

Constructive Sessions « « « « Mark Convention South Dakota Retail Merchants



Banquet Scene

LEADERSHIP Through Service—The Responsibility of Business," was the convention theme for the thirty-fourth annual meeting of the Retail Merchants Association of South Dakota held in Mitchell June 16 and 17. Approximately 250 merchants from all parts of the state attended the two-day sessions and participated in the program which had been arranged.

Following the call to order by President Web Hill at 9:30 Tuesday, June 16, attention was given by Dean Charles Wood, Rector of the Episcopal church. Community singing followed, led by Norman Putnam, better known as "Everlastinglyatit Put." Hon. George Fredericks, mayor of Mitchell, gave the address of welcome and extended to the visiting merchants the hospitality of his city. The response was given by Art Svendby, of Lemmon.

President Web Hill next presented his address covering the activities and work of the association during the past year. He heartily commended the Board of Directors for their coöperation and also stressed the work of Secretary W. C. Botkin who has an enviable record of accomplishment during his two years of service to the Association.

A splendid program consisting of addresses on various phases of retail merchandising and the problems of distribution was presented by a group of capable speakers. The following covers briefly

the salient points presented by the speakers:

FRED JOHNSTONE

*Divisional Manager, Federated Stores of
Butler Brothers, Minneapolis*

"The Renaissance of Retailing"

... "There is too much pessimism," he said. "If the merchant will take the guess out of his business, and learn more about it, he will find his margin of profit increasing. If you don't know the rules of the game, you play against tough odds." Mr. Johnstone's aim was to tell how an independent business can be operated at a profit not only in good times, but in years of depression as well. His talk was illustrated by charts and covered experiences with business houses during 1930, when prices were cut and business dragging, in which bigger profits were earned, all because the merchants learned the fundamental laws of operation.

H. L. KYES

*Secretary National Merchants Association,
Twin Cities*

"Out of Depression"

... "We must push educational work within our stores until improved knowledge permeates the entire fabric of distribution, if the guess work is to be taken out of selling," said Mr. Kyes. He stressed the fact that the generation of today must not lose its capacity to work. It was a marked characteristic of their

fathers who have been successful in developing sound business. He pointed out the evils of turning too quickly toward legislative relief, at the same time overlooking opportunities which exist in their own field. "Business today is suffering because of not having access to and using past experiences, not understanding changing competition and the causes for bringing that competition into the field," continued Mr. Kyes. He concluded by sounding the keynote for the modern merchant to be alert and eliminate, so far as practical, all guesswork in the science of selling.

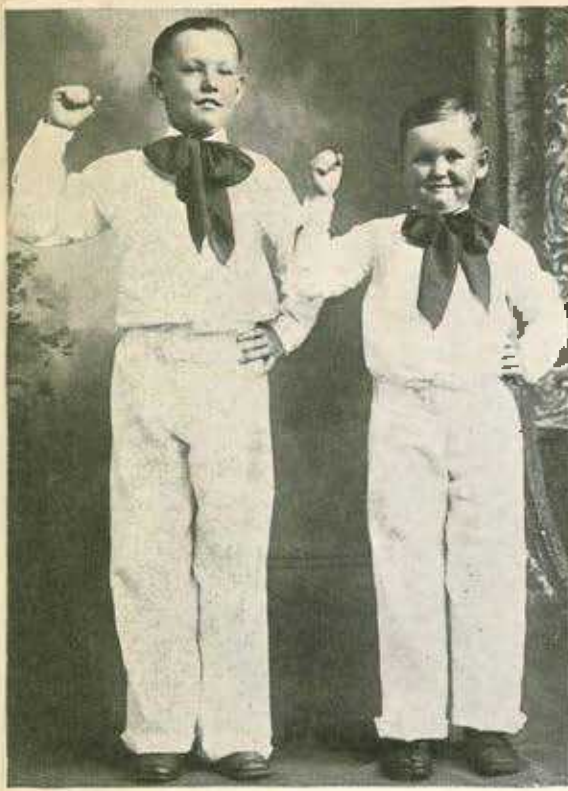
The Tuesday afternoon session was opened by Vice President H. G. Schwartz, of Redfield. Miss Florence Bjodstrup, of Mitchell, gave two violin selections. The opening address of the afternoon was given by

WILLIAM UNSGAARD

*Managing Director of the Thrift Stores of
Wyman, Partridge & Co., Minneapolis*

"Business of Yesterday and Today"

... "Too many merchants are thinking in terms of yesterday to meet competition of today. They have utterly failed to understand the changes that have been effected in retailing due to the automobile, the movie and the radio. These are factors that have changed the buying consciousness of the consumer. Many merchants overlook the effects of mass production. Today in every line of business there is not alone the competition of big business in the same line, but



Will and Bobby Looby

starred in singing

"South Dakota Is the
Sunshine State"

the competition of other lines of business which attract money from the family purse. Retailing of yesterday survived with dirty, poorly arranged stores, poor lighting, utter lack of merchandise display, wide margins, slow turnover, and little, if any, advertising.

