, for you may be sure that the corporate interests will pay large sums to bribe the members of parliament, to betray their people's interests as long as it may be done, and what if the members do lose their seats in the house if they are paid large sums for their votes to defeat the people's will. They will be paid enough to make them independent of life, and can afford to lose their seats in parliament. We should take no more flattering promises from these candidates. We want this resignation signed before we deliver them our votes, and then, and only then, are we assured that our will will be carried out in all important legislative matters. Representative government is not government by the people but government by the capitalists, for, of and by the capitalists. Are we awake to this fact and are we going to shake off the shackles of subservience to this class and use our votes for our own interests, the interests of our class, the workers of the shops and fields, etc.?

Will you not be free when you may from the date of the next election if you will, but use the machinery now in your hands. If you don't use it you deserve to suffer and should never utter one word of complaint if your lot in life is not improved. Study this resolution. It is not partisan. It is for your liberation. Talk about it in public and private, on the platform and from the pulpit and press. Make its full meaning known and the people shall be free.

Yours in Christian Soc. Fellowship,
A. O. Alexander,
Miller, Alta.

The Farmers Bank failed. It owes a lot of money. It failed because the bank manager sank a lot of money in the Keely Mine at Cobalt. The most popular definition of a mine is a hole in the ground into which a lot of fools put their money and which is owned by a liar. It has been said that if the Keely Mine will only prove good there will be no need of anyone losing any money over its failure. But the wage slaves who have been working in the mine have gone on strike. Western Federation pickets have been placed and the mine is idle. If the wage slaves do not work then the mine cannot produce any silver providing there is any silver there to be produced. This proves that it is not the bank that makes money but the wage slaves who work for the bank. Get wise, you wage slaves. Get wise to the skin game your masters are playing upon you.

There is unrest throughout Canada. The labor unions are feeling the strivings of new modes of thought. The western farmers are waking to newer ideas. Overripe capitalism is producing the unrest caused by an outworn system. The single taxer is abroad in the land. The movement for direct legislation is growing. The politicians at Ottawa are at sea. They don't know what to make of the new trend of affairs. But the Socialist knows. We are entering into a transformation of society, the end of which will be the social ownership of the means of production and distribution with the recognition of the principle that labor power applied to raw material is the only source of wealth and to the workers that wealth should belong.

Ontario is going in for technical education. Quebec has gone in for this. Manitoba and other provinces are following suit. The Dominion has spent tens of thousands of dollars on a commission for the study of the problem. The governments are going in for the training of the future wage slaves to be very productive. The masters must do this or lose in the race with foreign competitors. But by this policy they are forced to cut their own throats. For the intelligent, skilled wage slave whose brain has been sharpened by study will readily see that he is the one who is producing the wealth while the boss owner is merely a parasite on the labor of the workers. Socialism is coming and the bosses must do these things which hasten its coming.

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BUNCOME & SCRAPP'S

By R. W. NORTHEY

WRITTEN EXPRESSLY FOR "COTTON'S WEEKLY"

CHAPTER VI.

McSully Decides to Make the Running

When McSully went out from Miss Wimple's presence he was in a much more genial frame of mind than when he went in. The very thing he had been planning so furtively for months past had been brought about—he was now on confidential speaking terms with the woman he admired. It had been so unexpected, though, that he had hardly had time to utilize the occasion as well as he might have done. Still, he hadn't done so bad. The ice was broken, anyhow, and he would make good progress from now on. That stereotyped and ancient ruse of offering an opera ticket had been the best he could think of at the moment, but he felt he had made some sort of blunder, or else why had her eyes been so full of merriment when she declined? He wasn't sure whether it was this week or next that Melba was going to sing. He had read it in the papers only recently that she would appear at the Metropolitan Opera House, but he had not noticed the exact date. He would look it up. There was a morning paper in his office.

As he opened and closed his office door behind him a man stepped out from behind the dark velvet curtains that hung across one of the corners at the far end of the room.

"Well, what is it?" snapped McSully as the man came forward.

"Oh, it's all right," he repeated. "There's going to be a strike at Smoother & Grabbitt's. It was decided at the union meeting last night."

Now before we go any further this man will have to be introduced and put in his proper place, and this will involve the introduction of a lot of other men and things about which we must be made acquainted before we can expect to have plain sailing in the course of our narrative re Buncome & Scrapp's.

