

PROGRESSIVE FARMER

THE INDUSTRIAL AND EDUCATIONAL INTERESTS OF OUR PEOPLE PARAMOUNT TO ALL OTHER CONSIDERATIONS OF STATE POLICY.

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THE CROP REPORTING SYSTEM OF MICHIGAN.

MR. EDITOR:—Between the producers and the consumers of food products stand the speculators with robbery of each reduced to a science. Particularly is speculation in wheat systematized, and, to enable speculators the better to control the price, trained experts are sent out from the great grain markets to estimate both quality and quantity of the coming crop. If there is a shortage apparent, exaggerated reports of overproduction are industriously circulated; this discourages the farmer and induces him to sell at a low price. When the crop is mainly out of first hands, the shortage is discovered and the press aids the speculators in robbing the consumer by booming prices. It is aggregated capital against segregated capital; organization against the mob, and the unorganized producer loses.

In 1878-9, the Secretary of State, in the cereal reports for those years, recommended that a system of crop reporting be adopted for Michigan under authority of the State. The system had been first introduced in Illinois in 1876, and found a success. The system was again urged by Secretary of State William Jenny, in the introduction to farm statistics of Michigan for 1880.

In 1881 the Legislature passed:
AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE PUBLICATION OF MONTHLY CROP AND STOCK REPORTS.

This law provides that the Secretary of State shall obtain monthly statements of the condition of live stock and growing crops; and immediately after harvest, statements of the yield of wheat and other farm products; the quantity of wheat, wool and other products marketed, and the amount still remaining in farmers' hands.

The Secretary shall prepare monthly abstracts of all this information, also of the number of townships from which reports were received and a copy to each newspaper, each member of the Legislature, each crop reporter in the State, and 1,000 for free distribution.

The Secretary shall select at least one person in each township in the State who shall be willing to furnish this information for his township, and other useful information if desired, to the Secretary of State.

Such correspondent so fulfilling these duties receives free a copy each of the Annual State Report on Agriculture, State Board of Agriculture, and State Horticultural Society. This is the sole compensation of the crop correspondents, and several hundred of them report each month.

This information is laid before the reading public by the newspapers and has proved a great aid in protecting the farmers against the garbled, exaggerated and one-sided reports of the speculators.

It has been adopted by Ohio, Indiana and other States.

If not in use in the South, the Alliance should take it in hand at once. The officers of each Sub-Alliance could become accurate reporters. The reports when compiled could be published by the State, and you would have no guesswork about the cotton or other crops. If there is no similar system in North Carolina, I call on Bro. Polk and THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER to begin the good work at once, and have all ready for the Legislature to pass the law at its next session. Anything that will check the forays of the speculators against the producers should be pushed speedily and thoroughly.

From "Michigan Crop Report, Jan. 1, 1889," I compile these statistics: For 1888 the average cost throughout the State of producing and marketing one bushel of wheat was 64 cents, the average cost of one acre was \$10.54. The average yield was 16.47 bushels per acre. Crops are credited with value of straw and their proportion of rental of buildings.

The average yield for five years, 1884 to 1888 inclusive, is 18.53 per acre; average cost, \$14.22 per acre. Average net cost about 70 cents a bushel.

The yield is below the average this year and prices about 80 cents now.

Oats, average cost for those five years was \$10.77 per acre and 28 and five-tenths cents a bushel. Price now is 20 to 23 cents. Producers of oats lose heavily this year.

Corn for the five years, average cost per acre, \$13.74, and per bushel of ears, 21 cents. Western corn is shipped and sold freely here now for 40 to 45 cents per bushel of shelled corn.

The extreme floods until June and extreme drouth since then even until now in November, made it a disastrous year for corn. The outlook for next year's wheat crop is dismal. Nine-tenths of our wheat fields look bare as newly-plowed land. Plenty of wheat sown in the first half of September is just coming up and lots of it is past resurrection.

The average cost of the hay crop for the five years was \$6.54 per acre; the cost per ton, \$4.74.

This is a disastrous year to Michigan farmers. Crops yield below the average and prices are far below the cost of production. Just as hard, the annual crop of land mortgages, interest on debts, and taxes on property come up big as Goliath, strong as Sampson, deadly as vampires and invincible as death.

WOLVERINE.

MR. EDITOR:—With your permission I will give the readers of your excellent paper the benefit of some things which I observed and which impressed me very much while North this fall attending a number of Northern Fairs, with an exhibit of Southern products, sent out by the Southern Inter-State Immigration Bureau.

