

MERCHANTS ENDORSE FAIR TRADING POLICY

Address by the President of the Dominion Retail Merchants' Association.

By a standing vote, the members of the Kingston Retail Merchants' Association, at their annual meeting which took place at the Randolph Hotel on Wednesday evening, endorsed the plan to establish a "fair trading policy" as outlined by J. T. Crowder, Vancouver, B.C., Dominion President of the Retail Merchants' Association, who was the guest of the evening.

Mr. Crowder, who is a druggist by profession and owns a business in the city of Vancouver, is making a Dominion-wide visit for the purpose of speaking to the members of all the association and showing the need of a "fair trading policy" between the manufacturer, wholesaler and retailer which will guarantee to the retailer a reasonable margin of profit on trade marked nationally advertised standard goods.

Mr. Crowder who spoke at considerable length, showed how throughout the Dominion, goods are being sold in many stores for a price below the cost price, which meant disaster if this practice continues from year to year. He cited many cases where it was shown beyond a doubt the retail merchant, who helps pay the taxes of the town or city, is

selling his goods at a lower price than the chain of stores or departmental stores in the large commercial centres who pay absolutely nothing toward the upkeep of the towns and cities.

The speaker contended that a "fair trading policy" will benefit all as it will stop price-cutting, which would eventually lead to bankruptcy.

Mr. Crowder's Address.
Mr. Crowder in part said: The individual retailer is here to stay. The competition of the large department store, the large mail order house and the large chain store, would have eliminated the individual retailer long ago, if he had not been a community asset. He still persists even in the communities where these competitive factors are the largest.

A community with but one store whether department store, chain store or mail order house would not be considered "a good town" according to present day standards. If we are to have retail stores in our different Canadian centres the logical thing to do is to have them enjoy a reasonable amount of prosperity. The opposite of prosperity is bankruptcy. Prosperity is built from profit. Price cutting of standard lines to cost or less than cost abolishes profit.

Price competition has become so keen that many articles sold to-day in retail stores do not carry their own overhead. When retail prices on standard goods get hampered down they stay down.

Price cutting leads the people to

believe that if it is difficult to make a living on a farm, the best thing to do is to move to the city where by virtue of the wonderful "bargains" cost of living is so much less.

Becomes Demoralized.
When the retail business becomes demoralized the wholesale business becomes equally demoralized. Price cutting can be prevented and is being prevented. Many Canadian manufacturers do not permit their established prices to be cut.

In Great Britain the manufacturing, wholesale and retail druggists have formed a joint association which permits the manufacturers to establish a selling price on his product which allows the retailer a living profit and the three units use their joint influence to prevent that retail price being cut.

Over four hundred manufacturers distribute their wares according to this plan. Two thousand articles are listed with the retail prices, which is set in every instance by the manufacturer. This plan has been under process of development for forty years. The speaker quoted a number of examples where the same articles were distributed in Great Britain on the maintained price basis were being sold at prices as low as or less than the same articles being sold in Canada on the open price plan.

Price maintenance was not the same as price fixing. In the principle of price maintenance the manufacturer of a pair of shoes or a bottle of catsup or any branded trade-marked commodity established a selling price to the consumer. Any other manufacturer of a similar article can establish a higher or a lower price just as motor cars have their prices established to-day. The different manufacturers of different motor cars make different types at different prices.

The same principle can be applied to shoes, or stockings or mattresses or canned pineapple all the retailer insisted upon was that if the public expected to buy these commodities at a retail store he claims "the laborer is worthy of his hire" for the part he plays in national distribution.

Fair Margin of Profit.
Establishing a fair margin of profit did not carry a group of individual stores against the department stores, or the chain stores or the mail order houses. Insisting upon a margin of profit for a retail store would not put a department store out of business.

If there was any opposition of one type of store against another type of store, so far as retail merchandising went, it was between the mail order house and local institutions, not because mail order price cutting was worse than any other kind of price cutting, but because the development of mail order business is contrary to community development. As mail order business gets greater and greater, the business in the various communities must become correspondingly less. The ultimate would be that all business would be done by the mail order house. Then there would be no further need for stores in the various communities.

That condition would shrivel up local communities and instead of having community life we would have isolation. Community life is necessary for national development. The mail order house is not comparable to the local stores in our community service. They do not pay out taxes to build schools, or roads, or water-work systems, or other public utilities. Their owners and employees and families do not support our local churches or our other local institutions because they do not live here. A brilliantly lighted mail order house in Timbuctoo or some other distant city sheds no radiance on the streets of Calgary.

In times of stress the local farming and other communities are carried by credit from the local stores rather than by credit from the mail order house.

There is no objection to a mail order house buying and selling on the open market bulk or unbranded goods and competing with the local stores dollar for dollar, value for value. That creates a situation for which local merchants must compete to hold the favor of the local buying community. There is no desire to check any such competition.

We object to mail order houses or any other houses developing a big business at the expense of some manufacturers trade-marked goods. It should not be necessary to ruin another man's business to build your own.

