

Co-Operative Marketing of Commodities

(Continued from 4th Page.)

Exportation Board, which had prices here, and ordered that no fish be shipped before an agreement of sale, misnamed "Outright Sales," had been entered into. Nothing more injurious could have been done. No sane customer would agree in advance to pay a fixed price for an article he had not seen, and he felt the price was lower than it would be for similar goods in the market when arrived, or he saw the market for escape if the price should fall. Actually, the enforcement of the policy gave our markets largely to our competitors from foreign countries, and caused such an accumulation of fish here that early in the summer of 1920, the Board surprised us as it were, permitted the exportation of fish for "speculative purposes" to go forward for "the markets" and later on the "markets" in panic, not because the Regulations were abandoned, but because they had already done their deadly work. In this attempt, as in the case of the fish had not been pooled, the fish to sell—possessed only by the owner—and authority to fix price and conditions—possessed by the Board—did not reside in the same person, and confusion and loss resulted. A distinguished British statesman has said: "Newfoundland has the sport of historic misfortune." The greater misfortune has befallen us than those Fishery Regulations, and a tragedy it was that wisdom was not the handmaid of courage and the opportunity offered. The fish in foreign markets from time to time, competing for sale, has, of course, been "consigned," that is, sent to agents for sale, and a confusion of this kind has led to a denunciation of "consignment" as causing the evils of competition. If the consignments of any one market were all to one buyer, and the owners would not be "unfair" but natural, and bidders could play offers against each other, the confusion of ideas led directly to the attempt to enforce the so-called "Outright Sales," or agreement to sell in advance of shipment, with results I have referred to. In the "Principles and Practice of Co-operative Marketing," the author of which is a authority, it is said, "The Free-Trade method of sale (that is, outright sales) had brought the fruit of California to bankruptcy; the delivery system of selling directly to customers in the United States eliminated the speculative element at the point of production, and producers have been able to sell their markets evenly supplied." He says that California found the "bright sales" in her home markets were destructive, and substituted for them the practice of "consignment" to agents in the markets.

NATIONALIZATION. The ancient sore of undue competition in our markets abroad is, in fact, still an open one, and on this side are preachers of the doctrine of policy, who say that any method cannot be improved by national interference, and on the other side are preachers of a proposal to nationalize the whole business of exporting fish. Between this doctrine of doing nothing for a dangerous condition, and doing a thing which would be the condition disastrous, I offer a proposal for voluntary co-operation by producers, which shall abolish the disease which saps our strength, and shall avoid the terrors of national control. There is before us a method of working great harm, without "letting it alone" nor of interfering has abated it one bit. It must be destroyed, or it will destroy us. Why not try my suggestion of enlightened co-operation by persons directly interested in the results. "Nationalization," as stated, means this, that a "Marketing Board" appointed by politicians, all the fish of the Colony shall be bought at home, and abroad, fishermen being paid the fixed by the Board, but the sale abroad being such as the Board may be able to procure through agents. The scheme would have two virtues potentially—the one could fix standards of quality, and enforce a cull; and it would terminate competition in the sale abroad of Newfoundland fish. In other words, over the great question of "nationalization" it would be a centralized despotic authority, the defects of the proposal far outweigh its merits. It would be a monopoly, concentrating, as it were, the property of the fishermen; taking the fish at the Board's own price, and selling it at the best form of Government, and it is a free born Briton's instinct to follow well, but drive the fish from the market. But would this "nationalization" be "benevolent"? Political measures are apt to be partisan, and a Board would necessarily be subject to political influences. Take the case of call, for instance? Would the Board submit to a right call of the fish at which they would

have no direct interest—after it had been taken by the Board? Would not the same mingled force and tragedy be played as followed upon the Standardization Rules of 1920? Or consider the matter of prices to be paid by the Board! To provide for losses in bad years, the Board would have to build up a Surplus Fund, by paying the fishermen less in good years than their fish would really be worth, or the losses would have to be imposed upon the general taxpayers of the Colony, through customs duties, or some other form of taxation. In the former case, the fishermen would be robbed, and in the latter the general taxpayers. Or take the matter of sales abroad! The Board would have to appoint agents. Political influence would compel selection of partisan workers. The members of the Board, not being allowed to continue in the fish business on their own account, would, if experienced men, require great salaries, paid by the public, or out of profits on the fish; and having no direct personal financial interest in the business they controlled, they would prove more desirous to hold their offices, by pleasing their political masters, than to discharge their duties free from all extraneous influences.

OFFICIAL REGULATION IS NOT "CO-OPERATION."

Official regulation—no matter how attempted—is not "Co-operative Marketing" or "Pooling." The words connote voluntary and combined action by owners of commodities, while "Exportation Boards" and "Marketing Boards" are based upon authority by law, imposed upon unwilling owners, power to dispose being divorced from ownership. Official regulation is Autocracy. Co-operation is Democracy. Obedience is the keynote of one, and free will of the other; obedience imposed and exercised by outsiders as compared with concerted action by the persons immediately concerned. Official regulation is a form of slavery. Co-operation is a form of liberty. An appointed Marketing Board would be overlords, despots, tyrants, but a Central Exchange would be the delegates of the fishermen who had caught and made the fish, or of the merchant who had bought it, and the owners would care for it till final disposition in the market. Official regulation is a device of politicians, for partisan ends, and certain to be followed by failure, absolutely universal in attempts at Governmental interference in trade matters. Co-operative marketing of commodities absolutely excludes interference except by "producers," and aims solely at achieving best financial results.

OBJECTION TO APPLICATION HERE.

