

United We Milk---Divided We Don't.

How the Dairymen's League, Inc., of New York State is Organized, and What It Has Accomplished.

THE present situation with regard to milk production has been of such a nature as to shake the business of every milk producer in Eastern Canada, and a large portion of the United States. To anyone who has attempted to study the situation carefully the need for efficient organization among producers has been brought home most strongly, and the purpose of this article is to describe an organization which we believe to be the strongest and most efficient milk producers' organization in America, namely, the Dairymen's League, Inc., of New York and adjoining States. This organization at the present time has a membership of 85,952 milk producers organized into 1,116 local branches, and owning 914,680 cows. The organization largely centres in the State of New York, where 64,956 members, affiliated with 797 branches of the League and owning 724,665 cows, are situated. In addition to the members residing in New York State, however, there are 15,838 members in the northern half of Pennsylvania; 3,106 members in the northern part of New Jersey; 1,038 members in the western portion of Vermont; and 835 and 179 members in the western sections of Connecticut and Massachusetts, respectively.

The Dairymen's League was organized to oppose and prevent monopoly in the production or sale of milk, to protect both consumers and producers against unlawful combinations, to promote legislation and board of health regulations beneficially affecting the interests of milk producers, to encourage competition in the sale of milk, and to act as selling agent for each member in marketing the product of the farm dairy. Buyers of milk formerly owned a large number of the country milk plants, and they were able to dictate the price of milk so arbitrarily that farmers were forced to accept the buyer's price or be deprived of a market. The situation was, previous to the organization of the League, so uneconomic that either producers had to organize or go out of the business in large numbers. In fact, in June, 1900, the number of cows two years or over kept for milk, in New York State, was 1,501,608. In April, 1910, the estimated number was only 1,343,000, while by January, 1916, this number had further decreased to 1,270,836. It may or may not be significant of the protective value of the Dairymen's League to dairymen of New York State that by February, 1918 the number of dairy cows, and heifers in the State had increased to 1,375,793. The story of the organization of the Dairymen's League, and its growth up to the present time, is most interesting. Up to a certain point it is a story of conditions in dairying in Ontario and Eastern Canada. Canadian dairymen are now facing conditions which will compel them, as similar conditions compelled New York State dairymen, to organize efficiently or leave the business in large numbers. The story of the League organization and its progress to date can well be told in the words of Fred. A. Hoar, who is an editor of the Dairymen's League News, and is especially charged with the duty of keeping before the consumer in the large market centres the beneficent influence of the League on the milk situation. We quote his remarks as they were given to us on the occasion of our recent visit to New York City, where the headquarters of the League are located, and where an editor of "The Farmer's Advocate" spent some time in an effort to gather together information that would be of value to the milk producers of Eastern Canada.

WHY ORGANIZATION WAS NECESSARY.

