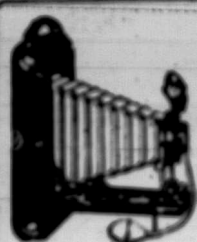


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Alberta

This Section of The Guide is conducted officially for the United Farmers of Alberta by
P. P. Woodbridge, Secretary, Calgary, Alberta, to whom all communications for this page should be sent.

SECRETARIES DISCUSS CO-OPERATION

There were about 75 delegates in attendance at the meeting of secretaries called to discuss the work of co-operative trading. The chair was taken by C. Rice-Jones, president of the Alberta Farmers Co-operative Elevator Co. Ltd. In calling the meeting to order, the president stated that the object of the meeting was to discuss the very important subject of co-operative trading, and to see whether it would be possible to arrive at some definite basis whereby a uniform system of organization could be decided upon, and also if the matter of the trading arrangements between the Co-operative Elevator Company and the locals could be improved. He stated further that the meeting was entirely in the hands of the delegates and any suggestions they might have to make would be very acceptable. He suggested, however, that in order to get the discussion started, it might be a good idea for the representatives of the co-operative associations that had been actively trading during the past few years to be first called upon to outline their views on this subject and to give their opinion as to what they considered would be the right basis of organization.

The Company and the Locals

Mr. Sparks, of Jenner, stated that he believed the main thing to do at the present time was to get the farmers' associations into co-operative associations so that it would be possible to successfully handle the supply business. In reference to the trading of these associations with the elevator company, the handicap which they had found at Jenner to be existing at the present time was that the company would quote the same price to individuals or unorganized locals as they quoted to the co-operative associations. The individual or the local would be handling probably only one carload of supplies in a year and the owner or the local secretary would, of course, be quite prepared to do business for nothing. The association, on the other hand, was handling business all the year and had expenses to meet, including salaries and the general overhead and upkeep of buildings, and as long as the elevator company adopted the policy of treating all alike it was not possible for the co-operative associations to meet the competition. He believed that the right thing to do was to arrive at a basis whereby the local associations would be recognized.

Favors One Unit Plan

Mr. Harris, of Macleod, stated that before the Manchester Co-operative Wholesale Co. came into existence, the wholesalers and retailers fought the co-operative association in the old country, but with the wholesale company brought into the field, that company took an oversight of the locals; checked them and even, if in difficulties, financed them and brought them along to a solid basis. In the old country the retail co-operative associations were very loyal to the wholesale. All their supplies were secured through that source and they even went so far as to invest their surplus funds with the wholesale house.

Mr. Harris believed that with some educational work the same thing could be worked out in this country. He described very fully the method which had been adopted by the Macleod District Association and stated that in the three months they had been in business they were very successful. The policy they have adopted has been that of trying to supply the commodity to their members at practically cost price, adding just sufficient to cover the actual charges. Their experience has shown already that the possibilities of the co-operative associations in this country cannot be overestimated and in this connection he stated that the first requisite for membership in the co-operative association should be that every member of the association must be a member of the U.F.A.

Another point which was often considered was whether the local co-operative associations should be one unit or whether they should be separate organizations,

dealing entirely on their own account. Mr. Harris expressed himself as being in favor of the one unit plan, and stated further that if it could be shown that the co-operative associations could get service from the elevator company then there was no reason why the local units should not be successful.

Business Flourishing at Macleod

Mr. Spark, of Macleod, stated that it might be interesting to the meeting to know just what had been done by the Macleod association since it was organized only about three months ago. The business was started in March last, with a paid-up capital of \$2,065, and the receipts for their first three months were, March, \$5,685; April, \$6,240; May, \$5,395; the difference in figures between April and May representing the falling off in the machinery business, the bulk of that business having been done in March and April. The amount of machinery business done during the three months was \$7,900, and the association had handled The Grain Growers' Grain Co. machinery exclusively. Other business consisted in part of oils and grease sold, amounting to \$480; two cars of posts and one car of shingles being handled to the value of \$720. The shingles had been purchased from the Co-operative Elevator Company, and the only regret the farmers of the Macleod district had to make was that they were unable to get 10 cars, as they made a very considerable saving for their members on the quantity handled. Hardware was handled on a commission basis and the sales made amounted to \$1,500. Hardware had also been handled to the extent of \$2,458.

Request had been made that dry goods should be handled and eventually arrangements were made whereby they were able to buy a stock of \$1,500 worth from a Calgary wholesale firm, the terms being half cash and the balance in 30 days. During the first month after this stock was put in they sold \$428 worth of these goods. A small stock of boots and shoes had also been put in and were being sold off. The company was handling hail insurance and was doing a good business in the district.