The object of this exhibit North, being for the purpose of impressing them favorably with our country and climate, that they may come among us and buy up our spare lands and develop manufactures, &c. gave me an opportunity to learn more of the details of their mode of farming than I could otherwise have had. Their land is not naturally more fertile than ours. It is more fertile because they make it so and keep it so. They would just as soon expect to get milk from a cow that was not fed, as to get good crops from land that was not manured. And they do not use commercial fertilizers, either. They say that commercial fertilizers mean exhausted lands. They make their own manures, and thereby increase the producing power of their land. They begin at the bottom, and manage the farm with a special view of making the manure pile as large and valuable as possible.

To this end they give great prominence to the raising of grasses and forage of all sorts. Hay literally and judiciously fed to stock in winter, produces fat beeves for market in the spring, which is cash. It produces plenty of milk and butter, which is also money. It produces the best of manure, which means rich land. But you say they get good prices for their milk and butter. They may regard the prices good, but you would not. These very farmers seldom realize over four cents per quart for their milk, and frequently, at certain seasons, have to take less than two cents per quart; and they seldom get over twenty cents per pound for butter, except for the golden grades which

sometimes brings a little more. But they must have the cattle and the hay to make the manure, or their farms will retrograde.

There is just this apparent difference between the special object of a New England and a North Carolina farmer. The Yankee farms with a special view of increasing the productivity of his farm, while the Southern farmer farms with a special view to getting all the crop possible that year. And the results of the Yankee mode are from 50 to 100 bushels of corn per acre and from 3 to 5 gallons of milk from each cow per day.

The surprise of the New England farmer is great when told that we can raise two crops of potatoes on the same land the same year, or a crop of wheat and corn or potatoes.

The superiority of Northern farms, modes and appliances is not the result of superior land, stock or people, but the result of close contact, and sharp competition; the result of necessity. Then why should our farmers, with climate and other things greatly in their favor, wait for necessity to force them to the adoption of modes and management necessary to place Southern farming where it belongs, ahead of the world?

Experimenting in farming frequently pays. The eastern Virginia and North Carolina truckers have been sending hundreds of thousands of dollars to New Jersey every spring for seed potatoes, because seed raised from the spring planting will not produce well. They degenerate. A few years ago a Virginia trucker made the experiment of planting the cuttings from the spring digging, as a second, or fall crop. These produced finely, kept well through the winter and furnished seed for the next spring planting equal to the Jersey potato in every particular. So much so that last spring six or eight thousand barrels were shipped to New Jersey for planting from one small section near Norfolk, Va.

But I must stop, lest I worry you, or weary your readers.

Respectfully,

T. C. W.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Nov. 12, '89.

MR. EDITOR:—In answer to the question, does farming pay? I answer yes. The next question in order would be who does it pay? To this I answer the man who don't farm. The next question will naturally be, why don't it pay? My answer is, you can find out just why by carefully reading the forthcoming *National Economist Almanac*. Then if any one wants to know just how to apply the remedy, subscribe for THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER and the *National Economist*, and you will then be thoroughly furnished with information that will enable you to knock a long hole in the arguments of any enemy of our order.

Fraternally,

HARRY TRACY.

THE BUSINESS AGENCY FUND.

MR. EDITOR:—Bro. Rogers of Northampton makes a suggestion as to the mode of raising the Fund, which I published for the information of the brethren, who can adopt it if it meets with their approval. Where a member prefers let him instead of money contribute 10 lbs of lint cotton or its equivalent in seed. Members to deliver the cotton to the Business Agent of their Alliance or the gin where they have their cotton packed. If there is enough to make a bale let the Business Agent have it packed or if not enough for a bale if he has no convenient market for "loose lint," he can make a bale by uniting with the gin or some brother. The Business Agent will sell the cotton and send me the money with a list of the names of contributors and amount of each. Tobacco could be contributed in some way, delivering it to the Business Agent of Sub Alliance who would pack and sell. Wheat also could be delivered to the Business Agent who could take one or more loads and dispose of it. There is no excuse for not contributing. If you have the will the way is certainly to be found, although money may be scarce.

Remember well and bear in mind that Article 17, Business Agency Fund provides that after January 1st, 1890, only contributors to the fund shall have its benefits free of cost. And the Executive Committee are obliged to execute it. If you desire its benefits contribute your share to its creation.

W. A. GRAHAM, Trustee.

Nov. 8, '89.

Queen Victoria will open the coming session of Parliament in person.

TRUSTS AND MONOPOLIES.

The Trust Itself a Monopoly—It Works to Suppress Competition.

A Member of the Great Body of Consumers—Its Purposes and Its Operations—Alike Confirm the Charge.

(From the Baltimore Sun.)

NUMBER VII.

I endeavored to show in my last paper that the two grounds on which trusts have been chiefly defended are both untenable, and furthermore, that they are not the real objects aimed at by these combinations.

