THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE FIELD MAN
An Historical Study Based on the Retrospections
of Extension Staff
of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool

A Thesis
Submitted to the
College of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of
Continuing Education
University of Saskatchewan

Submitted by
Sylvia Ann Robinson
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the wives of the field men of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. I sincerely hope that the reader may come to appreciate, as I have done, the contributions and sacrifices you made, and the support you offered, in order that rural education in Saskatchewan might be furthered.
UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

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Finally, and especially, I wish to express my gratitude to the
field men of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. Their co-operation,
enthusiasm, and generosity enabled me to record their story.
The purpose of this study was to trace the dynamic nature of the performance of field men in the Extension Division of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. Reminiscenses of these field men constituted the basis for the interpretations presented. Field men shared their perceptions in personal interviews and, less frequently, in their writings.

The thesis does not attempt to prove causality. It does, however, describe the changing activities of men and goals of the organization in relation to concurrent historical developments.

Initially, to secure and maintain a strong membership, the Pool needed effective salesmen who were alert for bootleggers of grain contracted to the Pool. The migration of farm families away from southern Saskatchewan homesteads during the Great Depression created a demand for orators, who could preach the co-operative philosophy, and morale-boosters, who could encourage farmers to wait out the difficult times. In the period of wartime prosperity that followed, the co-operative movement thrived. Field men actively promoted and organized co-operative stores and credit unions.

The post-war emphasis on adult education across Canada prompted the Pool to hire and train men in programme development and teaching methods. The self-help themes promoted in the continuing education movement, and the spirit of local self-determination moved field men of the 1950's into roles of organizers and communication links with the
central organization. The commercial expansion and diversification of the Pool necessitated the hiring or preparation of men for member relations roles. Members of the Pool and other co-operatives were demanding explanations and rationalizations for the activities of their large company. As public cries for participatory democracy increased in the late 1960's, Pool members, too, demanded a more conspicuous place for their elected representatives. Field men stepped out of the limelight and attempted to groom delegates for the center-stage role.

Through a well-developed network that extended throughout the agricultural area of Saskatchewan, field men carried a message. This thesis records and pays tribute to the contribution and success of this educational endeavour.
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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Saskatchewan's social and agricultural history is short. The tenacity and resourcefulness exhibited by settlers made possible the extraordinary progress of the province. The Territorial Grain Growers Association was among the first examples of decisions by Saskatchewan farmers to share control of their destiny with only the elements. From the founding of this organization, co-operative marketing agencies expanded. The co-operatives, with their traditional emphasis on member involvement and education, have been of significance in rural development. The Wheat Pool, a recognized Saskatchewan institution, became the largest of these agencies.

Aside from elevator agents, field men have been the most visible, most readily identified, and best remembered representatives of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool in rural areas. Their broad mandate has included education, social improvement, and leadership. Unfortunately, no record of their activities has been documented in print. This paucity of written description of their activities, of statements of organizational expectations, and of tributes to their endeavours has been, perhaps, characteristic of the part they played. Emphasizing practicality and adaptability, they have continued to perform services peculiar to each day and each district.
The assumption that something is common knowledge has been one of the greatestplaints of historians. Rural Saskatchewan residents recall field men as having been important community personalities for reasons and actions as varied as the situations in which they have lived and worked. The lack of written substantiation, the urgency of documenting the contributions of these workers while resource persons are still accessible, and the importance of this research to studies of rural development in this province dictated the undertaking of this study.

The thesis traces the dynamic nature of the performance of field men in the Extension Division of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. Retrospections of these field men regarding their motivations, goals, and activities constitute the basis for the interpretations presented. Field men shared their perceptions with the researcher in personal interviews. Written sources, including reports, newspaper articles, and general historical writings supplement information procured in the interviews. These sources are especially vital where gaps in time appear between available interviewees' employment periods.

Bricks of reminiscence from a single group, the field men, could not alone reconstruct an authentic monument to their work. In this study, only one arrangement of these bricks emerges: that seen from their vantage point. Consideration of impressions of other Pool staff, recollections of Pool members and non-members, assessments of rural development specialists, and recorded statistical data from districts would, perhaps, create a more accurate replica. This is, however, an unrealistic task for a single workman to undertake.
An eminent historian introduced a work with the following passage,

The behavior of men as individuals is more interesting to me than their behavior as groups or classes. History can be written with this bias as well as another; it is neither more, nor less, misleading. The essential is to recognize that it answers only one set of questions in only one way. . . . This book . . . is an attempt to understand how these men felt and why, in their own estimation, they acted as they did.  

Similarly, the perceptions of the key figures of this thesis dictate its point of view. This approach facilitates comparison and contrast of the field man's role over time. The alternative viewpoints suggested earlier appear as points from which elaboration and clearer definition of the subject might be made in future.

The researcher chose to restrict the study to the first fifty years of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool from its inception in 1924 through crop year 1973-74. A five year lapse to the date of research, 1979, offered presently active field men time to put their earlier activities into perspective. This eased comparison of their remarks with comments of men who were retired for a considerable time.

Differing economic and political climates, changing priorities within the Wheat Pool administration and membership, and maturation of the farm movement and of prairie communities created a demand for flexible and responsive men and programmes. The field staff of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool have been, upon occasion, depicted as an institution in rural life. Their role, however, has not been a static

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one. Only their continuing presence and prominence in rural Saskatchewan remained unchanged.

This thesis endeavours to interpret the form this co-operative and supportive role has taken throughout the phases of Pool history in the province. It does not purpose to prove causality; it does attempt to describe the subject in relation to concurrent historical developments.

The stages that emerge appear neither as discrete intervals nor as simultaneous developments in all districts. Rather, a continuum of shifting emphases becomes apparent.
Chapter I

THE SASKATCHEWAN WHEAT POOL: AN OVERVIEW

In 1924, Saskatchewan wheat producers united to create the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. They organized this farmer-owned co-operative to increase producer control over grain movement and marketing and to encourage improvement in the social and economic conditions of rural families. Through the fifty years since its initiation, the Pool had continued to be a dominant force in the agricultural community of the province.

The Western farmer had been attempting to meet the goal of economic viability through co-operation and mass action for at least three decades prior to the establishment of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. A series of experiments in farmer control preceded the evolution of the Pool. Several writers have described these early frustrations and successes in detail and from varied points of view.1 This thesis does

1See particularly Hugh Boyd, New Breaking (Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1938); Walter P. Davisson, Pooling Wheat in Canada (Ottawa: Graphic Publishers, Ltd., 1927); Harold A. Innis, ed., The Diary of Alexander James McPhail (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1940); W. A. Mackintosh, Agricultural Co-operation in Western Canada (Kingston: Queen's University, 1924); Hopkins Moorhouse, Deep Furrows (Winnipeg and Toronto: George J. McLeod Ltd., 1918); H. S. Patton, Grain Growers Co-operation in Western Canada (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928); L. A. Wood, A History of Farmers Movements in Canada (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1924).
not attempt to recreate a comprehensive history of the movement; it does mention significant milestones to provide context for development of the theme.

The grain marketing system prior to the turn of the century left the grower at the mercy of external interests. The Canadian Pacific Railway,\textsuperscript{2} to ensure a traffic market for itself, provided for terminal storage of grain at the Lakehead. Because the railway was unable to finance the construction of local storage facilities, however, the farmer found it necessary to haul his grain to shipping points where private dealers had erected flat warehouses. These dealers would either buy the grain from the farmer or levy a rental fee for warehouse storage until the farmer had accumulated sufficient grain to make a consignment to a Winnipeg commission dealer.

The process of loading and unloading bagged grain into and from warehouse facilities was slow and inefficient. Shippers and farmers alike demanded an alternative local handling system. The invention of the endless-cup conveyor elevator revolutionized the grain flow system. To relieve the chronic and seasonal strain on their limited car volume, the CPR offered an inducement to private operators to erect such elevators along its tracks. The resulting line companies were given free lease of sites on railway property and were guaranteed a monopoly of trade at any CPR shipping point where they erected a standard elevator.

\textsuperscript{2}In this thesis, Canadian Pacific Railway is hereafter abbreviated CPR.
elevator. The terms prohibited the farmer from loading his grain directly from platforms or flat warehouses. These terms included acceptance of the price offered, the grade assigned, and the dockage set by the elevator company.

Injustices were most predictable at points where only a single elevator existed. The presence of several companies at one point, however, did not guarantee the seller fair treatment and a competitive market. A conference of Winnipeg line elevator representatives determined local prices. The report of the Grain Commission of 1899-1900 found that five elevator syndicates or private milling companies directly owned more than 65 per cent of the standard elevators doing business in the West. As well, operators frequently compensated for higher prices or better grades with practices of overdockage or shortweighing. Farmers' attempts to establish local co-operative elevators proved futile because large companies could afford to undercut prices in one local market and recoup their losses elsewhere. The producer, believing himself helpless, readily blamed the railway and

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3 The term standard elevator refers to a grain cleaning and storage facility using the endless-cup conveyor system powered by a steam or gasoline engine and having a minimum capacity of 25,000 bushels.

4 Dockage refers to that portion of the delivered grain that is unacceptable. Dirt, chaff, damaged grain, and weed seeds comprise dockage. Elevator operators usually make the assessment.

5 A line elevator company was a private corporation that responded to encouragement from the CPR and built a string of elevators along rail lines.

6 Report of Royal Commission on Shipment and Transportation of Grain in Manitoba and the North-West Territories, 1899-1900; Sessional Papers #81A, 1900, p. 9.
commercial enterprises for financial losses and inefficient service.

In the 1898 session of the Federal Parliament, James Douglas, member for East Assiniboia, recognized the farmers' grievances and introduced a bill to regulate grain shipment. The bill did not pass the Railway Committee of the House; the issue of the bill did challenge the right of the CPR to control the trade. The report of the Royal Grain Commission, in 1900, documented the injustices to the farmers and recommended provision of alternative means by which they might market grain. Passage of the Manitoba Grain Act, a federal statute, in 1900, set up a permanent Warehouse Commissioner to function as an advocate for the grain growers. Among other provisions, this charter dictated equitable distribution of cars between the line companies and farmers who wished to ship their grain directly to the terminals.

Line elevator companies and the CPR, it soon became apparent, were not heeding the terms of the Act. This contravention was particularly blatant in regard to the car distribution clause. In 1901, a group of farmers met in Indian Head, in the District of Assiniboia, North West Territories, to discuss retaliatory action. They organized the Territorial Grain Growers Association to press for adherence to the terms of the Manitoba Grain Act. The organization gained members and momentum. In 1902, the TGGG presented a formal complaint to the Warehouse Commissioner against the CPR agent in Sintaluta. In a legal

7 Ibid.
8 In this thesis, the Territorial Grain Growers Association is hereafter abbreviated TGGG.
suit perceived as a test case, the court found the railway guilty of infraction of the Grain Act in the unfair allotment of cars at that shipping point. The Supreme Court of Canada upheld the decision and forced the CPR to pay a fine of fifty dollars.9

Line companies were still able, however, to dictate terms of wheat sales. The Northwest Grain Dealers' Association manipulated prices through collaborative fixing.10 The ultimate sales arena, the speculative Winnipeg Grain Exchange, was beyond the local farmers' influence.11 Milling and baking tests by the Territorial Department of Agriculture revealed inconsistencies: farmers' wheat of an assigned grade at the elevator was frequently of a significantly higher quality than grain of the same grade shipped from the terminals.12

Edward A. Partridge, a farmer and schoolteacher from Sintaluta, advanced the solution that farmers must become directly involved in the grain business. Despite the cool reception given him by elevator representatives and grain trade officials on his self-appointed tour of inspection to the Winnipeg Grain Exchange, he returned to the Territory convinced that farmers could form a company and enter the Exchange. In January, 1906, he started selling shares in the Grain Growers Grain

9 H. S. Patton, op cit.
Producers were the only eligible investors in the company.

When the Secretary of State rejected the Company's application for a federal charter, the organizers requested and obtained incorporation in Manitoba under a provincial charter. Mastering the problems of raising the necessary funds and appointing a manager, the GGGC was able to purchase a seat on the Exchange and to begin operation on September 5, 1906.

The company was immediately successful. Fearful of loss of business, the private companies joined forces and suspended the farmers' company from the Exchange on the basis of alleged violation of Exchange regulations. Manitoba government intervention resulted in the eventual reinstatement of the GGGC. The opposing member companies reacted by moving to dissolve the Winnipeg Grain Exchange. The farmers' company joined the voluntary exchange that was reorganized later in 1908.

The Grain Growers Grain Company provided both a training ground for leadership and a proof of the feasibility of a farmer-owned company. The experience in the business of large-scale handling of grain was

13 In this thesis, the Grain Growers Grain Company is hereafter abbreviated GGGC.

14 The GGGC announced its intention to distribute cash rebates to farmers. This practice was, apparently, counter to Exchange policy. "The Grain Exchange Attacked and Defended," Manitoba Free Press, January 9, 1907, p.11.


vital to the later development and stability of the pools in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

The success of the GGGC inspired the organization of the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company. Members of the Grain Growers had been assessing the need for a government system of elevators to eliminate the injustices dealt by the line companies through which farmers made initial grain deliveries. Within the ranks of the GGGC, support grew for the 'Partridge Plan,' a system of government ownership and operation of grain handling and storage facilities. In response to the announcement by the government of Manitoba of their intention to institute such a system, the Grain Growers prepared recommendations. They favoured the limitation of government responsibility to the provision of financial support; they delegated operating control to an independent non-political commission. The government refused to give autonomy to such a commission, however, in the company they established in 1910.

The Manitoba Elevator Commission showed horrendous losses in its first year of operation. The government blamed the GGGC, insisting the farmers' company had offered poor advice.17 The Grain Growers blamed the disaster on the government's failure to adhere to recommendations.18

Following this unfortunate experience and the report of an investigating commission in 1910, the Saskatchewan government

17 "Late Night Sitting of the Legislature," Manitoba Free Press, April 4, 1912, p. 5.

recommended an experiment in co-operative ownership and elevator
management by the growers themselves. The provincial government
volunteered financial assistance; the GGGC agreed to act as selling
agent for such an organization. In March, 1911, the provincial
legislature incorporated the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company.

A producer-owned system of elevators gave farmers greater control
over local delivery terms, but could not stabilize prices. Orderly
marketing entered the grain trade with the wartime price-fixing
experience of 1917-18. Following the Armistice and the reorganization
of European agencies for handling foreign sales, the Canadian Wheat
Board replaced this temporary regulatory board. The Canadian Wheat
Board had absolute control over the handling of all of the 1919-20 crop
that was marketed.

In the midst of a federal election campaign, however, the
government yielded to pressure from Eastern interests and the Winnipeg
Grain Exchange and, in 1920, dissolved the Wheat Board. This
dissolution was followed by a 65 per cent drop in wheat prices over a
fourteen month period. Wheat producers demanded reinstatement of the
Board. The courts, however, in pursuance litigation declared any
proposed federal regulation to be beyond their peacetime mandate.

In a speech in Saskatoon in late 1922, Premier Charles Avery
Dunning of Saskatchewan proposed the replacement of the compulsory
government board by a voluntary co-operative pool of grain producers.
Advocates for such a farmer-controlled body gained strength. At its
second convention in 1923, the Farmers' Union, a group modeled on
similar unions in the United States, passed resolutions in favour of the establishment of a provincial grain pool. The Union decided to invite Aaron Sapiro, the leading figure in the development of producer co-operatives in the United States, to address rallies of Saskatchewan wheat producers. Sapiro dismissed proposals for a farmers' wheat board. Instead, he suggested an association of producers, each of whom would agree to deliver all of his wheat in the name of the association. He emphasized the importance of a binding agreement by farmer-members to deliver all of their wheat to this pool, and the necessity of securing contracts from the farmers of at least 50 per cent of the agricultural acreage of the province.

Sapiro's enthusiasm was contagious. The campaign for pool membership began in the fall of 1923. When the deadline for meeting the 50 per cent membership goal arrived in September, the target had not been met. The rigidity of the acreage requirement terms of the contract forced abandonment of the plans for organization in time to market the 1923 crop. Supporters decided to continue the campaign into the spring of 1924. Alexander McPhail, one of the founding farmers, chairman of the provisional board, and later first Pool president, called his colleagues together to announce their success in completing contracts for 50 per cent of Saskatchewan wheat acreage on June 26, 1924. That day, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool formal entered the grain marketing

19 Although the organization has been referred to commonly by the title, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, throughout its history, it was known officially as Saskatchewan Co-operative Wheat Producers from 1924-43, and as Saskatchewan Co-operative Producers from 1944-53.
business.

Records show the pool in Saskatchewan, and those in her sister provinces of Alberta and Manitoba to have been an immediate success. In August, 1924, the three prairie pools established the Canadian Co-operative Wheat Producers, Limited. This corporation acted as a central sales agency and assumed responsibility for marketing wheat and distributing payments for the three pools. In their first year of operation, it handled 38 per cent of the total wheat volume leaving these provinces.  

Initially, the Pool sold grain through agreements with elevator companies. After one year of operation, it abandoned this practice. Early in 1925, the Pool established Saskatchewan Pool Elevators Limited as a subsidiary of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. They resolved to acquire facilities where they had at least 10,000 acres under pool contract, or at least 30,000 acres under contract at sites where other farmer-owned companies (United Grain Growers or Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company) had facilities. In 1925, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool purchased the facilities of the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company and also began an extensive construction programme. This development made Saskatchewan Wheat Pool the largest

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20 Farmers organized wheat pools in Alberta and Manitoba in 1923 and 1924, respectively. These co-operatives were similar in structure and operation to the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool.


22 Ibid.
integrated elevator system in the world.\textsuperscript{23}

In the 1925-26 crop year, the Pool broadened its scope of operation. Farmers signed contracts for the handling and marketing of coarse grains in addition to wheat contracts.

The economic collapse of 1929 produced trauma in the pools. By advancing higher initial cash payments than could be recovered in eventual sales, the central selling agency found itself overextended. The financial assistance offered by the provincial governments of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba saved the pools from certain bankruptcy.\textsuperscript{24}

In 1931, the Board of the Canadian Co-operative Wheat Producers decided to suspend the activity of the central selling agency. This decision released farmers from their contracts. A voluntary pool was continued in each of the three prairie provinces for the use of producers who wanted to continue co-operative marketing. These pools functioned primarily as elevator companies, rather than marketing agencies. When the non-operational contract legally expired, the pools made no effort to renew the agreements. An attempt to organize a compulsory or 100 per cent pool failed after the courts ruled such action ultra vires.

As a representative of Western farmers, the Pool has frequently exerted pressure for change. Pool officials played a part in

\textsuperscript{23}Hugh Boyd, op cit., p. 146.

\textsuperscript{24}The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool eventually repaid the Saskatchewan debt of $13,300,000.00.
formulating the first international wheat agreement in 1933. In 1942, and again in 1959, officials, staff, and members involved themselves in protest marches to Ottawa. Pressure from the Pool led to the end of speculation in Canadian wheat in 1943.

The Pool continued its involvement in leadership of agricultural policy-making and research. The organization expanded from local grain handling to the provision of terminal shipment facilities, livestock yards, farm supply centres, and the printing of a weekly farm newspaper. In the past two decades, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool became a joint owner of C. S. P. Foods, of XCan Grain, and of Western Co-operative Fertilizers. The purchase, in 1972, of the Federal Grain Company elevator system, related facilities, and inventory of grain on hand expanded the operating capacity of the Pool significantly.

Throughout its history, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool has been concerned with maintenance of a democratic structure within the organization. The early builders of the Pool wanted to guarantee that control would remain in the hands of the farmer-members. To this end, they incorporated a democratic electoral system. Through this structure, farmers voiced their opinions and were directly involved in the formulation of policies to strengthen the agricultural industry.

To ensure area representation, the Wheat Pool Executive, in May, 1924, divided the agricultural area of the province into sixteen districts. Eight to ten subdistricts made up each district. Originally, each of these sub-districts encompassed about ten shipping
points. Annually, members from each shipping point elected a local committee. One delegate was elected from each subdistrict to represent the members of that area at the annual meeting and to assume leadership functions throughout the year. The delegates from each district, in turn, elected one of their number to the Board of Directors, the executive body of the organization.

The committee men and delegates assumed responsibility for making policy recommendations and for keeping local members informed and active in the operation of the Pool. To support elected representatives, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, in its first year of operation, formed an extension wing. Full-time staff members, presently titled District Representatives, but traditionally and familiarly known as field men, were appointed to work in each of the sixteen districts. These men are the subject of this research.
They were getting memberships, they were seeing that people remained loyal to the organization, that they were given out all the information.¹

The decade of the 1920's was one of transformation and stabilization in Western Canada. Farmer action to gain control of grain marketing occurred in a restive environment. Residents of Saskatchewan, indeed of the country, were demanding rights and services. To comply with these needs, Canadians established and accommodated into their lives new institutions of political, economic, social, and technological natures.

Technology introduced new lifestyles and new explorations. The growing popularity of automobiles, gramophones, and jazz created fresh social possibilities to varying degrees across Canada. Improvement of air transport made accessible the unexplored areas of the Canadian North. Gas-powered trucks, tractors, combine harvesters, and "one-ways" began to replace oxen, horses, and steam-driven engines. The latter were fueled with locally available products: fodder, water, and straw. Demand for petroleum encouraged farmers to unite to bulk buy at wholesale carlot prices.

Joining together for mutual help was not limited to the organization of retail and producer co-operatives, political parties,

¹Wilson Parker, interview Prince Albert, Saskatchewan; October 25, 1979.
and work bees. The impracticality of maintaining several small churches motivated Saskatchewan communities to consider church union. In 1924, the Saskatchewan legislature passed an act to facilitate church union. The movement spread east and west, and the House of Commons, in 1925, passed a Union Bill joining three major Protestant denominations.²

Within this national atmosphere of modification and consolidation, Saskatchewan was adapting, too. Gradual improvement in road conditions encouraged travel and facilitated the growth of community organizations. Development of wheat strains with increased rust resistance and shorter growing seasons stimulated production. Saskatchewan growers harvested a record 321,000,000 bushel crop in 1928.

A provincial election in 1925 returned the Liberals to power with a significant majority.³ The party, over the next four years, however, faced a number of changes. James Garfield Gardiner, in 1926, assumed party leadership and the premiership.⁴ Urban centres witnessed the establishment, in 1929, of the Independent Labour Party of Saskatchewan by a nucleus of schoolteachers and union officials.

Returned servicemen and supportive civilians formed the Canadian

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² The union involved Methodists, Congregationalists, and some Presbyterians.

³ The Liberals won fifty of sixty seats. This party had formed the provincial government since the formation of the province in 1905.

⁴ William Lyon Mackenzie King invited Saskatchewan's Premier Charles Avery Dunn to join the Federal Liberal Cabinet as Minister of Railways and Canals. The Saskatchewan Liberal Caucus asked J. G. Gardiner to accept the party leadership and the portfolio of Highways.
Great War Veterans Association.\(^5\) This group fostered the growing resentment against those farmers, primarily of central and eastern European origin, who had been exempted from military service and who appeared to have profited from war-time prices.

Against this backdrop of changed leadership, greater community interaction, growing acrimony against ethnic and religious minorities, appearance of a new party, and agricultural prosperity, the Liberal Party met defeat. Following the provincial election of 1929, James Thomas Milton Anderson formed a majority coalition of Conservatives, Progressives, and Independents.

During this time, the co-operative movement was advancing markedly in Saskatchewan. In 1913, the Agricultural Co-operative Associations Act enabled farmer-members of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers Association\(^6\) to form and secure memberships in co-operative purchasing ventures. Subsequent legislation\(^7\) expanded the terms of eligibility to include every resident of the province, and the scope to include the marketing of produce. Accordingly, co-operatives were organized between 1925 and 1927 to market eggs, poultry, livestock, and dairy products. The United Farmers of Canada (Saskatchewan Section), a hybrid of the amalgamation of SGGA and the Farmers' Union of Canada, started

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\(^5\)This association later became the Canadian Legion.

\(^6\)In this thesis, the Saskatchewan Grain Growers Association is hereafter abbreviated SGGA.

\(^7\)1922 Amendment to the Agricultural Co-operative Associations Act, the 1927 Co-operative Marketing Associations Act, and the 1928 Co-operative Associations Act.
discussing, in 1926, the possibility of establishing a co-operative wholesale body. In 1928, the three prairie wheat pools set up Canadian Pool Agencies, Ltd. to meet their insurance needs.

The establishment of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool was the crowning achievement of this co-operative movement. Undeniably, the drive for the Pool had the sympathy of most Saskatchewan residents, farmer and businessman alike. For the provincial government, it was deemed imprudent to take a public stand in support of the enterprise but politically suicidal to project any suggestion of opposition. Minister of Agriculture, Charles McGill Hamilton, had been involved in pool organizational work in 1923. Premier Dunning was responsible for advancing the initial suggestion of a voluntary pool in 1922. Fearing that emotionalism generated by Aaron Sapiro's eloquence would outweigh rational commitment, however, Dunning cautioned farmers to study their contracts. Later the government awarded $45,000 toward organizational and managerial expenses.

June 26, 1924, was the climax of the campaign. Promotion had escalated beyond posters to windshield stickers, and the work of farmer-canvassers and the press alone, to efforts by schools and churches. Many centres declared a civic holiday so citizens could be free to assist. The prize of this drive was accomplishment of the quota. Canvassers had secured contracts for 6,330,000 acres from 45,725 farmers. 8

Balloting was held throughout the province for 160 delegates and sixteen directors to guide the infant organization. The Board of Directors met in Regina. They elected Alexander James McPhail first president and Regina the site for head office. Members assumed a defensive stance. Local shipping committees were formed for the express purpose of ensuring that members were not turned against the Pool by private elevator operators.