"Today the wide-awake merchant has a clean, attractive, well lighted, properly arranged store with good lighting, attractive merchandise displays and adequate and business advertising. The independent merchant is still a big factor in distribution, selling \$25,200,000,000 of a total of 46 billions retail purchases.

"The merchant who would add to his present sales volume must analyze his own business as to his market, merchandise, selling and advertising, to attain the utmost in his selling program.

"He must think ahead of the times if he is to keep up with the times. The merchant who expects to succeed must have an acute consciousness of today's conditions to prepare for tomorrow's business conquests. He should stop fighting his neighbor merchant in his own town and join hands with him in a coöperative effort to boost the home town and draw business to it. In boosting his town he increases his business and his profits.

"Every merchant worthy of the name knows full well the steps to take to improve his business. The great essential is action. Do the things that you know that you should do, and improvement will be quick to follow.

"The independent merchant by reason of his increased knowledge in merchandising and by force of his own personality in the community has before him the greatest of possibilities for success.

"Let him get a vision of tomorrow's possibilities and then think, plan and work to make that vision a reality."

A. M. EBERLE

*Extension Economist, Marketing,
Brookings, S. D.*

"South Dakota's Agricultural Problem"

"The business that retailers do is determined by the buying power of the people within the state. If, through your united efforts, the agricultural income of South Dakota can be increased 10 per cent, an added \$22,000,000 will be brought into the state."

Mr. Eberle pointed out that South Dakota produces a surplus of agricultural products sufficient to supply 5,000,000 people besides its own population. Retailers, the speaker said, can go a long way toward creating a demand for these surplus products by encouraging and aiding the farmers to produce the kind and quality of products that are in greatest demand. It is the consumer that dictates through his purchases what the farmer should raise. The retailer finds this out first, and through his orders tells it to the wholesaler, who, in turn, reflects it to the processor and he to the farmer.

Banquet

Under the direction of Milton E. Dowedell, Mitchell, collaborating with "Everlastinglyatit Put" in his cowboy regalia, approximately 300 merchants and their friends enjoyed the splendid banquet and program at the conclusion of the first day's sessions. The entertainment program consisted of juvenile song and dance numbers given by Mavis Warden of Stickney, Vernile and Virginia Verschoor and Phyllis Higgins of Mitchell, and the Looby boys, Will and Bobbie. Dressed in white suits with flowing red neckties, the boys starred in singing their song, "South Dakota Is the Sunshine State." Will and Bobbie are from Martin, and their father, H. A. Looby, a director of the association, has

one of the largest inland stores in the Sunshine state. A photograph of the boys in costume is reproduced below.

The silver cup annually awarded to the lucky visiting merchant was won by J. Lawrence Dawson, a member of the association from Pine Ridge. He comes from the Sioux country and delivered his thanks in the Sioux language. Dancing followed the banquet and entertainment.

Wednesday, June 17

Community singing opened the second day's sessions. The opening address was given by W. T. Coulter, COMMERCIAL BULLETIN AND APPAREL MERCHANT. He complimented the officers and directors of the South Dakota Association on the splendid progress which the organization has made during the past year in adding over 116 new members. "Special recognition," he said, "should be given the firms represented in the South Dakota section of the June issue of the COMMERCIAL BULLETIN AND APPAREL MERCHANT, which is the official Pre-Convention Year Book of the association." He also stressed the fact that aggressive membership campaigns should be maintained throughout the year, and that the important features of the association should be available to all progressive merchants in the state. Discussing the subject of his address, "The Customer's Viewpoint," Mr. Coulter suggested to the merchants that they watch the attitude of the buying public, studying both the buying inclinations and the wants of their customers. "By having the merchandise ready at the time the public wants it and at the price they want to pay, merchants will help increase business," he said.

FRANK W. DOÜTHITT

President, Big Stone Canning Company
"How to Buy Canned Corn"

Mr. Douthitt spoke very optimistically regarding the future of South Dakota. He pointed out that the wide-awake retailer has his future in his own hands and is not going to suffer materially from the chain organizations.

Referring to the subject of his talk, "Canned Corn," he said: "I know it is hard for a merchant to know all the goods, but if he will limit his buying to fewer brands and know the quality of these brands, his opportunity for satisfying customers is that much greater. I would like to warn the grocer to be particularly careful this year in buying cheap and off-grade corn. The government has made it necessary through passing what we commonly call the Mapes Bill that all canned vegetables which do not come up to a definite government grade be plainly labeled on the panel of the label and in large black letters, stating that this product is below the United States standard but not illegal; thus, the grocer who handles off-grades and sub-standard in any foods from now on is going to be branded with the proverbial Scarlet Letter of Puritan times."

Mr. Douthitt pointed out the factors

which enter into the quality of canned corn and also pointed out the different classifications and their characteristics.

E. B. MOON

Director Retailers Service Department of Griggs, Cooper & Co., and the Sanitary Food Manufacturing Co., St. Paul

"My Viewpoint on Merchandising and Advertising"

In developing his subject, Mr. Moon broadened his talk on a discussion of the essentials of successful retailing. "They are," he said:

1. An experienced head.
2. Essential capital.
3. A good location.
4. A well-lighted, attractive store.
5. A stock of right merchandise.
6. A definite plan of display.
7. Good windows and front.
8. A system of adequate records.
9. A well-defined merchandising and sales plan.
10. A well-defined advertising plan.
11. Trained salespeople.
12. A definite business policy."

