

From Producer to Consumer

THE busiest corner in Calgary on a Saturday morning is the market. To and from the market from early morning until noon through the thrifty housewives of Calgary. True, it is open every day, but Saturday is the day of all the days. Farmers begin coming in with their produce on Friday night. They unload at the market and arrange their wares in readiness for the early shoppers of the morning. All Saturday forenoon the farmers and gardeners are driving to the market. The bulky parcels, in their wagons, disclose all sorts of toothsome articles for the city man's Sunday dinner. The large odd-shaped covered parcel is a quarter of beef. The sacks have potatoes, carrots and every other vegetable grown on a prairie farm. Another contains fine plump spring chickens and turkeys. In the carefully covered crock is the sweetest and most delicious of butter. The crate contains dozens of new-laid eggs. Beside the farmer on the seat is a jug of vinegar. Do you wonder that the women of Calgary are bright and early to the market on Saturday morning?

Long before war conditions brought into existence the "cash and carry" system the housewives of Calgary were accustomed to take with them to market large baskets or shopping bags. Nor were they loath to carry the bulging receptacles home. They had saved a few hard-earned dollars besides securing for Sunday a real country dinner. Though, perhaps, more persons per capita patronize the Calgary market than do any other market in Canada, there are still a large number who will not give this public institution the benefit of a trial. They are not alive to the great principle of co-operation, or to the fact that they have in their midst a project the very existence of which is to regulate prices and do what it can to bring down the High Cost of Living.

Short Circuiting the Produce Trade

Several years ago the Calgary market came into being. Mrs. Georgina Newhall, a home economist of national note, decided that the exorbitant prices charged by the middle-men could not more effectively be regulated than by actually starting a market and by bringing the producer in direct touch with the consumer. The multiplicity of middle-men meant that the producer was forced to accept too little for his produce and the consumer was forced to pay too much. She organized a consumer's league. The Consumer's League, working with the city, established the present market. Before the war the patronage both of the consumers and the producers soon outgrew the market building. A new wing was built almost as large as the main building. For the first couple of years the whole building was utilized in accommodating the market patrons. As with everything else, the market business had a decided falling off owing to the war. The added expense of heat and light and the increase in cost made it imperative that a minimum amount of space be used. Only a few stalls in the new building are now being used.

The market is a large stone building, sanitarily and conveniently arranged. It is situated slightly to one side of the business section of the city. Several car-lines pass it. The city, in order to encourage the people to patronize the market, give a one-way rate on the street car for the forenoon.

Associated Consumers

Mrs. Newhall has for many years been a close student of home economics. She has long been the con-

Calgary Market a Boon to Consumer and an Impetus to Truck Farming—By Mary P. McCallum

member of the committee on household economics for the National Council of Women of Canada and has done much excellent work as head of that committee. Since the formation of the food control board of Alberta a board organized to assist and co-operate with the food controller, she has been a valued member. A year ago Mrs. Newhall decided that one market such as that in Calgary could do little more than deal with the little superficial results of the multiplicity of middle-men. No attempt could be made by one market to cope with the real situation. It was impossible to get to the bottom of things and exert any adequate control. She then organized what is known as the Associated Consumers, an organization nation-wide in its scope. Mrs. Newhall herself is the president. This new organization is endeavoring to nationalize all Canadian consumers into a united association. For example, should the packing houses run the price of

beef away out of reach and reason, as they have done in the past, the Associated Consumers, through their organization, should be able to boycott the packers and buy from the producer direct. They could then give the producer a better figure than the packers and yet buy from them at a much lower figure than they could buy from the retailers, who bought from the wholesalers, who in turn secured their supply from the packers.

The organization is too new and frail as yet to have attained any marked success. As a matter of fact, it is yet busy struggling for an existence. However, outside of government control of prices, no adequate control of the cost of living can be exerted unless the people who must be the consumers unite in a solid organization. Should that

organization become strong enough to bring the producer in touch with the consumer at nearly every point in Canada a regulation is established at once. It is a happy objective for which to work.

Regulating Prices

An innovation which the consumers of

Calgary have established in their market is what is known as the city stall. The city stall is one rented and operated entirely by the members of the league. The manager of the market acts also as the manager of this stall. He has the privilege of securing his produce where he can get it cheapest. The executive of the consumers' organization, before the introduction of the city stall, discovered that prices on the market were no lower than they were in the retail store in the city. There was absolutely no reason why they might expect the people of Calgary to come to the market. The farmer who brought in beef and sold it on the

market charged just as much as the butcher down town. That is, he had the profit he would have had had he sold to the butcher, as well as the butcher's profit. They decided that the prices on the market needed regulation as well as those of retailers. They then introduced the city stall. The manager must do his buying in the most economical way he can. He secures the prices from the retailers up-town and sets his price reasonably below theirs. This controls the prices in the market. A farmer with potatoes to sell soon finds that he cannot sell them for the same price as the man up-town because the city stall at the end of the market was selling them cheaper. His price must come down then. Mrs. Newhall says that it is a point of note that as soon as the city stall is sold out of any commodity,

say eggs, the price of the farmers' eggs immediately jumps to the price of eggs down town.