The man was an employee of the firm, a machinist named Sweeney—Judson Sweeney. He was not one of the five dollar a day men, however. He had come to Buncome & Scrapp's a few months after McSully had been appointed superintendent. Now McSully had been superintendent at Smoother & Grabbitt's for several years and had been of such importance to that firm that they were loth to let him go when Scrapp offered him a much bigger salary as superintendent at Buncome & Scrapp's. He had even offered to raise his salary from \$3,000 to \$4,000, but of course that looked a mere trifle compared to the \$7,000 Scrapp offered him. So Smoother & Grabbitt had to let him go, and the man who took his place was not worth \$3,000 a year, at least the firm was not paying him that much.

This Judson Sweeney had been a machinist at Smoother & Grabbitt's most of the time McSully had been superintendent there. He had been something more, too. We won't say it out loud, not so as every Tom, Dick and Harry could get on to it. A thing like this has to be kept dark you know, or else it's no good. He had been the superintendent's spy! There it is. It don't look very nice, but it was true, nevertheless. Like all good and capable superintendents McSully kept a blacklist, and, of course, he had to have a "confidential man" to make the blacklist effective. So when he took charge at Buncome & Scrapp's he found it so difficult to pick out a good man for his purpose that he made a vacancy for his useful underling and Sweeney was installed in his new job with the promise of a raise at the first opportunity. But he had been at Buncome & Scrapp's for nine months and the opportunity had not come yet. He wanted to get into the five-dollar-a-day class, and more than once had given McSully the hint that he was ready to accept that amount as his day's pay. But McSully, whose grandfather had been a brave Highland man, possessed all the cautiousness and closeness of the canny old Scot in money matters, and he said he would have no more five-dollar-a-day men in the shop while the union scale was four dollars. He would like to have reduced the wages of the seven men who were getting the extra dollar to what he called their proper pay, but so far he had not been able to effect such a purpose. Some day he would do it. At present the business of the firm was so brisk that he couldn't frame up a passable excuse. He could only fume over the fact—in his estimation—that seven good dollars were going to waste every day.

Now a few words as to why these seven men at Buncome & Scrapp's were getting a dollar a day above the union scale. It was Scrapp's idea. He wanted to get the firm noted for doing the best kind of work in the quickest possible time, and to do this he had to attract the best machinists in the country. So successful did his idea work out that Buncome & Scrapp's became a synonym for high-class workmanship, and the chance of getting a job there was looked upon as a great prize amongst machinists generally. He had limited the number to seven because he found that was quite sufficient for the needs of the business, and the four-dollar men had a sufficient inducement to do good work too, because it was from them that all vacancies in the five-dollar class were filled.

It was chiefly because of Scrapp that McSully hesitated to reduce the head machinists to union wages. He and Scrapp had discussed the matter several times, but the latter was firm in his refusal to consent to such reduction. Now it must not be opined that Scrapp had the welfare of the men more at heart than any other business magnate. He had found that the scheme worked well for the business, and he told McSully it would be foolish to be niggardly and parsimonious when such a little crumb of generosity had brought and was still bringing all the highest priced business to the firm. He pointed out to the superintendent that if he made the attempt to save seven dollars a day on the men's wages—the firm would stand a chance of losing seventy dollars a day by the inferior work that would result. From this it will be seen that Scrapp was in a class by himself. To a man of McSully's calibre such an argument seemed foolish in the extreme, and as we all know, the great majority of business managers belong to the McSully school.

So in the face of Scrapp's opposition he could not very well reduce the pay, and the only way to put Sweeney in the five-dollar class was to fire a man and so make a vacancy for him. But here again he was confronted with a little difficulty. There were three or four men in the "four-dollar class" who were "next on" for promotion, and if he promoted an outsider like Sweeney over the heads of these there would surely be trouble in the shops, perhaps a walkout, and McSully did not want any trouble just now. There was too much work on hand and too much in sight, and so far he had been compelled to ignore Sweeney's hints.

Judson Sweeney was a great talker at the union meetings, and had held office at various times. He aspired to be known as a capable "union leader," and he certainly did lead them a long and tedious chase through a windy and pointless oration as often as he could get the chance. He had won a title, however, if nothing else, and was usually spoken of as "Windy" Sweeney.

"What's the trouble? What's the strike for?" asked McSully.

"Well, they've got a rush on at Smoother & Grabbitt's and the men want double pay for overtime."

"Oh, they do? They used to have time and a half. That's good enough for anybody, I should think."

