

PORTAGE DISTRICT CONVENTION

The Grain Growers of Portage district got together on the morning of Friday, March 22, in their semi-annual district convention. The opening session was largely occupied with registration, arrangement of details for the general session and reports from local branches. Edwin Branch reported the most successful season they have ever had. A series of debates had added much to the interest of their winter meetings. Hagot reported a Women's Section with 24 members and an average attendance of 12. Elm Bank reported co-operative buying to the amount of \$7,000 during the year among a membership of 34. Through their efforts a new branch had been organized including the communities of Elm and St. Eustache. Oakville reported a Women's Section of 35 members and encouraging activity in patriotic work. The district generally is in a fairly satisfactory working condition.

In the afternoon session Jas. Barrett, of Hagot, reported a visit to the Saskatchewan convention. He was struck with the large number of young men from 20 to 30 years of age in their convention who had mastered the art of speaking not only intelligently and intelligible but with energy and effectiveness. This is the hope of the movement that our young people may be led to recognize that the movement is their affair in which they can take a real interest and exercise real influence. He was impressed with the completeness of their organization. The comparatively intricate machine of their convention with two distinct sections and many committees seemed to be perfectly arranged and the various sectional and committee meetings came off like clock-work. While Saskatchewan had been admirably organized Mr. Barrett did not feel in any degree ashamed of our organization in this province.

The School and the Community

The next paper dealt with rural rate-payers from a teacher's view point and was given by Miss Annie Hutchinson, of Beaver. Miss Hutchinson's paper dealt with the necessity for increasing co-operation between the school and the home, between teacher and trustees and among all those who are interested in the promotion of community well-being. She urged the necessity of the community, practically concerning itself with the well-being and progress of the school, suggesting that trustees, farmers, fathers and mothers should visit the school and by their presence, by friendly suggestions and by occasional talks on topics with which they have practical acquaintance encourage and assist the teachers in their work. An animated discussion followed this paper and from all quarters emphasis laid upon the school being included in a very practical way in the circle of the community's interests and activities.

Successful Co-operative Trading

Co-operation was the topic of a very interesting address given by D. G. McKenzie, of Forrest. He outlined the work being done in their branch at that point along the line of co-operative merchandising, showing that with a membership of 109 they had had a turnover in the past year of \$33,000, with an estimated saving in actual cash to the community of at least \$3,000. In their work everything is financed through the bank, where they carry a \$3,000 line of credit secured by 100 members, each signing a \$30 demand note which is held by the local secretary as collateral security. When the question of deciding between establishing a co-operative store or continuing with the method above mentioned, the decision was against establishing the store. Meetings are held regularly on the second Thursday of every month, at which if it is desired to secure a card-load of any commodity the individual orders are booked. The secretary is paid \$3.00 a day for his time in unloading, and a sufficient margin is charged to cover the cost of handling. They hold that a local merchant is a necessity and that he must be given a living. The help of the ladies at Forrest has been very manifest. They have credited the sentiment in the community that if one is not a Grain

Grower he is not what he ought to be.

Mr. McKenzie's address was followed with close interest and recognized as being a masterpiece of concise and lucid statement and a valuable contribution to general knowledge on the practical subject of co-operation.

Local and general organization was discussed in brief addresses by the president, C. H. Burnell, of Oakville, and by the secretary of the provincial organization, and the last address of the afternoon session was given by Miss Mary P. McCallum, of The Grain Growers' Guide. Her topic was "The Homemakers' place in our Organization" and her address was listened to with close attention. She dealt with the necessities for organization of women's work, the ideals they have in view and the position already attained in women's organizations in Western Canada. Miss McCallum is an earnest and enthusiastic advocate of women being given their true place of co-operative service with men in the community and is always able to inspire her audiences with her own high conception of what may be accomplished if the organization of women's work is undertaken with earnestness and intelligence.

Community Life

The evening session was opened by an address from the mayor of the city, who emphasized the patriotic responsibilities resting upon us in these days of national testing. He was followed by R. A. Hoey, of Dugald, Man., who spoke on community life and the necessity of undertaking the tasks of social economic reconstruction with energy and intelligence. He expressed the view that no organization was better fitted to contribute to this end than the Grain Growers. None was more representative or less sectional and if it can, by its influence, gradually eliminate the waste and the competition of our present system and unite our people not to crush existing institutions, but to consolidate the affairs of the community for the general good it will be of incalculable advantage. Many phases of our life were under such reconstruction. Not only distribution of commodities and social life, but insurance and banking need to be influenced toward the elimination of meaningless competition. This is the psychological moment and the responsibility is ours.

The closing addresses of the convention were given by Rev. J. W. Churchill who spoke on the challenge of the present world crises and W. R. Wood who dealt with the community service which may be rendered by the Grain Growers' movement and the ideals toward which it is moving.

SPRINGFIELD CONVENTION

Perhaps one of the most successful conventions ever held in the Springfield district was held in Dugald on Thursday, March 14. The attendance at the afternoon session was made up chiefly of young men to whom a special invitation had been sent. W. J. Wilson, president of the district, presided and addresses were given by Dr. Bland, J. C. McDermott, and Bruce Eddie. A period for discussion was allowed after each address and not during the entire session was there an uninteresting moment.

Refreshments were served by the ladies at the close of the afternoon session, and Dr. Bland kindly consented to conduct a question drawer immediately afterwards, much to the delight and satisfaction of all present.