Not Illegal.
A wire from Premier MacKenzie King: "There is nothing in combines bill which makes fixing a common price or resale price illegal. Wholes and retailers in action being such as to operate to the detriment or against the interests of the public."

Many manufacturers already interviewed and many wholesalers have expressed approval of the principle.

The Retail Merchants' Association is devoting its attention to four lines of trade in its primary campaign: groceries, auto and accessory tire dealers, implement dealers and bookstores. They have been requested by the hardware men, shoemen and clothiers to take action along the same line for them.

Exhibits were made of different goods being sold at maintained prices by the B. C. Section of the Retail Merchants' Association, where the retailer co-operated with the manufacturer to sell goods made in Canada in competition with other products.

The manufacturers have expressed their appreciation of the assistance thus supported them in very glowing terms.

The associated apple growers and

farmers of British Columbia have gone on record in favor of this plan and have expressed their willingness to co-operate with the retailers to sell O.K. apples on a price maintenance plan.

By having well known branded articles sold at the same price in all stores, the public can pick and choose among the stores according to service rendered. The store rendering the more intelligent and comprehensive service naturally receiving the largest volume of business.

The present campaign will probably take till February or March to discover the thinking of the retail trade up to and including Ontario and Quebec.

Every community yet visited has gone on record unqualifiedly approving such a sales plan.

Secretary Speaks.
R. M. Douglas, secretary and general manager of the Retail Merchants' Association for the Dominion, was called upon by W. Y. Mills, the local president, for a few remarks. Mr. Douglas opened his remarks by congratulating the Queen's rugby team for the excellent sporting spirit which it displayed in Ottawa. He stated that the association has accomplished some good work during the past few years including the removal of the stamp tax on estate-ments. The sales tax was also taken off the druggist, who is acting as an agent for the photographer. The association is taking up with the government at Ottawa the egg grading regulations which are very unsatisfactory to the country grocer.

He contended that there was no class of men in the Dominion that needed representation in parliament more than the retail merchants. He stated that the department of the Trade and Commerce was willing to co-operate with the retail merchants providing they were organized.

Mayor Angrove Speaks.
In opening his remarks Mayor Angrove stated that he could honestly say that he had not spent more than \$50 out of Kingston in his lifetime. He referred to the fact that since the last meeting of the local association, Mr. Walters, the former president of the Dominion Association, had passed to the great beyond. He urged the merchants to interest themselves in the city council.

The mayor stated that the retail merchants should be given better protection against the transient trader, who comes to the city and leaves quickly. The tax should be increased. He referred to the case of a transient trader, who recently came to Kingston and brought thousands of dollars worth of goods, which were sold locally as well as the stock which was already in the store.

J. C. Campbell, secretary, was called upon for a few words, but asked to be excused on account of his severe cold. Mr. Campbell, after hearing the mayor speak, stated that the association was at the present time framing a new law which would be presented to the Ontario Legislature raising the license for transient traders.

W. Y. Mills, the president of the body, presided in a very capable manner. Gordon Smith, secretary, was asked to read the report of the nominating committee, which was as follows: President, L. T. Best; vice-president, D. A. Shaw; secretary, Edgar Lockett; treasurer, Frank Kinneer; executive committee, William Cockburn, R. H. Sloan, Stewart Crawford and W. F. Roney.

Gill Netting Discussed.

A letter was read from the Frontenac Fish and Game Protective Association asking the retail merchants to endorse a resolution asking the Ontario Government to prevent gill and hoop netting in the lakes and rivers in the County of Frontenac.

W. F. Roney stated that he did not think that the meeting should endorse this resolution, but it should be given careful consideration by the new executive. He contended that many men were making a living by fishing and their livelihood would be cut off if gill and hoop netting was stopped. A. H. Fair approved of the resolution. At the suggestion of the chairman, the meeting passed a resolution asking the Ontario Government to take any action it saw fit to make it better for the fishermen who fish for the sport of fishing.

Letters and telegrams of regret were read from Hon. W. F. Nickle, Dr. A. E. Ross, the members for Kingston; Stewart McClenaghan, M.P., Ottawa, and Alfred Goulet, M.P. of Russell, who were unable to be present. The last two were on the speakers' list, but could not leave Ottawa. Both these men are officers of the Dominion Retail Merchants' Association executive.

The roll call when all present gave their names and their business, made a decided hit.

Jack Elder, the Scotch tenor, and Joseph Rowland, Steacy's, Limited, entertained the gathering.

W. Y. Mills, the president, in the course of his opening remarks, mentioned the necessity of amendment to the provincial act governing transient traders and peddlers. It was pointed out that the attitude of Retail Merchants' Association is simply a desire on their part to not in any way restrict competition and to allow outside firms to sell any quantity of goods they can dispose of, provided that all merchandise is sold in any manner whatever in any municipality, pays its share of the taxes of that municipality.

"Chilblain Cure," Gibson's, Napanee council appointed F. Gleeson a member of the Board of Education for three years. C. Hartley Lapman was appointed town treasurer at \$550 a year.

"Take prescriptions" to Gibson's. Dr. Stammers was elected chairman of the Smith's Falls Board of Education.

"Squibbs God Lather Oil," Gibson's.

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