The initial cost to a producer of membership in the pool was set at three dollars. One dollar represented his share in the company. The remainder was a contribution toward organizational expenses. Larger trust companies as well as lone settlers were eligible for Pool membership. The Pool's third annual report noted that at least one colonization company was insisting that new settlers sign a wheat contract. Farmers holding wheat contracts had the opportunity, in 1925, to apply for membership in a coarse grains pool, as well.

Many farmers were reluctant to sign a contract because they did not have the three dollar fee. Eager to meet their 50 per cent acreage quota, the Pool accepted promissory notes. As a result, the infant company was born naked of assets and handicapped with a crippling debt.

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9 The provisional executive received written nomination papers and conducted elections through the mail. To be eligible, a nominee had to be engaged in farming, have signed a contract, and be living in the district which he represented. He could not be actively involved as a candidate in provincial or federal politics or as an officer in other farmer-organizations.


to the United Grain Growers,\textsuperscript{12} the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company,\textsuperscript{13} and the Saskatchewan government.

The initial concern of the Pool was marketing, not storage nor handling.

In the early days, we didn't think of elevators, we were thinking in terms of selling our grain direct by bypassing the Winnipeg Grain Exchange.\textsuperscript{14} the Pool had salesmen in every importing country in the world.\textsuperscript{14}

The Board of Directors resolved to implement their programme through the existing co-operative elevator systems (UGG and SCBC) wherever possible. These facilities were not capable, however, of handling the yield of 50 per cent of the provincial acreage. As well, securing agreements to handle Pool grain became a tedious annual battle. Elevator companies levied excessive fees for this service.\textsuperscript{15} Consequently, the Pool incorporated a subsidiary, Saskatchewan Pool Elevators\textsuperscript{16} in February, 1925.

The mandate given SPE was acquisition of elevators at points where

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\textsuperscript{12}In this thesis, the United Grain Growers is hereafter abbreviated UGG.

\textsuperscript{13}In this thesis, the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company is hereafter abbreviated SCBC.

\textsuperscript{14}Wilson Parker, interview Prince Albert, Saskatchewan; October 25, 1979.

\textsuperscript{15}The elevator companies received, in 1924, five cents per bushel for handling the top three grades of wheat, and six cents per bushel for handling the lower grades. In 1979, the handling charge for wheat was approximately $5.30 per tonne. Adjusted for inflation, the 1924 rates were 153.4\% of those in 1980.

\textsuperscript{16}In this thesis, Saskatchewan Pool Elevators is hereafter abbreviated SPE.
neither of the farmer-owned companies were in business and where a minimum of 10,000 acres were under contract to the Pool. SPE undertook to build an elevator at a point already served by UGG or SCBC only if the Pool had contracts for 30,000 acres.17

This Pool Elevator Company policy raised the ire of the Board of the Co-operative Elevator Company. They viewed the construction of Pool facilities as unwelcome competition. The farmer-owners of the SCBC, most of whom were also members of the Wheat Pool and the Farmers' Union, did not share the anti-pool sentiments of their executive body.

Circulation of memos, prepared by Louis Philip McNamee of the Farmers' Union, made the SCBC more guarded. These memos proposed that Farmers' Union members who were SCBC shareholders advance a rent-with-option-to-purchase agreement with the Pool. When these letters came to the attention of the SCBC, the Executive grew very defensive.

Consequently, when SPE approached the SCBC with a view to establishing a mutually acceptable handling agreement, they met fierce resistance. SCBC Executive drafted an agreement with exorbitant rates that the Pool considered outrageous. Only after the Pool withdrew its request and finalized much more economical agreements with the UGG and the North-West Grain Dealers Association, did the SCBC indicate a willingness to compromise.

17 Pool members financed the construction programme through payment of a two cents per bushel handling charge. To handle the 1924-25 crop the company found it necessary to construct fifty-two new elevators.
SCBC members took action against the directors they believed were not representing them. At the subsequent annual SCBC meeting in February, 1925, three of the more vocal of the board members met defeat. The meeting also tabled a motion of intended co-operation with the Pool.

Pool delegates responded at their annual meeting by resolving to offer to purchase the entire SCBC country elevator system at an arbitrated price, and to lease or purchase the terminal facilities. Despite the unmistakable consensus of their shareholders, the directorate of the SCBC remained opposed to the sale. Nonetheless, at the SCBC's annual meeting, December, 1925, the motion for sale of facilities and dissolution of the company passed. Ownership was formally transferred on August 2, 1926. When the transactions were complete, the SWP found itself the owner of both the largest elevator system and the largest grain handling concern in the world.

Producer co-operatives in the United States and Denmark had demonstrated the importance of having staff available locally to relate to farmers and businessmen and to support elected officials in any manner possible. Delegates and directors were, after all, farmers first and had limited time and expertise to devote to the skills of propaganda and verbal defence. Aaron Sapiro emphasized the immediate need for a small mobile force to facilitate smooth operation of the pool in the country. He recommended the importation of experienced farm organizers from California. Pool officials balked, however, and insisted on the selection of Saskatchewan men to fill the positions.18

18 Harry Marsh, interview Rosetown, Saskatchewan; November 19, 1979.
Observers noted with some amusement that the Pool created a Field Staff Department in its infant organization.¹⁹ In the conflict in elevator interests between the two organizations in 1924-25, the negotiation process was fraught with attacks and counter-attacks. Both sides waged determined battles through the press. As discussed earlier, Farmers' Union supporter-Pool members considered the SCBC's policies and determination to retain its own identity to be in conflict with the development of the Pool. Through direct appeals and subtle persuasion,²⁰ pool advocates urged SCBC shareholders to support delegates who would attempt to turn the company, its facilities, assets, and patronage, over to the new pool. The SCBC took on a force of men, titled Field Service Men (but dubbed "Secret Service Men" by the Pool) to use whatever methods were necessary to maintain farmer patronage. The appointment of these men, allegedly only days prior to the annual shareholders' meeting, embroiled executors and shareholders alike in acrimonious debate. However legitimate the intent and cogent the arguments, the introduction of this force intensified the controversy and suspicion between the two organizations.

The Pool, nonetheless, ignored the controversy and instituted a Field Staff Department in 1924. Pool officials and supporters had ridiculed and denounced the SCBC staff that bore the same name and


performed similar duties. Wheat Pool field men confronted the negative image their organization had helped to foster. As late as 1927, the Pool's publicity man found it necessary to emphasize that the purpose of the field service department was not espionage and politics, but co-operative education and service. 21 He continued,

In recent years the very term 'Field Service' came somewhat into disrepute in the mind of the average grower as a result of certain situations which indicated such men can readily be used in the service of a specific set of officials rather than the service of men on the land who pay their salaries. 22

Several of the earliest field men had been involved in the initial contract drive. The province-wide army of canvassers that visited farmers, persuading them to sign Pool contracts, drew its recruits from many professions and walks of life. Boards of Trade, Retail Merchants Associations, Kiwanis Clubs, and churches joined the provincial government in lending moral support. Those who actually peddled the co-operative idea and the Pool contract from farm to farm pledged not only their allegiance, however. These men pledged their boot leather and, for homesteaders a less abundant commodity, their time.

Poor prices and high production and marketing costs hurt most farmers. Young veterans, returning from World War I, were perhaps hardest hit. These men started farming when prices were high. Market control by the Wheat Board, until 1920, helped to maintain income. When

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22 Ibid., p. 107.
the Board ceased to function and prices started to fall, however, young farmers could not make payments for land or machinery. Those who had no savings from previous years faced almost certain bankruptcy. Others who advocated co-operation joined the farmer volunteers. The management of the Liberty Grain Company learned, to their horror, that their young agent in Preeceville was selling Pool contracts.

The original contracts specified that if the target was not met in 1923, the agreements were automatically nullified. The provisional board of growers decided against abandonment of the project and proposed to continue efforts into 1924. The decision made necessary the relocation of all the original signers to waive the date clause, and the conversion of a sufficient number of other growers to reach the target of fifty per cent of Saskatchewan seeded acreage.

In the winter of 1923, we said, 'Now we've got to go out and renew all those contracts,' but instead of signing a new contract, we went out with what we called waivers, that waived this clause. I remember that when I got my chores done, I would take a team of horses and a cutter and drive around to the farmers and ask them to sign this waiver which they all did... I was just collecting the signatures - it was no problem, no problem whatever because the farmers were desperate at the time - all of them - and then long before, long before the crop year of '24, '25 we had an abundance of signatures, there wasn't any question about it... I remember when I first went out I didn't get anything for it: I did it on my own time; and then I got twenty-five cents a contract to start with, and eventually

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23 Wilson Parker recalled buying seed oats for $1.00 per bushel and selling the crop for $0.29 per bushel.

24 This agent, Thomas Bentley subsequently became an agent for the SCEC and a field man for the SWP.
developed into a dollar a contract. In '23 of course nobody got paid anything for it - country work - but when it got started, why then . . . it reached a dollar. And I'd go out in the afternoon and pick up a half dozen, probably a dozen contracts which wasn't a lot of money but it was a little bit. . . . it was interesting.  

With the organization of a Coarse Grains Pool in 1925, the directors of the infant company again faced the prospect of finding volunteers to secure contracts. They decided to put a number of salaried workers into the field to assist in efforts to increase Pool acreage. Alexander Yates and W. J. Lawless started work out of Weyburn and Assiniboia, respectively. In later months, Charles W. (Charlie) King and James H. (Jim) Newsome joined them. These men proved to be effective not only in canvassing for increased acreage, but in addressing public meetings. The directors decided to select and hire a permanent staff of sixteen men. The first annual report announced that these organizers in each district would work with delegates and local committees to reach the Coarse Grains objective and to increase the Wheat Pool acreage to 10,000,000. 26

These salaried canvassers or field men faced a generally less receptive audience than did their voluntary predecessors. The enthusiastic and credulous had signed contracts before October, 1925; the opposed and reluctant remained unconvinced. Hard-sell techniques used by convincing men in an intensive campaign was the order of the

25 Wilson Parker, interview, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan; October 25, 1979.

26 First Annual Report (Regina: Saskatchewan Co-operative Producers, 1925), p. 3.
day. The second annual report credits the field staff with 12 per cent of the wheat contracts and 17 per cent of the coarse grain contracts. In addition to these, their standard wares, field men were peddling the *Western Producer*.

Each farmer who signed a wheat pool contract acted on faith. He committed himself for five years to delivering his grain to an unproven infant organization with a staggering debt and virtually no assets.

Temptations to violate the contract were unquestionably strong. Farmers who saw higher prices and those who needed immediate cash found the contract suddenly loathsome. The success of the pool, however, depended on their faithfulness. The relative ease of selling to a line company at a point where no Pool facility was located stimulated the Board in their determination to build their elevator empire.

During its first year of operations, the Pool took legal action on two confirmed cases of contract violation. One of the bootleggers agreed to settle out of court. A trial judge found the other not guilty. The Pool carried the decision, as a test case, to the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal. This body reversed the decision and awarded the Pool full damages equal to 25 cents for every bushel of grain sold outside the Pool. The court deemed the contract reasonable.

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and consistent with public interest, and not in
restraint of trade. 30

The Pool delegated the responsibility of policing contracts to the
field men. The first annual report urged members to report any
suspicions of contract violation to the field service department.
Through such member reports, suggestions from doubtful agents, or
records in head office that a farmer had delivered little or no grain
that year, the field man built his case. He approached the alleged
bootlegger with his evidence, and the battle began.

Despite the frequency of such confrontations, few cases went to
court. Many farmers had plausible explanations: contracts signed after
the crop was marketed, over-estimates or duplications of acreage
reports, retirement of members, failures to specify to agents that
deliveries were Pool wheat, seizures of crops on unsettled debts and
mortgages, or crop failure. The Pool showed reluctance to prosecute
first offenders who failed to understand the terms of the contract.
Field men encountered difficulties in having many certain delinquent
members charged. Evidence was circumstantial. Neighbours showed
considerable reluctance to betray a fellow homesteader. This reticence
demanded more skillful sleuthing and tough action from the field men.

Pool reports and the speeches of field staff and officials
continued to drum home the ominous warning that staff were watching

30 Western Weekly Reports, 1926, Volume 2; Court of Appeal:
Saskatchewan Co-operative Wheat Producers Ltd. v. Zurowski, pp. 604-656.
carefully for illegal sales. They emphasized the moral obligation of farmers to turn in evidence or suspicions about their fellows. No doubt this rhetoric was more effective in reducing the amount of bootlegging attempted than were the laying of charges on suspected misdemeanors.

The field man also dealt with farmers' grievances. Complaints about payments, charges, and service contributed to the challenging nature of the position. An article describing the function of field staff in 1926 referred to their "being on the firing line, coming in daily contact with the farmer and his practical problems." 31

Combat was waged with many foes. The public arena witnessed many memorable, colourful, frequently verbal, and occasionally physical bouts. A co-operative pioneer recalled, "Those boys could really be interesting and the hecklers usually came off second best." 32

Employees of line elevator companies and, less frequently, leaders of particular religious sects incited public displays of opposition. One of the most effective devices of these adversaries was the linking of the Pool and the co-operative movement generally with the Bolshevik activity in Russia. In southwestern Saskatchewan, this 'communist scare' tactic closed many school facilities to SWP field men for meetings. 33

31 "Functions of Field Service Department," Western Producer, November 25, 1926, p. 6.


33 Tom Bentley, interview, Vancouver, British Columbia; November 2, 1979.
Early field men defended not only the organization they represented, but also the positions they occupied. When funds were scarce, maintenance of a relatively generously salaried force of men, the efforts of whom were difficult to assess, appeared superfluous to some members. Expressions of these sentiments started appearing as early as 1926.34

The Board of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool charged their field service staff with the responsibility of selling the pool idea to the community. In the mid-twenties, agriculture was unquestionably the dominant sector of Saskatchewan society. Leaders believed, however, that the ultimate success of the co-operative movement hinged on the endorsement of the ideology by all. Early staff pressured local merchants, lumber men, bankers, machinery dealers, and school officials to support the pool movement. Field men met to devise strategies and prepare pitches to controvert anti-pool propaganda. Apparently, the campaign was successful. The Western Producer commented, in 1927, on the increasing support from the business sector and credits the conversion to the evangelism of the field staff.35

Keeping the opposition in line and the business community convinced occupied only part of the attention of the early field man. He was also concerned with the membership. He was a recognized leader of the army of members and their families in his territory. As the

34Delegates representing 45 points presented a resolution to the Annual Meeting of 1928, moving the dissolution of the field service department because their services did not justify the expense.

35Western Producer, November 29, 1927, pp. 28, 34.
mobile link in the chain binding the organization's growers to its head office, he found it necessary to be travelling extensively. Most men were provided with cars, but meetings were not popular during those months of the year when most Saskatchewan roads were passable. As a result, he relied on horses and, later, the railroad to convey him and his message.

The first four field men appointed in 1924 and early 1925 faced a mammoth task. Even after the assignment of a field man to each of the sixteen districts, the responsibility was an awesome one. Collectively, their charge included developing more than 73,000 farmers into an effective pool unit. Management set no rules for meeting the objective. Each man developed his own methods based on his past experience, style, and knowledge of the district.

The early field man accepted a challenge in becoming a leader. Most of his work cropped up in the course of his movement through his large district and demanded immediate attention. He undertook the perpetual mission of publicizing and interpreting the policies formulated by the delegates and the Board of Directors. To rescue farmers from the 'perils of the market,' he denounced the evil practice of speculation and crusaded for co-operation. It was necessary to maintain and direct the zeal of the 'early-on-the-bandwagon' enthusiasts. He had to mollify the impatient who expected more dramatic and prompt changes. The quiet, wise members who made occasional but

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36. Davisson intimates that even this ratio was only a temporary measure and the size of the field staff would undoubtedly increase over the years.
perspicacious contributions needed recognition. The converts from capitalism had to be soundly indoctrinated in co-operative principles. The field man had to locate absentee landlords and sell them contracts. The throngs who signed contracts because their neighbours became members needed education. Many of these were illiterate; many more were unable to speak or understand English. Remittance men from the British Isles and fallen nobility from eastern Europe had never been actively involved in agriculture before. The earliest field man encountered these challenges along with his responsibility for recruiting the reluctant farmer.

The size of the membership dictated that much of the field man's work be done through the electoral structure. He could not reach, personally, every member, prospective member, and opponent. The delegates required support and assistance in organizing local committees. The field man gave advice and an orientation to the fundamental principles and initial policies of the SWP. He helped set up public meetings and may have spoken at them. Topics tended to emphasize the merits of Pool membership and the perils of bootlegging or withholding information about disloyal neighbours.

Who were these earliest field men? Davisson, writing in 1927, commented that a field man "must be one of the growers if he is to enjoy their confidence."37 Most men in Saskatchewan in the mid-twenties had probably tried homesteading at one time or another. To this extent,

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37 Walter P. Davisson, op cit., p. 108.
they may have been able, collectively, to empathize with the farmer and effectively earn his acceptance.

Unfortunately, relatively little is known about some of these first field men. It appears that most of these men were born in Canada. Lachlan (Lachie) McIntosh and Alexander Yates from Scotland, Peter B. (P.B.) Thompson from Norway, and Robert Pewtress from England were known exceptions.

Several of the men came to the field service directly from the farm. Osborne Upper from Pleasant Valley voiced his co-operative philosophy through the correspondence column of the *Western Producer*. P. B. Thompson was an iron worker in Duluth during his migration from Norway to a Saskatchewan homestead, via U. S. A. Neighbours remember his quiet manner and powerful speeches. Residents of the Netherhill district remember Robert Pewtress as a community-minded Englishman. Mr. Pewtress took a homestead in 1910 and continued farming right up to the time he joined SWP. Charlie King farmed near Leroy. Lachie McIntosh was an avid spokesman for the Pool from or before Aaron Sapiro's first visit. Cecil Angell worked a homestead near Harris and promoted a pool in that area.

The Wheat Pool drew other field men from leadership positions in other companies and agencies. Alexander Yates had experience as an agent with one of the line elevator companies. He came to SWP at the age of 41 years from the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company, where he had been a travelling superintendent. Robert Leslie Stutt was a farm boy studying to be an Anglican clergyman. Newton Raeburn left
selling railway shares in the Mackenzie and Mann empire for peddling coarse grain contracts for the Pool. Jim Newsome came to Saskatchewan from a feed mill in Eastern Canada. E. G. Ahearne held an administrative position on the Board of Pension Commissioners in Ontario. Tom Guild, the first director of the field staff, had a degree in agriculture from the University of Manitoba. He worked with the farming public as an extension agent of the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture and as a provincial organizer for the United Grain Growers in Manitoba. Tom Bentley was independent from the age of twelve years. At sixteen he came West on a harvest excursion and at nineteen was the foreman of a Quebec logging camp, supervising 180 men and 40 teams of horses.

Each of them was a leader. Nearly every man had experience selling goods, policies, or ideas. Some relied on the community respect they had earned; others added charisma and persuasive sales techniques. Each was a mix of diplomacy and independent thought and speech.

Like their pasts, the destinies of a few of these pioneer field men are obscure. It is known, however, that four remained on the field staff until they retired. Three others moved to other supervisory positions in the Pool network. Alexander Yates eventually earned a position with the Canadian Wheat Board. At least three others entered politics. Cecil Angell accepted the first managership of a co-operative insurance company. Jack Davis became a Farm Inspector for the Department of Indian Affairs. E. G. Ahearne went to work as the
canvasser for northern Saskatchewan with the Lombard Stock and Loan Corporation. Jim Newsome returned to his feed company in the East.

The field staff of the Pool established itself in the four or five years after its formation. Despite criticism, the workers could prove their vitality by producing sales and membership statistics. Never again would field men be able to justify their maintenance with such relative ease.

The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool established itself, too, in those first five years. Despite ominous predictions, it thrived. The amount of original capital was negligible, but an elevator empire developed. The major impetus for growth came from 'below,' but grow it did: while its success depended on the voluntary allegiance of individuals, it succeeded.

After five years, the farmers of the prairies demanded recognition as successful merchants. Because prices remained well above the initial payments in the first four years, the Pool was able to distribute interim or final payments. 1928 recorded an all-time record yield. Critics had to admit that without the Pool's stabilizing influence, the grain market would have collapsed.

With the pending expiry of the contract in 1928, a movement pressing for a compulsory pool for all grain farmers spread. Aaron Sapiro paid another visit to Saskatchewan to advance the cause for compulsion, or the '100% Pool.' Not all Pool officials advocated compulsory pooling. Some argued that such regulation would destroy the
farmer control on which the institution was built. Nonetheless, field men were directed to campaign for the proposal. 38

By 1929, the Central Selling Agency of the three prairie pools was the largest exporter of wheat in the world. Collectively, the pools owned the world's largest chain of handling and storage facilities. Pooling was the only business in Canada, in 1929, that turned over an average of more than one million dollars for every working day of the year. 39 In that year the 248,000 farmer-members included,

The Prince of Wales, a duke, a lord, an earl and a countess, ministers of the Federal Government, members of Parliament, the premier of Saskatchewan, mortgage companies, trust companies, real estate companies, merchants and professional men—all of them farmers. 40

Like the farmers' new wheat marketing contrivance, other machinery reflective of the changing society developed in Canada. By the close of the decade, major flaws were detected and remedied. Gears appeared to be meshing remarkably smoothly across the nation. Few anticipated the series of world and local events that would bring the country's economy to a rasping halt.

40 Ibid., p. 4.
CHAPTER III

KEEPING INTEREST UP

We needed the staff to keep moving among the farmers to keep interest up because it was hard to keep interest going unless you had someone there that could give the actual reports . . . and encourage [them] . . . to try and persuade farmers that it was worthwhile even though the going was tough."

On October 29, 1929, the New York stock market shuddered and plunged through the floorboards of the financial world. Into this cellar, later to be known as the Great Depression, it dragged scores of national economies and millions of hapless people. Observers appeared oblivious to the inevitability of the Depression's influence, not only on world politics and the global economy, but on local governments, wheat prices, and the farmer. Media generally ignored the signs. The Western Producer, certainly one of the most widely-read prairie newspapers, failed to note the fall of the stock market, and failed to make even general mention of depressed conditions until nearly a year later.

Canada experienced rapidly declining prices for agricultural produce, unprecedented unemployment in towns and cities, and reduced purchasing power into 1930. In February, the United Farmers of Canada (Saskatchewan Section)\(^2\) in convention resolved to take political action.

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\(^1\)Thomas Bentley, interview Vancouver, British Columbia; November 2, 1979.

\(^2\)In this thesis, the United Farmers of Canada is hereafter abbreviated UFC.
With the support of the Independent Labour Party, formed in 1929, they created the Farmers' Political Association to contend the 1930 federal election against the traditional parties. This new party demanded a policy of closure on immigration until thousands of unemployed Canadians found work.

The new leader of the Conservative party, Calgary barrister and millionaire, Richard Bedford Bennett, promised higher tariffs, aid to the provinces, and an end to unemployment. Liberal Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King made no promises, but hinted that he would consider assistance to provincial governments to relieve unemployment. In a debate in April, however, he destroyed his bases of support in at least five, and probably seven, of the nine provinces. In a rage incited by challenges to his noncommittal stance, he vowed that he would give no province with a Conservative provincial government 'a five cent piece.' To no one's surprise, Bennett swept to power with a comfortable majority.

Almost immediately, the new government began retracting its pledges. Despite his determination to raise the Canadian tariff, Bennett was unable to enter the world market. In 1932, indeed, he conceded a lower tariff to the Commonwealth and the United States. He was no more successful in combatting the staggering unemployment situation. No reliable figures are available, but even by mid-1930 more than 400,000 Canadians were looking for work.

The Conservative government did deliver on its promise to provide aid to the provinces. They did not make these subventions, however,
before some of the provinces extended their own resources almost beyond limit. For many, federal aid was 'too little;' for some, federal aid came 'too late.' Most Western Canadians were reluctant to accept relief. For them, dependence on support from the public purse was more an agonizing humiliation than was display of their dire circumstances.

Saskatchewan entered the 1930's with a spirit of acceptance and an optimism that things could only improve. Residents asked only "when?" In contrast with the 'bumper crops' of 1928 and 1929, farmers faced a grim harvest in 1930. A mild winter with little snow preceded a near-rainless summer. Crops simply could not grow. Homesteaders were unprepared for the prairie winds that lifted the topsoil from their barren cultivated fields, turned it to blinding grey blizzards, and left it silt-fine, in drifts that filled the ditches. In this first lean year, municipalities managed assistance to their distressed constituents with little support from the central government.  

The drought continued into 1931. As the fine sand sifted under doors, it brought despair and fear with it into every corner of prairie homes. The Government of Saskatchewan set up a relief commission. This body appointed officers to support local relief committees. After approving the assistance application of a family, the committee attempted to provide food and clothing for the family members, and feed for such livestock as they chose to keep. Whether cattle, horses, oxen,

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3 An exception to this generalization is the Saskatchewan government project, supported by a federal grant, to employ needy farmers to extend the provincial road system. As a result, Saskatchewan became the province with the greatest road mileage per resident in Canada.
or goats, stock must have appeared as proverbial white elephants to their owners: too useful to sell or destroy, but almost too costly to feed.