The evening session was held in the Methodist church. R. A. Hoey, district director, presided. There was not a vacant seat in the building when Dr. Bland began his address, "Canada after the War," which was the chief feature of the evening's proceedings. The speaker was in one of his happiest moods and for an hour and a half kept the mind of his audience riveted on

progressive and stimulating truths.

Springfield district has now three co-operative stores, one of these having been recently organized in an exclusively foreign-speaking section of the district. We see no reason why this co-operative trading movement, together with community club work and church union, should not become a distinctive feature of our Western life. Let us lead the world in something that is really practical and progressive.—R.A.H.

WOMEN'S SECTIONS

Several Women's Sections of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association have been formed since the annual convention recently held in Brandon. There is room and need for at least 200 more sections before another annual convention comes round. Miss Amy J. Roe, secretary of the provincial Women's Sections, whose office is at 290 Vaughan Street, Winnipeg, is prepared to give any information and assistance regarding sections, or the place of women in the association. Those members of the association who have the best interests of the association at heart are asked to co-operate with Miss Roe in enlisting the farm women in the association, through Women's Sections wherever possible, but in any case in the general association. If there is a willingness and desire on the part of five women in the community to form a Women's Section communicate immediately with Miss Roe. Full instructions will be forwarded by her and where possible an organizer will be sent.

SWAN LAKE SOCIAL MEETING

Swan Lake Grain Growers gathered men, women and children from town and country together in a social way on the evening of Friday, March 15, in the town hall. After an enjoyable program of literary and musical numbers had been given, the meeting was addressed by J. L. Brown, of Pilot Mound, the vice-president of the provincial association. Mr. Brown expressed his pleasure at the large gathering and especially at the presence of the women, who in this age are more than ever going hand and hand with the men in their pursuits of economic justice and the all round square deal. He instanced some of the advantages secured by the farmers' organization in the past and dwelt upon the necessity of pursuing their endeavors in united strength till other things urgently needed for public well-being are attained. He commended co-operative buying as a means of improving conditions, making it clear that the Grain Growers have no enmity to the local retailer, but only desire that the distribution of commodities shall be conducted economically and justly.

A light lunch was then served and a profitable evening brought to a close by singing the National Anthem.

TREHERNE RESOLUTION

At a recent meeting of the Treherne local association the following resolution was unanimously passed:—

That in view of the fact that a very serious strike among the coal miners of Western Canada took place during the summer of 1917, and also another during the present winter, 1918 (namely the Drumheller strike), we realizing how great a loss it means each day that these mines are not being operated, as the life, comfort and prosperity of the people of Canada to a large extent is dependent on this supply of fuel. Also these strikes, by holding up Canada are indirectly working out to the disadvantage of Britain and her Allies in carrying on this great war, which may be the main object why these strikes are brought about, as we are led to believe that a very large percentage of

the mine workers are of the same nationality of and in sympathy with our enemies. We therefore, would urge the Dominion Government to take some action to prevent a recurrence of these disturbances during war times.

THE MACDONALD DRIVE

Under the splendid generalship of the district director the advance in MacDonald continues. Successful organization meetings were held on February 21 and 22, at Tobacco Creek and Altamont. They were addressed by Andrew Graham, of Pomeroy, and Peter Wright, of Myrtle, and with such good effect that branches have been organized at each place which give promise of developing into strong and effective associations. At Tobacco Creek, W. Gilbert Weir was elected president and Frank L. Brown, Rosebank, P.O., secretary; and at Altamont, Geo. A. Crampton was elected president and P. Wagner, Altamont P.O., secretary. MacDonald district is making a splendid bid for the position of banner district in the province. Now it is "up to" the others.

NORTH STAR RALLY

The North Star branch is only a small unit of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association, with only 28 paid-up members for last year, but it is big enough to realize the importance of the movement and its own local responsibility, and in order to raise some money and give everybody in the vicinity an opportunity of seeing for themselves what it is doing a big rally was arranged for the evening of February 28. A fine program was prepared by the committee consisting of an address by Magnus Peterson, the president of the association, on what the United Grain Growers had accomplished and what this branch had done during the past year. There were also songs and recitations and an address by H. Danielson, and in addition to this the committee got a motion picture man to come up with his machine. The machine was placed upon the platform in the hall and the screen hung above the front door, this worked out as well as in any theatre in Winnipeg. The pictures being very good everybody enjoyed them immensely.

The supper consisting of cakes, sandwiches and coffee was prepared by the energetic ladies of the community. The weather was quite favorable and over 100 people turned out. The program lasted well up to one o'clock a.m., but no one was tired and only the older people went home then. Their departure just provided room for dancing which was enjoyed for several hours. Altogether this affair was a big success and quite a nice sum of money was realized, the admission being only 25 cents, the net proceeds were \$28, so the North Star branch is well prepared for the year's work.

The annual meeting of the North Star local association, held on March 19, elected the following officers for the year: President, Magnus Peterson; vice-president, J. A. Johansson; secretary, G. E. Thordarson; directors, B. Thompson, John Valdimarson, Barney Ingimundson, Wm. Peterson, Peter Jacobson, J. A. Johansson; auditors, D. Valdimarson and B. Eggolfson.

The North Star branch is very much alive and expects to continue so.

The merger, as distinct from the combine and the gentlemen's agreement, was almost unknown in Canada before 1907. It is a new development in tariff, industrial and financial economy, which began just as soon as promoters realized that at the revision of 1907 more protection was given to many industries, and that for a few years to come, at any rate, the privileged interests of the new Feudalism were in little danger at Ottawa.—Edward Porritt in "Sixty Years of Protection in Canada."