Their primary object is not to prevent adulteration or debasement in the quality of the objects they produce, nor, on the other hand, merely to secure the benefits that flow from production on a large scale. Experience has abundantly shown that the public can protect itself, and at the same time the honest producer, from frauds in the quality of commodities without having recourse to the subtle and expensive machinery of the trust. Very brief but very instructive experience has also been sufficient to show that whatever advantages for cheapening cost have been secured by its production on a large scale have always been appropriated by the combination itself and never shared with the consumer.

Moreover, when under the sugar trust eleven refineries are made to earn large dividends on the watered stock of sixteen refineries, when under the whisky trust twelve distilleries are in like manner made to earn liberal dividends on the watered stock of eighty-one distilleries, no amount of special pleading or economic *legerdemain* can obscure the fact that the public is compelled to pay excessive prices for their products, and that this result has been accomplished through a combination that has been able to limit supply, and by such limitation to run prices.

TRUE OBJECT OF A TRUST.

And this control of supply is the true and final object of every trust. But there can be no such limitation permanently and effectively accomplished as long as there is either competition or the possibility of competition in open market between independent producers of the same article. Accordingly this competition must be entirely or largely neutralized to clear the ground for a trust. The price of a commodity is settled by what has been called the "higgling of the market;" in other words it is the outcome of the contest between sellers trying to get the highest prices for their wares and buyers trying to buy at the lowest; and the law which controls this higgling is the law of supply and demand, which in the long run makes the normal price of commodities. The trust is a scheme to limit supply by lessening, and if possible eliminating, the competition which has hitherto compelled rival producers to seek their profits not so much in high prices as in large sales. Its avowed object is to substitute combination for competition, which is the very definition of monopoly—not the meaning of that much-abused word in the loose and random declamation of the hustlers, but its definition by the most exact thinkers and those who are guarded and precise in their terms.

"Wherever competition is not monopoly is," said John Stuart Mill, and so say all great writers on the history and laws of trade.

A SINISTER WORD.

There is scarcely a word in our vocabulary that conjures up ideas more repugnant to equality of citizenship and to free institutions or which comes down from the past freighted with more sinister import than the word monopoly. It is associated with all those wrongs and hoary abuses by which, in the older nations of the world, the great mass of the people have at times been sunk in hopeless poverty and toil that privilege might roll in wealth and idleness. We are bound, therefore, to inquire how far in its observations the trust merits and justifies the stigma that such a classification would stamp upon it.

Each one of the combinations we have examined aims to intervene between the producer of the raw material and the purchaser of the manufactured article, and, as far as possible, to control the production of some commodity of necessary or general consumption.

PRODUCERS OF RAW MATERIAL.

Let us begin, therefore, by inquiring what has been the effect of the trust on the producer of its raw material.

In order to measure this effect fully we must, if possible, select a trust that is, if not the sole, at any rate the chief

consumer of the raw material of its particular industry. The sugar trust cannot immediately or greatly depress the price of raw sugars, because by long usage in the trade that price is established by the quotations in the London market, and as nine-tenths of our raw sugars come from abroad, their shippers have choice of markets, and will not come here unless they have assurance that the New York market is as good as the London market, and this assurance they can command by contracting for the sale of their cargoes before starting. Yet, even with this protection, the sellers will eventually find some difference, for, instead of dealing with sixteen independent buyers, they now deal practically with one, and the diminished consumption caused by the artificial stimulation of the price of refined sugar, brought about by the trust, will inevitably affect the value of the raw product under the operation of the law of demand and supply.

Neither can we approximate the influence of the whisky trust on the price of corn, because it is but one of many buyers in the home market, and it consumes too small a fraction of the entire domestic product to enable it to dictate prices. Its influence on other industries will be considered in another and more important relation in my next paper.

But the Standard Oil trust is an example to our land. The producer of petroleum cannot, like the foreign sugar planter, send this product indifferently, and at the same cost, to the European or the American market; nor can he, like our farmer, find numberless other purchasers in the home market. He is largely dependent—has been at times entirely dependent—on the Standard combination to buy his crude oil. Has he shared in the phenomenal prosperity of that combination? Has it ever paid him fairly remunerative prices for that product, which in itself has turned into golden streams?

On the contrary, during the highest tides of its prosperity, his business has been vibrating between actual loss and lean and beggarly profits.

"To strike oil" was formerly a phrase implying the sure acquisition of great and immediate wealth, but as the refining business passed into the grasp of a single combination, the whole oil-producing territory passed into a "state of chronic depression."

And so we are justified in saying that in its dealings with those who produce its raw material the trust reveals itself wherever its power and tendency can have full play in the character of a true and unmistakable monopoly.