Frequently the manager of the market takes a buying trip to the fruit valleys of British Columbia. He, by buying from the grower direct, is able to get produce at the lowest possible figure. This gives entire satisfaction to both parties. Indeed, the Calgary market has more than once proved a boon to the small farmer of British Columbia. Frequently, the fruit farmer there ships to the market and the city stall sells the produce on a percentage basis. Many farmers within a radius of 50 miles of Calgary do this too and find the arrangement quite satisfactory.

Scores of farmers within a radius of 20 miles of Calgary bring their produce to the market. One woman from 21 miles away is on the market every Saturday morning. It is a common achievement for her to sell eight or nine hogs and half a beef as well as her butter, eggs, poultry and vegetables. She comes in on Friday night and is prepared for the early shopper on Saturday morning. Many of the markets in the east have a restriction against the man or woman who sells pork or beef in small quantities as do the butchers. They are permitted to sell in halves or quarters. In Calgary they may sell as small quantities as they can cut. This is a decided advantage to the farmer.

All meats are inspected and marked by an inspector in the employ of the city. Last June the manager of the market purchased two tons of fresh fish. The members of the Associated Consumers themselves went down to the market and sold it. The labor cost nothing. In this way the people of Calgary were enabled to buy fresh fish at the market for nine cents a pound, while those who retailed it were asking 15 cents. In early October another two tons were purchased and disposed of in the same manner. This is only one instance of how the Associated Consumers through organized co-operation are able to cut down to a certain extent the high cost of living.

The Place of the Dealer

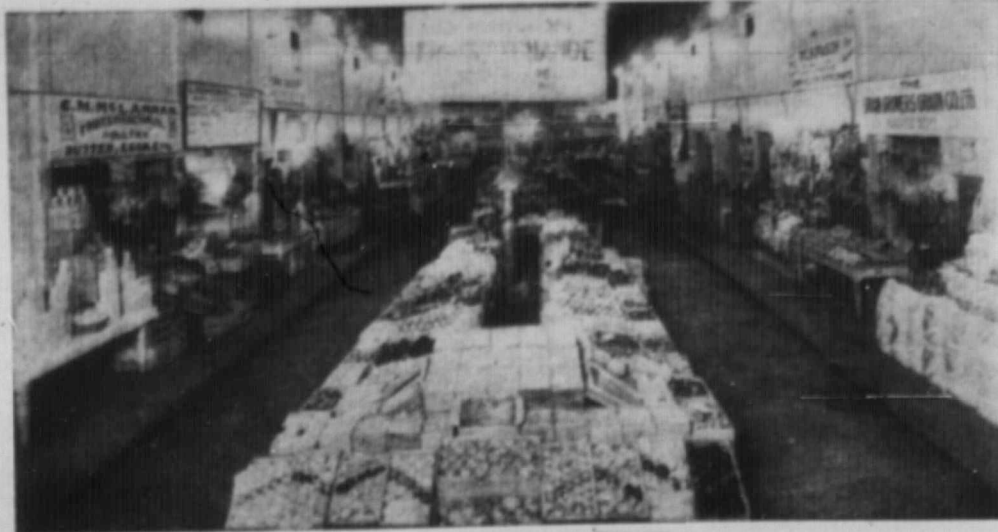
An important adjunct of any market is the dealer. Last fall there was considerable aversion stirred up against the dealer who was doing business on the market. Mrs. Newhall took a trip to the east and visited many markets, both in Ontario and in the United States, and made special study of the dealer and his place in a public market. Without exception she found dealers firmly established. Mrs. Newhall quotes many advantages to be gained by permitting the dealer to remain on the market. In the coldest part of the winter when few farmers or gardeners can bring produce to the market, or have it to bring, those who are in the habit of patronizing the market find instead of a few farmers several dealers who must, because of the city stall, sell a trifle below the down-town prices. In conversation with several of the dealers it was learned that they were willing to adhere to the market regulations and that they had no fear but what they could make a success of their business there. Perhaps this indicates plainer than anything else that the middle-men can still make a comfortable living if they cut down their profits a trifle. The president of the Associated Consumers stated also that when women came to the market to get cheaper groceries she was brushed in contact with the farmer and saw what he had to offer. The dealer was a drawing card, both for the farmer and the consumer.

No dealer or grocer is permitted to buy from the

Continued on Page 51



Mrs. Georgina Newhall
Who organized and is now head of the Calgary City Market, one of the most successful markets in Canada.



A View of the Interior of the Market.

All ready for the Saturday trading, the market presents an attractive and prosperous appearance.

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THE question of water is a tance to Alberta.

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