

Cooperative Work in the Annapolis Valley*

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YOU are all familiar with the formation of the Cooperative Fruit Companies in the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia, and are to a greater or lesser extent familiar with their history. It is a curious fact that the originators of the movement here knew little or nothing of the movement elsewhere, and shaped their course purely by what they considered the immediate necessity of the moment.

Our leading fruit growers felt and knew that there was something radically wrong with the method in which the products of their orchards were being handled. They knew that individuals speculating with their fruit were making money much faster than was the producer.

They had the right idea, the same as that of the pioneers of the movement across the water, namely that profit derived from apples should go to the producer of the apples. That is the principle under which we are working to-day. Unlike Denmark, Nova Scotia started on the marketing end of cooperation first and having got that fairly under way is now giving her attention to cooperative buying, but whichever end is handled first the result is and must be the same. Cooperation is bound to be a success wherever and to whatever problem it is applied, the only thing necessary is that all members thoroughly understand the great principle for which they are working.

FURTHER COOPERATION NECESSITATED

When, owing to the success that had attended the initial efforts of the fruit companies, others had been formed, it was realized that through the multiplicity of companies they were defeating their own ends, inasmuch as they were competing the one with the other to market their products, and the wily speculators were pitting one company against the other, and thus securing the apples almost as cheaply as ever. On account of this multiplicity of companies they were unable to accomplish that which they set out to do, namely, "bring producer and consumer closer together," they were as it were so many units whose power for good was ineffectual on account of their lack of central organization. Instead of working together they were fighting against one another. At last their leaders realized:

"Cooperation—not strife—
Is the Divine law of life."

And proceeded to incorporate all the companies into one central association, obtaining a special charter from the provincial government for that purpose. Thus did The United Fruit Companies of Nova Scotia, Limited, come into existence.

My paper would be incomplete without naming John N. Chute the father of cooperation in Nova Scotia, John Donaldson, S. C. Parker, your president, and A. E. MacMahon, who by their zeal and untiring efforts without reward, alone made this important centralization possible.

THE WORK ACCOMPLISHED

Possibly it is unnecessary for me to give in detail the splendid work accomplished by the Central during its brief existence. In the first year before it was incorporated, realizing that the record crop with which the Valley was blessed would never be harvested with the help at hand,

*Extract from an address delivered before the last annual convention of the Nova Scotia Fruit Growers' Association.

it brought in some four hundred helpers, and thus saved the situation for many a grower.

The same year, realizing that the steamship companies had utterly failed to provide sufficient transportation for the tremendous crop and that thousands of barrels of soft varieties were lying at Halifax sweltering in the sun, it made arrangements with the Intercolonial Railway (the People's railway) and sent train load after train load up to Montreal to load in the fast mail boats.

It followed this up by chartering four great steamships of the Warren Line and lifted forty thousand barrels of fruit which would otherwise have rotted. This action forced one of the greatest steamship companies in the world to buy out the Warren Line, and has thus secured for the fruit growers of the Valley a service of splendid fast steamships to carry the fall fruit. It thus saved all growers, whether cooperators or not, thousands of dollars.

In the same year the company opened up the western markets for our famous Gravensteins, and thus gave a new lease of life to that excellent apple. It also secured for the Valley a supply of specially lined cars almost equal to refrigerators by which every grower in the Valley benefits during the cold weather. In spite of the opposition in its own membership it reduced the price of fertilizer in the Valley by five dollars or six dollars a ton.

COOPERATIVE MARKETING

Before starting to explain the advantages of cooperative marketing I would like to impress on you one aspect of cooperation that I am afraid is not properly understood by our fruit growers. I feel this lack of knowledge among our membership and even I am sorry to say, among the directorate, hence my excuse for dealing with it here.

Very few of the members seem to realize that they are themselves The United Fruit Companies, they speak of letting the Central have their fruit as though the Central were some speculating firm buying their apples. They speak of buying their feed and flour, their fertilizer and seeds, from the Central if the price is right, all of which is evidence that they do not understand the situation.

The United Fruit Companies do not sell an ounce of anything to any member, they simply distribute what the members have authorized them to buy for them. It is exactly similar to the case of the English cooperator and his pair of boots that I cited a while back.

When that humble artisan goes to the store and gets his boots he pays a sum of money spot cash for them which is not a cent less than he could get a similar pair for from the store next door. He does not concern himself with the price; all he bothers about is the quality. He wants a certain kind and a certain quality, and gets it; the price is immaterial. Why? Because he knows that at the end of the season all the profit made on those boots, after necessary expenses are deducted, will be refunded to him in his dividend.

Had this cooperator and his fellows told the manager of their store that they could get a similar pair of boots next door for the same money and had got them, would the cooperative movement have developed as it has in England? Certainly not. It

is simply the abiding faith of these co-operators in the ability of their servants, the Central, to ultimately do better for them than they can themselves, their absolute loyalty to their fellows, that has made success possible.

Efforts are constantly being made in England to get cooperators to be disloyal to their fellows by offering them snaps, but these cooperators so thoroughly understand the great principles of their movement that all these efforts are futile.

SIMILAR EFFORTS HERE

Yet here in the Annapolis Valley a company manager will write to Central which has been instructed to buy the year's fertilizer by that actual company, stating "Please quote your prices and if right our members will probably buy." They don't seem to realize that we have already followed their instructions and have bought their fertilizers for them, and have made all arrangements to, in due time, distribute it.

They don't seem to realize that if some local agent has given them what they consider a tempting price, it is only done to fight their own society, only done in an endeavor to kill their own business.

They don't seem to realize that if fertilizer agents are quoting low prices it is only the fact of their own action in co-operating in buying, that has forced the fertilizer agent to bring his price down.

They don't seem to realize that they themselves can through their own tremendous buying power, obtain their supplies lower than any that can be supplied by middlemen.

They don't seem to realize that certain firms are prepared to sink a large sum of money to supply goods at a price as low as the Central's if by doing so they can not discredit and disrupt this cooperative movement.

Cooperators must be loyal to themselves if the great benefits of cooperation are to continue.

I know of actual cases that I can prove by documentary evidence, of wholesale firms right here in the Valley, supplying whole carloads of fertilizer at over a dollar a ton less than it cost them in order to keep certain companies out of the central, and even then did not get as low as central's price. I hope that all cooperators will think of that aspect of cooperation, and understand the true import of it.

Recent Bulletins

Circulars and bulletins that have reached The Canadian Horticulturist recently, include the following:

"Ten Years' Profits from an Apple Orchard," is the title of Bulletin No. 376, by U. P. Hebrick, of the New York Agricultural Experiment Station, Geneva, N. Y. This bulletin contains valuable information relating to the cost of tillage, growing of cover crops, pruning, spraying, harvesting, as well as the average profits of an orchard.

Another valuable bulletin by the same author and station is one entitled "Tillage and Sod Mulch in the Hitchings Orchard." This is bulletin No. 375. This bulletin is a most instructive one, is well illustrated and should be applied for by all grower interested in the subject.

The New Hampshire Experiment Station, Durham, N.H., has issued Bulletin 68, by J. H. Gourley, entitled "The Effects of Fertilizers in a Cultivated Orchard."