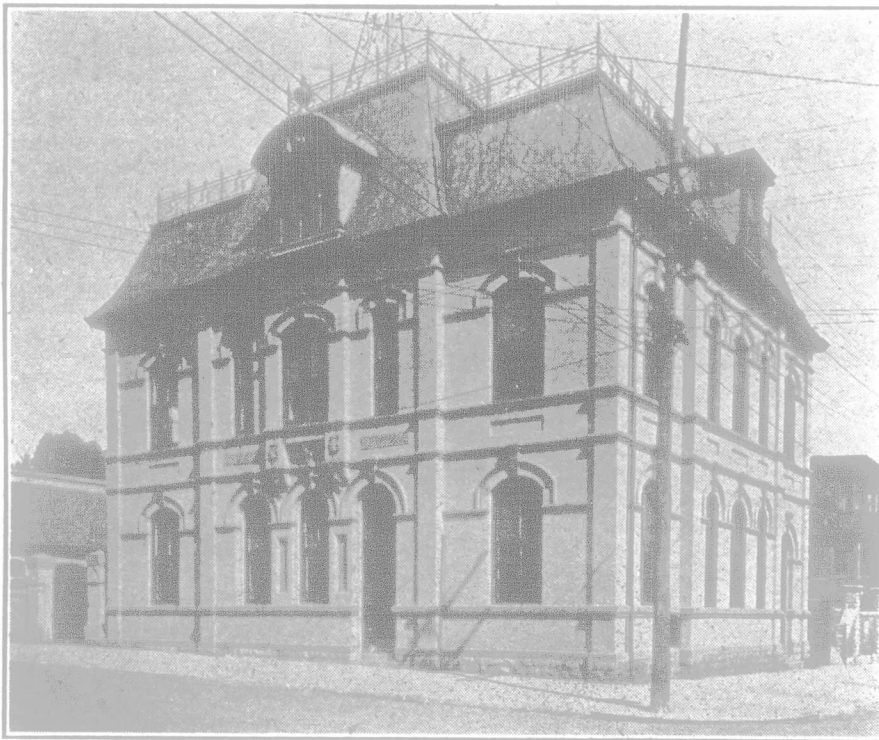
"Up to the fall of 1916 the dairy farmer was dependent upon and subject to the business whims of the men to whom he sold his milk. For many years prior to that period; in fact, ever since milk had been shipped to the cities, the distributor and manufacturer fixed the price to the producer. No matter what it cost the farmer to produce milk, he had absolutely nothing whatever to say about his selling price. The farmer was obliged to accept the price the buyer posted at the country milk stations, or the milk was thrown back on his hands. In the light of all that has happened since October, 1916, it seems remarkable that such a one-sided system could exist in the marketing of an important food commodity. It did exist, however, because the dealers were then more or less unanimous in believing that the system was a good thing for the buyers of milk. The individual farmer resented the idea that he had nothing to say about the price of his finished product, but as an individual he was helpless.

"About ten years before the breaking away from this obnoxious system, a few dairy farmers of vision planted the seed of rebellion against the existence of this manifestly unfair and economically unsound method by which the dealers permitted the farmers to market their product. They declared the farmer should stop being a slave. They insisted that as one of the two parties to a sale he was entitled to say what was a fair price, based on the costs of production, instead of being compelled to take what was offered him.

"The fathers of the movement for the liberation of the dairy farmer included Albert Manning, John T. Gerow, F. H. Thomson, and others. After a great deal of preliminary work in various dairy sections, the Dairymen's League was launched formally on August 24, 1907, at Middletown, New York, through the efforts of the Granges of Orange, Ulster and Sullivan Counties, New York, and Sussex County, New Jersey, with 691 members owning 14,719 cows. The certificate of incorporation was filed in New Jersey on October 4, 1907.

"The organization work was carried on for several years with much patience and persistence by a mere handful of men. By the middle of 1916 the League had a membership of about 13,000, and the men who were guiding the destinies of the organization decided that the League was then sufficiently strong to lock horns with the dealers and fight for independence. The executive committee was instructed to formulate plans whereby the farmers could establish a satisfactory price they should receive for their milk. In September the committee reported that the base price for October should be \$2.05 per 100 pounds for milk testing 3 per cent. butter-fat. This was equivalent to about one cent more than the dealers had signified their willingness to give.

"For ten years prior to this date, farmers had been paid a monthly average price of \$1.60 for 100 pounds of milk, a base price averaging 3.4 cents a quart. For years thousands of farmers sold their milk below the cost of production. Because this was true, many



New Headquarters Building of the Holstein-Friesian Association of Canada, Brantford, Ontario.

voluntarily retired from the business of producing milk and confined themselves to other lines of farming, or went out of the business altogether. The state was dotted with abandoned dairy farms. Reports of State and Federal experts showed that the cow population of New York State was not keeping pace with the increase in population of the people. The situation was desperate and required a desperate remedy.

FIGHTING FOR COST OF PRODUCTION.

"When the decision was reached in September that the time was ripe for a square deal, there were about 15,000 members in the organization out of a total of more than 100,000 dairy farmers in the state. The demand for a 'League price' was met by the dealers with a point-blank refusal to consider it. They insisted that the price was excessive, and also denied the right of the farmers to have any part in the making of a price. The League announced that unless its farmers received the League price, they would refrain from delivering their milk at the dealers' shipping stations. A 'strike' was declared on October 1, 1916. From the very outset a wonderful spirit of co-operation manifested itself among the farmers. Men who were not League members joined in the movement to remove the dealers' yoke from the farmers' necks. Milk was manufactured into butter and cheese in the country. Practically none of it was wasted. The New York

City daily supply of fluid milk was reduced to a minimum. Politicians took up the cry that the League was starving the babies in cities by not shipping in their milk. On the other hand, the thinking public was not long in appreciating the fact that the farmers had been forced into a position of fighting for the salvation of their own business.