Somewhat tardily, the federal government acted on their promise of aid. The Unemployment and Relief Act, introduced in 1931, brought help for the most severely stricken farmers. Depressed conditions resulted in there being no market for an abundance of Atlantic fish and central Canadian vegetables and apples. The government bought these goods at deflated prices and shipped them West. The Canadian Red Cross and church groups in eastern Canada collected clothing and supplies. The railways carried relief shipments at no cost to the sender or recipient.

By 1932, people were no longer asking "when": they were wondering "if" the Depression would end. Many disillusioned farmers began the northward trek. They migrated north to begin again the painful process of clearing and breaking land. Some settled on marginal land in northern Saskatchewan; others flocked to the sparsely settled Peace River country of northern Alberta. The population and number of farms in Saskatchewan began to drop.

Conditions in 1933 brought no release from hardships. Farmers who remained on their southern Saskatchewan farms started to devise adaptations to help them cope. They converted cars to "Bennett Buggies" to be pulled by horses. Green Russian thistle mixed with straw nourished the remaining livestock. Windmills pumped water from deep

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4 These districts, designated the "A" Zone, were those that had experienced three consecutive crop failures.
wells and turned generators for radio operation. Communities worked together to divert their collective preoccupation with drought by organizing local entertainment. Westerners also took political action. A left-wing party, to be known later as the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, appeared in 1932. The party, at its first national convention in Saskatchewan in July, 1933, drew up a lengthy list of goals entitled "The Regina Manifesto."

Continued drought, a grasshopper infestation, and a provincial election confronted Saskatchewan farmers in 1934. Voters replaced James Thomas Milton Anderson's Co-operative Group Government with James Garfield Gardiner's Liberals. They were unable to dispense with the drought or the grasshoppers this easily. Responsibility for rural relief shifted to the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture.

The unemployed were growing desperate. Single men in western relief camps and transient squatters' 'jungles' along the tracks decided to unite and demand government action. They boarded trains and headed east. Prime Minister Bennett ordered them stopped in Regina. The 2,000 men raised money there to send a delegation on to Ottawa. An open-air meeting with farmers and Regina residents ended in a riot when Royal Canadian Mounted Police and local law enforcement officers marched into the crowd. When the dust settled, one police officer was dead, and 100 persons were injured. The action did convince Prime Minister Bennett that relief camps were a failure and he began disbanding them.

In this thesis, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation is hereafter abbreviated CCF.
The co-operative movement continued to progress through the depressed years. Some local co-operatives with their small profit margins were unable to survive the shock of recession. In many rural communities, however, private businesses moved out as farm income and expenditure fell. In these centres, often only the establishment or maintenance of a locally owned co-op store made essential goods available to the residents. A 1930 tax amendment exempted marketing and wholesale co-operatives from paying income tax, and permitted non-member service up to twenty per cent of their transactions.

These advantages encouraged farmers to establish wholesale co-operatives for the purchase of twine, coal, and other fuels. Pressure exerted by the Retail Merchants' Association on behalf of private coal dealers influenced the Saskatchewan government, in 1931, to restrict coal distribution to dealers operating sheds. By 1933, farmers were forming local co-op dealerships with thirty or more members. Sheds were often adjacent to Pool elevators so agents could operate them.

Petroleum co-ops also met opposition. Major companies increased wholesale but not retail prices. In 1934, a group of farmers launched a campaign for funds for a Consumers' Refineries Co-operative Limited. Although few farmers could afford to invest in the plan, a small refinery opened in 1935.

Service co-operatives, including an abattoir and a breeding co-op appeared in the thirties, as well. Credit was almost impossible for

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impoverished farmers. A 1937 provincial act provided for the establishment of local credit unions.

The Depression struck a severe blow to every Saskatchewan farmer; it delivered a near-fatal blow to his marketing organization. The prairie pools, in 1928, still disagreed on the issue of compulsion. Some, led by Aaron Sapiro, were insisting that grain price stabilization could result only if the Pool controlled one hundred per cent of the wheat crop. Others, including Alexander James McPhail, believed compulsory membership and the co-operative philosophy to be incompatible. Opponents of the Pool accused 140,000 farmers of failing, and of wanting their remaining fellows to share this failure.

A mail referendum of Pool members in 1930 favoured a compulsory pool. They requested that the government of Saskatchewan establish a Grain Marketing Act to place all grain in the province under a central handling system. A Court of Appeal ruling, however, found this proposed act ultra vires, because it related to internal trade and commerce, a federal mandate.

Farmers' incomes peaked with the 1928 'bumper crop.' The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool found itself at the beginning of the new crop year, August, 1929, with much of this 1928 grain still on hand. The Pool, in light of the drought and anticipating small yields and high prices, confidently issued an initial price of $1.00 per bushel to their members. The price of grain on the market plunged with others in the October Crash. Directors recognized, to their horror, that the initial price paid was considerably greater than the price to be realized.
By December, 1930, the market price for wheat was fifty cents per bushel. The Central Sales Agency had outstanding bank loans to a sum of approximately $85,000,000 at one point in 1930. This debt still stood at $20,000,000 when all of the accumulated grain from the 1929 and 1930 crop years was sold. Saskatchewan's share of this loss was more than $13,500,000.

The three prairie provincial governments came to the assistance of the floundering pools. They agreed to accept mortgages from the pools, issue bonds for the amount of the respective debts, and pay the bank loans with the proceeds. In Saskatchewan, Anderson's Co-operative government also solicited debt relief on behalf of the Pool from the federal government.

As the price continued to fall, directors realized that they could not offer any initial payment in 1930 after handling costs, so they released Pool members from their contracts. For the next four years the Saskatchewan organization operated a voluntary pool for wheat. They disbanded the coarse grains pool. One observer expressed incredulity that they were attempting to continue operating. In a later article, he commented on the likelihood that farmers would have learned, at last, not to trust the Pool. Another author suggested that requests for government assistance were incompatible with the 'self-help' principles


8 Frank Oliver, "Pool Sales Tactics Vs. the Banks," Saturday Night, July 18, 1931, pp. 17, 19.
of co-operation. When initial payments for the 1931-32 crop slipped to thirty-five cents per bushel, press excitement flared. Grain Trade News carried a series of articles attacking the pools. The articles also appeared as leaflets in public gatherings and schools. The percentage of farmers patronizing the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool remained unchanged the following year. Volumes handled, however, were small because of the drought conditions.

Whatever Eastern critics were saying, the pools were not 'looking any of their gift horses in the mouth.' They could not even afford to reject one such offer though it meant accepting a new 'jockey' with the horse. The Canadian government insisted upon the appointment of a general manager acceptable to both the banks and the federal government before they would provide assistance. The government invited John I. McFarland, a veteran Calgary grain expert, to come from retirement.

McFarland accepted on the condition that he would be allowed to work without remuneration but also without interference. He encouraged farmers to reduce their seeded acreage, but these farmers were already facing destitution and needed every bushel they could coax from the

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9 H. C. Grant, "Developments in the Concept of Co-operation In Western Canada," Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science 3 (1937): 412-420. Grant, a Professor of Economics at the University of Manitoba, was one of the three personnel appointed to the first Canadian Wheat Board in August, 1935.

10 Grain Trade News, published by Dawson-Richardson Publication, Ltd., Winnipeg, was the official organ of the Winnipeg Grain Trade.

11 McFarland had been an official with a private grain company. He retired before the pools became a force, and consequently, had not been involved in any controversy with them.
land. He was more successful in the sales arena. He terminated the export branches, the overseas selling agencies, and in fact, the prime activities of the Central Sales Agency. He demanded that the three pools operate separately in the open market. McFarland was not popular with pool leaders at the time of his appointment. His success at disposing of the backlog of grain, however, won their admiration.

The collapse of prices, in 1929, armed those who advocated a regulatory body to monitor the handling and sales of all Canadian wheat. The Wheat Pool led the clamour for a Canadian Wheat Board. One hundred and seven thousand Saskatchewan farmers and businessmen submitted a petition. Bennett's Conservative government did not comply, but promised to carry on large-scale buying of grain to stabilize the market temporarily.

Twenty-two producer nations signed the London Wheat Agreement, in 1933. This pact broke down when Argentina disregarded the regulation two years later. The pools again demanded a central marketing agency. In June, 1935, Bennett introduced legislation for the creation of an autonomous board of three members and seven advisors. This board had authority over wheat transportation and sales. It excluded coarse grain regulation. The Board guaranteed a minimum price to producers. Overpayments were absorbed by the government. The pools no longer distrusted McFarland, and welcomed his appointment as chairman of the first Canadian Wheat Board.

A new Liberal government, in 1935, changed the structure, personnel, and mandate of the Board somewhat. Four Cabinet ministers
replaced the advisory committee of seven, and James R. Murray replaced McFarland as chairman. In August, 1936, the Board acquired power to buy wheat only if and when the market price for wheat fell below ninety cents per bushel. Otherwise, wheat fluctuated on the open market. Pool officials objected and, in 1937, the Turgeon Grain Commission Enquiry started gathering information.\textsuperscript{12}

The financial crisis in the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool necessitated many cutbacks. Departments and programmes found themselves under close scrutiny. Officials examined operations scrupulously to detect any superfluous expenditures. Annual reports reflected curtailment of radio broadcasting, public exhibitions, certain publications, library expansion, and other supplementary programmes.

Other businesses experienced distress, too. The Pool sympathized with a newspaper, the \textit{Western Producer}, in particular. Much of the popular press was unkind to the farm movement in western Canada. The \textit{Producer} and its predecessor, the \textit{Progressive}, had shown support for the co-operative movement. Pool delegates, in 1930, authorized their officials to take whatever action appeared necessary to guarantee the survival of this publication. In June, 1931, Modern Press Limited took its place as an incorporated subsidiary of the Pool.

From the creation of the department in 1925, the field service withstood accusations that they were a needless luxury. It is not

\textsuperscript{12} The federal Liberal government appointed William Ferdinand Alphonse Turgeon as a one-man commission to study the grain marketing system, and to make recommendations, particularly, about retention or dissolution of the Canadian Wheat Board.
surprising that when the financial status of the Pool was bleak, the volume of the cries for dissolution of this department increased. The delegates always decided in favour of retention of the field men on the basis of their perceived vitality as morale-boosters.

A proposal from the semi-annual meeting of shareholders in June, 1930, suggested the maintenance of the field staff in a strong enough force to ensure efficient and effective activity. The proposal went on to suggest that each field man should assume responsibility for fifteen, instead of ten, subdistricts, and that agents should take over more of the routine paperwork. One year later, delegates elected to retain the department but reduce the number of men employed. As a result, nine district men and two special language workers accepted the territory previously covered by a staff of nineteen. In the drought-stricken south, districts doubled up to be served by one man. In 1932, the department of Field Service disappeared and field men became district representatives of the Country Organization Department. The restricted staff number continued until 1937.

An awesome task faced field men from the onset of the Depression. Continued support was essential to the survival of the Pool. Workers confronted the product of the contract sales campaign. Overemphasis on the price motive created an expectation of collective wealth, but farmers faced destitution. They needed to be reeducated, to be convinced that the pool meant average prices for everyone but not necessarily higher prices. The organization could certainly not accept responsibility for lower incomes resulting from massive crop failure.
Until officials released members to pool their wheat on a voluntary basis, in 1930, the company depended on the contract to ensure deliveries. Employees and delegates expended relatively little effort in instilling an understanding of co-operative marketing in their members. In a voluntary pool, support depended on this understanding. The reeducation project was the field man's role.

The Pool's eighth annual report, in 1932, made reference to attempted development of a co-operative education programme. In addition to efforts to coordinate staff and elected officials, the report listed the following objectives:

1) Development and extension of co-operative ideas in every community using Wheat Pool committees as local centres;
2) Maintenance of a well-informed membership by supplying Wheat Pool committees with regular information regarding operations. 

Field men toured the countryside advocating co-operation as an economic solution. The co-ops made efforts to co-ordinate their publicity through joint meetings and rallies.

We were supposed to assist any kind of co-operative organization that we could. But the Wheat Pool was the main thing and because it was the co-operative principle that was at stake we were . . . on instructions from head office, promoting any kind of co-operative prospect, but the big job was in holding the Wheat Pool steady. . . . Lots [were] not acquainted with co-operative principles, and our job was to get them on a solid foundation.

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14 Everett Baker, interview Shaunavon, Saskatchewan; July 17, 1979.
The 1933 annual meeting of delegates passed a resolution for closer co-operation between their organization and, in particular, the Saskatchewan Co-operative Wholesale Society.\textsuperscript{15}

Field men worked with the young people of the community, as well as with farmers. They worked in schools, teaching the principles of co-operation, decrying the evils of the open market, presenting facts and issues relating to grain movement, and sponsoring essay contests. The University of Saskatchewan encouraged the promotion of junior grain clubs and girls' homemaking clubs. Pool field men responded and accepted the sponsorship of these clubs and variety test plots in each municipality. This contact offered an entry into farm homes, and an exposure to young prospective farmers.

To maintain long-term patronage, the Pool found it necessary to urge discouraged homesteaders to wait out the drought. With this objective, the field men set out to provide social events to, at least temporarily, divert the attention of farm families and entire rural communities from their dreary plight. The result of this effort was the emergence of the highest profile that field men ever enjoyed in the history of the Pool extension activity. Their names came to connote picnics, fiery speeches, and Donald Duck.

To many who grew up in Saskatchewan during the Depression, mention of the wheat pool still brings to mind the field man and his movies. For many, these were the first and only moving pictures seen for many

\textsuperscript{15} Ninth Annual Report (Regina: Saskatchewan Co-operative Producers, Ltd., 1933), p. 21.
years. Publicity was never a problem: a poster in the country school practically guaranteed that everyone would soon be aware of the coming picture session.

The initial purpose of Pool picture shows in the country schoolhouse was the provision of free entertainment. Survival was a sad struggle; children and adults alike needed a chance to laugh. The first films, Walt Disney cartoons and other comic dramas, were at once funny and awesome. The subjects offered a relaxing interlude; the technology reflected an optimism that, somewhere, there was still progress.

The field man in the Thirties was more than a technician at these community picture shows. In fact, he was the entertainer. He arrived with his props: his films, his portable screen, his co-operative charts and literature, his small projector, and six car batteries. The batteries were connected together to furnish electricity for the projector bulb and to light the schoolhouse. These first productions featured soundless movies so the field man added the voices and sound effects. He could give life to personalities as he interpreted them. Since the earliest machines were turned by a crank, he could regulate the speed of the show to conform to the time he had available, the restlessness of the audience, threatening weather conditions, or the number of times he had already viewed this particular movie. Later, 16 mm projectors, operated by a 32-volt generator carried in the trunk of a car, limited this flexibility somewhat. Sound reels relegated the field man eventually to the role of operator or at best, commentator.

At some point, often between films when the projector needed to cool, the field man gave a short talk on co-operative thought or
practice. He was tipping his hat, as it were, to the sponsoring body, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. These gatherings were an opportunity for the development or practice of the field man's oratorical ability. He had a captive audience, waiting eagerly for the next film, or certainly for the lunch and social at the end of the evening. This audience included virtually everyone in the community. Speeches on the Pool, or on co-operation, or on the need to boost Western Producer circulation became features in themselves and an integral part of an evening of pictures.

The Pool's film library grew. Educational films on nature or citizenship became available. Release of a co-operative film, "This Generation," met with warm community acceptance. This production portrayed the story of the place of co-operation in dry-land farming in Saskatchewan.

Field men also attended and assisted with other community functions. They were present with a tent, a few chairs, and printed material at local and regional fairs. Each summer a man might visit eight or ten one-day events and an exhibition in a larger centre in his district. He was often involved in organizing picnics, guest lectures, and political forums.

Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, through its field staff, contributed to the relief effort. Throughout the Thirties they supported the Christmas Seal Anti-TB Programme. In 1930, the Red Cross, unable to handle relief for the whole province, appealed to the farm organizations for
assistance in meeting the needs of the northern half of the province. The UFC agreed to help and the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool promised financial assistance. As a result, the Wheat Pool Rural Relief Fund was set up to locate and collect donations of clothing and supplies. Field men were active in this collection and in distribution. Between November 30, 1930, and January 31, 1931, five thousand people received clothing. Adequate clothing allowed many children to attend school that winter. Through the Thirties, some field men organized study groups on the subject of municipal co-operative medical schemes. Wheat Pool representatives were involved in discussions to frame the 1935 debt adjustment legislation and measures to protect destitute farmers from foreclosure. This involvement was related to the organization and efforts of pressure groups encouraged by local field men.

This community contact rendered the field man the most effective liaison between the Wheat Pool organization and the rural public. They carried news of co-operative progress and pool activities and reports of crops and babies from one district to others. They fostered a sense of unity in a time when men appeared helpless.

To help in systematizing efforts to increase pool deliveries, field men compiled analyses of where each farmer at each shipping point delivered grain. These statistics were included, with others, in the field man's "Black Book." The director of field staff during the Thirties, R. B. (Bux) Evans, did not want his men to have offices. He believed that the place for them was out with their constituents. Black
Books were to be their portable office files containing any and all information that might be needed as the field man moved through his district. Evans insisted that Black Books be kept up-to-date as evidence that the staff member knew his district. At each staff meeting, someone selected at random was asked to present his book. These books contained more than information about committees, elected officials, members, and grain delivery practices. They recorded data on each community including detailed population statistics, facilities, leadership figures, total business revenue, total grain deliveries, and more.16

Although he spent much of his time in the community arena, the Depression-era field man encouraged elected Pool officials as well. Field staff outbacks necessitated more reliance on the delegate to fulfill some of the functions earlier handled by the field man. This, in turn, dictated that field men spend more time in consultation with their elected compers.

To maintain Pool stability through the crisis, the democratic delegate and committee structure had to survive. Study of annual reports through the Depression years revealed a steady drop in the number of local committees. The report of Noel Craddock, in 1936, emphasized the need to strengthen the committee links in the

16 Wilson Parker recalled being approached by business and church officials searching for wealthy communities in which to set up their respective institutions. They wanted information from his Black Book. Parker was also able to resolve community arguments with figures from his book. Wilson Parker, interview Prince Albert, Saskatchewan; October 25, 1979.
co-operative chain by improving morale and clarifying responsibilities. The head office encouraged monthly or bi-monthly committee meetings. Articles from the *Western Producer* formed a core of discussion materials. Ideally, the field man, the travelling superintendent from the Elevator Division, the local agent, and the district delegate attended, and each played a leadership role at every meeting.

The field man usually spent a week or two in each sub-district on each circuit of meetings. Road conditions dictated that he travel by train several months of the year. After receiving notification of the interval the field man would be in his area, the delegate selected meetings points and drew up an itinerary. Visits to community leaders occupied mornings. Afternoon committee meetings at two or more shipping points preceded a public social evening or educational event.

The basis upon which the selection of men to continue on the field force was made remains undetected. Several characteristics were general but not definitive. The more outspoken or eloquent of the original field men continued working during 'the Thirties.' Most had been farming at the time of the organization of the pool and had been involved in the canvass drive. Although their geographic origin varied from Eastern Canada to Eastern Europe and from Manitoba to Missouri, most of these men were relatively well-educated for that day.

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17 Saskatchewan Archives Board, S. W. P. Collection, "Minute Book, District #11."
One characteristic, apparently, was common. Pioneers recall each of the field men who remained active during 'the Hard Years' as being genuinely dedicated to the co-operative philosophy. To several, co-operation was inherent in the Scandinavian or rural British societies of their childhood. A conviction that co-operation was essential to the survival of a way of life grew in others through the founding years of Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and other co-operatives.

The job in the Thirties meant relentless evangelism among disillusioned farmers over twice the normal territory. Only a man who believed in the doctrine he preached or one who received handsome remuneration would accept this mission. Records deny the latter possibility. Perseverance despite reduced incomes and increased responsibility demanded dedication.

The men on field staff during these years tended to remain with the co-operative movement. Tom Bentley, Lachie McIntosh, and Peter B. Thompson were ultimately successful in securing ministerial or deputy ministerial positions in the CCF government. Alfred Himsel died prematurely in an accident while on the job. Each of the others retired from the Pool or one of its subsidiaries.

These men moved with Saskatchewan Wheat Pool through difficult times for the organization and for its membership. People remember them as entertainers, as orators, as leaders. They are remembered kindly.

The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, with assistance from two levels of government and the loyal support of its farmer-members, weathered the trauma of 'the Thirties.' During this time it faced the death of its
first president, Alexander James McPhail, in 1931, and his successor, Louis C. Brouillette, in 1937. It pioneered in the struggle for debt adjustment legislation and in the distribution of rust-resistant wheat. The elevator system lost more than a million dollars in 1937 alone because it chose to keep open local elevators to enable farmers to market what little grain they were able to harvest. They underwent a drastic structural change but maintained the principles and philosophies of co-operation.

Saskatchewan felt no relief from drought conditions until 1939. Plagues of grasshoppers, army worms, encephalitis, and grain rust ensured financial disaster for farmers.

The Government of Canada registered some successes. In keeping with his corporate experience, Bennett instituted several crown companies and encouraged developments in the trade of others. In 1931, the first grain shipment from the Port of Churchill embarked. The Bank of Canada, incorporated in 1934, monitored currency and credit, acted as banker to the Canadian chartered banking houses, and counselled the federal Department of Finance. The government reestablished the Canadian Wheat Board. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and a government-owned air transport system, eventually to become Air Canada, started operations during this Conservative rule.

These achievements were unable, however, to wipe from Canadian memories Bennett's association with the discomforts and the horrors of the Great Depression. Saskatchewan farmers, in particular, welcomed the opportunity in 1935 to return Mackenzie King and his Liberals to power.
Indeed, sixteen of the twenty-one candidates elected from this province were Liberals. Charles Avery Dunning and Thomas Crerar, familiar leaders in the farm movement, regained their seats. James Garfield Gardiner, following the example of his predecessor, resigned the premiership of Saskatchewan to accept the federal ministry of agriculture.

The Great Depression finally did come to an end. To Saskatchewan farmers, Depression meant Drought, and Drought, according to one author meant . . .

At first, drought meant only what the dictionary intended it to mean — an appalling and almost total lack of moisture. But as the years went on it came to stand for everything that was hard and hostile in the day-to-day business of living.

The Drought left its indelible mark on those who weathered it, and who went on to face the decade of the Forties and what it offered.

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CHAPTER IV

ORGANIZING CO-OPE rateIVEs

If you were working in a community where there was a Pool elevator but there was no indication of a co-operative of any kind, or a credit union, well, how about getting a study group started? I am quite safe in saying that I was involved in organizing six or seven credit unions in my district. . . . Mind you, we were selling the Wheat Pool, too, but we were selling all these other things as well.

Canada declared war on Germany on September 10, 1939. Recruitment campaigns for army, navy, and air force personnel began promptly. The first of her troops embarked for England exactly three months later. Factories converted from the manufacture of domestic goods to war machinery with astounding rapidity. This action suggested that Canada had anticipated and readied herself for war. Such was not the case.

Just over 10,000 men, most of them unfamiliar with modern war machinery, comprised the armed forces. Military hardware, vehicles, and supplies were obsolete or virtually nonexistent.

Canada's entry into the war salved her ulcerous economy almost immediately. The migration of men to recruitment stations and industrial centres relieved unemployment. The British Isles offered a ready market for domestic necessities as well as military equipment.

Britain needed food as much as she needed troops and materials. Animal products posed a particular problem. The Government of Canada promised assistance and undertook to stimulate the production of beef

1 Wilfred Macleod, interview Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; October 17, 1979.
and dairy cattle, poultry, and hogs. Farmers received a bonus for converting wheat acreage to the production of coarse grains for feed. To meet wartime sugar demands, beekeepers expanded their apiaries. Canadian boards administered food agreements with Britain.

Rust, drought, and grasshoppers rendered the 1938 crop a light one. The following year, the Canadian Minister of Agriculture, James Garfield Gardiner, urged passage of a national relief act. The Prairie Farm Assistance Act, basically a form of mandatory crop insurance, applied to the grain belt of the western provinces. The Board of Grain Commissioners collected a one per cent levy on all sales of wheat, oats, rye, and barley and issued payments to farmers who experienced crop failure. Farmers collected $500,000 from the fund in 1939. Increased rainfall that season ended the drought, however, and the farmers harvested the largest wheat crop on record at that time.

Despite cutbacks, Canada produced excess wheat from 1939. American speculators started purchasing wheat on the futures market for use in the livestock industry and in alcohol distillation. In September, 1943, the Canadian government closed the futures market and granted the Canadian Wheat Board exclusive marketing privileges for this grain.

Saskatchewan witnessed many changes during the war years. She saw the exodus of many of her young men to the forces and the factories. Women, youngsters, and senior citizens took up the reins to keep agriculture moving. Encouragement to shift into mixed farming eased the transition. New faces appeared. Refugees from Czechoslovakia, Austria, Germany, and the Sudetenland took up homesteads in the north-west.
The Liberals under William John Patterson held the reins of Saskatchewan government through most of World War II. The young CCF party strengthened its representation in the legislature.

The co-operative movement continued to spread and diversify. Under pressure from the Income Tax Payers Association and the private elevator companies, the Federal government levied an income tax against the three wheat pools. The government, assuming that the co-operatives would appeal the levy, planned to use the court decision as a basis for the formulation of taxation legislation for co-operatives. The pools, however, elected to return any surplus to their members, reducing their own taxable income to a negligible figure.

The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool always encouraged its field staff to offer assistance to other co-operatives whenever the opportunity arose.

The Wheat Pool believed in giving all the encouragement possible to any co-operative enterprise in the way of a co-operative store, or co-operative pastures, credit unions; anything at all that would get people together to do something.

