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and Home Magazine

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EDITORIAL.

OFFICIAL ORGANSHIP.

The Ontario Vegetable-growers' Association, in convention at Toronto this month, displayed sound sense in voting unanimously to reduce the membership fee from one dollar to fifty cents, and to discontinue having an official organ.

An official organ is a paper or journal adopted as the mouthpiece of a particular organization, the understanding commonly including an arrangement whereby it is supplied to all the members, along with, or for a slight consideration in addition to, the regular membership fee. On the face of it, the idea looks good. It seems an easy means of keeping all the members in touch with the work of the body, and acquainted with its official promulgations. The paper is also considered a more or less attractive bait to increase the membership, while the publisher is supposed to be recompensed for the reduction in his subscription price by the increased circulation of his paper.

In the light of experience, the subject takes on another aspect. First of all, from the standpoint of the organization, it is found that the official organ has little or nothing to publish which is not also communicated to its members through the mail, or that would not be otherwise given far greater prominence through the press as a whole. As a means of increasing membership, it is usually disappointing, while the net income to the association is seriously reduced by the charge for subscriptions to the official organ. There are always a number of people interested in the work of such organizations who are taking other papers which they prefer, and, while probably not refusing the official organ, they may value it little. As a means of attracting membership, a free subscription to a paper is probably not equal to an equivalent reduction in the membership fee.

There is another point to consider in this connection. For an organization, as such, to concentrate its patronage upon one paper is a more or less direct slap at others covering the same field. It cannot expect the same interest in its affairs, nor the same solicitude to increase its membership and further its work. Thus, on the whole, it probably loses more than it gains in the way of assistance by the press.

Still another point is that a paper which considers it has a sure grip on an organization, is liable, in a short time, to lapse into a state of somnolence. Thus, the official organ itself probably serves the organization less efficiently and with less alertness than it otherwise would.

From the standpoint of the publisher, also, the arrangement is bad. Commitment to the interests of one particular body detracts from the independence, the vigor and confidence inspired by his publication. His subscription lists become loaded up with names of people who are but indifferently interested in the paper. Moreover, self-preservation is the first law of nature. An editor or a publisher who depends on an organization to extend and maintain his subscription list, does not bring to his work the same zeal, efficiency or fertility of resource. A sort of dry-rot sets in, and his paper suffers accordingly.

"The Farmer's Advocate" has been repeatedly approached with a view to being made an official organ for this, that or the other body, but the publishers have always declined, feeling that such a relationship was not best, either for the paper or the organizations concerned, though in some cases these have been large and influential. The wisdom of this course is apparent in the steady growth and improvement of "The Farmer's Advocate," in the value of the service it renders, the

independence of attitude for which it is respected, and the principle of merit and self-reliance to which it has adhered.

We feel free, therefore, to commend to other associations the prudence of following the example of the Ontario Vegetable-growers. Of course, those bodies that rely on their own efforts, and do not receive Government subvention, have a right to do as they see fit in the matter, but, in the case of publicly-aided organizations, the Department granting such aid should examine into this matter, and take action to insure that no body receiving a public grant shall ally itself directly or indirectly with any particular publication, to the exclusion or prejudice of any other. A motto that will be found to work out excellently from every standpoint is to let every tub stand on its own bottom. Self-reliance is the tree that bears the choicest fruits of effort.

SCIENCE OF AGRICULTURE.

Farming is a trade, a business and a science. One must know and faithfully practice the trade to attain even an elementary success. To make much more than a frugal living, under any except the most favorable conditions, he must understand something of the economics of agriculture, and bring business methods and business judgment to bear upon his occupation; while, to attain a broad, full scope of success, the farmer must be not only a capable, thrifty worker and a wise business man, but he must also understand the science of agriculture. He must know not merely what to do, and how to do it, but he must know the why of things, else he will be nonplussed when changing times and conditions call for departure from the beaten paths.