They found that they were handicapped to a considerable extent through having rather a poor building, which was situated off the main street and away from the main artery of traffic in Macleod; and last, but not least, the lack of interest on the part of many of the farmers. For this reason, a short time ago, it had been decided to buy a second-hand car for the object of taking the U.F.A. stores out to the farmers. This car had been used for about two weeks and was very successful, a large amount of business having been secured in this manner.

Mr. Smith, of Milk River, stated that the Macleod association seems to have laid the foundation for the local work on a very satisfactory basis and that with the Alberta Farmers Co-operative Elevator Co., the wholesale organization which was required was already established and all that was now wanted was a plan for the locals to be brought together so that their trade would flow through the one channel, that is through the wholesale house represented by the elevator company.

Encouraged by Banks

The delegates in attendance asked, "How does Macleod finance its business?" Mr. Spark answered that this was done by getting the farmer to subscribe for \$10 shares. The stock was fixed at this price so that all could be included in the stockholders. Half-yearly meetings of the shareholders are held. The first meeting was held in February last, at which time only about \$500 of capital stock was subscribed, most of which was 50 per cent. paid up. It was felt that it would be impossible to go ahead with such a small sum, so an effort was made to secure additional stock subscriptions, and in order to make a start the first business was done in car lot commodities only handling direct from the car. Then the opportunity came along whereby the association could secure the building which they now occupy, and if it was a

little out of the road, still as a machinery showroom and for other purposes required by them it was well situated. The big handicap was that it was not a building which could be used for the display of goods.

Since February nearly all the stock payments had been made in full, and the officers are appealing at every meeting held for additional stock, which was being subscribed. In reference to financing, this matter had been taken up with the manager of the Bank of British North America at Macleod. He had secured a full statement from them and had submitted same to his head office, with the result that instructions had been issued that this work was to be encouraged and the Macleod Co-operative Association was provided with a line of credit in the sum of \$3,000. It was interesting to note, however, that up to the present time the association had not found it necessary to call on the bank for this credit.

The question was asked as to how many shares had been sold in this association. Mr. Spark answered that they now had 222 members, holding from one to six shares each. The limit of stock which any person could hold was 10 shares, and the method of organization provided for one man, one vote; the idea prevailing with the officers was to give the members their profit when buying goods instead of paying a dividend on stock. Mr. Harris stated that in organizing at Macleod the Central of the U.F.A. had been of considerable assistance to them in securing the necessary information, supplying them with draft by-laws, articles of incorporation and other information of this kind required; while the Co-operative Elevator Company had also done everything possible to assist them in the work.

A delegate asked what percentage of profit was fixed on the sales made by the Macleod association. Mr. Spark answered that this was hard to fix. They sold for cash alone, but some articles were turned over quickly, while with others it was necessary to keep them in stock for some time. For this reason they found that some goods could be handled on a 10 per cent. margin, while in other cases more would be required.

Patronize the Elevator Company

Mr. Spark stated further, that the big trouble they had encountered was buying from private firms and he believed that the less they were required to buy from individuals the better it would be, as to a large extent they could only be considered as middle men. The only way to overcome this was to buy from an organization organized on the same line as ourselves; that meant that the co-operative associations doing business in Alberta should look upon the Co-operative Elevator Company as their headquarters and their supplies should be secured through them.

The question was asked as to whether the machinery was sold for cash or for credit. Mr. Spark answered that they sold absolutely for cash alone. A small charge was made for setting up the machinery and the machinery sold was giving very good satisfaction. They expected to be handling the Acme binder through the Grain Growers this season, under an arrangement which had been entered into, and as a man had been engaged to set up the machines and see that they were in proper working order before making delivery, it had been decided that it would be in order for the association to make a small charge with the catalog prices for this work.

SOUNDING LAKE SECRETARY SELLS INSURANCE

We are in receipt of an encouraging letter from John Mitchell, of Monitor, who has been appointed hail insurance agent by the Sounding Lake Local. Mr. Mitchell has succeeded in writing a considerable amount of insurance, although, as he states in his letter, a variety of circumstances militated against his doing a big business in this district. However, he has apparently dispelled any doubts which may have existed in the minds of the members as to the standing of the Rochester Underwriters for which the U.F.A. has taken the agency, and several who have placed their insurance with other companies this year have promised to patronize the U.F.A. insurance next year. He says that he will be pleased to take up the insurance agency for the U.F.A. again next year, and hopes that he will be able to do a little educational work between now and then, showing the farmers the advantage of patronizing their own organization.

FEDERAL

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Ottawa, June,

JOHN C
Secretary, Grain Association

Dear Sir:
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