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EDITORIAL

Need of Produce Markets

The breaking of the prairie sod and the growing of grain calls for greater markets and more extensive market facilities. In many parts, and especially in Alberta, where "King Wheat" does not reign supreme, but where mixed farming is practiced to a great extent, one of the prime needs of the farmer is an established produce market.

There are many advantages to be gained both by the producer and the consumer to have a market house, where farmers or gardeners may display and offer for sale what their efforts have brought forth from the soil. There it is a producer may go and find a customer, either a private citizen or a merchant, and receive cash for his sales; otherwise he might have to seek over town for one who desires to purchase, or he might be forced to trade out his commodities for what the dry goods man offers him. With the merchant it is a matter of barter, but where the consumer buys directly from the producer usually it is a cash sale. The consumer is likewise benefited, for at such a place he may procure for his household everything he desires direct from the producer.

Few centers in this western country can boast of such a market. Recently the city of Strathcona, in northern Alberta, provided quarters and established a suitable building where farmers bring and sell their products. Apartments are provided for vegetables as well as eggs and dairy products. It has proven an unqualified success. Every thriving town where farmers and gardeners go to dispose of their produce should have such a market. Not only would it aid producers in disposing of what they have to sell, but it would stimulate prices, and consequently promote mixed farming and the growing of garden products on farms surrounding the town.

Where Does the Price Go?

With the idea of obtaining something definite in regard to hog marketing, readers a few weeks ago were asked to discuss the question of the local buyers' profits, as that seemed about the only point in connection with the hog business on which information at hand did not make the situation entirely clear. Hogs have been selling at unusually high prices for some months, and packers claim that at the prices paid there should be a good slice of profit for the producers. Producers, however, are not over-enamored of what they get out of the business. So there the matter stands.

Packers at Winnipeg are paying from eight and a half to nine cents per pound live weight for pork, and if farmers are not receiving within a reasonable margin of this, after freight charges are deducted, then too much of the price is sticking to the man between the producer and the wholesale buyer. The net profit made by local buyers on a car of hogs is estimated by correspondents at from $50.00 to $200.00, or from fifty cents to $2.00 per head. This is given as the average profit left after freight charges, feed in transit and shrinkage have been met, as what accrues to the buyer for getting a shipment together and marketing it. Within a reasonable distance of market, say 300 miles, freight and shrinkage are estimated to equal half a cent per pound, so the buyer who buys on a margin of a cent a pound has half a cent per pound left, or fifty cents per hundred for the buying. In Ontario where hogs are more plentiful than here and buyers are satisfied with smaller remuneration for their time, from ten to twenty cents per hundred, clear of freight and shrinkage, is considered sufficient to cover the cost of buying. Here, however, where a much larger area has to be covered to gather in a load of hogs, and more time is consumed in taking a shipment to market and returning, to say nothing of the larger profit looked for by buyers, fifty cents per hundred clear is not an abnormally large profit. We doubt if many of our hog-raisers under existing conditions would undertake to ship for much less.

There are two ways in which the cost of hog marketing can be reduced. The first is to raise more hogs, and the second is to force the railways to give a faster live-stock freight service. As long as buyers have to scour over two or three hundred square miles of territory for hogs, and find when shipping day comes that they have about enough to fill one corner of a car, and as long as a bunch of hogs can be picked up in a district, say, once in two months, just so long will buyers require a profit of fifty cents per hundredweight, or more, to pay them for the time spent in gathering a shipment. Similarly, as long as the railways are permitted to make any speed convenient, between the shipping point and the market, making 100 miles in twenty-four hours sometimes, and at other times not doing quite as well, so long will heavy losses fall on the producer by weight-shrinkage in transit.

There are other features of hog marketing that react unfavorably for the producer, among which might be mentioned the packers' practice of buying off cars instead of allowing the seller to feed and regain some of the weight lost, and the local buyers' general practice of paying a flat price for everything that classes as hog, regardless of type or quality. But these can very well be left over. Perusal of the contributions in another column of this issue on the marketing phase of the hog industry is worth any reader's while.

Fighting Sow Thistle

Perennial sow thistle, that persistent weed with bright yellow blossom and vigorous running rootstock, with its natural tendency to send up a shoot from every few inches of length, has become recognized as one of the most serious menaces to farming in many parts of the West. The Manitoba Weed Act—an act that has done much good—has been responsible for farmers appearing in court and paying heavy fines. Even weed inspectors—the men who are responsible for the enforcement of this new act—have been found negligent. Perennial sow thistle can be branded as the main factor in causing the trouble.

Some claim that it is impossible to eradicate this terrible pest. Others, perhaps blessed with a little more persistence or agricultural fighting ability, will not grant that this assertion is true. They have in some cases succeeded in conquering the weed, or, at least, prevented it from securing a foothold, whereas surrounding farms are practically overrun. Few farms in Eastern Manitoba are absolutely free from its ravages. Some do not know the weed and look upon it as being the prairie sunflower, or the daisy, until it has secured such stand as to be a real danger.

But how can farms be free from it? The seed, if allowed to mature, blows for miles, and settles perhaps on a farm or in a district formerly exempt. For one season it may be there in a single stem. Perhaps that stem does not mature seed. But the root system develops and the following year shows a circular patch with dozens of stems and a great tendency to spread. It is not many seasons before several such patches are in evidence, and soon whole fields are completely overrun, to the exclusion of valuable crops.

For weeks past these dread seeds have been blowing too and fro in many parts of Western Canada. Despite all that weed inspectors have done, plants stood undisturbed all summer and were allowed to produce seed. It