THE CONSUMERS OF ITS PRODUCTS.

We may next ask how the trust has dealt with that larger body, the general public, who purchase and consume its products. This question I have already virtually answered in the paper reciting the enormous profits of each one of the combinations investigated—profits so far in excess of the possible returns of legitimate industry as to imply beyond question the spoliation of the consumer by the single or overshadowing producer in the market. Stress is constantly—and especially in behalf of the Standard trust—laid upon the argument that self-interest will always prompt a seller to content himself with moderate and reasonable profits in order to secure the largest range of customers, and the public is assured that in this principle it will find protection against extortionate charges. But does any one argue that self-interest impels the owner of a patent upon an article of general use or necessity, or even, like the Bell telephone, of general convenience, to content himself with moderate profits in order to increase to the utmost the number of purchasers? The argument has force only in respect to articles whose use is voluntary with the people, and which they must, therefore, be tempted to buy. On the other hand, as long as there is or can be but one seller of an article which people are almost or actually compelled to buy, that seller can and will sell at a price that brings to him the largest possible returns, or, in other words, at a monopoly price. When the patent on the telephone expires and other manufacturers can supply the market the public will get telephones much cheaper, while still paying reasonable profits to those who make them.

In the case of the telephole the law of patents has for a fixed term entirely obliterated competition; in the case of trusts their own successful combination has more or less fully obliterated competition. As each one of them control the sale of an article of general necessity or convenience,

they have thus one and all become monopolies, and as a result we see them all—patent and trusts—gathering their millions by leaps and bounds.

TRUST MAY BILLET ONE CONSUMER ON ANOTHER.

Let me add, in conclusion, that a trust may not only despoil the great body of consumers by its control of prices, but may impose heavier exactions upon a part to compensate itself for temporary favors to others. The history of the oil trust shows that it has resorted to this practice, formerly so common with railroad companies. At the very time it was driving a competitor in one market to remediless bankruptcy by selling its oils therein at less than cost, it was recouping its losses by advancing the price of oil in other localities where there was no competition. In this way it waged its wars and made its conquests—not at its own expense, but at the expense of the public. I have already noted the same practice in the gas trusts, and examples might be multiplied from other combinations; but surely enough has been said to prove that in dealing with the consumer, also, a trust is always and everywhere a monopoly.

In my next paper I will consider the relation of the trust to labor and to the public generally, in continuance of this particular line of discussion.

WM. L. WILSON.

A LIMIT TO CORPORATE RIGHTS

The decision of the United States Supreme Court, recently announced in the Filbert street case, appears to determine finally that no chartered rights of a railroad company can exclude it from control by the Legislature in the public interest, or can permit it to escape subjection to the constitution of the State, or allow it to avoid payment of damages for the consequences when it occupies or verges upon a public highway in such a manner as to injure private property. It is not possible here to consider all the far-reaching consequences of this important decision, even if, indeed, they could just now be fully discerned. The matter that seems to us of most concern is, if we rightly understand the decision, that it will operate to put the railroads of Pennsylvania at once under the jurisdiction of the constitution of the State without regard for any voluntary action upon their part. Thus far some of the railroads have clung fondly to the theory that they could set the fundamental law of the State at defiance so long as they did not seek for new legislation under its provisions. This article seventeen, which forbids discrimination against persons and places and the issue of passes to others than the officers of the companies, has for fifteen years been treated with contempt by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, to the serious hurt of the interests of Pennsylvania and of Philadelphia. It will be a most fortunate circumstance indeed if the decision of the highest tribunal in the country shall have the effect to put this insolent and domineering and unscrupulous corporation where it ought to be, into the position of servant rather than of master of the people and into positive subjection to a law which cannot be just if it is not universal in its supremacy. The people are making headway against corporate power. We shall have our masters transformed into servants after awhile. The Belt Line Railroad scheme is an instrument with which we shall further relax the deadly grip with which the railroad holds this city of Philadelphia.—*Philadelphia Manufacturer*.

LIFE LENGTHENING.

Human life is estimated to have lengthened 25 per cent. during the last half century. "The average of human life in Rome, under Caesar, was eighteen years," says Dr. Todd, of Georgia; "now it is forty." The average in France fifty years ago was twenty-eight; the mean duration in 1867 was forty-five and one-half years. In Geneva during the thirteenth century a generation played its part upon the stage and disappeared in fourteen years; now the drama requires forty years before the curtain falls. During the golden reign of good Queen Bess, in London and all the large cities of merry old England, fifty out of one thousand paid the last debt to nature yearly, which means, instead of three score and ten, they averaged but one score. Now, in the city of London, the average is forty-seven years.—*Herald of Health*.