The Pool collaborated with the Livestock Pool, the Poultry Pool, the Dairy Pool, the Saskatchewan Co-operative Wholesale Society, and the Consumers' Co-operative Refineries in educational and organizational endeavours. The reduction of field staff by nearly one half of its earlier strength, in 1931, affected the development and expansion of these co-operatives. The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and the others,

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2 Tom Bentley, interview Vancouver, British Columbia; November 2, 1979.
excepting the Consumers' Co-operative Refineries, reached a formal agreement of affiliation, in 1937.

The basic provision of this pact was that from April 1, 1937, the field staff of the Wheat Pool would be maintained at a minimum of eighteen men. Each co-operative pledged as much toward the salaries of these men as their organization could honour. The task of general co-operative organization and education fell to the field men. Each co-operative retained responsibility for business related to their respective commodities and for problem identification and solution. Any party to the agreement could withdraw from it on a notice of twelve months.

The time was ripe for change on the field staff. The establishment of the Canadian Wheat Board, in 1935, ended the need for a missionary declaiming the evils of the open market and begging farmers to win converts to orderly marketing. Provision of co-operative information and promotion of co-operative ventures assumed greater importance.

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3The agreement allowed for one man in each of the sixteen districts plus special language men to serve the Ukrainian and French populations, respectively.

4The annual pledges were: Saskatchewan Livestock Pool, $3500; Saskatchewan Poultry Pool, $3500; Saskatchewan Dairy Pool, $1600; and Saskatchewan Co-operative Wholesale Society, $1000.

5Howard Tyler, interview Regina, Saskatchewan with Connie Stus and James Sarauer; August 14, 1975. The tape of this interview is housed in the Co-operative Pioneer Collection at the Co-operative College of Canada, Saskatoon.
This agreement necessitated the prompt location and employment of seven additional field men. Most were early homesteaders who moved into salaried positions with the Wheat Pool or another co-operative. The organization rehired one of the field men released in 1931. Most of the others were Pool agents with a demonstrated interest and ability in community leadership. This leadership frequently took the form of initiative in setting up or managing small co-ops or credit unions. Several of these new men were early organizers, or sons or brothers of early officials and employees.

New men hired on over the next few years demonstrated similar characteristics to these. Wilf Macleod, while an agent at Evesham, was instrumental in starting a co-operative and a credit union in that town. With the assistance of a retired town bank manager, this unauthorized credit union operated successfully for three years. The initiators of the Evesham Credit Union were faithful to co-operative principles and the credit union model, but were unaware that they required a provincial charter for legal operation. Nonetheless, it seemed likely that Macleod's leadership in the scheme helped him acquire a position on the field staff of the Pool.

Not all employees during this time had managed or started a co-op store. Vern Metheral brought an unusually high educational background with him to the field staff. A Bachelor of Science in Agriculture graduate of the depression era, he returned to university when no suitable jobs were available. After completing his course work and the research toward his thesis, he accepted employment with the Dominion Experimental Farm in Swift Current. Subsequently, he became Wheat Pool field man in that district. Metheral experienced difficulty in the
area. He modelled his style and pattern of operation after that of his predecessor, Tom Bentley. Bentley was an older man and well known in the district. It was, perhaps, inevitable that young Metheral, with his university degree and untried ideals, would receive a cool reception from local farmers.

Harold Wagner, raised in a small rural community, was a schoolteacher with a keen interest in agricultural organizations. After attending one of the first Co-op Schools in Saskatoon, he set up a model credit union in the school where he was teaching. After twelve years in the classroom, he joined the Pool as a field man at Shaunavon. A fund-raising venture there earned him the nickname he carried with him since that time. Around the neck of a bull which he persuaded a local rancher to donate, Wagner hung a $500 bond. From the slogan, 'A bull and a bond for a buck,' he became 'Buck' Wagner. Absent from the field staff and Saskatchewan from 1942 when he enlisted, Wagner rejoined the Pool in 1946.

Buck Wagner believed that he, a schoolteacher, was hired on the field staff as a complement to other members. Director of the department, R. B. (Bux) Evans, wanted a variety of aptitudes, educational statuses, and work backgrounds on staff. Perhaps selection of Metheral, with his academic achievement, was congruent with this approach.

New men looked to varied sources for direction. Wilf Macleod reported meeting with other co-operative personnel in his region to establish needs and set priorities for immediate action. Because of
their relatively substantial contribution to the maintenance of field staff, directors and management representatives of the Saskatchewan Co-operative Wholesale Society played central roles in this process. Vern Metheral, lacking the experience to identify needs and the credibility to develop successful innovative programmes, looked to his district director for guidance. Buck Wagner demanded little counsel from the elected representatives in his district. He developed ideas for programmes and activities chiefly from those of his more experienced colleagues. With one career and several years work with rural people behind him, he was sufficiently self-confident to experiment with unusual tactics and untested methods.

The field staff owed their resurgence of strength to the agreement made with sister co-operatives. Not surprisingly, their efforts over the next several years were directed toward co-operative promotion. They became the extension and sales staff for the entire movement.

Our philosophy was to preach the co-operative movement; to get everybody we possibly could to believe in and to become a member of the co-operative movement.6

Pool annual reports described the continued activities of the field staff under the coordination agreement. They listed such goals as increased deliveries to the Pool and its subsidiaries; increased subscriptions to the Western Producer; development of a better

6Tom Bentley, interview Vancouver, British Columbia; November 2, 1979.
understanding of co-operative aims and policies; maintenance of current records; and general developmental support to the producer and consumer co-ops. Their proximity to the frontier of co-operative development made field staff a reliable source of data for governmental and other coordinating agencies. Field staff collected data related to co-operatives on behalf of the Registrar of Co-operative Associations. 7

The growth of co-operative enterprises during the post-depression war years was phenomenal. In the 1939-40 crop year, 123 new co-ops were incorporated. Field men were involved to some degree in virtually all of these developments. A former field man recalled,

I would say that the field staff of the Wheat Pool did more than any other organization to organize co-op stores, co-op bulk stations, credit unions, anything that was co-operative. If a group of people wanted to do something on their own, and wanted assistance, they could get it from the Wheat Pool. 8

The products and services available to members of these new co-operatives extended over a wide latitude. Everett Baker, field man in District #16, worked especially with the Sudeten refugees. Few of these late homesteaders had any agricultural experience; most had been craftsmen in Europe. Under Baker's guidance, they set up a producers' toy-making co-operative in 1940. Wilson Parker helped organize a swine co-op near Tisdale, and a medical co-op in the Melfort area. Field men

7 A. H. Turner, Co-operative Purchasing Associations in the Province of Saskatchewan (Regina: King's Printer, 1942), pp. 18-19.
supervised the 1940 organization of the Canadian Co-operative Implements Limited.\footnote{Because the manufacture of war materials supplanted the production of farm machinery, Canadian Co-operative Implements, Limited (CCIL) did not operate fully until 1946.} Other co-operatives that started operating with advice and effort from the Wheat Pool field men included the Saskatchewan Co-operative Creamery Association, the Saskatchewan Honey Producers Co-operative, the Horse Marketing Co-operative Association, and the Saskatchewan Co-operative Wholesale Flour Mill. As well, scores of consumer co-ops credit their establishment, in part, to the efforts of these men.

Field men involved themselves in the initiation of co-operative insurance schemes. In 1928, the three prairie wheat pools formed Canadian Pool Agencies to meet their own business requirements. They did not extend their mandate into provision of personal insurance services. During the depression, however, many people, unable to pay premiums, lost their other insurance coverage. The Pool encouraged and assisted in the organization of funeral co-operatives in many of the most impoverished rural municipalities. When families were unable to meet the burial costs of their deceased, humiliation added to their despair. Municipal governments, already over-extended in their attempts to provide relief to their constituents, assumed the expense. The Pool encouraged families to make small annual contributions, usually of five dollars, to local mutual benefit societies that would handle funeral costs up to four hundred dollars. Agents tried to promote the
insurance; field men were almost inevitably involved in promotion and securing policies.

In 1939, the Pool created a subsidiary, Pool Insurance Limited. This company provided more general protection, notably fire insurance, for its members. Finally, in 1945, the Co-operative Life Insurance Company, incorporated under Saskatchewan legislation, commenced operation. The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool offered strong support to this independent company. In addition to the $25,000 contributed toward incorporation requirements, the Pool proffered the time of its field men as first agents. In the next ten weeks, these temporary agents sold one hundred fifty-nine policies representing $350,000 coverage in life insurance. 10 The company reached sufficient strength by 1947 to hire its own agents, and field men relinquished their role.

Field men developed several media for this co-operative promotion and support. At staff meetings, they shared experiences and ideas. They tried to get as many invitations to speak to groups as possible. Groups interested in setting up co-operatives consulted the field man on procedures and often relied on him to complete the required formalities. Support occasionally involved helping take inventories and making reports. Most field men active during the Forties found this a satisfying role.

Work was easiest and most rewarding in areas that were struck most

severely by the depression. Impoverished communities needed little persuasion to band together for mutual advantage.

While the co-operative sales activity continued through the mid-Forties, the number of consumer co-operatives in Saskatchewan reached a peak in 1941. Numbers slowly, predictably, declined in following years. Wartime restraints on agriculture, on products available for retail, and on manpower, limited the volumes that co-ops could handle. For producer co-operatives, international conditions limited expansion into other commodities and new markets. The gradual but visible depopulation of some small rural communities with the migration to industrial centres made the going tough for any local enterprise, regardless of its service or commodity specialization.

Increasingly, co-ops began amalgamating. In 1943, the Saskatchewan Livestock Pool resolved to amalgamate with the Saskatchewan Co-operative Wheat Producers (SWP). The 1944 merger of the Consumers' Co-operative Refineries and the Saskatchewan Co-operative Wholesale Society to form Saskatchewan Federated Co-operatives Limited resulted in the coincident amalgamation of many local consumer co-op stores and oil co-ops. Field men attempted to facilitate these unions. Each of the smaller associations had its own objectives, its own membership, and its own board of directors. The intermediary trying to ease the transition needed discretion and diplomacy. When petty jealousies between local

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co-operatives arose to hinder progress, the field men mediated and encouraged more harmonious activity.

The co-operative movement, including the Pool and its staff, was promoting credit unions. These co-operative financial institutions were popular and comparatively easy to establish.\textsuperscript{12} Saskatchewan passed legislation providing for the formation of credit unions in 1937. The government distributed details of the legislation to field men of the Wheat Pool and encouraged them to discuss credit unions in the course of their regular activities. Muriel Clements, the historian of the Saskatchewan credit union movement, concluded that such institutions appeared first in the rural areas of the province because the Pool had the organizational structure there to support them.\textsuperscript{13} Indeed, many credit unions opened in the agent's office of the local pool elevator.

In 1939, the Co-operatives and Marketing Branch of the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture appointed a credit union organizer to work with the University of Saskatchewan and the field staff of the Pool. Organizers drew on the early successes. Tom Bentley spoke on the principle that there was "always enough money inside the community to do what needed done."\textsuperscript{14}

In the establishment of a local credit union, the field man was usually involved in three capacities. He was an initiator, sparking

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} Everett Baker, interview Shaunavon, Saskatchewan; July 17, 1979.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Muriel Clements, \textit{By Their Bootstraps} (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, Ltd., 1965), p. 50.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Tom Bentley, interview Vancouver, British Columbia; November 2, 1979.
\end{itemize}
curiosity, kindling enthusiasm, and describing successes of other community credit unions in the province. When interest flickered, he provided information, distributed copies of the credit union act, and explained the implications. Finally, he frequently demonstrated his confidence in the venture by casting his membership fee into the endeavour.

To foster commitments to pioneer co-operatives and credit unions, the Pool developed education programmes. The Western Producer included editorials and articles designed to stimulate co-operative growth and featured news of co-op activities and developments. The Pool lending library added books on co-operative principle and practice to their boxes of fiction, nature studies, and farm practice. The fieldmen continued to deliver the programme in the country. Films, slides, speeches, and study groups brought co-operative philosophy to the rural resident.

Pool picture shows continued. Subtly, their intent shifted. While comics, dramas, and travelogues still occupied much of the programme, they were a drawing card. By the late Thirties, fieldmen were asking for films about the co-operative movement. At that time, when staff were still using silent projectors, the only available co-operative films were 'talkies.' The Pool borrowed eight silent films from the English Co-operative Wholesale Society. Like many Pool activities, film showings during the Depression had been of no direct advantage to the organization. No one apologised for the entertainment
function. The report of the Country Organization Department in 1938, however, stated that

One of our greatest difficulties, against which it was necessary to guard carefully, was to keep our organization from developing into a purely entertainment department, and for some time the necessary insistence that the use of pictures could only be regarded as supplementary to our general educational activities was not popular.15

The report went on to mention that the film library consisted of 329 reels, 90 of which were of 'high educational character.'

An effort has been maintained to keep down to a minimum of equipment and at the same time build up a film library containing types of pictures that would not only attract people to Wheat Pool meetings but give us entry into the schools of the province.16

Over the next few years, these presentations gained field men entry into many schools, including the Provincial Normal School.

Field men made similar comments on the value of films as a drawing card. "They were useful in that they brought people together, and then you were able to tell them a story, and convince some of them."17

The report of the following year described the difficulty experienced in locating good co-operative moving pictures. Officials believed that while there were some good sound pictures available, there

16 Ibid., p. 27.
17 Tom Bentley, interview Vancouver, British Columbia, November 2, 1979.
were too few to make the purchase of sound projectors practical.

In 1940, field men showed pictures at 1059 of the 1825 meetings they organized. That year, the department purchased eighteen still projectors. Field men used them for presentations at committee conventions with favourable results. Because filmstrips for use with these machines were simple and relatively inexpensive to make, the Pool developed five such presentations.

Two pool films for use on the moving projectors premiered in 1941. Field men began replacing their speeches at movie showings with slide presentations. Audiences enjoyed pictures of faces and places familiar to them.

Despite this response, field men were finding it increasingly difficult to compete with the National Film Board 'talkies' travelling about the countryside. The Pool and the federal government struck a mutually advantageous bargain in 1942. In exchange for field men showing films about the war effort and war bond promotion, the National Film Board loaned the Pool two sound projectors and a power plant. The Board stipulated that the projectors were for use in the two Wheat Pool districts beyond which their own programme extended and demanded an average of ten shows each month. Over the next four years, the field men increased their support to the National War Finance Committee by campaigning for Victory Loan sales. The canvass was conducted by door-to-door sales and at large community meetings where the field man

prefaced his appeal for support with War Loan films. By 1946, the Pool had fourteen sound motion picture units, twelve of which were donations from the National Film Board for services rendered.

Field men showed support for other wartime government programmes. In co-operation with the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture, they set up 'Win the War' committees in every Wheat Pool district in 1943. The objective of the committees was to stimulate farm production to meet provincial goals. Representatives of all the organized farm groups sat on each of the municipal boards. Much of the organizational work fell to the field men.

Field men used several media to fulfill their co-operative education mandate. One of these was the study group. These began as monthly programmes designed for study at local committee meetings. In many areas they expanded to encompass other members of the community, often those with a strong interest in setting up a local co-operative or credit union. The first of these programmes emphasized Pool aims, structure, and policies; co-operative philosophy, history, and legislation; and practical guides for setting up such an organization. By the mid-Forties, topics included Co-operative Crop Insurance, State Hospitalization, Co-operative Farming, and Credit Unions. The study group programmes were often led by Pool field staff, but were sponsored in co-operation with the Adult Education Programme of the University of Saskatchewan.

The Pool also developed a co-operative education programme for its own staff members, particularly country agents. Field men collaborated
with travelling superintendents and directors to develop and deliver this material. The core of the material consisted of the policies and principles of co-operation, the Pool, and the grain handling system in Canada. Agents completed and mailed examinations to Head Office for grading.

Field men continued their involvement with Junior Grain Clubs and Homecraft Clubs. Wartime conditions restricted the development of these clubs, however, as young people assumed greater responsibilities on the farm in the absence of fathers, older brothers, and hired help.

A description of co-operative promotion and education would certainly be incomplete without mention of Co-op Schools. Field staff played a vital role in these events from their beginning. Most early co-operators credited John Stratychuk, Special Language Field Man in the Ukrainian communities, with the co-operative school idea. He initiated schools among Ukrainian settlers to familiarize them with co-operative philosophy and pooling principles. It soon became apparent that others were anxious for this educational opportunity. In 1939, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Employees' Association sponsored the first provincial three-day school for Pool staff at Carlyle Lake. More than one hundred elevator agents registered. The Co-operatives and Marketing Branch of the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture, the Saskatchewan Co-operative Wholesale Society, and the Wheat Pool arranged the first provincial Co-operative School at the University of Saskatchewan. This
week-long school drew students representing Ukrainian Canadians from one-day schools, Pool agents, and students sponsored by the other provincial co-operatives.

In 1940, the employees' association and the Co-operative Union of Canada set up twelve two-day schools at various locations around the province. That year the Carlyle school continued for four days. In addition, the Pool and two Ukrainian educational organizations held twenty-six one-day schools during the winter months. Several Wheat Pool committees organized their annual rallies into one-day schools. The collective purpose of these schools was threefold: dissemination of co-operative education, training of co-operative leaders, and selection of students for the more extensive week-long school in Saskatoon.

Initially, lectures at co-operative schools introduced speakers from the university or experts on co-operation from the United States to their rural students. By 1941, however, field men were taking a more noticeable role. They had assisted in the local organization of schools; now they began accepting more of the classroom leadership. One

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19 In fact, the twelfth was a project of a Catholic priest at St. Peter's College, Muenster, who followed the same agenda.

20 These were the Ukrainian Self-Reliance League and the Canadian Ukrainian Youth Association.

Field men described these educational events as "propaganda at its finest." 22

Field men represented the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool in local agricultural movements. When appeals for a higher Board price for wheat in 1938 and 1940 yielded no apparent results, farm groups decided to launch a 'Square Deal for Agriculture' campaign. During September and October, 1941, the Pool field men and local committees organized mass meetings throughout the province. Businessmen, church officials, and government employees joined them. In their annual meeting later that year, Pool delegates resolved to circulate a petition for a one dollar per bushel wheat price. Field men joined agents, committeemen, and delegates in the organization of communities for canvass. By the end of the year, they collected 185,000 names on a petition and $43,000 to cover the expense of a delegation to Ottawa to present their concerns to the Prime Minister. Despite opposition, 403 farmers and representatives of the business community boarded a train bound for the East. The February 2 meeting with King did result in a higher wheat price. 23 Most field men led meetings, organized the canvass, and attended the Ottawa presentation.

Many field men active during this period recalled using statistical reports as a basis for evaluation of their own performance. These

22 Vern Metheral, interview Regina, Saskatchewan; October 19, 1979. Metheral was making a positive comment; he used the term "propaganda," as was common through World War II, as a synonym for publicity.

23 The petition demanded a $1.00 per bushel price; a $0.90 per bushel price was realized.
figures included numbers of meetings held; meeting attendance; sum of schools, farms, businesses, and elevators visited; and the total new co-operative institutions in their districts. To Tom Bentley, evaluation was more subjective. He described his feeling of success at selling someone the co-operative idea or a co-operative membership as "something like scoring a goal."24

The comment, 'personal contact was the key,' echoed by many retired field men from the early Forties, summarized their technique. This public role was a more positive, less defensive one than that of their predecessors. Opposition to pooling and co-operation was less audible now in Saskatchewan. There were several reasons for this cease-fire. The threat of war diverted the attention of the antagonistic press. Few farmers during the depression could afford to speculate and hold their grain until prices were higher in the spring; many joined the Pool. The Prairie Farm Assistance Act, essentially a co-operative self-help programme, relieved many Saskatchewan farmers of their post-drought debts. To the surprise of critics, the Pool was gradually paying its massive government debt. Finally, the co-operative movement in Saskatchewan was gaining credibility with the growth and success of new stores, service co-ops, and credit unions.25

Incidentally, opposition within the Pool to the retention of the field staff continued. One field man recalled his learning that his

24 Tom Bentley, interview Vancouver, British Columbia; November 2, 1979.

25 Ibid.
first district moved to dispose of field staff just prior to his
commencing work. At the 1939 annual meeting, the chairman of the
Saskatoon Wheat Pool committee charged the organization with
extravagance, including "the maintenance of an unnecessary field
force." The survival of a staff of extension personnel attested to
the more popular recognition that they performed a significant and
worthy function.

For many of these men, selling the co-operative enterprise
continued an interest. Peter Jansen was one of the originators of
Co-operative Life Insurance. Several, notably Cecil Angell, Alexander
Gilliland, Wilf Macleod, and Buck Wagner eventually accepted managerial
or executive positions with a co-operative insurance or trust company.

The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool continued to flourish. It undertook
construction, in Saskatoon, of an oilseed crushing plant and a flour
mill. In 1944, the Saskatchewan Co-operative Livestock Pool joined the
Wheat Pool, becoming the Livestock Division of the larger co-operative.

The number of co-operatives in the province continued to increase.
This rate of expansion forced the federal government to develop a
taxation policy. The Royal Commission on Co-operatives held hearings
across Canada in 1945. It recommended the allowable deduction of
patronage dividends and member rebates from co-operative income.

26 Wilf Macleod, interview Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; October 17,
1979.

27 "Raps Pool Executive at Meeting," Star-Phoenix, March 17, 1939.
The provincially appointed Saskatchewan Reconstruction Council recommended post-war emphasis on the stabilization of agriculture and the development of a social service programme. Before the time for implementing these suggestions arrived, however, Patterson's Liberal government met defeat. In 1944, the CCF party under Thomas Clement Douglas swept into power, winning forty-seven of fifty-five seats in the legislature.

The Federal Government made post-war plans, too. It appointed, in 1944, a Committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment to make recommendations that might avert problems associated with the return of the troops of employable citizens.
CHAPTER V

ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

We moved toward a more sophisticated role . . . we spent considerable amount of time working with the Extension Division of the University. . . . We worked pretty closely with Adult Education, carried out some of the adult education programmes. ¹

The Liberal Government of the Right Honourable William Lyon Mackenzie King, returning to power with a small majority in 1945, faced educational and social concerns. In Canada, as elsewhere, people who had struggled through the dark days of the Depression were asking unsettling questions. Why was a country, unable to support and sustain its citizens during peacetime, able to find the necessary money to send them to war?

Men and women returning from World War II were relieved by the apparent buoyancy of the Canadian economy. Some Saskatchewan farmers found themselves, for the first time in their experience, free of debt. Public confidence soared with the 1947 discovery of the seemingly endless reservoir of oil in Alberta. The country was continuing to supply Europe with goods and raw materials.

It was with shock and dismay, therefore, that Canadians learned of the country's virtual declaration of bankruptcy on November 17, 1947. On the same evening as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trades (GATT) became public in Geneva, the Canadian government used the escape

¹William John Forsythe, interview Katepwa, Saskatchewan; October 20, 1979.
clause in the agreement to extricate the country from the obligation of free trade. It became apparent that the bulk of those massive European sales had been transacted on credit; Canada had continued to import American goods, paying cash. A federal agency set quotas on most common household goods and forbade the importation of nonessential luxuries, such as fresh produce, toys, jewellery, and household appliances.

Investment, primarily American, in Canadian natural resources eased the financial situation. Improved transportation, by air, by rail, and by water through the St. Lawrence Seaway Project, increased the accessibility of oil fields in the West and of iron and other ore deposits in Quebec and Labrador.

To the surprise of no one, Louis Stephen St. Laurent, a French-Canadian lawyer, assumed the leadership of the Liberal party after the 1948 convention. King clung to the prime ministership, however, until he collapsed in November of that year. In 1949, St. Laurent led the triumphant Liberals back into power with 194 Parliamentary seats.

Many returned veterans used their re-establishment allowances to enrol in university programmes designed to prepare them for civilian careers. In 1949, the government set a Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences, chaired by Vincent Massey. The resultant Massey Report recommended the establishment of the Canada Council to offer moneys to universities and other cultural projects.
In Saskatchewan, the CCF government under the leadership of Thomas Clement Douglas continued through elections in 1948 and 1952. Culturally, Saskatchewan began to gain recognition. The University of Saskatchewan was earning a respectable reputation across Canada. Within the province, residents participated in extension programmes and classes from the university. The introduction of rural library systems assisted those who wanted to study or read for enjoyment outside formal classes.

Improved transportation and concurrent technological development stimulated the gradual movement toward larger school units. People blamed these same forces for the increased urbanization and consequent debilitation of smaller rural communities.

Although economic diversification was apparent, the province still depended on the agricultural industry. Three years after the establishment of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers, in 1946, the First International Wheat Agreement set base and maximum prices for wheat on the world market. Despite gloomy forecasts that the Wheat Board would soon be dissolved, the Board actually received, in 1949, extended authority to become the sole marketing agency for western Canadian oats and barley.

The Saskatchewan legislature authorized, in 1952, the establishment of a six-member commission chaired by Professor William Bernard Baker of the University of Saskatchewan. This Royal Commission on Agriculture and Rural Life undertook to study "...the requirements for the

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2 Saskatchewan Archives Board, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Collection, "Minute Book, District #11."

maintenance of a sound farm economy and the improvement of social conditions and amenities in rural Saskatchewan."  

This commission collected its material and prepared its report in a variable agricultural climate. In the opening years of the '50's, wet autumns and early snows resulted in delayed harvesting operations and, consequently, lower grades for Saskatchewan grain. Yields were high, however, and the grain system was unable to handle the quantities produced. The 375 million bushel bumper crop of 1953 forced farmers to construct temporary storage facilities on their farms. These granaries were typically snowfence and tarpaper structures, and the eventual marketing of the stored grain again brought diminished profits to the grower.

