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MIXED FARMING

A majority of the news and farm papers have been giving a lot of information on the subject of mixed farming and the big profit to be made out of fattening steers, quoting as an example the price secured by Mr. G. H. Hutton, superintendent of the Experimental Farm at Lacombe. These steers were sold at 7c per lb. live weight, and this price is now shown as an example of what can be done. But it is generally forgotten that the cattle dealer who paid this price for the steers was figuring on at least one cent per pound advertising in the offer he made, and he is getting value received at that, too.

The farmers are urged to go into the feeding business, but is it to be expected that they will do so when they remember the conditions which have existed in the past, and still in existence, when it was impossible to get any kind of an offer for good beef cattle. Many writers and theorists are urging mixed farming as the only solution of the difficulties in Alberta, but on what inducements were the settlers first brought to Alberta? A perusal of the advertising literature sent broadcast throughout the world has as the slogan, "Wheat, Wheat, Wheat." The immigrants came with probably just sufficient capital to take up their land and make a few improvements. They purchased their machinery on time and then after following directions as contained in the literature they received, waited for a crop. The result everyone knows—two crop failures in many districts, and these men are now told to go in for mixed farming. They would like to do it, but it takes money, and that is not forthcoming, and after getting started there is the long wait for returns. We are told there is no combine in the beef industry and that the buyers go wherever they please to purchase the stock they require. They probably do, but take care not to disturb prices being paid in that district. While the Experimental Farm got 7c there are many farmers who have had to take from 5c to 6c, off ears, and there are many districts where, with even a greater scarcity of cattle, the beef market is apparently so over supplied that those having cattle for sale have not been able to get a buyer to even come and look at the cattle, and no bids are forthcoming. The Experimental Farm returns make good reading, but where would Mr. Hutton have been if he had paid a good price for the steers last fall and then sold at the price which the majority have probably had to take, about 5½c? The balance would have been on the other side of the ledger then.

Mixed farming is all right, and I for one am a believer in same, and the time will come when diversified and intensified farming will be the order of the day, but would it not be better for the powers that be to take steps to ensure to those who are already raising beef a steady and profitable market for their surplus instead of trying to get others to get more stock and make conditions worse than they now are?

We are apparently in the position here that one train load of export cattle is about sufficient to cause a drop in prices, and no doubt if every man followed the advice now so fully tendered the result would be that we would again see the day of 2½c steers. Let us have the open market, the independent yards and the opportunity to dispose of our produce to the highest bidder, and there will no longer be the need to continually exhort the farmers to raise cattle. They will do so as soon as they possibly can, for they will be able to see a steady market in sight. But until that time arrives, the publication of statements showing the profit which can be made out of 7c steers will do more harm than good.

The semi-monthly meeting of Lousana Union was held on May 4, when Circular No. 4 was discussed and much interest

shown at the reading of the section relating to the cattle industry. We decided to co-operate with Trenville Union in the purchase of binder twine and machine oil. A big mark was put on the calendar for a boost toward the campaign fund. This is a noble work and we are ever willing and anxious to assist.

H. S. MURRAY, Sec'y.
Trenville, Alta.

A member of the U.F.A., who has been feeding steers this winter on a contract basis, estimates that as a result of his winter's work he will secure the sum of \$1,050 for feeding fifty steers. They have been fed on ground grain for fifty days and the expected gain per steer is 125 lbs. Of course the scales may tell a different story when the cattle are delivered. That the owner of the cattle is not losing on the deal can be shown by the estimate of the feeder that if he had purchased at the prevailing prices last fall, and sold at the price for which these steers have been contracted for, his cheque would have been made out for \$1,575 instead of \$1,050 as per his present expectation.

The members of Rathwell and McBride Union have been very successful with their buying fund so far. We have had a car of posts distributed among the members and we bought a quantity of wire that the C.P.R. had left on their hands at this point very cheaply. We are corresponding with a B. C. co-operative fruit association in regard to fruits, also with several wire firms and the prices quoted show a considerable reduction over local prices. We are also getting several quotations for lumber all at reduced prices. We have now forty-eight members on the roll and will have more soon.