It has been objected that co-operative marketing methods cannot be applied here because (1) Our fishermen generally—unlike California fruit growers—are not sufficiently educated to understand and work them; (2) the fishermen while awaiting returns from exported fish. If these objections were fatal, the fact would constitute the strongest possible indictment of the methods of business hitherto pursued, which have resulted

ed—the hypothesis is—in ignorance and poverty so profound that the people cannot rise out of it by methods adopted elsewhere. But I do not admit the conclusiveness of the objections, while sadly agreeing that lack of education and of means make more difficult here than elsewhere the general adoption of Co-operative Marketing. The exporting merchants could co-operate. There are many planters, vessel and trapowners, and collectors of fish by purchase or barter, who could co-operate. The number would constantly increase as the advantages become more perceptible. Co-operation by present day exporters would and competition abroad in the sale of all our fish, would standardize freight, lead to the abolition of many difficulties in foreign markets, and powerfully affect the cull of fish here at home. What is there, really, I would ask, to prevent a combination to-day amongst St. John's exporters, or Burin Peninsula exporters, for instance, to adopt pooling and co-operative marketing. Our fishermen are very intelligent, if not well educated, and co-operative marketing would be an education in itself for them, the lessons of which they would be very quick in learning. As to the fishermen's financial ability to maintain themselves while waiting returns, I would point to the Savings Banks for evidence that there is money for safe investment, and that if the supplying system can be "scotched" by Co-operative Marketing, providence will decrease, and independence increase, until all the fishermen will be independent in means. The system—or lack of system—upon which the fishery business has been conducted, has not created millionaires, but it has done much to pauperize a hardy and deserving people. Fewer fortunes have been made in it, I think, than have rewarded equal enterprise in other callings elsewhere. But, on the other hand, the people generally are not as well to do as people in the same walks of life elsewhere. The system—with its rapid ups and downs has created improvident habits, and has resulted in the conditions objects tell me make co-operation impossible. It has undoubtedly caused widespread, dangerous class dissatisfaction. The cry of "Down with the Merchant" has appealed to "the ancient grudge" of the toiler, conscious that he has not reaped his fair reward and inclined to blame suppliers, who, as a class, and upon the average, have been sufferers from the same wrong methods of doing business. That "ancient grudge" is still alive, that dangerous cry still awakes echoes. "Nationalization" is a panacea which will appeal convincingly to the prevalent sense of injury held by the majority, unless there is offered in its stead a wiser, better way. That way can be put "Over the Top" if vision, initiative, courage and resolve be shown.

OLD PRINCIPLES NEWLY APPLIED

This that I propose is not new in principle. I only suggest its application to conditions here. The citrus growers of California, the raisin growers of the San Joaquin, the apple growers of Okanagan, the grain growers of Canada's North-West, the fruit growers of Niagara, the apple

NICKEL

RUTH CHASE

Soprano.

(A) S'ETE (Chamisiade).

(B) MOTHER O' MINE (Tours).



MAURICE TOURNEUR VICTORY

Eileen Sedgwick in "The Diamond Queen." Coming: Jackie Cogan, The Kid Himself, in "Peck's Bad Boy."

GEORGE DALE

Tenor.

(A) DUNA (McGill).

(B) I HEAR A THRUSH AT EVE (Cadman).

NICKLE



WHEN FATHER BROKE HIS ARM. Pa never gets a story straight. He's always mixed about the date or where it was, or what occurred. Or who related what he heard. And every time he starts to tell some little story he knows well, Ma says: "No, Pa, as I recall that isn't how it was at all."

"Remember when I broke my arm," says Pa, "when we were on the farm. And I went out that slippery morning. A few days after Bud was born. To get some wood"—and Ma says: "Then?"

"Oh, Pa, don't tell that tale again! And anyhow, I know right well Bud wasn't born the day you fell."

"Two months before he came," says Ma.

"'Twas after he was born," says Pa; "I rather think I ought to know just when it was I suffered so."

"Maybe you ought," says Ma, "but still, I saw you tumble down the hill. And it was March with snow drifts high—"

"Bud wasn't born till next July."

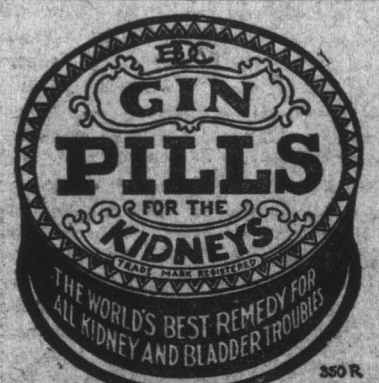
"I'd walk him round the floor," says Pa.

"You're all mixed up again," says Ma. "We'll ask Aunt Lizzie, she was there. She'd come to help." Says Ma: "I swear you're just as crazy as a loon. Aunt Lizzie didn't come till June. To argue on is most absurd. Bud wasn't born when that occurred."

I wish I knew just what it was or whether I was born or not. But I'll just have to sit and wait until Pa gets his story straight. And I have never heard at all just how it was he came to fall. For Pa and Ma can't yet agree which one came first—the fall or Ma.

Every Day a Tag Day.

TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING. The tag day nuisance has reached a point in Montreal where the newspapers are calling for strict police regulations. The public to receive some guarantee that the funds are not diverted to purposes or people other than those designated. In Montreal nearly every day, barring Sundays and church holidays, are tag days. Coming as often as they do, and with the general public none too sure where their ten cent pieces are going, there is a very natural hesitation on the part of the man on the street as to whether or not he will part with



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MUTT AND JEFF—

OLD MUTT IS A VERY CONVINCING ARITHMETIC TEACHER.

—By Bud Fisher.

