

Co-operative Conference at Brandon

A conference on co-operation in buying and selling staple commodities was held at Friday's session of the Brandon convention. The conference was opened by Mr. T. A. Crerar, President of the Grain Growers' Grain company. Mr. Crerar first briefly sketched the history of co-operative enterprise in Britain, Denmark and Germany since the time in 1846, when the few poor weavers, now known as the Rochdale Pioneers, put their savings together and opened the first co-operative store with a capital of \$140, in a Lancashire town. Reference was also made to the wonderful progress of the agricultural industry in Ireland, which has resulted from the adoption of co-operation in buying and marketing by the farmers of that country. The need for co-operation in this country was very great, and the question was how they could gather the experience of other countries and apply it to their own farming operations in Western Canada. Already many of the members of the Grain Growers' association were making a considerable saving by purchasing their flour, twine, coal, apples, coal oil and other commodities by the car load, through their local associations, and he looked forward to the time when they would be able to go a step further and by combining together be able to handle the whole output of mills and factories, or even manufacture for themselves. A visit which a committee from the Board of the Grain Growers' Grain company had paid to the plant of the Independent Harvester Company of America, at Plano, Ill., had shown the possibilities that lay in the manufacture of farm machinery, the statement having been made by the mechanical superintendent of that institution that an eight foot binder could be manufactured for less than \$50. By a proper system of co-operation, the speaker pointed out, the farmers could secure all the economies which were gained by the big trusts, and with the very important difference that whereas the trusts were usually operated for the benefit of a few, theirs would be for the benefit of all. Mr. Crerar strongly advocated the Rochdale system of distributing profits, the payment of a fixed and moderate rate of interest on capital, the provision of a reserve fund, and the distribution of the available surplus in dividends according to the amount of the members' purchases.

Co-operative Work by Associations

That the spirit of co-operation possesses a great many of the members of the association was evident from the discussion which followed Mr. Crerar's address. A large number of delegates spoke briefly relating the experience of their local associations in co-operative buying. Mr. Simpson, of Shoal Lake, stated that since August 1 last the members in his district had saved \$3,850 on local retail prices by their wholesale purchases of twine, apples, flour, feed and coal. C. Burdette, of Foxwarren, C. H. Burnell, of Oakville, T. H. Drayson, of Neepawa, and others told the same story, though their figures were not so large.

Co-operative Warehouse for Neepawa

Mr. Drayson said in his district an attempt was being made to put the co-operative movement on a permanent basis. It was found that only about one half of the members were able to take advantage of present arrangements because many of them had not the cash to deposit with their orders. Their proposal now was to sell stock at \$10 per share and when they had sold fifty shares they would start business. They would then not need to wait until a car load had been ordered, but if that amount was ordered they would be able to purchase a full car and store a portion in a warehouse which they would erect alongside the railway tracks. They intended having a man at the warehouse half a day a week to make deliveries. Sales were to be made at current retail prices in the locality, and profits would be returned to members in proportion to the amount of their purchases. (Applause.)

Euchre D'Galley, a young French grain grower, from Rutledge, took part in the discussion, especially advocating the establishment of a co-operative

implement factory, and other speakers included Hugh McKay, of Bagot, delegate from Ninga, and Mr. McKenzie, manager of the Echo Milling Company, of Gladstone, who said co-operative buying of flour had been so generally adopted that the Grain Growers now took almost the entire output of his mill. An interesting and significant point brought out by Mr. Burnell, of Oakville, was that although the largest mills had previously refused to sell at wholesale rates to the associations, they had recently changed their policy and now that the Grain Growers' Grain company was selling flour in car lots, these companies were endeavoring to secure the business and were offering flour at the same or lower prices. The small independent mills, Mr. Burnell said, were saving the consumers from the tender mercies of the big companies, and he hoped the farmers would give the independent mills their support whenever it was possible.

The Resolutions

The following resolutions were unanimously passed: That in view of past experience, covering a period of five years, that the time has come when all the Grain Growers' associations throughout the Province of Manitoba should organize themselves into country or district associations, to consist of two



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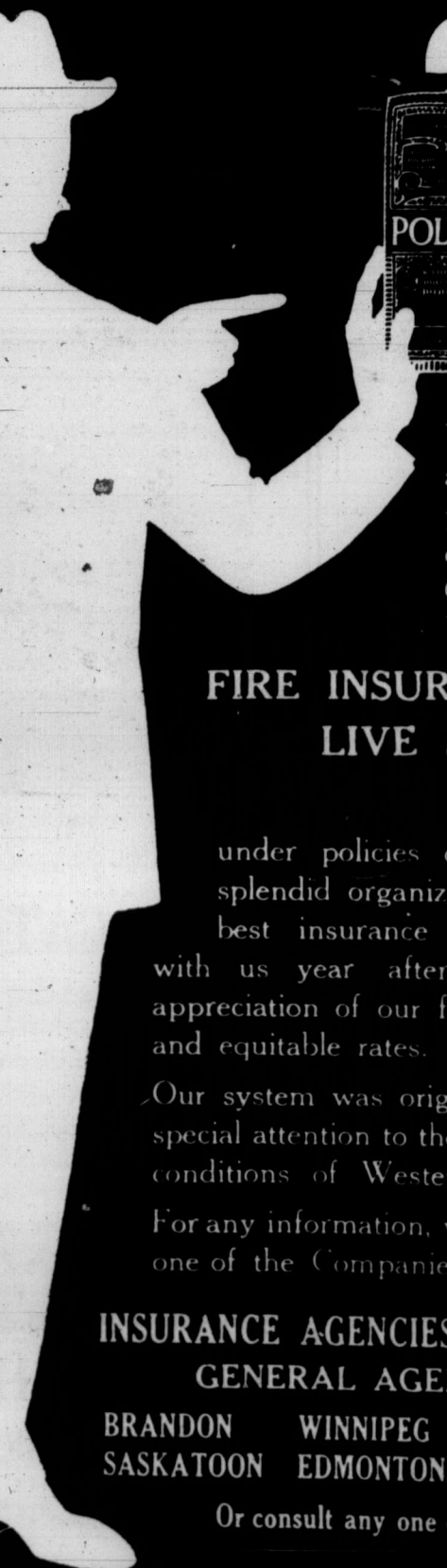
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or more sub-associations, for the purpose of co-operating in the purchasing of car load lots of the necessities of life, etc., the purchasing of large orders to be done preferably through the Grain Growers' Grain company or appointee. This, we believe, to be in the best interests of the farmers' organization as a means of strengthening our association.

That this convention recommend that the Grain Growers' Grain company

enter into negotiations with dealers in gasoline and coal oil with a view to supplying members of this association with oils at a reduced rate on a cash basis.

That this convention recommend the Grain Growers' Grain company to open negotiations with the independent flour mills in the Province of Manitoba with a view of making arrangements to provide farmers with flour at a less price than is now quoted by larger mills.



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