"The strike lasted two weeks, and most of the men who bore the burden of the fight then are still officers of the League to-day. The dealers spent vast sums of money trying to break the farmers' spirit and to disrupt the organization. In the end they were obliged to capitulate. They agreed to pay the League price, and from that moment the success of the League was assured. Farmers began to understand what organization meant to the individual farmer, and six weeks later the membership of the League had increased to 22,482 farmers, owning 336,940 cows.

"Thereafter, for a long period, the League and its officers were subjected to all kinds of petty persecutions and prosecutions, all of which had their inspiration in official sources. Investigation followed investigation. The officers of the League were indicted in New York County for conspiracy in connection with an alleged violation of the Donnelly Anti-Trust Act. Later, these indictments were quashed because the State Legislature amended the Anti-Trust Act so as to exempt agricultural groups from its operations. Everything possible was done by people, chiefly politicians, who did not understand, to inflame the public against the League, but as the months passed, there gradually came to be a better understanding on the part of the public as to the purposes and ideals of the League and the part the League played in the economic scheme of things.

"During the greater part of the war period the Federal Food Administration fixed the price of milk for the producer as well as for the consumer. The price for December, 1919, was fixed at \$4.08 per 100 pounds, after which Federal regulation of milk ceased. The League reduced the price for January, 1919, to \$4.01 per 100 pounds, and the dealers refused to accept it. Then occurred the second 'break' between the League and the buyers of milk. Instead of paying the League price, the dealers reached far out beyond League territory for milk for New York City, and brought it in from the middle west and as far north as Canada. It cost them thousands of dollars in the long run, and after eighteen days they gave up the fight against the League as a bad and expensive job. All through the so-called 'boycott' by the dealers the League farmers stuck loyally together and again demonstrated the power of organization in fighting for the right. On February 1, 1919, following the disturbance in business relations, the membership of the League had increased to 80,339, owning 858,403 cows.

THE LEAGUE AS SELLING AGENT.

"The price which the League receives for its milk is the result of an agreement between the League, as selling agent, and the dealers. The League is represented at all price negotiations by its executive committee. The dealers are represented by the conference committee of the New York Milk Dealers' Conference Board, an organization of all interests who buy milk from the farmers. As a general rule, the price has been agreed upon from month to month, although there have been exceptions by which the price was arranged for a longer period. In case the executive committee of the League is unable to come to an agreement with the dealers, the board of directors passes upon price terms.

"Since April first last, the League price has been based on the cost of production, as figured out by the Warren Formula, although for the previous twelve months the price plan was based, in the main, upon the wholesale price of butter and cheese. From the very inception of the League, the officers and members of the Board of Directors believed that the solution of the milk question, as far as the producers and consumers are concerned, lay in the control of the country milk plants by the farmers themselves, and to this end they have bent all their energies."

Thus is the story of the League told by one who, for many years, was a disinterested spectator and daily newspaper man, and who finally became convinced that the principles for which the producers were fighting in a long struggle with the dealers, were correct. The accompanying table gives the Dairymen's League monthly

DAIRYMEN'S LEAGUE PRICE SCHEDULE 200-210 MILE ZONE.

	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920
January.....	1.84	2.10	3.49	3.97	3.69	
February.....	1.78	2.05	3.31	3.50	3.48	
March.....	1.66	2.00	3.19	3.27	3.36	
April.....	1.43	1.94	2.47	2.80	2.55	
May.....	1.31	1.89	2.43	3.06	2.55	
June.....	1.19	1.79	1.77	2.89	2.83	
July.....	1.37	1.99	2.21	3.01	2.95	
August.....	1.55	2.44	2.66	3.13	3.35	
September.....	1.62	2.44	2.86	3.21	3.65	
October.....	1.66	2.05	3.07	3.53	3.11	3.65
November.....	1.90	2.15	3.31	3.77	3.33	
December.....	1.90	2.15	3.07	4.02	3.68	