This period was one of stabilization for many of the earlier co-ops. The government of Saskatchewan continued to support the co-operative movement. The Co-operative Guarantee Act of 1947 guaranteed loans made by co-operatives for development purposes.

Co-operative organizations and the CCF party had much in common. Although the co-operative movement was officially neutral, leaders were generally sympathetic to the CCF. A study, in 1946, showed that 84.9 per cent of SWP delegates were CCF supporters. One former field man declared that it would have been suicidal for the Pool to allow itself

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to be identified with any political party. While public presumption of political partisanship created no difficulties, he believed it was prudent to avoid holding public meetings during political campaigns.5

The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool was diversifying. A flour mill, built in Saskatoon, in 1946, went into production three years later. In 1947, a vegetable oil plant for processing flax and, later, rapeseed joined other Pool subsidiaries. The merger between Saskatchewan Livestock Producers Co-operative and the SWP, planned earlier, went into effect in 1948 and led to the creation of a Livestock Division in the Pool. Shipping facilities expanded with the acquisition of a Western Grain Company terminal at Fort William.

Within the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, and particularly in the activity of its field staff, an emphasis on adult education developed. One observer commented on the success of SWP in sustaining interest and activity among its farmer-members, despite the tendency of "units of agricultural production to remain relatively atomized and independent of one another." She attributed this success to the practice of carrying on the educational functions of the organization in concert with business activities.6

5 Allan D. Macleod, interview Regina, Saskatchewan; October 23, 1979.

A description of the rural adult education programme of the field staff outlined the following principles:

It has been recognized that a good program must include the following:
  a) a well-informed membership who understand, accept and support the aims and objectives of the Pool. This is considered to be basic to the health and welfare of any organization.
  b) To achieve a well-informed membership a continuing flow of information must be carried to the members.
  c) A sound organization framework must be established to carry the program.
  d) Well-informed local units are the foundation for good organization.

Another writer delineated two classifications of the educational programming of the Pool. The first of these was co-operative education. These programmes emphasized the economic and social principles of co-operative education, generated member activity and policy formation, and challenged people to accept responsibility. This education process resulted in the prominence of Pool members and staff in the founding of other co-operatives.

The second kind of educational programme that became more prevalent after World War II was more general in scope. Much of this activity originated with other agencies, particularly the extension services of the government and the university. Formats included community short courses in agriculture, co-operative schools with emphasis on

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9 See above, pp. 52-53, 74-75.
citizenship, public meetings directed toward health and social improvements, and promotion of agriculture and other vocational courses in schools.

Both social demands and influential individuals dictated that the Pool enter this field. Several field men attributed the emphasis on adult education to the Director of Country Organization, Robert Leslie Stutt. Stutt believed his interest to have developed while he was active at the district level. Moving pictures often stimulated the curiosity of the audience and led to discussions. This forced field men to develop lessons on related topics. Increasingly, these programmes grew and developed from policies and discussions at the week-long annual meeting of delegates. Although the management of the Country Organization Division encouraged adult education activity, the field man made the final decision as to what his involvement would be.

The defined qualifications for a field man at that time were helpful in determining just how this educator role was to be implemented. The field man was to be familiar and literate in the Pool’s aims, policies, and operations. He was to be a “public spirited citizen, willing and able to help rural groups with their social and economic problems.”

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12 Op cit.
The Pool recruited men from a variety of backgrounds to the field staff during that period. Virtually all of them grew up on farms. At least three were former agents. Several had been active overseas during World War II. Some credited the teaching of co-operative philosophy in their homes during their youth with the decision to work for the Pool. Others, having grown up during the Great Depression, saw the Pool as an employer that promised steady work and security. Some were near retirement when they came; others were young, well-educated, but relatively inexperienced. W. J. (Jack) Forsythe was one of these 'youngsters,' but reported having no particular problems related to his age.

Advanced education was becoming a more common characteristic among field men. Oliver Olson was a trained schoolteacher. After earning his Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, Allan MacLeod worked one year with the provincial Department of Co-operation before joining the field staff. Philip Rothery admitted to knowing relatively little about the SWP but brought a Masters Degree in Animal Science to the group. Abel Toupin was a Normal School graduate with five years teaching experience, when he found himself unable to make a living in that profession during the '30's. After working in a country store in south-eastern Saskatchewan, a mining company store in Quebec, and an elevator, he accepted an offer to become a field man.

These men, like their predecessors, received little training for the jobs they were accepting. Several recalled feelings of loss and uncertainty and suggested that for a year or more, until they developed
their own style of working, they were of little benefit to the Pool. Those who had been agents or held other positions in the co-operative movement formed images of the ideal field man based on those with whom they were acquainted. Few received any preparation for the job beyond, "Here's your briefcase, there's your car, that's your district, . . . and God bless you."13 One field man remembered,

You go out there and sort of feel your way around. And while it's a pretty cruel way of starting, maybe it's the best teacher in the world, because you make an awful lot of blunders and mistakes, and you don't do them again.14

Although this introduction was trying, few men became discouraged enough to resign. Nearly every one discovered that he could not fit someone else's mold, however, and developed an effective method of operation that worked well for him in his district.

Co-operative education and promotion remained an activity for field men. They promoted Pool and Co-op Flour, assisted in the organization of livestock marketing facilities, and co-ordinated activities for CCIL and Saskatchewan Federated Co-operatives Limited. Gradually, however, the need for organizational work lessened, as most communities had co-operative stores and credit unions. Soon, field men were acting only as consultants. When the Department of Co-operation and the Saskatchewan Co-operative League hired their own field men, SWP staff deliberately withdrew their official involvement in other co-operatives.

13 Abel Toupin, interview Regina, Saskatchewan; April 8, 1980.
14 W. J. Forsythe, interview Katepwa, Saskatchewan; October 20, 1979.
Co-operative education was one of the better known instructional activities of the field staff. Each had, at his disposal, a more extensive programme of coloured slides tracing co-operative development. As the founding generation of Pool supporters retired, programmes needed to involve the younger farmers who lacked the historical understanding of the conditions that made the Pools necessary. Regular public meetings, larger regional rallies, and co-op schools offered opportunities to present this history.

Reports of one field man's co-operative education activities between 1946 and 1952 disclose a range of topics and varied approaches. He held meetings outlining activities of Scottish co-operatives, organized an inter-committee rally at Rosetown, fought a McCabe Elevator Company anti-co-operation campaign, and recruited for a Youth Training School held at the University. He sponsored essay contests for co-operative school participants and organized a summer co-op day. This field man also recorded recommendations that ladies be allowed to speak at committee conventions, and that more Pool information be distributed to new members. He believed that members in his district displayed, in 1948, a better understanding of the co-operative movement than had been demonstrated earlier. He expressed optimism about the future of the Pool and the larger co-operative movement, but was pessimistic about the destiny of the Pool's flour mill and Canadian Co-operative Implements, Limited.  

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15 Saskatchewan Archives Board, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Collection, "Minute Book, District #11."
Development of an understanding of agricultural issues was also central to the educational efforts of the Country Organization Department. This programme yielded no direct or visible returns to the Pool. Field men justified this activity, and directors encouraged it because they were helping to transmit an important message to the farm population. After a worker developed an idea for a programme, he would discuss the topic with farmers and colleagues to assess interest.

The "Car Order Book Programme" was one such topic. Station agents with the responsibility for allocating cars were in a powerful position. Boxcar shortages encouraged field men to hold meetings. They explained the regulations and purpose of the car order book, and urged farmers to sign the book, demanding their rights. Another current topic was the British Wheat Agreement, its principles, aims, and why the Pool was offering support.

Field men and agricultural representatives\(^\text{16}\) of the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture served the same rural population. Joint activity between the two forces peaked as the Pool emphasized adult education. They shared the organizational work of Dominion Provincial Youth Training Schools held at the University of Saskatchewan. They co-sponsored one-day agricultural courses in rural communities. These events featured speakers dealing with agricultural problems, improved farm techniques, better seed, and more efficient use of farm equipment.

Impetus for the Pool's adoption of an adult education role stemmed

\(^{16}\) Agricultural representatives (Ag Reps) are the rural extension staff of the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture.
from encouragement from the University of Saskatchewan. As early as 1936, Professor John George Rayner, guest speaker at a Wheat Pool meeting, discussed adult education and study groups. Involvement with personnel in the Extension Division of the University peaked in the late 1940's and early '50's. At that time, the University lacked the necessary manpower to extend research findings and college resources to rural areas of the province. The University requested the Pool to mobilize its field staff to serve as a vehicle for distribution of this information. Campus Extension and Engineering departments co-operated with the field staff in farm machinery demonstrations to farmers and junior clubs. In 1950, the Pool and University jointly supplemented regional agricultural short courses with three co-educational agricultural programmes. These courses were six-week residential sessions offered at Kenosee Lake, North Battleford, and Prince Albert.

With the establishment of the Royal Commission on Agriculture and Rural Life, in 1952, a network to reach rural Saskatchewan residents was essential. To draw conclusions and recommendations about the future of agriculture and country society, the commission needed input from groups and individuals. They requested the assistance of the Wheat Pool field staff in organizing and conducting series of community forums through the province. Public meetings and hearings encouraged people to consider the direction of farm life and to express their concerns and

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17W. J. Forsythe, interview Katepwa, Saskatchewan; October 20, 1979.

18 A fourth course, held at Canora and sponsored by the Board of Trade, included lectures by several members of field staff, as well.
suggestions. Agricultural representatives, field men, and other community leaders set up meetings, encouraged attendance, and facilitated group process and decision-making. They set up discussion groups to formulate recommendations to be integrated into the final report of the Royal Commission. Involvement continued after publication of this report. Field men held meetings to study the findings and their implications.

Field staff assisted in programming for rural women, too. Frequently, they accepted invitations to work with Saskatchewan Homemakers' Clubs and Women's Co-operative Guilds.

The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool also continued programming for young people. Co-operative school agendas included a wider scope of topics, beyond the traditional lectures on co-operation. At the invitation of principals, field men sponsored citizenship days in schools across the province. Like co-op schools, these events originated in the programming activity of John Stratychuk. In addition to co-operative history, aims, and philosophy, topics related to community development, civic responsibility, grain handling, agricultural problems, and farm safety. The Saskatchewan Department of Education approved the programme. Superintendents of Education, the Extension Division of the University of Saskatchewan, and the provincial Ag Rep service offered resource assistance. The Pool often sponsored essay contests in conjunction with these citizenship days.

Field men also lent support to 4-H clubs, junior grain clubs, and
homemaking clubs. Local Wheat Pool committees often sponsored these organizations. Field men regularly accepted invitations to speak or show slides at meetings, or to judge achievement days of these clubs.19

The field man encouraged the establishment of grain variety test plots in each municipality. They organized field days and equipment demonstrations under the supervision of Professor Evan Hardy from the College of Engineering, University of Saskatchewan.

Other public service activities occupied the time and effort of field staff. This involvement included work on rehabilitation committees of the Saskatchewan Reconstruction Council,20 surveying farm machinery requirements, canvassing for destitute European children, and recruiting students for the School of Agriculture at the University of Saskatchewan.21

The decision as to method of presentation of an issue lay with each field man. Because each man exhibited different natural talents, and because the districts and their populations differed greatly from each other, this flexibility was advantageous. Each man was free to introduce and experiment with his own and others' ideas. Staff meetings provided a forum for the sharing of such ideas, or success stories, or frustrations.

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19 SWP supported the 4-H Club Movement financially, as well. They issued an annual grant of $10,000 to the Extension Division of the University of Saskatchewan for 4-H Club work, and sponsored bursaries to a value of $32,000 annually.

20 See above, p. 83.

21 Saskatchewan Archives Board, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Collection, "Minute Book, District #11."
The field man as educator utilized several media. Individual contacts with farmers and businessmen continued. Printed materials, including committee study programmes, brochures, the *Western Producer*, and books, often served as resource materials or supplemental information. Audio-visual materials, especially documentary films and slide shows on agricultural or co-operative topics, continued to prove useful. Field men encouraged rural residents to listen to the Pool-sponsored provincial radio programme, and to participate in the Pool-supported National Farm Radio Forum and Citizens' Forum.

The collection of sound motion picture equipment and films continued to grow. Film subjects included co-operation, agriculture, health, soil and water conservation, news reels, travelogues, and comics. Most frequently, shows featured films that related directly to agriculture, but not necessarily to the Wheat Pool. The purpose of these film showings at meetings was a dual one: to encourage attendance and to instruct. Entertainment was no longer an acceptable reason for showing pictures. One former field man stated:

> We did very little of the entertainment type of film, very little. We might show a short one or something in an evening or an afternoon, but it was never the purpose of being there, to entertain people. It was more to portray a message.  

The popularity of motion picture shows decreased with the demise of

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22 W. J. Forsythe, interview Katepwa, Saskatchewan; October 20, 1979.

23 W. J. Forsythe, interview Katepwa, Saskatchewan; October 20, 1979.
the country schoolhouse. Field men started using alternative visual aids for smaller gatherings. The Canadian Association of Adult Education, commenting on the lack of stimulating motion pictures in the field of co-operation, recommended slides or filmstrips. Slides became increasingly popular, and the Pool began to develop its own collection.

At the beginning of World War II, 500 Sudeten refugees arrived in the St. Walburg area of north-western Saskatchewan. They settled homesteads on deserted, rocky land. The government issued each of the one hundred forty-eight families a settlement allowance of $1500. Only two of these families had any farming experience; the others had been craftsmen in Europe.

Few of these settlers could speak English and all welcomed visits from the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool field man, Everett Baker. Baker's rudimentary knowledge of the German language, learned at college in the United States, helped him establish rapport with these new immigrants.

Predictably, these families soon found themselves in need of cash and eager to pawn articles they had gathered with them as they fled from Czechoslovakia. To assist one of these farmers, Baker agreed to purchase a slide camera. The Pool advanced him $100 from his salary to purchase what was, in Canada in 1939, a novelty. He began taking pictures at community gatherings, co-op schools, and meetings. At shows, he offered double features: slides as well as movies.

Baker's supervisors recognized that this technique might be used to advantage by other field men. In 1945, the Pool assigned Baker to a three-year term in Regina to build sets of slides, specific to Saskatchewan.

This adult education involvement offered field men an opportunity for contact with entire communities. One reported that because the activities enhanced the image of the Pool to members and non-members alike, it was, in the longer run, a good investment in time and energy.25 The requirement to maintain a high public profile was still present, but somewhat altered for the adult educator field men. Generally, his supervisors prioritized public appearances above farm visits. They expected that he would have contact with most of the community through public meetings and socials. He saw himself as a diplomat for the company, as the man that people could identify and associate with the Pool as its representative in their community. He knew best those persons who came out to meetings or took an active role in any of the co-operatives. The field man was the "answer-man," the one person in the district who could get up-to-date information.

While much of this educational activity occurred in the larger community setting, the field man developed certain of his programmes specifically for Pool members and elected officials. Pool annual reports through the early fifties reflected a steady decline in the number of Wheat Pool committees and in attendance at committee

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25W. J. Forsythe, interview Katepwa, Saskatchewan; October 20, 1979.
conventions. The field man held meetings that were essentially volunteer training sessions to provide information and motivation for committeemen.

At Pool meetings, the field man assumed the leadership role. Before the fall annual delegates meeting in Regina, some delegates would meet with the field man and their committees to prepare resolutions and policy recommendations. Following the Regina event, each committee held a local annual meeting. The field man usually attended two of these per day, handling those parts of the meeting that the delegates did not wish to lead. This field man did not believe it essential to attend every local meeting, but he seldom was absent in the early '50's.

After seeding was completed, committee conventions drew members from throughout the district. These day-long meetings included discussions of issues, reports, and formulation of resolutions. The field man accepted responsibility for much of the programme delivery and much of the organizational effort. Topics for discussion may have included "How to Increase Deliveries to Pool Elevators," "Importance of Clearing Estates and Cashing the Deduction Certificates of Deceased Members," "Improving Patronage by Committeemen," "Need for Committee Reorganization," "Ways and Means of Increasing Attendance at Annual Meetings," and "How to Get Non-members who Deliver to the Pool to Take Out A Pool Membership."

The field man also supervised the continuing studies of other staff. He conducted agents' study groups and co-operated with travelling superintendents from the elevator division in training about
new policies. Both dropped in on agents regularly to identify problems and respond to concerns. Field men tended to deal with membership and policy problems, leaving operational concerns to superintendents.

Improved transportation routes and vehicles eliminated the need for months of rail travel and country hotel accommodation. Several field men still mentioned the necessary hours spent away from home as one of the greatest difficulties associated with their jobs. Lack of public response to thoughtfully prepared adult education programmes frustrated others.

The Country Organization Department and the men who directed it earned recognition in the larger continuing education community. In 1953, the Canadian Association of Adult Education presented the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool with the Henry Marshall Tory Award\(^\text{26}\) for the most distinguished work in adult education in Canada. This was the first occasion for this honour to be conferred on a non-professional organization of educators. The announcement of the award credited the eighteen members of the field staff "under the leadership of Robert Leslie Stutt [with] outstanding service to worthwhile community efforts in every part of the province over a period of many years."\(^\text{27}\)

\(^{26}\)Tory, first president of the University of Alberta, was a proponent of university and agricultural extension.

\(^{27}\)"Wheat Pool Division Honored," \textit{Leader-Post}, May 29, 1953, p. 3. The continuing education endeavours of R. L. Stutt, director of the division, also merited a Centennial Medal. (\textit{Western Producer}, February 8, 1968, p. 3.) One of his field men, Howard Tyler, earned international recognition from the Association of Co-operative Educators for his contribution to co-operative education in North America. (\textit{Western Producer}, August 16, 1973, p. 5.)
On its twenty-first anniversary, the Canadian Association of Adult Education publicly recognized, for the second time, the work of SWP field staff. The Association made presentations, designated as "President's Awards," to several Canadian organizations that had done outstanding work in the field of Adult Education. One of these awards came to the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Education Programme delivered by the field staff.

A description of the adult education programme developed and delivered over those years mentioned several indications that the programme had been significant. A well-informed, alert rural population, further development of co-ops initiated in earlier years, increased support for formal and informal education in the province, and increased public awareness of health and welfare programmes demonstrated that forces of continuing education were active.28

Field men involved initially in this educational work planned and conducted their programmes much as they had done their co-operative information events. Gradually, an emphasis on a conscious design process developed. Planning, initially done in the car between farm visits, was recorded and eventually rendered on paper. Saskatchewan farm people were in need of training and information to improve their living conditions. Field men attempted to convey learning opportunities to those rural people who were not in regular nor proximal contact with educational institutions. Sometimes, people needed a forum for sharing their views and formulating solutions. The Pool provided this

28 "Program of Adult Education" (mimeo), Saskatchewan Wheat Pool.
opportunity through public meetings. With few exceptions, field men during this period went on to accept Pool positions in supervision, training, programme planning, or research.

In 1952, the Saskatchewan Co-operative Wheat Producers underwent a major reorganization and a name change. Saskatchewan Pool Elevators, Ltd., Saskatchewan Pool Terminals, Ltd., and Modern Press, Ltd. would henceforth conduct business through the parent organization.

Canadians turned their attention inward. The 1952 appointment of the Right Honourable Vincent Massey gave the country her first native-born governor-general. Introduction of television reduced the demand for community responsibility for entertainment. Across the nation, communities started demanding control over their own activities and structures.
CHAPTER VI

COMMUNICATION TO STRENGTHEN DECISIONS

I think most important was the fact that we provided communication between the country and the head office. People in the country had this opportunity for . . . [a] two-way communication system through these meetings that strengthened the owners', you might say, the Pool members', decisions out in the country.¹

The strength and influence of the national Liberal party began to deteriorate in 1954. The Conservatives, under new leadership, formed a minority government after the 1957 general election. The December before the election, John George Diefenbaker had won the Conservative leadership by a crushing majority on the first ballot. Diefenbaker was a Westerner with an understanding and sympathy for prairie farmers. For the five years prior to the 1957 election, Canadian grain sales had fallen. European countries had restored their pre-war agricultural capacity. Moreover, the United States was selling her surplus grain at bargain prices on the international market. Prairie discontent paralleled the accumulation of unsold wheat on the farms. The granting of a 1.5 million dollar cash advance to Western grain growers for stored grain was one of the first actions taken by the new government.

They also increased old age pensions, reduced income taxes, and expressed concern about the extent of foreign ownership in Canada. In response to the outcry about rising food prices, the government set a

¹Oliver Olson, interview Swift Current, Saskatchewan; October 9, 1979.
Royal Commission on Price Spreads of Food Products in Canada. The Commission held hearings and received briefs from persons and organizations on the disparity between the payment made to producers and the expenditure by consumers on food.

Canada acted with greater autonomy in her political and economic affairs. In 1960, the Minister of Agriculture, Alvin Hamilton, signed the first three-year contract for sale of Canadian wheat to China. This transaction was described as the largest single settlement made in world commercial history. Diefenbaker, with almost unanimous national backing, opposed Britain and led a campaign to exclude South Africa from the Commonwealth.

Saskatchewan marked the fiftieth anniversary of her provincial status in 1955 with jubilee celebrations throughout the province. With a goal of further development over the next decade, the government and the university entered into the joint sponsorship of a Centre for Community Studies, a research and consulting resource for communities concerned about their preparedness for the changes in the province. Regina, with cooperation from the Province and the University, created the Wascana Centre Authority. The Municipal Road Assistance Authority supervised the project of building an all-weather grid road system throughout the province. Saskatchewan completed her section of the Trans-Canada Highway. In 1956, the province recorded an increase in population for the first year since the outward migration of

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2 This community park along Wascana Creek, in Regina, was a planned development of facilities for culture, recreation, and education.
disillusioned settlers had begun in the Dirty Thirties.

An election, in 1956, returned the CCF party to power with a noticeable loss of support in some rural areas. Following one of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Agriculture and Rural Life, the government passed the Agricultural Machinery Act, responsible for the independent testing of implements used on Saskatchewan farms. The Department of Agriculture established a Family Farm Improvement Branch to offer assistance and advice on home and yard planning, sewage, electrification, and water supply to rural residents. In 1960, the provincial legislature passed the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Act.

Across the West, co-operatives started to amalgamate. This trend was a logical development in a changing business environment. Independent establishments operated by single proprietors yielded to corporate chains. Co-operatives united to enhance their purchasing power and collective strength that they might compete with these large merchandisers. Other co-ops, having fulfilled their original purpose, disbanded.

In 1959, the Government of Saskatchewan passed the Family Farm Credit Act. This legislation provided for loans to assist residents in acquiring and improving family farms. The CCF government named the Co-operative Trust Company as the lending agency. In the five years of operation of the Family Farm Credit Act, the total value of loans made by the Co-operative Trust Company exceeded seven million dollars.

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3 See above, p. 86-87.
The Report of the Royal Commission on Food Price Spreads, in 1958, lent support to the Co-operative Movement. As well as recommending passage of a federal statute providing for the incorporation of co-operative associations, it concluded that co-operative associations served as a check against excessive price spreads.

The need for an agency to programme educational events specifically for elected officials and salaried employees of co-operatives became apparent. Consumer co-operatives in Manitoba presented a proposal at the June, 1955, meeting of Federated Co-operatives, Limited. Later that year, the Co-operative Union of Saskatchewan invited representatives from Federated Co-operatives, Limited, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the Manitoba Federation of Agriculture and Co-operatives, the Saskatchewan Farmers' Union, the University of Saskatchewan, and the Departments of Co-operation and Education to exchange ideas. They created the Co-operative Institute and bestowed on the new body the responsibility for training programmes. On November 28, 1955, the Co-operative Institute instructed its first class of retail co-op managers. Four years later, the Western Co-operative College evolved from this Institute. The new college sought incorporation in the province of Saskatchewan and applied for registration in Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia.

The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool assumed the role of a rallying point for rural causes. Reduced grain sales in the 1950's were reflected throughout Saskatchewan communities by 1959. When less dramatic means failed, farmers, joined by businessmen and professionals, planned a
delegation to Ottawa to press for deficiency payments on grain sold in crop years 1955-57. The delegation of over 1,000 carried a petition bearing more than 302,000 names supporting recompense to farmers for losses sustained in the marketing of wheat, oats, and barley over those three years. They favoured the designation of a "break-even" wheat price at which producers could continue to operate. They demanded government subsidization to bridge the gap between the selling price and this base price. The government did not comply with this request, but did admit to recognition of the problem in the West. Eventually, they introduced an acreage payment system to inject funds into the prairie region.

The Pool and many of its membership supported the Hudson Bay Route Association. This group promoted utilization of the Hudson Bay Railway and the recently opened Port of Churchill. Advocates believed that movement of grain through this channel would reduce costs for Saskatchewan farmers and overseas buyers, alike.

The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool favoured the Canadian Wheat Board Amendment that concerned boxcar allocation. Earlier, all elevators received the same allotment of cars, regardless of volume of patronage. The new regulations allowed operators of congested elevators to order two cars immediately. Producers were able, therefore, to make deliveries to the elevator company of their choice.

While the relationship between the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and the private elevator companies was certainly competitive, the animosity witnessed earlier was nearly absent by 1955. One former agent described
them not as enemies, but as companies, all trying to survive.\(^4\) The old image of the line elevator as "bad guy" had long since faded.

Through leases and purchases the Pool continued to expand its terminal capacity and its local elevator empire. In 1960, the first research analyst came on staff. The Pool set up a research division to direct commercial activity and public policy planning. In addition, it commissioned specific projects and made research grants to students.

