

S.G.G.A. Executive Report

Reviewing Management, Specific Activities and Business Policy of the Association

The annual report of the executive of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, presented at the Regina convention, and which contains also the secretary's report and the treasurer's statement, gives a comprehensive review of the association's activities. The executive was gratified to have such an encouraging report in view of the way in which the work had been affected by the war. The co-operative purchasing activities particularly had met almost insurmountable obstacles of de-ranged, inefficient and insufficient transportation facilities, continued shortage of supplies and rise of prices, the enlistment and conscription of a number of the most experienced of the staff and the continued untiring attempts on the part of organized trade to frustrate the efforts in co-operative purchasing. In spite of this the department prospered out of all proportion with previous years. During the year a large number of conferences had been attended by members of the executive, and some were in attendance at each of the 16 district conventions held during November and December, and at a large number of local Grain Growers' gatherings.

Canadian Council of Agriculture Recognized

"Probably in no year since the inception of the Grain Growers' Association were the results of its work in various conferences so evident or so great as during the year 1917," the report continues. "One important victory and one that should have permanent and far-reaching effect, was winning from members of the government at Ottawa recognition of the Canadian Council of Agriculture as the mouthpiece of the western farmers, and the submission to it before enactment of the proposed regulations to commandeer the 1917 wheat crop. Had the Grain Growers' Association in all the years of its existence accomplished nothing else, it would still have fully justified its being by its service to western agriculture in this one matter alone. Your executive has no desire to cast any discredit upon those who made the proposal which the council saw fit in your interest to reject, but wishes to impress upon you the almost incalculable value to yourselves of being fully organized and able to express yourselves collectively through a common central official body fully conversant with all the details of local conditions of grain production and marketing. Probably as a result of this action on the part of the council the federal government saw fit to constitute a Board of Grain Supervisors, composed of men carefully selected to represent the various interests concerned in production and marketing of grain and embracing in its membership the president of the council, H. W. Wood of Calgary, Alberta. The government conferred very wide powers upon this body of men. Through it, after very careful investigation, prices for the 1917 wheat crop were fixed and arrangements arrived at eliminating all speculation in connection with the handling of it.

"It will interest you to know that at the various sittings of the Board of Grain Supervisors, where evidence was received from the various bodies interested, practically every organization outside of those which hold membership in the Council of Agriculture, requested the board not to fix the price of wheat but set a maximum and a minimum price with a wide margin between, their purpose beyond all doubt being to leave full opportunity for those skilled in the business to buy the farmers' wheat as near the lowest price as possible and to sell the same to the Allies' buyer as near the maximum as possible. A clearer illustration of the fact that all profit of speculation must be taken either out of the producer or the consumer could not well be cited. It is, of course, not known whether the persistent demands of this dozen or so powerful organizations that minimum and maximum prices be set would have influenced the board of supervisors or not, but it would appear that the board appreciated the attitude taken by the Council of Agriculture in demanding a fixed price and such control as would eliminate all speculation, for the chairman called the written statement of the Council 'a statesman-like presentation.' If time permitted it, real value would accrue to your organization by careful analysis of the present situation of grain marketing in Western Canada. Suffice to say, however, that after eliminating from the calculation all transportation cost, the spread between the price actually paid the producer of wheat and that paid by the British miller is very much less than in years when there was no government control, and when the investment required was a mere fraction of what it now is. What would have been the case had our wheat been handled without government control is very well exemplified by the enormous difference between the prices received by many farmers, and those demanded of others for oats handled without such control.

"The question naturally arises, and it is a very

proper one for you to deliberate while in convention, shall we go back after the war to the same old methods of marketing of wheat when it has been so clearly demonstrated that under government control equal if not better service can be secured for a mere fraction of the cost which formerly was levied upon society?

"Amongst other important results of conferences participated in are the fixing of prices on flour and mill feed, securing of an agreement from the millers to sell feed without the old and burdensome condition of selling with it larger quantities of flour, government control of prices and of profits on many commodities, etc.

Grocers' Monopoly Frustrated

"One of the most important conferences attended by members of your executive was one with W. J. Hanna, Food Controller, and his colleagues, at Ottawa, when the outrageous recommendations of the Grocers' Committee for the control of the distribution of groceries and other food supplies were discussed. At some time during the convention an opportunity will be provided for further discussion of these recommendations, but your executive wishes to point your attention to the fact that the or-



J. B. MUSSELMAN
Secretary Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association

ganized grocery trade is still waging war, as it did three years ago, upon co-operative undertakings, and that in these recommendations it was seeking to deal a death blow to co-operative merchandising and to establish for itself a monopoly of the business of food distribution, an effort which might well have succeeded but for the vigorous fight put up by your own representatives and other friends of true national economy. That this attempt was made in the name of patriotism and that it has a great many powerful supporters amongst the self-styled 'legitimate' traders proves that not all the enemies of democracy live across the Atlantic.

