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FARM AND DAIRY

& RURAL HOME

The Recognized Exponent of Dairying in Canada



Trade increases the wealth and glory of a country; but its real strength and stamina are to be looked for among the cultivators of the land.—Lord Chatham

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Cooperative Methods Not a Cure-all*

They are the First and Absolutely Essential Step, But Only One Step, Toward Better Conditions

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Farm and Dairy.

ONE of the reasons why the farmers of Canada are making such progress in cooperative work is that they have the experience of previous attempts at organization to warn them from the rocks upon which shipwreck and disaster have been met in the past. It is well that full advantage should be taken of such experience. But it is not necessary to confine ourselves to the history of cooperation in our own country for lessons in what to adopt and what to avoid in shaping our cooperative policies. We can draw valuable lessons from the experience of farmers' organizations in other countries. The forces that have contributed to their success or failure are operative with us. Recent developments in cooperative work in the western states are particularly illuminating. Among other things they show, in a remarkably clear and forceful way, the limitations that are set to the benefits to be derived from cooperation even when carried on with a perfection of method that has been the despair of farmers engaged in similar work in other parts of the United States and in Canada.

Fruit growers in the east have long looked upon the great fruit growers' organizations of the Pacific Coast States as being almost models of all that fruit growers' organizations should be. The thorough manner in which they have safeguarded every step from the pruning and spraying of their trees and the thinning of the fruit to the packing of the product in neat, attractive packages, just so many apples, uniform in size and color, to the box, has been pointed out as the explanation of their ability to outsell—not undersell—eastern fruit in the eastern markets. It has come as somewhat of a shock, therefore, to many eastern growers to find that in spite of their apparent perfection of method, all things are not well with the fruit growers of the western coast states. In fact, it has seemed at times as if their situation could hardly be worse. The very prosperity brought about by their early successes has led, in a large measure, to their undoing. This success brought a false optimism, which resulted in over plantings, excessive land values, increased cost of production, and ruinous competition between different cooperative organizations. This condition, in turn, culminated in glutted markets, and such low prices for fruit that thousands of fruit growers have been ruined and large areas of fruit trees cut down and the land devoted to other crops.

So serious did the situation become that early last fall growers, selling organizations, bankers

and commercial clubs in the northwest sent hundreds of telegrams and letters to the Department of Agriculture at Washington, urging them to have the Office of Markets come to the assistance of the fruit industry. According to the Fruit and Produce Market, of Portland, Oregon, the department was advised that the fruit industry was in a deplorable condition, that this condition was realized by all, and that the help of the federal government was needed in order that a plan might be found that would place the industry upon a better basis. In response to these requests the department sent to the northwest three experts to investigate conditions. These men spent many days and a large sum of money in investigating every fruit section in the northwest, and talking upon the selling organizations, bankers, growers and leaders in the different

communities. They thus secured a thorough understanding of the needs of the industry. With this information in their possession they called a meeting of those interested and reported to them somewhat as follows:

"We find the fruit industry of the northwest to be the greatest example of disorganization to be found in the United States. The very fact that you have a number of strong organizations makes it all the worse, because it gives you larger clubs to use in your game of tearing each other to pieces. Your principal trouble is 'selfishness.' If you have a sincere desire and are willing to do certain things, we will suggest a plan upon which you can meet on equal terms and agree."

They were answered in this fashion:

"We realize our deplorable conditions and know that if we do not agree to certain practices that we will have no industry in a few short years. We therefore are here with open hearts ready to agree to any constructive plan that will assist the industry."

Growing out of this report a Fruit Growers' Agency was formed for the purpose of reorganizing the industry, harmonizing the competing interests, bringing order out of chaos, and re-establishing better conditions. It is yet too early to decide what success will attend this new effort. In the meantime we, in the east, may learn some valuable lessons from the conditions that have thus been revealed in the west.

Lessons For the East.

In the first place, let us note that the primal cause of the trouble in the west was SELFISHNESS. What a flood of light that one word throws on the whole situation, both east and west! The evil worm it represents finds its way to the centre of every effort of man to improve his condition, and again and again thwarts his best efforts. It explains why men refuse to cooperate as long as they think they can do better for themselves in some other way; it leads men to throw down their association when a buyer offers them an extra inducement to sell outside their organization; it is the cause which prompts growers to rush immature fruit to the market in the hope of obtaining some of the early high prices; it explains why buyers so often find inferior fruit under number one grades, and makes clear the motives which prompt even cooperative associations to cut the ground from under each others' feet in their anxiety to market their products.

What are we going to do about it?

In some ways there is not much that can be done. A greater than human agency is required to deal with this evil in the hearts of men. Let us, therefore, recognize this fact, and not make

(Continued on page 9.)



A Citizen Worth While

THERE is a life that is worth living now, as it was worth living in the former days, and that is the honest life, the useful life, the unselfish life, cleansed by devotion to an ideal. There is a battle that is worth fighting now, as it was worth fighting then, and that is the battle for justice and equality; to make our city and our State free in fact as well as in name; to break the rings that strangle real liberty and to keep them broken; to cleanse, so far as in our power lies, the fountains of our national life from political, commercial and social corruption; to teach our sons and daughters, by precept and example, the honor of serving such a country as America—that is work worthy of the finest manhood and womanhood. The well-born are those who are born to do that work; the well-bred are those who are bred to be proud of that work; the well-educated are those who see deepest into the meaning and the necessity of that work. Nor shall their labor be for naught, nor the reward of their sacrifice fail them; for high in the firmament of human destiny are set the stars of faith in mankind, and unselfish courage and loyalty to the ideal.—Henry Van Dyke.

*This article was written primarily in the interests of the fruit industry of Ontario. It appeared in the August issue of The Canadian Horticulturist. As the principles it deals with apply with equal force to the cooperative movement that is making headway among the farmers of Ontario, it is here republished with but slight alterations, in Farm and Dairy.—E. B. C.