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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.

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ROSEBEG REPORTS

In forwarding $5.50 membership dues for Rosebeg Union, No. 719, Donald Cameron, secretary, reports that they have now thirty-six members on the roll, twenty-nine of whom are paid up. No meetings have been held since July 31, as the members have all been busy with harvesting and threshing operations. However, it is hoped that they will get going again as soon as the busy season is over.

WORK IS DONE

F. W. Parson, secretary of Fawn Lake Union, No. 703, reports that for the past two months the meetings have been very small. However, they managed to hold monthly meetings regularly and expect to have a good one this month as the rush work is about over, and they have some important business to discuss. He goes on to say, "We are neither dead or dying, altho my membership report is blank, all dues being paid up and no new members this trip. Better luck next time maybe."

WILL DO BETTER

At a meeting of the Maple Leaf Union, No. 504, held recently, ten members were present. There was one application for membership, which was accepted. The question of purchasing flour, coal oil, fruit, etc., co-operatively was discussed and the secretary was instructed to secure prices on same. It was also decided that for the future the union would hold their meetings on the third Saturday in every month, instead of at or before full moon. A special meeting will be called on Saturday, November 6, to find ways and means of bringing life back into the branch. The members also hope to have an entertainment in the near future. The secretary states that he hopes the next year will be a more active one in that part of the country.

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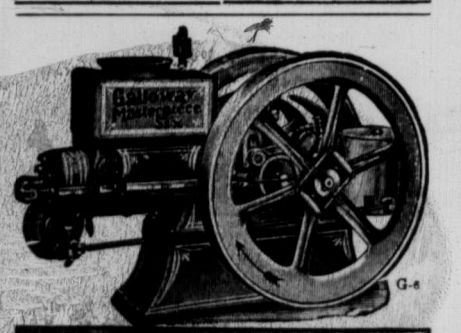

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TRANSPORTING THE WHEAT CROP

Some of our members may possibly have been following the amusing controversy which, in a purely private capacity, I have been carrying on with the Calgary News-Telegram in regard to its suggestions that the British government step in and purchase from 100,000,000 to 150,000,000 bushels of Canadian wheat and requisition or commandeer sufficient vessels to transport same to England, thereby making an alleged saving of from 40 to 50 cents per bushel, which the News-Telegram thinks the British government might very well divide up between the Canadian farmer and the British consumer. The News-Telegram has now contributed to the general gaiety in six extra large columns of reply (?) to a total of three letters, in no part of which so far as I have been able to discover, has any information been forthcoming in support of the News-Telegram's contention that their proposal was either feasible or reasonable.

I think that we all think that freight rates are higher than they should be at the present time, and many of us are somewhat disappointed that even if there is an extraordinarily large surplus of grain for export in Canada, U.S. and Argentine, the prices we are receiving for our wheat are not higher than they are. The question as to just who is paying this freight, whether the producer or consumer, is one well worthy of careful investigation, in fact, the whole problem of the grain business under present conditions is extremely interesting and might be worthy of a special report setting forth the reasons for the somewhat eccentric fluctuations which have occurred. It must be remembered that there is absolutely no precedent in the history of the world's grain trade for present conditions. There never has been a time before when practically the whole of the grain consuming nations were at war at the same time. When some of these nations are strictly blockaded and unable to secure any grain from outside their own borders, and the balance engaged in a wholesale transportation of troops and ammunition, such as would have been considered quite inpossible a little more than twelve months ago, it is very doubtful if the British or Canadian government could exercise any effective control over freight rates on ocean going vessels, neither would they have any control, of course, outside of vessels of British registry, and with those of British registry it is generally understood that the government has to guarantee the owners the same rates that they would get if not commandeered by the Imperial authorities. This means that ocean rates even under government control would be the same as they are now, or if they were less, the difference would have to be made up by increased taxation on somebody. So far as the present rates are concerned, I understand that they have not varied very greatly during the past few months, and that 30 cents a bushel was no uncommon charge for space in the spring or early summer. The whole question will doubtless be carefully investigated and in the meanwhile, when we carefully think over the situation as it is today, which includes as it does a tremendous demand for ships usually engaged in the grain business, for the transportation of munitions of war and supplies of all kinds for the Allies, to say nothing of those being used for the transportation of troops, also taking into consideration the fact that the total world production this year is estimated to be considerably greater than the world consumption, we may decide that our prices are not quite so bad as they might seem at first thought. We have a yield this year away above the average; the price is also above the average for the last six years, except the season of 1914-15. That, of course, is no reason why we should permit of anyone creeping in and making an exorbitant profit either at our expense or that of the British consumer, if we can possibly prevent it. It is, however, one reason why we should bear more patiently any disappointment we may feel because we are not getting as much as we had expected and it should also make us feel that we should look at the matter from a more unselfish point of view than the mere possibility of getting more money for ourselves without considering its possible effect on the ultimate consumer.