This more self-confident organization drew its field men from varied settings. Birden Lee, Ted Nyhus, and Oliver Olson cited their Scandinavian heritage, with its devotion to the co-operative philosophy, as the reason for their seeking employment with the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. These men were born in the northern United States and migrated to Saskatchewan at an early age.

Like their predecessors, most of these eventual field men tried their hand at farming at some time prior to their coming to the Pool. Several taught school before accepting work as grain buyers and, subsequently, field men. Donald Sinclair immigrated to Canada from Scotland. He had a brief stint in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Ivan McDonald managed a hardware store. With few exceptions, these men transferred to the field staff from positions in an elevator. Many agents managed small consumer co-operatives along with their grain buying responsibilities.

Not all field men followed this route. Anomalous backgrounds included a Master of Science in Agriculture (Animal Science) for Philip

\(^4\)Ted Nyhus, interview Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan; August 9, 1979.
Rothery and study at the Saskatchewan Technical Institute for Ian Traquair. Martin Hopkins was first an employee of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool as a temporary seasonal clerk in the Flour Milling Division. None of these latter three had elevator experience.

Most of these men believed they were selected for the field staff on their records of work with Pool members, elected officials, and the larger community. Ian Traquair was involved in committee work and community activities throughout his farming career. Martin Hopkins was involved in the March for Ottawa canvass although he was only a city-employed junior clerk. He and others with elected Pool officials in their families were somewhat familiar with the work of field men. Director of Field Staff, Robert Leslie Stutt, told Donald Sinclair that he wanted him on staff because he had a "social conscience." Sinclair interpreted that as "being concerned about what was happening around [him] and wanting to do something about it."^5

Attributes cited for successful performance on field staff included public relations skills, imagination, and a willingness to learn. An effective field man needed to be able to get people to believe proposals were their own ideas; he should not have needed to tell anyone what to do.^6 He needed experience and ability in programme planning and organization. Managing several programmes and events simultaneously

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^5 Donald Sinclair, interview Regina, Saskatchewan; October 22, 1979.

^6 Birden Lee, interview, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; October 1, 1979.
created stress for the organizer. More highly educated farmers, technological innovations, and increasingly complex information demanded, in turn, more highly educated men. They had to be able to identify and work through influential community leaders.

Field men of the later 1950's, like those throughout Pool history, had to resign themselves to extensive travel. Improvement in automobiles and road conditions, however, freed them from the necessity of rail travel and protracted absences from families.

Inservice training for new employees was, at best, haphazard. Former agents had gained some understanding of their new mandate from working beside field men. Many of them started by visiting agents in their districts. Some had the opportunity to spend a few days travelling with the men they were replacing. The scope of their activity gradually broadened and routines evolved as each apprehended what was expected of him. Each understood that he was to work with people. Further interpretation of his role depended on his own convictions and the expectations of his director and delegates.

Men entering districts represented by experienced elected officials often learned quickly of expectations for them. As well, supervisors in the Pool's Country Organization Department encouraged centrally developed programmes. The Board of Directors dealt with issues and advised the field staff if a matter should be taken to the

7 Ivan McDonald, interview Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; October 15, 1979.
8 Philip Rothery, interview Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; October 16, 1979.
membership for decision-making, discussion, or explanation. Annual meetings provided material, and staff meetings suggested methods for delivering country presentations.

The Canadian public, including the prairie farm population, was growing increasingly skeptical of its leadership during the 1950's. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation brought national political debates into homes across the country. Citizens gained the national self-confidence to question government decisions of international consequence. The voters forced a dramatic change of status in party representation in Parliament. Once again, grass-roots activism influenced farm policy. In this climate, Pool members were unwilling to accept bureaucratic direction. They demanded field men capable of facilitating the work of the Pool in the country; they wanted coordinators.

One of these field men rated organizational work the most important of his functions. This activity included committee organization, programme design, meeting scheduling, follow-up to determine whether delegates held meetings with their committees, overseeing annual meetings and committee conventions, and encouraging member nomination for offices.9

The field man could not rely completely on the respect commanded by his position; he had to earn his authority. He tried to encourage participation. Speaking of his functioning and activity in his district, one man recalled, "I didn't play a big role, except to see

9Martin Hopkins, interview Regina, Saskatchewan; October 22, 1979.
that things happened."\textsuperscript{10} This catalytic function was central. "His job was to be able to recognize and define a problem and to motivate people to do something about it."\textsuperscript{11} He became as familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of his district as possible in order to encourage leadership and activity at local points.

Co-operative school organization and instruction continued to employ the field man's time and energy. He also co-operated with school principals and superintendents in organizing oratorical contests for junior and senior high school students. Inter-school competitions involved as many as nine schools.\textsuperscript{12} The decision to sponsor public speaking matches lay with local committees. The field man assumed responsibility for organization, coordination with and between schools, renting a hall, and securing judging services. Frequently, he provided films or other entertainment at semi-final and final meets.

Coordination of efforts between co-operatives was also necessary. The field man called on merchants and held meetings to encourage patronage of Pool livestock and flour-milling facilities. He represented the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool at co-op and credit union annual meetings. When co-ops experienced difficulties, he ministered behind the scenes, helping them to regain their strength. Occasionally, he

\textsuperscript{10} Oliver Olson, interview Swift Current, Saskatchewan; October 9, 1979.

\textsuperscript{11} Ivan McDonald, interview Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; October 15, 1979.

\textsuperscript{12} Oliver Olson, interview Swift Current, Saskatchewan; October 9, 1979.
became involved in mediating disputes concerning co-operatives.\textsuperscript{13}

They worked with the Extension Services Division of the Department of Co-operation and Co-operative Development, and the Public Relations Officers of the Credit Union League. They campaigned for the Western Co-operative College Building Fund. They assisted Co-operative Guilds with their programme details.

The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool charged its field men with the responsibility for tying together every part of the organization into a mutually advantageous and cohesive unit. This necessitated close co-operation with every department and all personnel "whether elected officials, employees, or volunteer workers."\textsuperscript{14} They organized meetings concerning livestock marketing. Field staff were part of the team for the development and operation of agents' study programmes. Most committee programmes originated centrally; field men accepted responsibility for their local delivery. The first five-day delegates' school premiered in 1959. The following year witnessed the introduction of schools for committee chairmen and secretaries. Field men held local workshops on such topics as leadership and communications. A fresh method of instruction at committee conventions began in 1960. Field men used prepared mimeographed material, a blackboard, or a flannelgraph to present facts. Group discussions followed.

\textsuperscript{13}Philip Rothery, interview Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; October 16, 1979.

Most field men recognized in agents the key contact with farmers. When possible, field men assisted agents in handling membership problems. Agents, in turn, assisted with local organizational details. Few clashes resulted when field men discreetly refrained from involvement in operational issues.

With the growing popularity of television, moving pictures and slides lost much of their value as drawing cards. Field men could no longer hold audiences with pictures alone. Supper meetings replaced day-long committee conventions. A short workshop or a speaker on a single theme replaced a series of comprehensive reports. Attendance did not increase, but many field men believed a single topic maintained a higher degree of interest.

Rounds of committee meetings occupied considerable time. The field man tried to attend at least one meeting at each shipping point annually. Contact with the less active committeemen, the general Pool membership, and the public steadily lessened as this emphasis on meetings grew stronger. The field man found less time to make visits to farmers and businessmen. Consequently, he was less well known than his predecessors.

Increasingly, planning for district activities occurred in consultation with the director, delegates, local committees, or a district education committee. As early as 1953, at least one education committee was in operation. The Pool's Head Office encouraged formation of these committees by introducing a grant to meet expenses. Locally, profits from committee bonspiels or socials supplemented this sum. The
structure and size of the education committee varied from district to district, but most included the field man, a travelling superintendent, the director, and a delegate. Their chief function was the generation of ideas for district programmes. Inclusion of elected people as well as staff reflected the trend of increasing volunteer participation to foster unity and strengthen members' feeling of being part of a team. 15

Involvement in test plot projects continued. The field man urged delegates to appoint two growers in each subdistrict. Participants were boys and girls, usually from twelve to fourteen years old. Head Office distributed the seed grain and provided the instructions for plot development and maintenance. Growers received help from field men in interpreting these instructions and in following them closely. The field man also offered encouragement and conducted a continuous assessment of the plots. Annually, he organized an activity (frequently a field trip to the city) to recognize the efforts of the young people.

Although internal assignments were time-consuming, field staff were active to varying degrees in other ventures. In 1959, they had an eight-month involvement in the organization and final preparation for the "On to Ottawa" delegation. They reported 75 per cent of their working time was spent administering the fund-raising and recruitment progress of this joint project with the Saskatchewan Farmers' Union. 16

15 Philip Rothery, interview Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; October 16, 1979.

The following year, the University Jubilee Fund Drive offered an opportunity to work with the non-farm population of the province. Five field men acted as district chairmen while others participated less conspicuously. Several maintained their interest and co-operation with local 4H clubs.

Recording and conscious planning assumed increasing importance. The monthly meeting of the Board of Directors heard a review of the daily and monthly activities of the field staff. These summaries included attendance figures, contacts, topics, reactions, and issues.¹⁷

One older field man, who became a supervisor in 1959, noted with dismay that the more recent additions to staff were doing significantly more paperwork. He considered planning to be a perpetual process, fixed neither to time nor place. He witnessed field men planning with pencils at their desks; he regarded this as time away from the district and its farmers. Noting this reduced exposure, he was alarmed that field men were less familiar to the public and less familiar with their communities.¹⁸

Evaluation of their own performance was never easy for field men. In the 1950's, some found that planning permitted them to itemize their goals. They were able to gain satisfaction from stroking entries from their lists. Others waited for visible results of their campaigns.

¹⁷ Oliver Olson, interview Swift Current, Saskatchewan; October 9, 1979.

¹⁸ Wilson Parker, interview Prince Albert, Saskatchewan; October 25, 1979.
Some gauged their success by how fully elected people picked up ideas and assumed responsibilities. A few needed less tangible measuring sticks and simply continued, confident in the belief they were working for a legitimate cause.

There were frustrations. Not everyone could cope indefinitely with being unable to measure the returns of their work immediately. Frequently, former field men recalled their regular absences from home and the hours the job demanded.

I remember the census-taker coming to our house and filling out the papers. And she wanted to know how many hours I'd worked the week before. I figured it out and told her it was seventy-two hours. I don't know whether she believed me or not, but that was the actual figure.

Apathy and poor attendance at meetings discouraged some workers. The organization was apparently functioning smoothly: without a cause to rally members to action, participation dwindled. Some men expressed frustration with central office policies and personnel.

The source of their discontent doubtless directed the later careers of these field men. More than half of them eventually assumed positions of leadership elsewhere in the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. A few accepted employment in government agencies or crown corporations. The four that remained in the field force until their retirement demonstrated not only a proficiency in this organizational work, but an adaptability to changing demands.

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19 Oliver Olson, interview Swift Current, Saskatchewan; October 9, 1979.
A successor to one of these workers summarized the activity of the time.

Don Sinclair . . . was really my idol as far as field staff was concerned because he did all the things that I thought were necessary. . . . He seemed to be at meetings, talking to people, informing them, . . . helping out local membership with programmes, and just visiting. . . . We had all-day conferences and he was always there organizing the way things were done and helping out.

Field men received their training in co-operative history and philosophy, public relations, leadership development, and public speaking on the job and through training sessions held in conjunction with the School of Agriculture at the University of Saskatchewan. The opening of the Co-operative College introduced a new training ground. The College also assumed some organizational functions performed by field men. Their work was changing.

The stability of rural life in Saskatchewan was shaken, too. Drought or near drought conditions in many areas of the province in 1961 forced a change of plans for the farmer and the province.

The same year marked a new era for one of Canada's political parties. At a National Convention, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) adopted the name, New Democratic Party (NDP). Simultaneously, the farm-based party undertook a drive to enlist the support and participation of the organized labour movement.

20 Bob Cunningham, interview Assiniboia, Saskatchewan; October 21, 1979.
CHAPTER VII

MEMBER RELATIONS

The computer age was coming upon us but there's one thing they can never use a machine for and that is public relations, and that's what the main thrust was: member relations.1

For Canadians, the mid-1960's were years of struggle for personal rights and for a national identity. The years following 1961 brought to Canada an economic prosperity that endured for the longest uninterrupted interval in peacetime history.

Homemakers, organizations of consumers, and co-operatives led a consumers' revolt against misleading advertising, dubious sales practices, and excessive packaging. Supportive evidence gathered by a royal commission2 ultimately resulted in the establishment of a Canadian Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

When Prime Minister John George Diefenbaker dissolved Parliament early in 1962, the Progressive Conservative Party held 203 seats in the House of Commons. Following the June election, his party reclaimed only 116 to face a combined opposition of 149 members. The return of sixteen Conservatives, in a total of seventeen constituencies in Saskatchewan, reflected the Diefenbaker government's sympathetic support of western agriculture.

1Bob Friesen, interview Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; October 11, 1979.

2The Royal Commission on Food Price Spreads recommended in its report, in 1960, the institution of such a department.
On February 4, 1963, a non-confidence motion in the House of Commons defeated the government. Diefenbaker campaigned in his most effective role: as the persecuted, victimized representative of the "Little Man," exploited and helpless against the rich central provinces, the greed of commercial enterprises, and the slandering public press. As a result, his party experienced defeat, but not demolition. They drew strength from the prairies, the Maritimes, and rural Ontario to retain ninety-five Commons seats. The Liberal party, with 129 elected members, fell four seats short of a majority.

In Saskatchewan, the CCF under Thomas Clement Douglas and subsequently, Woodrow Stanley Lloyd, had formed the government for twenty years. In 1964, the party met defeat at the hands of the Saskatchewan Liberal party under the leadership of Wilbert Ross Thatcher.

The CCF government, in 1963, set up the Saskatchewan Economic Corporation to encourage large industries to locate in Saskatchewan. Premier Thatcher urged private corporations to come to the province. Despite growing local and national concern over foreign ownership, he eased the establishment of natural resource developments by external interests.

Smaller industry developed, too. The government supported beginning enterprises operated by native Canadians. The number of Saskatchewan firms manufacturing farm equipment jumped dramatically. In

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3 The Saskatchewan Co-operative Commonwealth Federation did not endorse the national name and stance of the New Democratic Party, in 1961. See above, p. 120.
1966, a large pulp mill opened in the north-central area. Potash mining gained prominence.

The face of Saskatchewan agriculture was also changing. Price stabilization guaranteed minimum wheat prices, but the increase in the costs of labour, machinery, manufactured goods, and fuel were accelerating. To escape the cost-price squeeze, farmers found it necessary to increase efficiency and mechanization in their operations. To achieve economy of scale, they purchased larger and larger equipment and operated larger and larger acreages. Small farms became less common. Better hard-surfaced roads, consolidated schools, and union hospitals encouraged the migration toward towns. As residents searched for fresh opportunities and different lifestyles in the city, many rural centres lost their viability.

A United Nations report indicating that the world population had reached 3,135 million and was increasing by 63 million annually stimulated fears about the adequacy of the world food supply. Governments encouraged farmers to increase their wheat production. In 1964, prairie farmers exceeded the 1940 record and seeded 29,080,000 acres to wheat. In conference the following year, the premiers of the three prairie provinces agreed to encourage greater use and further development of the port of Churchill.

Farmers decided to assume a more aggressive role in agricultural affairs. The National Farmers' Union, formed officially in 1954, became active in 1965. That year, it launched a campaign to assist drought-stricken farmers of Eastern Canada.
By 1967, farmers felt the burden of a contradiction between government policy and practice. The federal government continued to express concern that world food production was lagging behind population increase and encouraged farmers to increase wheat production. Canadian wheat sales were not, however, reflecting this rising world demand. The lack of foreign markets was manifest in stockpiles of grain on prairie farms and in commercial storage. Once again, wheat producers found themselves improvising temporary storage bins from plywood sheets, tarpaper, and tarpaulins. Much of the 1967 crop, harvested under unfavourable conditions, deteriorated further in such inappropriate storage facilities.

Co-ops diversified and spread to urban settings through the 1960's. With the decline in farm and village populations through the decade, shopping became increasingly centralized in larger communities. To compete more effectively against larger chains that were replacing local independent merchants, many co-operatives agreed to amalgamate. By reducing the number of outlets in a trading area, co-op stores were better able to form larger associations and reduce operating expenses.

Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, too, was finding it necessary to expand and diversify in order to successfully compete with its privately owned counterparts. In 1961, senior Pool officials toured Europe in an effort to establish rapeseed markets. A similar goal directed visits to Japan in 1964 and 1965.

In 1962, the Pool purchased the assets of the dissolving Saskatchewan Seed Grain Co-operative, Limited, and subsequently set up a
department to handle cereal and forage crop seed. Two years later, they purchased a seed-cleaning plant in Moose Jaw from the provincial government. In 1967, they purchased an Ontario stockyard for the purpose of marketing Saskatchewan cattle.

Member and agent demands for seed, fertilizer, chemicals, and twine resulted in the establishment of a farm service division within the Pool. The Division gradually expanded its commodity line to include livestock feed and equipment and animal health products. Retail co-ops already offering these supplies actively opposed entry of the Pool into retail farm supply. Resolutions from local boards and delegates to Federated Co-operatives, Limited urged that the central co-op encourage the Pool to handle farm supplies only in areas where co-operative stores were not actively involved in distribution of the same products. The Pool rationalized their continued involvement by saying that their action resulted from demands from their membership, not all of whom belonged to co-operatives, and by insisting they needed to provide this service in order to be competitive with other elevator companies.

Rail line abandonment and changing grain transportation patterns dictated readjustments in storage facilities. The Pool's engineering department developed a means of moving country elevators from one shipping point to another. Kenaston was the site for the first all-steel construction elevator experiment. The purchase of three Lakehead terminals, in 1962, brought total terminal capacity to nearly 38,000,000 bushels. Two years later, the Pool approved plans to construct a 5,000,000 bushel capacity terminal at Vancouver.
This increased diversification and expansion stepped up the hiring and heeding of technical staff and financial advisors. In many cases, the membership could not be consulted before decisions involving business transactions needed to be made. Consequently, the organization faced louder accusations that it was becoming centralized and little different from other large corporations. Research sponsored by the Country Organization Department and released in 1966, revealed that delegates were not average farmers. The profile of delegates showed them to be larger-than-average landholders with at least 70 per cent of their income coming directly from the sale of grain. Skeptics questioned whether less fortunate and more diversified farmers had adequate representation.

The field staff were on the front lines, confronting and attempting to deal with these problems and to thwart these attacks. Like many of their predecessors, most of these men had grown up on farms, and worked in elevators. The Wheat Pool had become a family tradition; many families had developed loyalties to it. This loyalty attracted several men to begin working for the Pool. Others made their decisions on the basis of the organization's reputation for providing well for its employees.

Several recruits to field staff during this period brought university degrees or diplomas. At least three came from careers in a branch of the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture. Several were graduates of the co-operative correspondence course sponsored by the Co-operative Union of Saskatchewan. Doug Kirk had managed two CCIL
depots between his elevator experience and his joining the field staff.
One had completed teacher training and had spent some years in the
classroom.

These men believed public relations skills were key assets for
workers. The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool needed diplomatic representatives
who could get on with people, ranging from visiting dignitaries to
disenchanted members. They had to be accepted by the larger public, not
only the loyal membership. The field man had to be "sensitive . . . a
student of people" who could handle people differently. He needed
charisma: the ability to draw followers. Public speaking ability was
not prerequisite; for most, it developed and improved on the job.
Organizational skills and creativity were obvious assets.

Farmers in the 1960's were, undeniably, businessmen. To establish
credibility with his clientele, the field man had to have a proven
record of applied business acumen and an understanding of the sphere of
agribusiness. Managerial experience dealing with buyers as well as
sellers in another co-operative was also advantageous. Some elevator
experience was almost essential. Otherwise, the profit-making goals of
operations and the philosophical aims of membership development
conflicted. Field men drawn from the elevator cited their business

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4 Jim Forrest, interview Weyburn, Saskatchewan; August 17, 1979.
5 J. C. Manning, interview Prince Albert, Saskatchewan; October 25, 1979.
6 Doug Kirk, interview Regina, Saskatchewan; October 23, 1979.
success as grain buyers as a prime reason for their selection. 7

Some characteristics and qualities were timeless. No less than his predecessors, this field man needed patience with the slowness of adoption of changes. He had to be able to continue to function without seeing immediate or visible returns for his efforts.

These men benefited from more formalized training programmes. Each attended a considerable number of courses at the Western Co-operative College over their terms of employment. The course offerings included basic leadership skills, programme and activity planning, organization of work, human relations, finance, communications, co-operative history, and co-operative philosophy. Some field men also assisted in the leadership of these classes, particularly those designed for Pool officials and other Pool staff. Most also spent time with a more experienced field man before assuming responsibility for their own districts.

Stereotyped expectations of the work they would be doing were not always accurate. Because the Extension Division was the official educational arm of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, some expected to be working, primarily, in instructional settings. Freeman Magnusson found less time for this activity than he had anticipated. He confronted the realities of work in a big business: maintaining a service industry

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7At this point, the Pool experimented with bringing in consultants to do aptitude inventories of job applicants. Successful candidates for field staff deduced that their selection criteria was their highly successful and profitable operation record in the elevator.
and lending support to the operational branch took time from educational work. 8

Promotion of the Pool and its policies was the mandate of these workers. They were rural extensions of the Pool management structure, trying to sell to the farmer and to the larger community the advantages of the Pool.

Field men were diplomats. They outlined central business decisions, rationalizing them and soothing community feelings to make the decisions as acceptable as possible to the membership. Elevator closures demanded their conciliation with shippers at the local points affected. These liaison men faced the task of personally and, subsequently, publicly reconciling the activities and concerns of the central organization and the membership. They felt caught in a dilemma; often they could understand only too well the frustration of the small member farmer who was convinced that effective decision-making lay beyond his control. Field men directed much of their effort toward the replacement of this "small-farmer-versus-large company" attitude with the conviction that the Pool was a democracy still.

Fact-finding in local affairs was another responsibility of field staff. Time for such study was difficult to find. Consequently, trainees or temporary assistants often accepted assignments to collect opinions and facts related to increasing Pool patronage. Occasionally, these less experienced staff, with lofty ideals and high expectations

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8Freeman Magnusson, interview Regina, Saskatchewan; October 24, 1979.
for the consideration of their findings, learned to their dismay that
decisions made "higher-up" conflicted with detected farmer preferences.

Management included graduates of universities and recruits from
the business community. These specialized business experts made
decisions. Although the organization was anticipating longer-term
benefits to farmers, field men faced the question, "Could the Pool
afford to be too responsive to the immediate demands identified in field
research?"

Once again, co-operative promotion was a sweeping responsibility.
The field man coordinated co-operative development in his district. He
chaired meetings, participated in public media broadcasts, and acted as
master of ceremonies at a variety of events. He organized amateur
nights and community socials that featured a speaker and dance. A
limited commitment in time, energy, and expertise was fair to expect of
volunteers: field men accepted salaries for being accessible. Reaching
the public required ever greater patience and ingenuity. The field man
found himself doing public relations work with town- and city-dwellers
as well as farmers. To foster an understanding of agrarian problems,
they told the Wheat Pool story as well as general co-operative history
to urban audiences.

The field men continued to work with agents. Experience in the
elevator undoubtedly helped them understand the more profit-related
concerns of operations personnel. Because agents were often the best
informed sources on the membership, field men cultivated a trust
relationship with them as quickly as possible. They tried to remind
grain buyers of their important function, representing the Pool in the community in the best possible light. Upon the Pool's entry into the farm supply business, agents needed an understanding of the rationale and a briefing on sales techniques. They had to learn to think of members, not only as sellers, but as prospective purchasers. Occasionally, agents called on field men to placate local co-operative store managers or members who resented the Pool's entry into farm supply distribution. One field man's work with staff also included a course on co-operatives for livestock personnel.9

Awareness by field staff and other membership-oriented personnel of the importance of elected officials heightened with the growing concern over the Pool's public image. Local officials were influential in the establishment of local estimations of the organization. If a delegate was an esteemed community leader and a successful farm operator, he drew community respect for the Pool he represented. To enhance his effectiveness, the field man spent time coaching him on his leadership and subject delivery skills. The field man paid him informal visits to discuss issues, pass on information, and extract opinions.

Field men actively promoted the Pool as a grass-roots democratic institution. In the words of one of them, however, it was sometimes necessary "to warp democracy."10 He could not tamper in any obvious way with the electoral machinery, but he could use his influence to effect

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9 Owen Mickleborough, interview Coronach, Saskatchewan; October 21, 1979.
10 Doug Kirk, interview Regina, Saskatchewan; October 23, 1979.
change more subtly. He could encourage election of progressive and effective representatives. If a delegate was performing below an acceptable level or projecting a weak image, the field man tried to plant the seed of an idea in someone's mind to, perhaps, nominate a candidate to oppose the complacent incumbent. A salaried employee could not distribute nomination papers; he could suggest superior candidates and encourage them to accept the nomination. One former field man, proud of the role he was able to play in this process, reported the change of nearly one-half of the original delegate body during his four years in that district. Not only did he encourage challengers, the field man may have played a part in the decision of some delegates to step down. 11 Not all field men agreed with their influential role in delegate removal or selection. Most believed it necessary. One retired employee suggested that this "oiling of the machinery of the democratic structure was, from the company standpoint, one of the more important roles of the field man at that time." 12

The revised delegate body that was a product of this drive included more younger men and more large farm operators. Most were more highly educated and able managers. Initially, many demonstrated a poorer understanding of the organization and the co-operative movement. They were generally able to assimilate the information readily and pass it to members effectively. They demanded business news and facts as well as

11 Ibid.
12 W. J. Forsythe, interview Katepwa, Saskatchewan; October 20, 1979.
Field men canvassed for volunteers and for nominees for elected positions. The kitchen table, the farmyard, and the board room were likely sites for recruitment for local co-op representatives to attend rallies, teachers for courses, and students for co-operative schools. Most had little confidence in the efficacy of the printed word to attract people; they relied on personal contact to solicit response.