W. H. SHIELD, Sec'y.
Macleod, Alta.

The last meeting of Sunprairie Union was held on May 3, when on account of the busy time there was not a very large attendance. Various letters and price lists were read and a carload of posts was ordered through one of the local lumber dealers. It was decided not to place a fixed fee on the members for the campaign fund, but let each contribute of his own accord. Eighty cents was handed in as a start from Sunprairie. It was decided to make a thorough study of the Initiative, Referendum and Recall, taking up one section at a time until completed. It was also decided to advise those interested that the union is now ready to receive prices on and place their orders for a good standard grade of twine.

H. A. DENNISON, Sec'y.
Nanton, Alta.

The members of Vulcan union held their regular monthly meeting on May 6, and it is with pleasure that I report our meetings continue to be successful, the attendance and enthusiasm of our members being very gratifying. Mr. C. Rice-Jones presided at the meeting and five new members were enrolled. The committee appointed to aid one in our community reported that \$51 was collected for the good cause. Mr. Ryecroft brought to the notice of our union a case of distress in our neighborhood, where a widow, left destitute by the untimely death of her husband, was in need of immediate financial aid. A committee, consisting of Messrs. North, Bedlemon and Judy, was appointed to give the matter consideration and to advance such money as they might consider immediately necessary. The question of purchasing binder twine in quantities for the benefit of the members was discussed and a committee appointed to obtain all necessary information relative to this matter. The secretary read a letter received from the Central and the members were well pleased to note from the contents that the representatives of the organized farmers were

successful in their fight on the Grain Bill during its passage at Ottawa. The secretary was instructed to draw up a resolution granting the representatives of organized farmers a hearty vote of thanks for their good work. The resolution is as follows: "Whereas any change in the section of the Grain Bill relative to the car distribution in the West would be detrimental to the best interests of the Western farmers, and whereas the representatives of the organized farmers successfully fought any such injurious change, we, the members of Veteran U.F.A., wish to place ourselves on record as heartily endorsing the stand which was taken by the representatives of organized farmers at Ottawa, and hereby pass a resolution granting them a hearty vote of thanks for their good work in obtaining favorable legislation in the matter of car distribution in the West." The secretary was also instructed to look into the lumber question in our district and report to the Central any information he could obtain on the matter. Veteran union now has a membership of 79, and the average attendance is over 30, so we are displaying considerable interest in the work.

F. A. BRENNAN, Sec'y.
Wheat Belt, Alta.

GRAIN WEIGHING DIFFICULTIES.

I am a member of the U.F.A. and my market town has installed a set of scales. The platform is uncovered but the beam is in a small office and a certificate of accuracy is displayed therein. Is this a legal scale and would its weights (of hay, grain, coal, etc.) be accepted in a court of law? This has an important bearing on my subject.

I drew a load of grain to the elevator a few days ago and first of all weighed it on the town scales. The weight given was 3,640 lbs. The elevator man weighed it as 3,560 lbs. I suggested him having another look and he said "Oh, yes, 3,580, I mistook the figures." Now, I said, try again, and thus persuaded he got it to 3,590 lbs. still leaving a deficiency of 50 lbs. (You can imagine he was beginning to get less pleasant.) Then I told him I had already weighed the load and that his scale did not tally and asked the reason.

He answered that his scale was right and anyhow that was the only one he would buy on and I could take my load home again if I was in the mind. In any case, he went on to say, the town scale is not a legal one because it is uncovered and weights from it would not be accepted in a court of law. I argued the point with him and he finally got pretty mad and although he eventually took that load at 33 cents, refused to take any more. (The wheat was slightly tough.)