The science of agriculture is not all confined to books. Much is expounded and discussed in weekly issues of such journals as "The Farmer's Advocate." Reading of these, and of such books as are therein recommended, will acquaint one in time with the cream of the teachings of agricultural science. There are scores of farmers who, starting with an ordinary public-school education, have in this way learned more of agricultural science than many an agricultural-college graduate possesses. Their knowledge may not be so broad, but their understanding is practical, being developed in keeping with their own experience. Join the progressive class. Read, study and reflect upon the contents of "The Farmer's Advocate," and persuade your neighbor to do the same. It will lead to a higher plane of business success, and a far deeper and more delightful interest in one's work.

DATE OF WARRANTY DEMAND POSTPONED.

It is announced through our English exchanges that the National Federation of Meat Traders have agreed to postpone the date for putting into operation the butchers' demand for a warranty with stock purchased, from Nov. 2nd to January 1st, 1909. The postponement appears to be due to Lord Carrington's intervention, and to his suggestion that the Federation should confer with the Central Chamber of Agriculture, and possibly with representatives of the Tuberculosis (Cattle) Committee. There is hope that a compromise may be effected by legislation recognizing the principle of compensation from national funds. Meanwhile, pending the conclusion of investigations by the Royal Commission on Tuberculosis, it is suggested that farmers might not be unwilling to adopt a system of insurance by which they would bear a share of the monetary loss which butchers are now liable to incur.

LIMITED EXPERIENCE MAY MISLEAD.

A very striking incident was related by Prof. Chas. S. Wilson, of Cornell University, at the recent convention of the Ontario Fruit-growers' Association, in the course of an address on orchard survey work in New York State. The objects of this work are to obtain data as to the results of different methods of orchard management, and with this end in view the orchardists of one county after another are visited by a man who makes note as to yields past and present, treatment of the orchards, etc. In some cases precise figures cannot be recalled, and the data acquired are more or less of the nature of estimates. However, in the aggregate of a large number of orchards it is believed that fairly accurate averages are obtained.

As illustrating the accuracy of the law of average, Prof. Wilson told of a speaker who brought into a meeting a number of slips of paper on which were struck off a single line of the same length in each case. Distributing these, he asked those present to guess the length of the line. Thirty guesses were made, varying from a quarter of an inch to an inch. The average of these guesses gave .723. Actual measurement showed a length of .72, as nearly as could be measured, or within three one-thousandths of an inch of the average of the estimates.

This law of averages has a very general application. It applies to practically all the lessons of farm experience. It applies to the results of co-operative and all other experiments. In almost any field of effort experience can be cited to prove almost any erroneous theory. One man will declare that he has tried two breeds of cows or of pigs, and that one was much superior to the other. Another will have had a contrary experience. One or both men may have had a better strain or better individuals of one breed than of the other; or may have given one better care or conditions in any of a dozen possible ways, thus unconsciously biasing the results of their experience. So it will be with various methods of crop rotation, garden practice, of spraying, and every other branch of farm activity.

In addition to the elements of error, prejudice and unrecognized bias which tend to such infinite variety of experience, there are other factors, such as the individual preference or aptitude of a particular farmer, and variations or peculiarities of local soil, climate and other circumstances, which make it necessary for every man to be an intelligent student of his own farm. It all goes to prove that no man is entitled to dogmatize general conclusions on the strength of his experience alone. In fact, there is, perhaps, nothing much more misleading than a limited personal experience. It so often lends an appearance of reliability to conclusions that may be very far from generally correct.

We do not depreciate the importance of practical personal experience. It is of the very greatest importance, but to be helpful in the best and largest sense, it must be supplemented by a wide outlook, and an extensive knowledge of the experience of others similarly engaged, not only in one's own community, but all over the country, and all over the world.

Whether we like the covered milk pail or not, it must be admitted that the old-fashioned, twelve-quart pail flared the wrong way. A milk pail should be as small at the top as one can conveniently milk into. Myriads of bacteria are constantly dropping into milk pails, borne by manure, dust and hair. The smaller the opening, the less the dirt and the fewer the bacteria admitted.