This public contact was effective. Undeniably, slides and moving pictures had diminished in effectiveness and consequent usage. Some field men, however, began to develop interest and proficiency in the use of other media. In 1961, a field man and a co-op manager in the Swift Current area conceived the notion of a co-operative-centred television production. Receiving little support or enthusiastic response from the Publicity Department of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool,13 district delegates in the south-west voted to continue planning. With support from the Extension Division of the Pool, "The Co-op Way" premiered on Swift Current television. Response was gratifying. Although controlled evaluation was not made, the programme received a warm acceptance. Schools, credit unions, and consumer educators from the area co-operated in preparation and delivery. The production, which continued to run for several years, demonstrated the potential strength of television as a local medium. Viewers were familiar with the issues

13 Field man Jim Forrest recalled that the publicity personnel did not favour the association of their department, with its self-consciously greater professionalism, with an "amateurish programme."
and the participants, and responded zealously.\textsuperscript{14}

Another field man, dismayed at the small part of the message he perceived was being left with the people after a delegate or director's lecture, determined to develop alternative means of presentation. He encouraged and participated in the production of better charts that boasted bright colours and clearer printing. He promoted the use of slides depicting the activity of local people to supplement those prepared centrally, outlining the Pool's annual achievements. Older delegates, comfortable with their familiar method of presentation, resisted change. Others, recognizing the increasing competition for public attention, adopted some new techniques.\textsuperscript{15}

In response to demands from the agricultural community, field men organized public programmes. The Pool's entry into farm supply necessitated meetings to outline the rationale for the move. Farmers attended clinics on grain drying, farm safety, farm machinery co-operative organization, and livestock marketing. Field staff organized hearings, gathering information for the establishment of the Saskatchewan Hog Marketing Commission. They delivered, infrequently, prepackaged programmes developed by the Western Co-operative College.

Youth work continued. Field men helped organize and instruct co-operative schools and citizenship days. As well, several field men accepted invitations to make presentations to high school classes on the

\textsuperscript{14}Jim Forrest, interview Weyburn, Saskatchewan; August 17, 1979.

\textsuperscript{15}Freeman Magnusson, interview Regina, Saskatchewan; October 24, 1979.
Canadian Wheat Board, grain movement, agricultural production, and the historic development of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. The test plot programme involving young grain growers gave field men exposure to prospective farmers. This opportunity justified continuance of the project that, by the mid-sixties, was recognized as lacking in sufficient control to be scientifically useful.

Their work brought field men face-to-face with propounders of discordant philosophies. The National Farmers' Union and the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool co-operated in many endeavours but differed on selected issues. In particular, the Farmers' Union disagreed with the involvement of an agricultural policy-making body, such as the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, in agribusiness. The implications of this divergence in opinion varied from district to district. Most National Farmers' Union members were good commercial and policy supporters of the Pool and most field men reported few clashes. Others, while attempting to avoid public conflicts, disagreed vocally with Farmers' Union supporters out of the public eye. Field men tried to present the Pool stand, left the NFU to circulate its views, and assigned members the task of making their respective decisions. In some cases, however, confrontation appeared necessary to protect principles. The central organization did not, apparently, discourage such activity where warranted.

For twenty years, the Pool fielded accusations of political sympathies with the CCF party. Denial was typically perfunctory. The
election of a Liberal government, in 1964, however, made it necessary for field men to emphasize Saskatchewan Wheat Pool neutrality. The organization depended on the establishment of a sound working relationship with whatever party was in power.

The field man spent more hours making plans and drafting reports. Estimates ranged as high as 20 per cent of his time. Comprehensive weekly summaries, however, replaced detailed daily reports for head office. Reports included an assessment of the reaction of people toward the Pool, its policies, and its services. Experience also curtailed the time required for reporting and reading. As he gained confidence, a field man was able to do more of his programme plans mentally, with only short notes kept. Preparation of aids and materials grew easier with practice. Because the field man needed to be conversant on all issues and problems, he received reams of materials from his supervisors. Only with experience did he become skillful in identifying the most critical and the most concise.

Field men active in this period drew satisfaction from the responses they elicited from people. Positive indicators included animated discussion, decisive community action, achievement of a harmonious atmosphere, and productive canvasses. Several appreciated invitations to make presentations or supply answers to interested groups. Others drew sustenance from the camaraderie of fellow field

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16 Bob Cunningham, interview Assiniboia, Saskatchewan; October 21, 1979.

17 Boyd Pederson, interview Estevan, Saskatchewan; October 5, 1979.
staff, their autonomy in their districts, and being remembered by residents of communities in which they worked.

Many frustrations were familiar ones. Long, irregular hours continued to oppress field men. The transfer from operations to field staff introduced the frustration of being unable to readily assess effectiveness. Some men experienced difficulty in reading, when accustomed to activity. Increased numbers of centrally planned programmes and development of a staff merit rating system, offended some entrepreneurs.

Changes in the agricultural scene and in the delegate body created new obstacles. Younger members, including delegates, typically were less familiar with the importance of the Pool to the history and continued well-being of the grain marketing industry. This lack of understanding manifested itself in apathy, sporadic patronage, poor attendance, and unveiled skepticism.

Sympathy for member or community disagreement with Pool policy decisions created painful dilemmas for some. Inability to translate general abstract goals into meaningful action at the local level sometimes caused distress. Failure to convince communities of the appropriateness of organizational action or campaigns discouraged others. Field men rarely mentioned disharmony between divisions as being stressful.

Undeniably, families had to adjust to being "field staff homes." Wives and children acted as receptionists for visiting dignitaries and secretaries for delegates. Wives had to adjust to husbands being gone
in the evening but underfoot, yet working, during the day. The director of field staff told one successful job applicant that he was selected, in part, because of his wife's tolerance, interest in her husband's work, and sympathy for the need for him to keep erratic hours.\textsuperscript{18} Wives had to accept dual parenting roles to some extent, particularly with younger children. One field man decided to change employment when his weeping son was heard to query, "Why doesn't Daddy live here anymore?"

The relative tenure of these men on the field staff was short when compared with most of their predecessors. Several echoed the philosophy of the sixties that "a rolling stone gathers no moss." Gaining experience was the objective; upward mobility was a societal value. Nearly all moved, eventually, to Head Office positions. Other moves included returns to former employers or commitments, including education, the provincial power company, and the Church.

A transition was taking place. For these field men, skills in public speaking, community leadership, and public relations were helpful. Most commented, however, on the gradual deemphasis of the importance of personal appearances and contacts as the '60's receded. An advisory role began to supplant visible leadership. As the cries of skeptics questioning the effectiveness of the Pool democracy increased in volume and frequency, the need for demonstration of this grass-roots control became more apparent. The public needed to see the elected personnel in the vanguard of organizational activity.

\textsuperscript{18}Jim Forrest, interview Weyburn, Saskatchewan; August 17, 1979.
The minority Pearson government, returned to power in 1965, faced growing alienation from Western grain farmers. In 1967, they established a Task Force on Agriculture to study trends and future developments of agriculture in Canada. Faced with the celebration of a century of union, Canada was attempting to minimize regional disparities and tensions.
CHAPTER VIII

DEVELOPMENT OF THE DELEGATE

The basic premise for our job in this particular period was the development of people and, primarily, the delegate. The delegate to Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, in my estimation, is the key.¹

Canada celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of her Confederation with gala birthday parties and innovative projects. The most ambitious of these, Expo '67 in Montreal, attracted Canadians from the Maritimes to the Yukon, and visitors from around the world.

In the 1967 election, Saskatchewan voters returned thirty-five candidates in Wilbert Ross Thatcher's Liberal government. The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, running for the first time in the province as the New Democratic Party, won twenty-four seats. Under the new leadership of Allan Emrys Blakeney, the New Democratic Party swept into power, in 1971, in a manner reminiscent of the 1944 CCF victory. In spite of an internal cleavage,² the NDP claimed forty-five seats.

Prairie farmers continued to confront marketing dilemmas. Several large wheat sales to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the People's Republic of China, however, brought some relief to congested storage conditions. The American violation and consequent effective end to the International Wheat Agreement, in 1969, necessitated ever

¹Bryce Belt, interview Regina, Saskatchewan; October 19, 1979.

²A 'Waffle' group, supporting anti-nuclear development, public ownership of natural resources, and environmental concerns, separated from the larger party.
increasing skill in international bargaining on the part of Canadian wheat salesmen.

Damp conditions postponed much of the 1968 grain harvest to the following spring. The crop required drying before storage. The inadequacy of grain drying facilities, the reduced grades, and the lack of markets for this expensively reaped wheat incited farmer rage. Parades of tractors, farm rallies, and talk of western separatism flourished through 1969. The Saskatchewan government bartered wheat for potash mining equipment from Japan. This bargain bypassed the Canadian Wheat Board and met strong opposition from those persons and organizations, including the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, that supported orderly marketing. Farmers greeted Prime Minister Trudeau's visit to the West with accusations and demands for positive action in the sales arena.

Perceived lack of attentiveness on the part of the Canadian Wheat Board tempted grain farmers to bootleg grain. The Federal government, in 1969, ordered the seizure of permit books of farmers suspected of selling their grain directly to feedlots. Later that year, programmes of cash advances on stored grain and interest free loans suggested farmers had Ottawa's attention. The Canadian Wheat Board established a two-price system with the introduction of a guaranteed floor price on all domestic wheat sales other than for use as livestock and poultry feed.

Attempts to rectify the problem of stockpiled grain were directed not only through market intervention, but through encouragement to
change production patterns. A 1969 federal task force reported grain storage on July 31 to be 850 million bushels and estimated that harvest of the crop of 1969 would bring the figure to over one billion bushels. As well as urging greater Canadian aggressiveness in locating markets, the report recommended a reduction in the acreage sowed to wheat by about 35 per cent by 1980.3

Predictions proved accurate. At the end of the 1969-70 crop year, Canada held in storage the highest wheat inventory in Canadian history.4 A poor market was not a new problem for Canadian wheat producers. Consistently high yields, attributable to use of chemical fertilizers and herbicides and to improved farm management techniques, were unusual. The surplus supply of world wheat, not surprisingly, affected price. The average price of wheat, $1.69 per bushel for the period 1963-67, dropped to $1.38 over 1968-71.5

In response to recommendations to reduce wheat acreage, the federal government introduced the LIFT6 programme. In the spring of 1970, farmers received $6.00 per acre to convert to summerfallow land usually planted to wheat, and $10.00 per acre to convert to perennial forage


41,008 million bushels of Canadian wheat were in storage on farms, in elevators, and at terminals. 400 million bushels of this surplus were actually stored on Saskatchewan farms. (Sixty-sixth Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Saskatchewan (Regina: Queen's Printer, 1971), p. 302.)


6Lower Inventories for Tomorrow.
crops. The initial reaction of prairie farmers was predictable. Coaxing every bushel possible from the reluctant soil was almost second nature. Many farmers believed that deliberate inaction was at best, unnatural, and at worst, criminal abuse of the land. Nonetheless, the programme resulted in a reduction of more than 50 per cent of 1969 seeded wheat acreage, in 1970. The whole prairie economy reflected the cutback as sales of fertilizer, machinery, fuels, agricultural chemicals, building materials, and consumer goods fell off.

By late 1970, the efforts of the Canadian government, the Wheat Board, farm organizations such as the wheat pools, and the private grain trade, resulted in some new markets. The report of the Canada Grains Council, in 1972, proposed the erection of eighty inland terminals and the coincident reduction in the number of country elevators. Because inefficient shipping systems within Canada caused loss of some sales, the government undertook the construction of inland terminals and the purchase of superior hopper cars.

New farm organizations appeared and developed during this period. In 1970, Palliser Wheat Growers formed to promote production, handling, and marketing of wheat. This new body favoured erection of government-owned inland grain terminals. That same year, the Saskatchewan Federation of Agriculture changed its structure to permit direct membership by individual farmers. The National Farmers' Union led a national boycott of Kraft Foods to press for higher returns for Ontario milk producers. Representatives from the three prairie wheat pools, United Grain Growers, and five private elevator companies met and
formed the Western Grain Elevator Association to act and make recommendations in the area of country elevators and terminals. The Hudson Bay Route Association continued to gain strength.

Wheat prices reached a record figure in 1973, but costs were increasing even more rapidly. Young farmers found it particularly difficult to establish themselves in the industry. One of the earliest steps of the Blakeney government was the establishment of a land bank commission to purchase land and lease it to these young farmers, thus reducing somewhat the tremendous capital investment demanded. They went further in 1973, setting up Farm Start as a crown corporation to issue low-cost loans to beginning farmers or those eager to expand their operational base.

Marketing policies for other grains changed, too. The Canadian Wheat Board relinquished control, in 1974, of feed grains moving between provinces. This removal of domestic feed grain from Canadian Wheat Board control transpired without the consultation of farmers. After the fact, a questionnaire revealed that 92.9 per cent of the 41,250 participating farmers disagreed with the action.7 A controversy developed over whether rapeseed should be marketed by the Canadian Wheat Board. The wheat pools, the National Farmers' Union, and several other farm organizations supported placement under Board jurisdiction; the Rapeseed Association advocated open market selling. Balloting among rapeseed growers favoured the open market by a slim majority. Because

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the vote was so close, the federal minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board promised to set up a voluntary rapeseed pool for those who wished to use it.

Saskatchewan Wheat Pool maintained its diversity. A major study, undertaken in 1969 and reported in 1970, researched the viability of increased livestock production on the prairies. The report, optimistic about the potential for an expanded livestock industry, recommended the creation of a new organization under the sponsorship of the older co-ops. This new organization would provide complete service including research, breeding, veterinary services and supplies, feeds, and marketing. Saskatchewan Wheat Pool did not choose to be involved, but Federated Co-operatives, Ltd., incorporated a subsidiary, Federated Distributing Company, to provide service to larger livestock and poultry producers. The Pool kept up its livestock marketing yards and related research.

In 1970, the three prairie wheat pools and the United Grain Growers established XCan Grain, Ltd., to coordinate their grain sales at home and abroad. With assistance from the Federal government, XCan invested in a new flour mill in Venezuela under an agreement whereby most of the wheat milled had to be of Canadian origin. When UGG dropped out of the partnership in 1974, the other three members took over the shares.

Saskatchewan Wheat Pool enlarged their facilities. In 1972, the vegetable oil plant in Saskatoon expanded. Two years later, the Pool entered a joint agreement with Agra Industries, in Nipawin, for a
rapeseed crushing and rapeseed oil refining operation. In 1972, the three prairie pools purchased country elevators, terminals, seed plants, and supply warehouses from the Federal Grain Company.

Field men worked in a dynamic milieu in the organization. The membership profile was changing; new issues demanded attention. There was more money in agriculture as government programmes injected funds, as wheat prices soared, and as land started to sell again. Optimistic farmers were more eager to attend meetings and become actively involved in the organization. Farmers, generally, were better educated: their understanding of modern agricultural practice paralleled their academic accomplishments. This younger farmer did not require the district field man to be an answer-man; the new member expected that the field man be aware of the issues and be familiar with appropriate resource people and methods of presentation. These members were more mobile and, consequently, more aware of what was happening across the district, the province, and the nation. Issues included elevator closures, grain movement, and an elevator development plan. These topics involved operational policy and necessitated closer co-operation with other divisions. Field staff utilized a sophisticated communications system. The field man needed to be aware of this changing environment to modify his techniques for reaching the membership.

The most prominent change made in Pool extension at that time was in their relationship to elected officials. Field men deliberately

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8 Jim Feist, interview Regina, Saskatchewan; October 19, 1979.
stepped back into the wings and nudged delegates and directors to centre stage. The abruptness of the change resulted from the conjunction of several movements. Critics were questioning the potency of the membership in the decision-making and operations of the large farm organization. To reply effectively to this censure, elected personnel had to be conspicuous in leadership roles. Under the scrutiny of a more discerning membership, delegates faced questions about annual meeting decisions. They needed a sound understanding of the issues and of membership sentiments to cast a committed and representative vote.

The complexity of issues increased the scope of the field man's work and made it impossible for him to travel and meet with groups of farmers on a regular basis. Field staff recognized delegates as extremely useful, but underutilized tools in the country. Efforts shifted from delivery to facilitating and supporting the programme efforts of these elected representatives. Western Co-operative College courses for field men on programme planning and direction strengthened this concentration. These courses emphasized letting people take charge themselves.

Personnel in elected, supervisory, and programming positions were influential in accomplishing the change of emphasis. Central office staff heard complaints that suggested that the organization was growing unresponsive. They realized that the Pool lacked the means of identifying and meeting the needs of members quickly. They recognized

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9 J. C. Manning, interview Prince Albert, Saskatchewan; October 25, 1979.
delegates as a more direct channel for receiving messages and sending responses. Field men participated in a centralized campaign for greater development of the delegate.

The hiring of new field men eased this transition. The Division faced the retirement of several older staff members within the space of a few months. New recruits, selected for their willingness and ability to motivate people, attempted to stimulate members to take a more responsive leadership role in accelerating the intraorganization communication process. These men did not see themselves as creators of the Pool and were content to relinquish the conspicuous leadership function in order to expend their time and energy behind the scenes.

The character of the delegate body in the late 1960's eased the shift in responsibilities. Older delegates were often reluctant to accept the greater commitment at the local level. The entry of a considerable number of younger farmers to the delegate body provided an opportunity to educate them, from the outset, about the importance of this function. The higher average education level of these men equipped them to assume this leadership.

The roots of these new field men were in rural Saskatchewan. Two had graduated from the School of Agriculture and others had attended universities or technical schools. Most had bought grain for a period of months or years before being successful in a bid for field staff positions. Their past employment, in addition to farming, had included

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10 Keith Adie, interview Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; October 5, 1979.
work with the railroad, an oilfield service company, in construction, in farm equipment sales, and at a feed plant. At least three men had worked for other co-operative agencies or institutions. Jim Wright had served as a Wheat Pool delegate. John Trew had contributed to the organization of the Federation of Production Co-operatives, had been a member of the Beechy Co-operative Farm, and had assisted in the founding of co-operatives in British Guiana and among the Cowichan Indians on Vancouver Island.

Several field men were sons of men who had been delegates or grain buyers of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. Others, however, worked for the Pool, not because of commitment or tradition, but because of interest in the work and the security the position offered. While several stressed the importance of understanding co-operative philosophy and practice, others believed community involvement and ability to motivate were more important.

The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool recruited younger men to the field staff. The Pool sought flexibility, enthusiasm, and willingness to question and innovate. A successful candidate needed skill in human relations and communication skills. Ability to assimilate and retain information on a wide range of topics was essential. It was necessary to be able to grasp the politics of the district and to identify problem areas before crises developed. Because the field man could only earn his authority, he needed skills in motivating people and moving groups to co-operation and consensus. Experience increased his effectiveness; he could not afford to be blunt until he gained the respect of his
delegate body. He had to be willing to admit his errors. Not only did he need skill in programme preparation and delivery, he required ability in helping delegates and directors through this process.

Most of these men drew their impressions of the responsibility they accepted from contact with earlier field men. The work promised an opportunity to work with ideas and people and an exposure to up-to-date information and innovations. Former delegates found difficulty in refraining from voicing their personal views freely. Former agents believed themselves unprepared for the intense level of activity and commitment in what had appeared to be a minor role. Most recalled feeling confused at their first meetings. Fortunately, the previous man almost always had the preparatory work completed for scheduled programmes.

Training programmes varied. Several men received only on-the-job coaching and an introduction to delegates by a supervisor. Occasionally, the Pool hired men to field staff some months prior to assignment to a district. These employees worked as assistants. Experienced field men briefed the newcomers on district work and techniques for assisting elected officials. Head office personnel discussed philosophy questions and basic principles of the organization.11 Attendance at the fall annual meeting gave an opportunity for witnessing the process, meeting other field men, and sharing ideas. Project work occupied assistant field men, too.

11Keith Adie, interview Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; October 5, 1979.
Research among the membership provided contact with the perceptions of events or problems from the viewpoint of the farmer. Coordination of efforts to produce a report brought an increased awareness of group process.

Field men understood their mandate to be support of the democratic structure. Head office employees and elected officials offered direction in identifying priority areas for the district. Directors, who were most familiar with the comprehensive activity of the organization, were particularly co-operative. Supervisors encouraged new men to use 'Management by Objectives' techniques to set goals for the year. The field man's responsibility was to oversee projects, ensuring that they met specified needs. He no longer attempted to satisfy all demands through his own programming activities.

Delegates were not accepting responsibility for the decisions that they, in fact, made in annual meetings. Field men found it peculiar to be asked to explain these decisions when they went to meetings. They decided to attempt to provide the support and training that delegates appeared to need for satisfactory performance in their districts.

Support of delegates and committees took several forms. The field man conducted training courses and briefing sessions. While topics ranged from youth leadership to discussion of new methods of agricultural production, management, and marketing, programmes generally

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12 Donald Tindall, interview Regina, Saskatchewan; October 19, 1979.
attempted to develop an understanding and foster support for the Pool's aims and objectives.

Work with the delegate often involved familiarizing him with his position and responsibilities. The field man coached the delegate on the skills he needed to act as a responsible representative of his subdistrict. Most orientation sessions were in the form of personal visits. The field man also attended meetings with new delegates to offer feedback and moral support. At least one field man encouraged each of his delegates to prepare a presentation for the district meeting, so each would have something prepared and evaluated to take back with him to subdistrict events.13

Feedback was continuous. The field man assessed his delegates on their ability to communicate with members, programme presentation, accuracy and completeness of reporting from annual meetings, willingness to express the views of their subdistricts at the annual meeting, and how well-informed they were about issues under discussion.

The field man's principal responsibility during this era was to organize and assist, not to present. As a result, these field men did not develop the superior public speaking abilities of many of their predecessors.14 They did give organizational assistance and help with administrative details. They discussed alternate approaches, located information, and prepared materials. The field man let people 'struggle through' when it would have been easier and faster to perform a task

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13 Steve Tonita, interview Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan; August 9, 1979.

14 Donald Tindall, interview Regina, Saskatchewan; October 19, 1979.
himself. Because response and enthusiasm were generally greater when ideas came from members and officials, he gave 'suggestive leadership.'

The ultimate objective was not to make it appear that delegates were the leaders, but to cultivate the capabilities of the elected representatives to be the leaders. "Our most important role was to develop delegates to the point where the field man was no longer necessary." Delegates, however, were not always equipped with the skills and the time to assume all of these leadership functions. The field man found it necessary to handle topics that appeared less urgent or of longer-term significance.

The field man offered support to Wheat Pool committees. He conducted workshops for chairmen and secretaries. He managed and administered committee budgets for his district. Working within guidelines and appraising their submissions, he made final financial allocations.

The field man, working as much as possible through the delegates in his district, had little opportunity for more general exposure. The profile of the field man was never lower. It was not uncommon for

15 Jim Feist, interview Regina, Saskatchewan; October 19, 1979.
16 Ibid.
17 Bob Cunningham, interview Assiniboia, Saskatchewan; October 21, 1979.
18 J. C. (Clint) Manning believed that as demands upon delegates increased it became more difficult to locate and retain superior candidates.
members to be unsure of the identity of their field man. Most field men tried to attend at least one meeting with each shipping committee annually and to be known to agents. Occasionally, an effort to call on individuals yielded a different roster of concerns and a variant sentiment than was observable in large meetings. To become familiar in the business and professional communities, involvement in other co-operatives was advisable.

Providing information to the general membership remained one of the most important functions of the Extension Division of the Pool. Much of this information passed through district delegates and directors. Field men presented materials distributed from the central organization or from courses at the Western Co-operative College to delegates on an individual or group basis.

In much of the district educational programming, the field man handled organizational concerns, including locating speakers and promoting the event. Topics included Machinery Co-operatives, Retention of the Crow Rate, and Rationalization for High-Throughput Elevators.

Less frequently, the field man called public or membership meetings at which he delivered the programme. Topics usually related to agricultural policy development. Field staff had a part in explaining

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19 Bryce Belt was field man in the Pool president's district. Consequently, he had to play the part of delegate as well as fill the role of field man in that particular subdistrict in the frequent absence of the elected representative. He noted how much better known he was in that subdistrict than throughout the rest of his district.

20 Frank Klatic, interview Whitewood, Saskatchewan; August 16, 1979.
the LIFT programme to the farming public. They co-operated in a special campaign, in 1973, to increase member participation in the Pool control structure and policy decisions and to encourage youth involvement. In 1974, they conducted a rapeseed marketing poll.

One of the most innovative programmes originated as "Forrest's Folly." Farmer discontent over federal grain policy was growing. In an Indian Head meeting of the Wheat Pool, members resolved to invite Eastern Members of Parliament to the West to hear farmer concerns. The field man who initially supported the resolution encountered disbelief and good-natured ridicule. Farmers were serious, however, and the idea spread. As the campaign gained momentum, field men organized public meetings, coordinated the writing of submissions by local groups, and promoted the forthcoming visit. In the spring of 1969, the entire Agricultural Committee of the House of Commons travelled to Saskatchewan for a series of meetings with farmers. Field staff accepted much of the responsibility for locating facilities and coordinating the local arrangements. Across the province, halls were filled to capacity as farmers presented their grievances and concerns related to pricing and the slow movement of grain. More than 18,000 farmers participated in the twenty-four meetings.