"Yes, that's the union scale, and the union didn't uphold them in threatening to strike at first. But there's a lot of us who would like to see a strike at Smoother & Grabbitt's. It's an open shop, you know. Besides, a lot of the men say they don't want to work overtime at all. They say nine hours a day is good enough for them. They say let the bosses put on more men while the rush is on. There's lots of men out of work. Of course, if Smoother & Grabbitt's wasn't paying the union scale there wouldn't be much trouble to get the union to order a strike there. About half the men there belong to the union. You said you wanted Smoother & Grabbitt's put out of the running, you know, and I don't see how I could."

"Well, you mustn't mention that to anyone. 'Twas merely a test to see if you had the power to do anything in the union. I don't know that it will matter very much to us anyway. So the matter was voted on last night?"

"Yes, and carried by just two votes. All the bloomin' Socialists voted against it, and there's quite a lot of them in the union now."

"Well, that's funny," said McSully. "They're usually the chief strike-makers, ain't they? What did they vote against it for?"

"Oh, they think the men are being led into trouble by false leaders. That's what George Workman said. He and Billy Gay and Dick Norris and Luce Lyon were the four from our shops who spoke against the strike, but only one of them, Frank Wells, works at Smoother & Grabbitt's."

"And you say Workman, Gay, Norris and Lyon are all Socialists? How do you know?"

"Oh, I seen them taking part in Socialist meetings several times, and Billy Gay is chief literature seller at Maynard's soapbox meetings at some street corner nearly every night."

"Maynard? Who's Maynard?"

"Oh, Alan Maynard. That's the Red who has been run in so often for obstructing the streets. He's got the Socialist gift of gab alright, and there's generally a big crowd around him."

"Somebody ought to plug his mouth with a few rotten eggs," said McSully. "I hear you're no slouch in the speech-making line, Sweeney. They say you can keep an audience in agony for an hour or two right off the reel," and McSully emitted a harsh sound like laughter.

"Oh, I guess I can put up a good speech alright when the occasion calls for it. I had to do a lot of talking last night to get votes enough to carry it. And I won out, too. But—"

Just then there came a knock on the door and Sweeney started for the curtains at the far end of the room, but ere he could reach them the door opened and Jimmy Hike the office boy entered with a yellow envelope in his hand.

"Telegram for you, sir. Any answer?"

"No, no reply," he said. "Now when you knock at my office door again I want you to wait outside until you hear me say 'Come in.' Understand?"

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy.

"Very well; don't forget it. You can go."

(To be continued.)

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(To be continued.)

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Lists of wage workers wanted in Quebec and New Brunswick particularly. Also in other provinces. All lists acknowledged by mail.

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The single tax is coming. It is coming because capitalism wants it. But the single tax will not abolish wage slavery, the curse that is afflicting the civilization of modern countries.

The capitalists want to have the capitalist system reformed by its friends. This means that the capitalists want a system which, though reformed, will still allow them to ride on the backs of the wage slaves.

The capitalists are cute. They put up a party to serve them called the Liberal party. They also put up a party to serve them called the Conservative party. The wage slaves are allowed to vote for one party or the other. Both parties are capitalist parties. But the wage slaves don't know that. So when they feel the pinch too hard they go and vote for the capitalist party which is in opposition. The plute papers are filled with the doings of the two parties. There is a third party in the field, the Socialist Party which opposes both old capitalist parties and stands for the working class interests first, last and all the time. You do not find the plute papers telling about what the Socialist Party and the Socialist members are doing. They don't want the working plugs to find out the political tricks of the labor skinkers.

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The capitalists are preparing for the elections that will come in a year or so.

What is Cotton's Army doing to offset the political activity of those who live by the labor of others?

Many, many workers are ignorant of the Socialist philosophy.

What is Cotton's Army doing to dispel that ignorance?

Capitalism is working eight, ten, twelve and fourteen hours a day right on the job with the wage slave, to rob the wage slaves of the greater part of what they earn.

What effort is Cotton's Army putting forth to stop that robbery?

The farmers of the west are feeling the impulses of the new forces of production. What is Cotton's Army going to do to show the working farmers that their hope lies in the coming of Socialism?

Cotton's Weekly can fulfil its mission only in so far as new readers are brought within the circle of its influence.

This is the mission of Cotton's Army. To put the paper into the hands of those who are tired of the present condition of society but who do not see the remedy.

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