"Following out our general policy of departmentalizing the association's activities with a man at the head of each department, your executive secured the services of H. H. McKinney as superintendent of organization. The effects are already evident of the aggressive organization policy thus launched. We bespeak for Mr. McKinney the hearty co-operation of all. We are confident that his ambitious program of '30,000 members for 1918' is not at all beyond possibility of attainment if every present member of the association will support it.

"During the year no grants were received by the association for carrying on organization work except that from the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company. This company, always closely allied with the interests of the association, made a grant to your organization department this year of the generous sum of \$5,000.

Extended Publicity

"In line with our aggressive organization policy and educational campaign, we greatly extended our use of the public press late in the year. Almost the whole of the Saskatchewan press has for years been friendly to the association, and very large numbers of papers have from time to time copied association articles, or published articles especially furnished to them. But during 1917 special arrangements, under which in each Saturday issue there is reserved for our exclusive use a page or the major portion of one, was entered into with the Regina

Daily Post, The Regina Leader and The Saskatoon Star. Arrangements with other important Saskatchewan papers are pending also.

"Under the agreement entered into with the publishers of these important periodicals, no restriction whatever is placed upon the character of the matter published in the association's page or the policy advocated therein. We are at liberty to differ as much as we choose from the editorial policy of the papers in question. Each of these pages is therefore an official organ of the association, controlled entirely by it and published under the supervision of the Central secretary. Through the use of these papers the association's propaganda is being spread in thousands of homes in Saskatchewan that could not otherwise be reached, and that are not reached by The Grain Growers' Guide, in which, as a matter of course, the association still retains its page. By this means alone we are reaching each week probably 50,000 homes in Saskatchewan. You are deeply indebted to the publishers of the papers named for their friendly co-operation in forwarding the educational and propagandist work of the association, and we should like to see beside The Guide one or other of these papers go into the home of every farmer of this province.

"The phenomenal growth during recent years of the prestige and influence of your association and the high respect in which it has come to be held by the general public is well demonstrated by the treatment it is receiving from these great Saskatchewan daily papers and by the press in general. Only a few years ago it was very difficult to get the views of the association before the general public, because of the apathy, indifference, or opposition of the public press. Today, at least so far as Saskatchewan is concerned, this has all been changed, and now the public press is our chief agent for the spreading of those doctrines for which you have so long been contending. The wonderful progress which many of these doctrines have made and the grip which many of them have now secured upon the general public of the Dominion of Canada ought to fill you with the utmost satisfaction.

The Women's Section

"Much good work was accomplished during the year by the Women's Section. Its activities will be reported separately by its own officers, but no doubt may be entertained as to their value to the general movement. There has been a tendency with many to think of the Women's Section as something separate and aside from the general association. This impression should be corrected. The Women's Section is formed from women members of a local, and the women members have exactly the same standing in the local and in the association generally as have the men. Women are as much entitled to hold office in a local or in the Central as are men, and the provision for Women's Sections is merely intended to provide convenient machinery under which the women can get together by themselves for the prosecution of those activities which they are by sex and training especially fitted for, and in which men generally do not seriously interest themselves.

"Besides a number of local seed fairs held throughout the province, there was again held at the Regina exhibition an association seed grain exhibit. It is regrettable that the number of exhibitors participating was less than in 1916, for after all, grain production is the principal source of livelihood of 90 per cent. of our farmers. The following is a list of the prize-winners and prizes awarded: 1st, Bulyea, \$100; 2nd, Rockhaven, \$75; 3rd, Assiniboia, \$50; 4th, Speers, \$40; 5th, Belbeck, \$30; 6th, Dafoe, \$25; 7th, MacRorie, \$20; 8th, Belmae, \$15; 9th, Keddlleston, \$10; 10th, Hay Creek, \$5. Specials: Barley, Buffalo Horn Local, gold watch; Wheat, Rockhaven Local, gold watch; Oats, Rockhaven Local, gold watch.

"It is worthy of note that Rockhaven Local, which in 1916 won first prize and the grand challenge shield donated by the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company, was successful in 1917, taking second prize for the group and special prizes for the best samples of wheat and oats. Bulyea Local is to be congratulated on winning first prize and on being the holder of the grand challenge shield. Bulyea was also a prize-winner last year, occupying fourteenth position. This undertaking is worthy of the heartiest co-operation of all locals throughout the province. These annual exhibits can be made of the utmost value to the farmers of Saskatchewan as well as to the S.G.G.A. if large numbers of locals will participate each year.

Banner Competition

"Last year an interesting banner competition was instituted in connection with the convention.

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