Now, is an elevator bound to buy any marketable wheat offered? By marketable I mean any wheat that would be reasonably safe to keep. I have been told that if a fellow weighs his grain on a certified scale in the presence of a witness and then takes it to the elevator and the weights given by the elevator scale do not tally he can have the elevator man arrested straight away. Is that correct? Will you tell me all you can about these things, yours truly,

"U. F. A. MEMBER."

An elevator operator who would make the statements credited to him in the above letter could not be considered very intelligent. Outside platform scales are erected all over the country and while it is true that the action of the weather will make some difference still when the double beam is operated the scales can be made to weigh within a fraction of a pound and the weights from these scales, when accompanied by the affidavit of the weighmaster, are generally accepted as final evidence, in fact in many instances, especially when shipping hay to interior points in British Columbia, such weights are the only kind offered.

Once scales have been inspected and tested by a government inspector and his

certificate given it can generally be taken for granted that the scales are correct, and if the weights would not be accepted in a court of law why is it that even the biggest kickers are prepared to accept the town weight certificate when presented by the man delivering the load of coal?

Many elevator operators are careless and mistakes can easily arise if the weighmaster does not balance his scales before weighing the load, but the same mistake can arise with a covered scale as well as with one exposed to the weather. Is there not an instance of carelessness in this case when the operator complained of was able to increase his weights by 30 lbs? That the weights from town scales exposed to the weather will be accepted can be shown by quoting the fact that one elevator company after purchasing an elevator at a certain point which had secured an unsavory reputation in the past, did a good business by closing the elevator scales entirely and accepting the town weights until confidence in the elevator had been re-established.

It is no doubt the desire of an elevator operator to deliver as much grain as he gives certificates for and that may possibly have something to do with carelessness in weighing, but if the discrepancy between town and elevator scales did exist, as in this instance, I for one would not like to be the party taking the responsibility of arresting the operator. There may be many reasons for this difference and it is not always advisable to chase after a policeman if matters do not go just as we want them.

Before an elevator can do business a license must be secured from the Grain Commissioners, and the elevator, and operator, is then under regulations prepared by the Commission. Any elevator operating in violation or in disregard of the Grain Act will lose its license if the facts are produced to the Board.

The duties of a person operating a country elevator include:

(a) To receive the grades of grain established and described by the act.

(b) Upon receipt of any person delivering grain for storage or shipment, receive such grain without discrimination as to persons, during reasonable and proper business hours.

(c) Insure the grain so received against loss by fire while so stored.

(d) Keep a true and correct account in writing in proper books, of all grain received, stored and shipped at such country elevator, stating (except in stated cases) the weight, grade and dockage for dirt or other cause, of each lot of grain received in store, for sale, storage or shipment.

(e) At the time of delivery of any grain at such country elevator, issue to the person delivering the grain either a cash purchased ticket, warehouse storage receipt, or storage receipt for special binned grain, dated the day the grain was received, for each individual load, lot or parcel of grain delivered at such country elevator.

Persons interested in the weighing of grain at any country elevator shall have free access to the scales while such grain is being weighed. Provision is also made for complaints made in writing, under oath, by any person aggrieved to be investigated on the following charges:

(a) Failing to give just and fair weights or grades.

(b) Guilty of making unreasonable dockage for dirt or other cause.

(c) Failing in any manner to operate the elevator fairly, justly and properly.

(d) Guilty of any discrimination forbidden by the act.

I think it may be taken for granted that if an elevator operator has space in his elevator he can be compelled to take any grain which may be offered to him while is elevator his open for business, but of course he can fix the spreads at which he will purchase the grain, thereby making the price so low that it would not pay the farmer to sell. Is not this one more telling instance of the need of a good elevator system in Alberta owned and controlled by the farmers themselves?

E.J.F.

District Directors:

Victoria—P. S. Austin, Nanfurly; Edmonton—George Bevington, Spruce Grove; Strathcona—J. R. Pointer, Strone; Red Deer—E. Carwell, Penhold; Calgary—H. Sorensen, Strathmore; Macleod—G. W. Buchanan, Cowley; Medicine Hat, W. S. Henry, Bow Island.