P. P. W.

EVERYBODY BUSY

A. W. Hatherly, secretary of Lauderdale Union, No. 422, reports that there have been no meetings of that union during the past quarter, owing to the fact that the membership is very scattered and the unusually busy season made it extremely difficult to get together. He states, however, that the interest is as strong as ever it was in the work of the U. F. A. and is looking forward to some good meetings as soon as threshing is over.

TRY AGAIN, BROADVIEW

The following report has been received from J. H. Clarke, secretary of Broadview Union, No. 342:

Our members have been very lax in paying up their dues. I am sorry to say the membership of our local has fallen away sadly. We now number only eighteen male members and four female, the rest of them have gradually dropped out and fallen in arrears. We have not had any meeting for the past two and a half months, owing mostly to the busy harvest and threshing time. We resume our meetings again on November 7, when I hope and trust we will get into a better shape. The men round here want stirring up; they have been diffident all the year and seem to think when they have paid their dues their responsibility ends. Early in the year we were in good shape and initiated several new members, but not one of them paid their dues, nor have they been present at any subsequent meeting. It is very discouraging, but I sincerely hope that we will shortly pull up to our former strength. We have certainly had a hard time of it this year past, owing to the bad harvest of 1914, but with the plentiful crop of this year I trust we will show a very substantial gain in our membership.

ORGANIZATION NO. 3

The first problem I want to discuss as providing reason for organization and work for our unions is "better farming." The fact that we have to sell in the world market, with competition from farmers of other countries, both at home and abroad, makes it necessary to study out the best ways of producing the largest quantities and the best qualities with the lowest expense. If we don't succeed in this, we cannot expect to make a decent living on the farm. To succeed in this we must combine, we cannot do it by individual effort. As an American writer says: "If a hundred men in a community are all studying the problem of growing the crops of that community, but each man studies alone and does not exchange ideas with his neighbors, each man profits only by his own study; but if they meet frequently to discuss their common problems and to exchange ideas, each man profits not only by his own study, but by that of all his neighbors." I would add, that each man profits not only by his own experience, but also by the experience of all his neighbors. That is based of course on the co-operative principle, that a man's ability and knowledge and experience are not merely a personal capital, to be used only for his own profit, but a common capital, for the service of the community. And in the end this is also the wisest principle of self interest, for no individual farmer, unless he is farming on a very large scale, can market his own small quantity of produce as easily and advantageously as if he can combine with a number of other farmers who are producing the same thing. This line of thought suggests a great many topics for discussion at Union meetings, such as:

1—What is the best kind of farming in our locality? (a) Grain growing; (b) Cattle and hog raising; (c) Mixed farming.

2—What are the best kinds of grain for our locality? (a) Wheat, what kind? Winter wheat or spring wheat? Red Fife, Marquis, Prelude, or? (b) Oats, what kind? (c) Barley, rye, flax, etc.?

3—What roots pay to raise and how? For instance, what are the best potatoes?

In all this work, after settling on the definite thing to grow, the next question would be where and how to get the best seed, and in this our unions might link up with the work of the Canadian Seed Growers' Association, about which I may write more fully in another article.

Then there are numerous interesting questions about livestock raising and feeding. For instance, there is probably no better country anywhere for raising horses than many parts of Alberta, and yet the chief lesson taught us recently, in trying to sell horses for the war, was that we needed to improve our horse raising. If we could combine to raise certain definite good types of horses, so that a buyer when he travels thru a community finds a fair quantity of good, uniform draught, or coach or saddle horses, there would be much more money in the business. The same thing applies to all the other kinds of livestock.

Then there are many other farming questions that it would pay the unions to study and discuss.

4—What have we found to be the best methods of cultivation?

5—What are the best kinds of farm implements?

More depends on the kind of plow and seed drill we use than many farmers think. I was struck, in travelling over some of the dried out districts last summer, with seeing a very decent wheat crop in a locality where scarcely any crop was visible. When I chatted with the farmer and listened to his very intelligent description of his seed drill and the way he worked it, I found a full explanation of his success, and I said to him: "Why could you not in the winter have given your union such a talk as you have given me? It might have saved one neighbor that I knew from spending his money and wasting his seed on a useless drill."

Another series of questions to study in our unions might deal with the waste on our farms, for instance, in manure. In the United States it is estimated that the total annual value of natural manure amounts to $2,225,700,000, more than the combined annual output of timber, $690,750,000, and minerals, $1,342,453,982. I should imagine it quite possible that two million dollars are going to waste annually in Alberta in manure alone.

This rapid sketch of a few topics on "Better Farming" shows that it should be very easy for the president, secretary and a small committee in every union to draw up a program for a few interesting meetings. And along these lines the unions could get plenty of help. The Central Office, of course, would help. The government would provide quite a few lectures, if they were asked for. I have no doubt the new Agricultural faculty in the Alberta University would help. Then the unions within a reasonable area around the Agricultural schools connected with the Demonstration farms could be visited by the teachers of these schools, and soon, I hope, the pupils of the Agricultural schools will come into our unions to help us by telling what they have learned. Just imagine the uplift to farming in Alberta, if seven hundred live U. F. A. Unions were studying and working together to promote better farming.

JAS. SPEAKMAN.