Field men used several other media. Television work continued with regular programmes from Swift Current and Prince Albert. Some radio and

\[21\] Jim Forrest, interview Weyburn, Saskatchewan; August 17, 1979.

\[22\] Ibid.
television farm broadcasts and spot presentations also featured the field man from the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool discussing the achievements of the organization, metric conversion, or agricultural policy.

Despite their diminished public image, field staff still organized bonspiels and golf tournaments, dances, picnics, and suppers. In 1973 and 1974, they encouraged, coordinated, and facilitated the committee celebrations of the Pool's fiftieth anniversary. Some field men recalled such activities as supervising the assembling of floats for fairs as the least productive and rewarding aspect of their work.

The extent of work with young people in the district varied with the age of the field man. Older men, generally, were less interested in this involvement. Some field men continued making high school appearances and most maintained their involvement with Co-operative Youth Seminars, the offshoots of Co-operative Schools. Several field men believed the teaching of co-operation to young teens to be a poor use of time, and some found it difficult to relate to youngsters.

As the population shifted, field men spent less time with high school students. With the movement of the products of the "Baby Boom" into young adulthood, the Pool began to concern itself more with young members. District and provincial young members' programmes invited individuals and couples to discuss their needs and present orientation to the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool.

23 Tom Simmonds, interview Prince Albert, Saskatchewan; October 25, 1979.
Relationships within the field staff were competitive but essentially supportive. Common backgrounds and common routines created a spirit of camaraderie. Each needed to share his experiences with one who appreciated his work and his difficulties. Novices believed they could request advice or assistance from veteran field men. Nonetheless, they were somewhat awed by the individualism and self-assuredness of their senior colleagues. The internal staff atmosphere had changed with more centralized planning, shorter tenures in the country, and less opportunity for carrying programmes through all phases from inspiration to delivery. Commenting on the atmosphere in staff meetings, a field man of some twenty years recalled,

It used to be I'd leave physically bushed but enthused . . . charged up from the mutual exchange of ideas and problems. . . . Now I come home mentally bushed but it takes me two weeks to figure out what . . . we accomplished.  

By 1974, staff meetings passed on a massive volume of information in a short period of time; they provided little opportunity for sharing of plans and ventures. Controversy and criticism of a programme, proposal, or opinion, in the view of this participant, seemed to deteriorate into censure of the person making the comment. Consequently, staff members were hesitant to volunteer suggestions.  

Relationships with operational personnel were, reportedly, enhanced by the field man's demonstrated achievement as an agent or financial success in another enterprise. On visits with agents and

24 Jim Forrest, interview Weyburn, Saskatchewan; August 17, 1979.
25 Ibid.
superintendents, he discussed membership and policy issues. He avoided operational problems but did talk about operational policies. A sound working relationship depended on mutual respect for boundaries of expertise and authority. Infrequently, field staff instructed workshops for elevator and livestock personnel on pooling philosophy and current policy concerns.

Field men, whose prime objective was the development of elected officials, gained satisfaction from witnessing the improved performance of delegates and directors. Well-attended meetings that stimulated member involvement and activity made the work more rewarding. Enactment of specific and innovative projects were potentially effective in the longer term. One field man took advantage of the position to increase his familiarity with the organizational structure. Another appreciated the freedom to express his views freely, if he clearly distinguished them from company policy, without fear of losing his job.

Frustrations with the inability to measure progress, slowness of change, poor response from members and officials, and lack of authority to demand results were familiar. Developmental work behind the scenes created especial problems. Sometimes, the field man was not successful in his attempt to stimulate a delegate or committeeman to adequate performance as a representative of his subdistrict. The field man

26 Bryce Belt, interview Regina, Saskatchewan; October 19, 1979.
27 Frank Klatic, interview Whitewood, Saskatchewan; August 16, 1979.
28 John Trew, interview Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; October 17, 1979.
learned to leave flexibility in his work to absorb unplanned events, yet to maintain a structure so he would achieve something. Relinquishment of control accompanied delegation of responsibilities. Although the field man may have believed he could do the work more competently himself, he could not govern the outcome. Time spent preparing reports was irrevocable to use for more visible activity.

The job inevitably affected family life. Most field men believed the work, with its peculiar hours and demands, strained family relationships. Fathers were absent from their homes many evenings and were unable to promise to attend functions with the family. In their dedication to being responsive and flexible servants, some men believed they became inadequate husbands and fathers. One man concluded that his wife had sacrificed her personal development for the demands of his career. Like clergymen's children, the offspring of field men sometimes rebelled against the expectation that they would carry on the activity and philosophical devotion of their fathers.

Other field staff families exploited the conditions imposed by the job. One couple decided that they could apply the skills learned in classes in human relations, adult education, and communications to their family and personal life. Because a field man worked out of his own home, his wife had the opportunity to share his work with him. This sharing and understanding drew some couples closer together.

Few of these men left the field staff because they were unhappy with the work, however. Nearly all of them aspired to managerial

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29 Bryce Belt, interview Regina, Saskatchewan; October 19, 1979.
positions and were growing bored and restless. Most moved to positions in Head Office or in the operating divisions. Two more retired and two others accepted employment in crown corporations.

These recent field men were, in the words of one of them, 'tail twisters,' pushing and motivating others to initiate action and change.30 Another identified his chief purpose as 'farming farmers.'

He made the circumstances as favourable as possible for germination and growth, but he was never able to guarantee a bumper crop.31

30 J. C. Manning, interview Prince Albert, Saskatchewan; October 25, 1979.

31 Bryce Belt, interview Regina, Saskatchewan; October 19, 1979.
CLOSING REMARKS

"Somebody has to talk philosophy; we can't all talk business."¹

The field staff of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool formed a network throughout rural Saskatchewan. They not only drew out information and opinions to deliver to central personnel for absorption; they carried a message. The theme of the message and the fashion of its presentation shifted with time.

The farmers of Saskatchewan established the Wheat Pool when joining together for mutual benefit was a necessary way of life. Homesteaders needed one another's help to combat Nature's indifference to their endeavours. They also required mutual support and united efforts to gain control of the marketing of their produce. Early achievements in this struggle included the passage of the Manitoba Grain Act, the organization of the Territorial Grain Growers Association, and the establishment of the Grain Growers Grain Company. Producers assumed the ownership of their own system of country elevators with the incorporation, in 1911, of the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company. The crowning achievement was the stabilization of wheat prices as a result of the establishment, in 1924, of a contract pool, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool.

¹J. C. Manning, interview Prince Albert, Saskatchewan; October 25, 1979.
The basic philosophy underlying pooling was that, collectively, producers could act as one mammoth seller, to the advantage of all. Price fluctuations would be minimized and all members would receive average payments for their grain. To achieve these goals and to prevail in the commercial arena, the Pool needed a common commitment to the new marketing organization.

To secure and maintain a large and strong membership, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, in its first year of operation, hired field men to work among the farmers. These men concentrated on selling memberships to those who had not signed a contract during the initial drive. The philosophy of pooling was foreign to some settlers, and misunderstandings of the contract terms were common. Field men provided background information about pooling and co-operation to farm families across the province.

They were more than simple propagandists, however. When necessary, they collected evidence and initiated legal action against those who sold grain outside the contract. This activity was necessary but unpopular. Strict adherence to the contract was necessary to maintain the strength of the Pool. The cohesive nature of rural communities, however, made testimonies against delinquent members difficult to collect.

Just as the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool appeared to be establishing itself, it met disaster in the form of the Great Depression. With governmental assistance, the Pool emerged from the crisis, crippled but certainly alive. It discontinued contract pooling and depended on voluntary pooling by its members.
Deteriorating economic conditions accelerated the migration of farm families from the agricultural land of southern Saskatchewan to other provinces and to new homesteads further north. The long-term survival of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool depended on the perseverance of its members. Consequently, field men spent their energy and time encouraging families to wait out the dreary drought. They organized such social events as moving picture showings and community dances. They lectured on co-operative philosophy. They reminded members that average, stable prices were the only permanent solution, and that such stability was the co-operative goal.

The end of the drought and the beginning of World War II brought conditions of relative prosperity to Saskatchewan. The replacement of young men by women, youngsters, and senior citizens during the war years hastened the mechanization of agriculture. Increasing demands for agricultural produce for Europe necessitated greater capital expansion and increased financial risks.

In this atmosphere, co-operatives grew. The larger co-ops entered into an agreement with the Pool, whereby SWP field staff acted as promoters and salesmen of co-operation. Field men were instrumental in the organization and development of innumerable local co-op stores and credit unions. They encouraged co-operative insurance schemes. Moving picture and slide shows continued, but with a changed purpose: these functions were primarily educational events promoting co-ops, not simply entertaining presentations. Field men worked with youth in local agricultural and home craft clubs and in co-operative schools.
The end of the war and the return of troops initiated an emphasis on adult education across the nation. The relative prosperity across Canada permitted the luxury of concerns other than those directly related to survival. To avoid excessive unemployment, governments encouraged returning troops to attend educational institutions. Grants and other support to these institutions increased.

In Saskatchewan, Pool field men co-operated with the extension services of the government and the university to deliver programmes. They formed study groups around Wheat Pool committees. They organized co-operative schools in their districts and citizenship days in high schools. In the 1950's, they participated in the collection of material and distribution of findings of the Royal Commission on Agriculture and Rural Life.

Canadians, by then, were asserting their rights. Farmers demanded wheat sales. Consumers demanded an explanation for rising food prices. Citizens organized and executed plans for local recreation facilities and provincial welfare programmes. The public, including the Pool membership, grew more determined to take control of its affairs.

Adult education activity of field men included study at the recently-established Western Co-operative College. Courses there emphasized member participation. This growing awareness on the part of field men coincided with the strengthening spirit of self-determination in the Pool membership. Consequently, field men accepted more organizational, coordinating, and communication responsibilities. They
encouraged common efforts between Pool departments and with other co-operatives.

A period of expansion followed. Saskatchewan's economic base diversified. Farming demanded more expertise and greater capital investment. The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, by the mid-1960's, was a mammoth diversified enterprise. Members expressed concern that they were losing control of the organization. Indeed, sound business practice necessitated some actions that precluded member consultation and others that did not win the approval of some segments of the membership.

Field men sold these ideas and programmes. Their activity in member relations also involved explaining the rationale for the method of implementation of these programmes. They reassured the uneasy that the democratic principles upon which the Pool was founded remained intact.

By the close of the 1960's, 'participatory democracy' was a household phrase. The student protests, the cries for western separatism and appearance of new farm organizations, and the resurgence of left-wing political support were symptoms of a growing discontent with institutionalized government.

Within the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, too, cries for greater grass-roots participation in decision-making increased. By 1970, the delegate body included many younger, better-educated men. These officials were equipped and willing to accept a more visible and responsible leadership role. Field men provided these delegates with
support, training, and information. They directed from backstage, in an attempt to improve the presentation of the publicly elected cast.

The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool developed in response to the needs of rural Saskatchewan. The early planners might have experienced difficulty in reconciling the organization, as it developed, with their dreams. They were concerned with direct marketing of wheat. This marketing system included overseas sales offices, but not local shipping facilities. They emphasized the need for a contract to bind members into a reliable unit for selling grain. Within a decade, the Pool was operating under a system of voluntary pooling. The membership of this marketing co-operative, as initially introduced, did not aspire to act as retailers of farm supplies, nor as manufacturers of refined farm products. Today, the Pool is an amalgam of these functions.

Early architects of the Pool could not have drawn a blueprint for the present organization because they could not foresee the societal and historic changes that would make adaptations necessary. Neither could they, therefore, make an accurate assessment of the staffing needs for extension work. Initially, they hired forceful salesmen. Fortunately, the field staff demonstrated the understanding of the milieu in which they worked and the flexibility needed to adapt their activities to changes. They were successful in educating rural Saskatchewan people because they did listen to their constituency and tailored their programmes to meet expressed needs.

Through changing themes, one central mandate of field men of the Pool remained unchanged. The field staff was the adult education arm of
the organization. It extended to rural Saskatchewan policies, philosophy, and information. Field men instilled new ideas and encouraged progressive action.

These adult educators kept few records of their programme development. Ideas for activities grew from needs encountered in their daily contact with rural residents. Their plans existed only in their minds and programme records remained only in their memories.²

Field men still employed by the pool, and particularly those few still active in the field staff, experienced difficulty in distinguishing what they were doing prior to 1974 from what they were doing at the time of their interview. Some believed their association to restrict their ability to be absolutely frank. For others, the time was insufficient for gaining a perspective on what they were doing at that time: they recalled the activities, but were unsure of the ultimate objectives.

Some field men were unaware that men who preceded them and those who followed them had different concerns and different activities from their own. Others were able to identify periods of different emphasis in the work of themselves and their fellows. These periods were not discreet intervals. The boundaries between the stages were blurred.

²The use of oral history to collect the substance of this story brought rewards. Former field men volunteered facts and shared reminiscenses of which there is no other record. Their memories were the story; their emotions in the telling were the key to the climate in which they worked.

In discussion, field men mentioned additional points and elaborated on those mentioned by others. The continuing support and enthusiasm of these men were critical to the completion of their story.
Resistance to change brought prolongation of activity on the part of field men who worked through a shift in emphasis. New men coming on staff facilitated a more dramatic change quickly.

A field man's understanding of his responsibility and the way he undertook to fulfill it influenced his tenure in the field. Men who attempted to emulate their predecessors or who operated in an outmoded fashion or followed an outdated direction were dissatisfied. Nearly all resigned after a relatively short tenure on staff. Several of these 'behind-their-time' field men could not understand why they were not successful or why response to their endeavours was poor. At an earlier date, they might have succeeded.

Conversely, men who were 'ahead-of-their-time' stayed with the organization. These workers had goals, convictions, and methods that were innovative and that did not become general in field staff until some months or years later. They, too, were field men for relatively abbreviated terms. Virtually all of them moved to head office.

Unlike operations personnel, occupied with dollars and deliveries, field men concerned themselves with the roots of these tangible offshoots. They attempted to plant the seed of an informed membership through lectures on the grain industry and homilies on the co-operative doctrine. They tried to preserve a hardy democracy by encouraging member participation. They treated the causes of wilting enthusiasm and falling membership.
The key to the success of a co-operative lies in the membership's conviction that its goals are valid. Even when immediate returns were low, field men emphasized the importance of collective strength to long-term viability. The loyal patronage of over 100,000 farmer-members at the end of fifty years\(^3\) indicated success in this educational endeavour.

The future of field men in rural Saskatchewan seems assured. Co-operatives need educators; they need philosophers.

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APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN THE EXTENSION DIVISION OF THE SASKATCHEWAN WHEAT POOL

A. NAME OF DIVISION: (from annual reports)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>1931-1932</td>
<td>Field Organization Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>1932-1966</td>
<td>Country Organization Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>1966-1974</td>
<td>Extension Division</td>
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B. TITLE OF WORKERS: (from annual reports and district reports)

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<td>1928-1931</td>
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<td>1931-1933</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966-1974</td>
<td>District representatives</td>
</tr>
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English was the official language of Saskatchewan from the creation of the province in 1905. When the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool commenced operation in 1924, however, just over one half of the population was of British extraction. Canadian Indians and immigrants from other European countries comprised the balance of Saskatchewan citizenry. The three largest single language groups represented were German, Ukrainian, and French.¹

Many of the German-speaking residents of Saskatchewan were Mennonites who had migrated from Germany or Holland via Russia. Most German-Canadians in the 1920's were determined to prove themselves successful farmers. Their agricultural experience, shrewd business sense, and hard work fulfilled this dream for many of them.

Mennonites, characterizing the work ethic and an unpretentious lifestyle, thrived. The Canadian government guaranteed members of this pacifist sect freedom from conscription for military service. Despite their volunteer work in the Red Cross and other war-time benefit activities, Mennonites experienced public ostracism in World War I.

¹Census of Saskatchewan, 1926. (Ottawa: King's Printer), pp. 138-39.
Public suspicion of all Saskatchewan residents of German ancestry heightened with the compulsory registration of "aliens of enemy nationality." The armistice, too, brought resentment, as returning troops witnessed the apparent prosperity amassed by Mennonites, able to remain on their farms throughout the war.

Mennonites traditionally settled in colonies to practice and preserve their religious and cultural customs. Animosity from the larger population drew other German settlers closer together, too, and helped establish the pattern of German pockets of settlement and culture in the province.

Ukrainians, the second largest non-Anglo-Saxon ethnic group in Saskatchewan, had emigrated from Galicia and Bukovina in the Austrian-Hungarian empire, and from parts of the Ukraine under Russian control. Few had any affection for the administrations of either rule. They had come to the Canadian West, believing in the "land-of-milk-and-honey" mirage that overseas agents created. They had come too, to escape from excessive control by the government and from military service. Relative latecomers to the Saskatchewan homesteading scene, Ukrainians often laboured on the least productive land and in the most distasteful employment.

French Canadians in Saskatchewan in the early 1920's numbered only about 45,000, or less than 6 per cent of the population of the province. They were, however, among the earliest arrivals. Scattered French settlements throughout the province dated from the 1880's or

2 Ibid.
earlier. In response to a campaign, small numbers of immigrants arrived in Saskatchewan from Quebec. French Canadians from the East viewed migration to the prairies as voluntary exile from civilization, however, and preferred to move to Ontario or the United States.


Premier Anderson held strong views on Saskatchewan's ethnic diversity. In the 1920's and '30's, he shared, with others, a conviction that assimilation was the only route to unity. In this atmosphere, all non-Anglo-Saxon groups suffered and, for a short time, the Ku Klux Klan flourished.

In its infancy, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool recognized the need for work among the non-English-speaking farmers. In each of four breaches of contract in 1925-26, the member failed to understand the terms of the contract and did not know the English language.\(^3\)

In 1928, the Pool compiled mailing lists for members speaking Ukrainian, German, French, Hungarian, and Roumanian.\(^4\) These persons received circulars containing pool information. Non-English newspapers


in the province co-operated with the pool through free publicity and in editorial columns. *Der Courier* and *Le Patriote de l'Ouest* were especially helpful. Difficulty in translation and a lack of understanding of the Pool aims and objectives on the part of publishers limited the effectiveness and extent of this support. By 1930, the pool estimated its membership among the five largest non-English groups to be in excess of 15,000.5

In its second year of operation, the Pool appointed one field man to work in the non-English areas of the province.6 Soon, three part-time ethnic field men were involved, as necessary, in German, French, and Ukrainian settlements.

Alfred Himsl, a farmer and early Pool canvasser from Bethune, worked among German-speaking members. Of Mennonite descent, Himsl had a co-operative background. From 1924 until 1928, he volunteered his services as an organizer and speaker in German communities. The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool hired the thirty-four-year-old enthusiast, in 1928, on a part-time basis. Himsl prepared some materials, but spent most of his time travelling to German settlements to address farmers or translate the speeches of other Pool officials.

In 1930, 'Fred Himsl accepted the position of district field man. With one brief recess, he acted in this capacity in Districts #4 and #5 for fourteen years. Because of his bilingual ability, he accepted, in


1938, a special assignment to work with the Sudeten refugees in the Meadow Lake area. He died in an accident at a railway crossing near Uren, Saskatchewan, on his return from taking a family home after a Victory Bond drive meeting, in 1944.

John Stratychuk joined the staff of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool in 1927, when he started as an unpaid elevator helper at Canora. Soon after this, the field man in his district, Lachlan (Lachie) McIntosh asked Stratychuk to accompany him to a meeting to translate for him, because many members in the district spoke only Ukrainian. After the meeting, McIntosh told him that the pool was looking for an additional field man. Stratychuk applied, but was unsuccessful in his bid for the position.

Stratychuk persevered. As assistant secretary of the local wheat pool committee, he noted and commented on the lack of even one non-Anglo-Saxon delegate in the predominantly Ukrainian district. He remembered his father telling him that, in the initial drive, he signed a wheat pool contract that he was unable to read. He signed because so many others did that it was bound to be a good thing. With these facts and recollections in mind, Stratychuk composed a five-page letter, explaining why, in his opinion, the pool needed a field man who could work directly with the Ukrainian population. Within two months, he was that field man.

Over the next five years, the work of the Ukrainian language man had three main thrusts. Stratychuk continued to interpret the speeches of directors and employees at membership and committee meetings. He
regularly condensed sixty- to ninety-minute speeches into ten- or fifteen-minute presentations. He also translated the speeches of visiting dignitaries and pool officials for publication in Ukrainian. For a three-month period, in 1928, he moved to the Publicity Department to develop and write Ukrainian materials about the pool and the co-operative movement. He visited Ukrainian farm homes, canvassing for pool memberships. Initially, he travelled on horseback; eventually, he utilized a company car. He calculated that, in total, he travelled over 1,000,000 miles in this work.\(^7\)

Stratychuk also employed his bilingualism in work with young people of Ukrainian extraction. He lectured on the fundamental rights and responsibilities of citizenship, expounded on Pool policy, and started 4H grain clubs.

In this work, Stratychuk regularly confronted prejudice. In 1929, he attended a meeting at a predominantly Anglo-Saxon shipping point.\(^8\) When Stratychuk rose to give the report, about half of those present decamped. Stratychuk believed only three men at the meeting were Canadian-born.\(^9\) Neighbours criticized a delegate who, on another occasion, invited Stratychuk to address a meeting. They railed him for

\[^7\]John Stratychuk, interview Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. The tape of this interview is housed in the Co-operative Pioneers Collection at the Co-operative College of Canada, Saskatoon.

\[^8\]He replaced the regular field man who was of German extraction. The membership included many returned soldiers, so it was unadvisable for the latter to attend.

\[^9\]Stratychuk, op cit.
making them listen to "a God-dammed foreigner." In still another instance, a chairman reminded him that his committee need not accept advice "from any bohunk." Stratychuk recalled fifty or sixty similar incidents in the first three years of his work.

Stratychuk worked for the Extension Division of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool for over forty years. He moved to Regina, in 1952, and

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 See above, p. 78-79.
subsequently acted as a field supervisor, as assistant director, and ultimately, as director of the division. A colourful public speaker, he was active in adult education, public affairs, and several Ukrainian organizations. In 1967, he accepted a Canada Centennial Medal for outstanding service in the field of adult education.

At least three men held the position of field man for the French-speaking communities. Their work, too, was certainly challenging. Even as late as the 1940's, agents of French-Canadian and Roman Catholic background accepted work where they could get it. For most, that meant in French-speaking communities. Earlier, discrimination was blatant.

The first of the French ethnic men, Louis de Montarnel, was a homesteader from the Edam district. He died suddenly, in 1930. His successor, Romulus (Bob) Beaulac was from Quebec and the graduate of an agricultural college. During an interval while Beaulac was taking treatment for tuberculosis, Alphonse Toupin, an agent from southern Saskatchewan, replaced him. Time has obscured the detailed activity and the personal achievements of these workers.

The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool recognized their contribution when, in 1931, they drastically cut back district field staff but retained the ethnic men. John Stratychuk lived to hear apologies for the ethnic discrimination he encountered in his work. He credited the Saskatchewan

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14 Abel Toupin, interview Regina, Saskatchewan; April 8, 1980.
Wheat Pool with being the best armed and most effective unit in the campaign against prejudice in Saskatchewan.  

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15 Stratychuk, op cit.
APPENDIX C

OUTLINE FOR TAPING

1. Identifying information:
   - Name.
   - Date and place of birth.
   - Other information as required on Saskatchewan Archives Board Visitation Reports.

2. Background:
   - Brief autobiography up to your association with Saskatchewan Wheat Pool.
   - Why/how did you get involved with Saskatchewan Wheat Pool?
   - Were you involved in other activity with Saskatchewan Wheat Pool before joining the field staff?
   - How long were you a field man? [Get dates.]
   - In how many districts did you serve during that time? Identify districts and dates.

3. Role as a field man:
   - What was the mandate given you by the organization?
   - Tell me about what you were actually doing in a typical day.
   - What, in retrospect, appears to you to have been your most important role?
   - What do you recall as having given you the most satisfaction?
   - What do you recall as producing the most frustration for you in the job?
   - How widely known do you believe you were? How high a profile do you believe it was important that you show?
   - What, in your estimation, were the most important attributes for a field man at that point in time?
   - Did your role change while you were a field man? Why? Why not? How?

4. Afterword:
   - Tell me about your decision to move to another position or to retire.
   - Tell me, briefly, what you've been doing since that time.
   - Have you any reflections or comments about the role of field staff today?

5. Is there anything else you would like to relate?
APPENDIX D

ABBREVIATIONS
COMMONLY USED IN THE THESIS

Ag Rep: Agricultural Representative
CCIL: Canadian Co-operative Implements, Limited
CCWP: Canadian Co-operative Wheat Producers
CPR: Canadian Pacific Railway
CWB: Canadian Wheat Board
OCF: Co-operative Commonwealth Federation
GATT: General Agreement on Tariffs and Trades
GGGC: Grain Growers’ Grain Company
NFU: National Farmers’ Union
NDP: New Democratic Party
RCMP: Royal Canadian Mounted Police
SCBC: Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company
SGGA: Saskatchewan Grain Growers’ Association
SPE: Saskatchewan Pool Elevators
SWP: Saskatchewan Wheat Pool
TGGA: Territorial Grain Growers’ Association
UFC: United Farmers of Canada
UGG: United Grain Growers
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