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CO-OPERATIVE EGG CIRCLES HAVE BEEN FORMED IN PETERBORO COUNTY

A New System of Marketing Eggs and Poultry has been Launched Through Farm and Dairy that may Revolutionize Existing Methods.

DURING the past two weeks farmers in several of the best farming districts around Peterboro have organized five cooperative poultry circles. Within the next few weeks they expect to commence the marketing of their poultry products on the cooperative basis that has proved so successful in Denmark. But they expect to retain for themselves the money now appropriated by three or four of the middlemen who handle most of our eggs and to save, also, the great loss that results from our present careless methods of collecting and marketing eggs. The members of these circles believe that from the outset they will be able to sell their eggs for 2 cts. to 5 cts., a dozen above prevailing market prices, and that ultimately they will be able to do considerably better than this.

If this movement proves as successful as there is every indication that it will, it is not unreasonable to expect that it will spread rapidly throughout the county and that it may ultimately revolutionize our present chaotic methods of selling eggs and poultry.

CONDITIONS FAVORABLE.

Conditions in Peterboro county are favorable for the success of this movement. How it came to be started is interesting. Several years ago Prof. F. C. Elford of Macdonald College, when chief of the poultry division of the Dominion Government, interested Farm and Dairy in this project. The Dominion Government, however, has never given this matter the attention that its importance has deserved. This led Farm and Dairy, some three years ago, to approach Mr. Wm. Newman of Lorneville, and to suggest that he should introduce the system in connection with some of his creameries in Victoria County. It was proposed that the eggs of the patrons should be collected by the cream haulers, drawn to the creamery and be graded and shipped direct from there, thus cutting out two or three middlemen. Mr. Newman and the editor-in-chief of Farm and Dairy later met one of the managers of the Wm. Davies Co., in Toronto, and explained to him the proposition. It met with his instant approval. The Wm. Davies Co. agreed to purchase, at an advanced price, all the eggs that might be supplied them and to furnish the necessary crates. Later some incidents occurred that prevented Mr. Newman from proceeding with the undertaking at that time.

A few months ago Farm and Dairy again had the matter up for consideration and was planning to start it, if possible, through one of the Peterboro factories. At this same time Mr. Gunn, manager of Gunn's Limited, of Toronto, and of Gunn & Langlois, of Montreal, possibly the largest purchasers of eggs and poultry in Canada, finding it impossible to secure enough eggs of first class quality for their trade, decided that something would have to be done to induce Canadian farmers to market their eggs on a better basis. Mr. Gunn secured the assistance of Mr. John I. Brown of Beachburg, who with his father, Mr. John Brown, secretary of the North Renfrew Farmers' Institute, had done much to interest the

farmers of North Renfrew in the cooperative handling of poultry. Mr. Gunn and Mr. Brown asked Professor Elford of Macdonald College where he would advise them to start the movement. Professor Elford, knowing the interest Farm and Dairy was taking in the matter, suggested Peterboro. When Mr. Brown reached Peterboro and explained the object of his visit, it was decided to make a start immediately in the Peterboro District.

To find if they would be willing to support it, Farm and Dairy decided to first invite a few of the leading farmers around Peterboro to meet in the office of Farm and Dairy to consider the proposal. This meeting was held on May 25, as reported on page 11 of the June 2nd issue of Farm and Dairy, and proved most successful. The proposal was discussed in all its aspects for four to five hours. It was unanimously endorsed. It was further decided to lay the proposal before the farmers in the adjoining districts at meetings to be called specially for that purpose.

Last week and the week before five of these meetings were held. At each place the proposal taken by the farmers and their wives present that in few cases did the meetings adjourn before eleven o'clock, while in one case the meeting lasted until after 12 o'clock. At each point a poultry circle was formed, a draft constitution adopted and officers elected.

THOSE WHO SPOKE.

The speakers at the various meetings included Prof. F. C. Elford of Macdonald College, H. C. Duff of Norwood, the representative of the Ontario Department of Agriculture in Peterboro County, who has helped the movement energetically from the first; John I. Brown of Gunn & Langlois, and H. B. Cowan, Editor-in-Chief of Farm and Dairy.

In each case the meetings proved of intense interest. The speakers pointed out that our present system of handling eggs is defective in two important respects. In the first place, four to six middlemen come between the farmer and the consumer. These include the country merchant, the egg dealer, the wholesaler, the cold storage concern and the retail grocer. Each of these middlemen exact a portion of the price ultimately paid by the producer for the eggs and thus reduce the amount paid the farmer. It was estimated by Professor Elford that whereas something like \$25,000,000 was paid last year by consumers for eggs, the sum realized by our farmers, did not exceed \$15,000,000. This meant that some \$10,000,000 went to the middlemen.

A GREAT LOSS.

Owing to the careless manner in which many farmers gather their eggs and to the numerous hands through which they pass, often three weeks leave the farm and the time they reach the consumer. The result is that some 17 per cent. of the eggs are either broken in transit or are bad and have to be thrown out by the produce firms which handle them before they are sold to the consumers.

This alone represents a loss of about \$2,000,000 a year to the farmers of Canada. Mr. Brown stated that his firm, which has to keep some 45 men employed all the time candling eggs, throws out an average of two to four dozen eggs from every case they handle and that enough eggs are thrown out in this way, in the course of a year, to buy a whole township of good farming land. The cost of collecting, shipping and handling these bad eggs is enormous. Professor Elford stated that it was sickening to visit these establishments and see the places where these immense quantities of bad eggs are disposed of.

It was brought out clearly that this loss is ultimately paid by the farmers who sell good eggs, as the buyers protect themselves against loss by paying the farmers enough less for their eggs to provide for the loss. Thus the farmers who sell good eggs really provide the money paid the careless farmers for their bad eggs. The fact that farmers who take good care of their eggs do not get any more for them than those who handle their eggs carelessly was brought out clearly.

AN UNLIMITED MARKET.

Professor Elford showed that there is an unlimited demand for eggs of good quality. As evidence of this he stated that the heads of one of the largest railways and one of the largest steamship lines in Canada who had been utterly unable to secure enough good eggs to supply their demand had consulted him recently in regard to the advisability of their starting a 50,000 hen plant near Montreal as a means of partly overcoming the difficulty. He had advised against such action, but pointed out to the farmers in Peterboro County that if they would furnish the eggs demanded there would be an unlimited demand for their product.

Mr. Duff and Mr. Cowan showed that by organizing, as the farmers of Denmark have, and by furnishing a guaranteed article, our Canadian farmers will be able to eliminate three or four middlemen and thus obtain the highest market prices for their eggs. The success that has attended co-operative work of this kind in Saskatchewan and British Columbia was mentioned.

FORMING THE ORGANIZATIONS.

When it was found at each meeting that the farmers and their wives present were ready to organize, a plan of organization was submitted for consideration. It was shown that it would be necessary in each district for the farmers to have a local organization to look after the collection and shipment of their eggs, that these eggs would have to be collected regularly and that they must be uniform in size and quality. It was decided that the eggs will have to be left by the members of the circles at central points. Where necessary they will be collected by an egg wagon that will be sent out from Peterboro. Space does not permit of a full explanation being given in this issue of the various rules adopted.

It is proposed that every member of a circle shall have a number and that they shall number their own eggs. In this way it will be possible to trace back to each circle and each producer any stale or bad eggs they may deliver. The eggs are to be collected at Peterboro and candled there before shipment. The officers of the circles will

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