

# FARM AND DAIRY

## RURAL HOME

### OVER 400 DELEGATES DISCUSS NEW CONDITIONS PREVAILING IN FARMING

**Farmers are Receiving Too Little for their Produce—Consumers are Paying Too Much—Why Is This? The Great Question Discussed at a Great Convention held in Chicago and Called by the Farm Papers of America. A Review of the Proceedings Written by an Editor of Farm and Dairy, who was in Attendance at the Great Conference.**

**A** REVOLUTION is taking place in agricultural conditions on this continent. Out of the old is emerging the new. The old type of farmer was and is—for we still have many left—content to devote his attention to increasing the productiveness of his farm. Public questions of the day were left for the political parties, railway and business interests, to settle among themselves. The farmer has paid but little attention to such issues. He has tried to hoe his own row in his own way.

Of late a change has been coming over his dream. He has had a few horrid nightmares that have helped to frighten him awake. He is likely to have a few more before he becomes wide awake. He has increased the productiveness of his farm enormously, but the railway and express companies have charged such enormous prices for handling his products he has had little or nothing to show for his extra effort. His farm products are selling to-day for higher prices than ever before, but the middlemen and other influences have stepped in and take the greater part of this increased revenue which should go to him. He has doubted the wages he formerly paid for farm help, but the business interests have gone him one better each time, with the result that it is more difficult to-day to obtain satisfactory farm help than ever before. Large sums have been spent in improving country highways, installing rural telephones and making similar improvements in country conditions, but rural depopulation increases. What is going to be done about it?

To discuss just such problems as these, but particularly the great marketing problem, over 400 delegates, representing four provinces of Canada, and 28 states of the American Union, met in Chicago last week. These men represented the new type of farmer: The farmer who now realizes that his interests extend far beyond the borders of his farm, and that if he is to receive the full reward of his labor he must take an intelligent interest in questions which he now realizes he has too long ignored.

#### HOW IT WAS CALLED

This great gathering was called together by the representatives of the agricultural press. The editors of the great agricultural papers of the continent have long felt a growing restiveness and pressure among their readers for information and action along these lines. Some months ago Col. Frank P. Holland, of the "Farm and Ranch," Dallas, Texas, placed himself in touch with his brother publishers to find if they would cooperate with him in calling an international conference to discuss these problems. The response was instant and continent wide. A committee was formed

and arrangements for this great gathering made. This was the meeting that took place last week in Chicago. It was called "The First National Conference on Marketing and Farm Credits."

#### WHO WERE THERE

The interest taken in the gathering was immense. Besides the farmers who were present, the national and state governments had representatives, there were college professors and presidents and leading railways had delegates in at-

thought that both producers and consumers must cooperate together. As man after man expressed his beliefs it became increasingly evident that the problem was too great for early settlement. Men who had come there believing that their plan was sufficient saw their mistake. They realized that many more factors than they had ever thought of must be taken into consideration. Another conference was seen to be necessary, and steps were immediately taken to organize for continued definite effort along the chief lines. Officers were elected, the outlines of a constitution approved and provision made for the holding of another conference, to begin the second Tuesday of April next year.

#### ARE LARGE CROPS ALL?

It is significant that at this conference, which comprised some of the brightest and brainiest thinkers of the continent, greater production as a remedy for the difficulties that now beset us, was mentioned only once and then not by a farmer, but by a railway president. This convention was no place for making loose statements or for uttering old-time platitudes recommending old-time remedies. Evidence was immediately brought forward to show that great crops have not benefited the farmer. Statistics produced proved that the bumper crops of 1912 returned to the United States farmer about \$150,000,000 less than the much smaller crops of 1911. Statistics for other years and from other countries showed similar effects of increased production.

Any old-time ideas of what constitutes the work of a farmer which may have been lingering in the minds of any of the delegates and of what should interest him were entirely done away with at this conference. It was unanimously conceded that the day is past when the farmer may be content if he produces great crops. The speakers proved that methods of marketing are of just as great importance to farmers as are methods of production, and that the farmer of to-day must be as well informed on marketing as any other business man. A generation ago the neighboring village or the country seat offered fair markets to the individual farmer, but such a method of distribution is not in harmony with the business world. The produce of one section is consumed hundreds of miles away; it may be on another continent. Great cities have sprung up and farmers who have never walked their streets are producing food for the people of those cities. These modern conditions have given rise to a most complicated system of marketing, in which middlemen galore, as well as transportation and cold storage systems, take an important part. It was realized that in few sections have farmers made the necessary adjustment to these modern conditions, and through no fault of their own the situation is reacting harmfully upon all. The cost of marketing produce varies from 50 to several hundred per cent of the price the farmer receives.

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#### What is Wrong with Farming?

Why is it when the farmer receives so little for his products that the consumer must pay so much? This constitutes the giant paradox of the times. What is it that is wrong? Farmers realize that great crops or production alone will not avail. They have found that they receive less money for large crops than they do for small. What then should be done?

Such is the problem that was discussed at the First National Conference on Marketing and Farm Credits at Chicago last week. Over 400 delegates attended this conference called by the editors and publishers of the farm papers of America. The delegates to the conference represented many interests, including banking, transportation and consumers' leagues, as well as agriculture. They came from 28 states of the American Union, and four provinces of Canada. Two Canadian farm papers, The Grain Growers' Guide of Winnipeg, and Farm and Dairy, were represented.

All recognized that a new day has dawned in agriculture, and that old-time remedies will no longer avail to make farming profitable. In an adjoining article an editor of Farm and Dairy tells something of the great convention, and in future articles will deal with some of the methods suggested by delegates for the amelioration of present conditions.

tendence to see in part what the farmers were doing, as well as to take part in the discussions. There were also present many managers of farmers' cooperative associations, representatives of consumers' leagues, legislators and others interested in the problems to be discussed.

#### CHIEF RESULTS

Discussion was limited to two subjects—marketing and farm credits. Even with the subjects thus limited, the delegates soon found themselves overwhelmed with the magnitude of the task before them. Naturally in such a large body of thinking men there was a great diversity of opinion as to the best methods of solving the problems before them. Some believed that the various governments should take action. Others believed that the producers, through cooperation, could solve the whole question themselves. Still others