Mr. Moon is recognized as one of the outstanding business engineers in the country, with a valuable background of practical experience and contact with retail merchandising problems dating back over many years.

E. U. BERDAHL

Secretary Wholesalers Section, Minneapolis Civic & Commerce Association

"Adjusting Expense to Volume"

"The merchant who seeks to increase the volume of his business and reduce expense can't do business without merchandise," said Mr. Berdahl. "While I am a strong advocate of careful buying, I urge that merchants not carry this to the extreme of inadequate stocks. If all merchants could be induced to keep their stocks up, the wheels of industry would be started turning at the prosperity pace." Mr. Berdahl developed some practical ideas which merchants should follow in bringing about a closer adjustment in balancing their volume and expenses. He was optimistic about the future but pointed out the necessity for creating standards of the future which will maintain profit and remuneration commensurate with service performed.

He also discussed the pending activity relative to the proposal of eastern railroads for increased freight rates at this time. On this subject, he said: "This is no time for railroads to increase their profits. It is a time for reduction of costs, and this applies to transportation as well as distribution."

Reports of the auditing committee and of the secretary concluded the Wednesday morning session. Secretary Botkin's report covered briefly the activities of the Association during the past year with reference to the Association's legislative work, membership campaigns, finances, etc. In conclusion, he said: "I wish to state that I am firmly convinced that this year's work by officers,

directors and members has brought about real progress for our organization. Let us vow, now and here, that we will strive to build greater institutions, greater towns and cities, and a greater state during the coming year."

Wednesday Afternoon, June 17

P. A. EGELAND

Advertising Manager and Head of the Merchants Service Department of Finch, Van Slyck & McConville, St. Paul

"Measuring Up to the Responsibility of Business"

Mr. Egeland said: "The man who wishes to measure up to the responsibilities of modern business must master himself. He must be willing to plant before he expects to reap; he must be willing to serve before he expects a profit. The profit will grow in proportion to the improvement of service."

"Highly competitive as business is today, it presents problems that require the training of a specialist to solve. This presents the danger of each and every one of us acquiring a one track mind, whereas the business man who wishes to measure up to the responsibilities of modern business must realize that in

All officers and directors reelected: President, Web Hill, Rapid City; Vice President, H. G. Schwartz, Redfield; Secretary-Treasurer, W. C. Botkin, Huron; Directors—H. A. Looby, Martin; John Bonde, Arlington; William Lanster, Big Stone City; Fred Cole, Brookings; A. Svendby, Lemmon; H. A. Plate, Cresbard; and Earl Kelly, Madison.

order to fill his place in business he must have or possess a working understanding of the many problems of life. He will realize that he must acquire as great an interest in the sanity of consumption as in the size of consumption, because great businesses are not built upon fads that are worthless and passing but upon appetites that are worthy and permanent. Likewise, he will realize that the most important task for him to accomplish in order to sustain his place in the business world is to constantly develop his mind, the ability to think independently and to render sound business decisions on problems as they present themselves.

"Evolutionary progress cannot be stopped, and only the short-sighted attempt to stop it. The wise ones seek to adjust themselves to meet the new conditions created by progress. If the present day consolidations of business present a more economical and better system of distribution and can prove to the world that the system is better, then it becomes the duty of every independent operator to encourage the progress of consolidated business, because if the system is economically better than that which preceded it, opposition of any kind will then prove futile. However, it remains the task of the consolidated

operators to prove to the world the merits of their system. The problem, however, remains one of economics and must be solved by economic methods.

"The person who wishes to measure up to the responsibilities of modern business must realize that the most important force in his business is the human element. It constitutes the motor in his vehicle of business, his capital the fuel, and physical equipment the chassis. The three parts must function before his business vehicle can make progress, but if any one of the three fails, the most difficult one to replace is the motor. The fuel or capital may be procured at any way-side station at a small cost, but the motor must come from headquarters at a great cost and long delay. Likewise, a human organization. It cannot be purchased. It must grow under supervision and training."

CHARLES L. SOMMERS

Secretary and Director, G. Sommers & Company, St. Paul

"What Is Ahead"

Mr. Sommers traced the history of depression during the world's history, particularly the periods of recurring prosperity from depressions in the United States. "As past history shows," he said, "under conditions as they were, this period of depression was unavoidable, but things are not as bad as they might have been or have been in times past. There are some indications that this period, like other periods of depression, will be of short duration, that liquidation will soon be about completed and business recovery will be under way, possibly before the end of the year."

Mr. Sommers' address is being reproduced practically in its complete form elsewhere in this issue.

Chairman Svendby, of the resolutions committee, presented a very complete report calling special attention to appreciation of the work of the officers, President Hill and Secretary Botkin. Thanks were expressed to "Everlastinglyatit Pu" for his splendid work in membership drives. Recommendation was made that he be appointed Honorary Field Secretary.

Special thanks were expressed to H. E. Doolittle and the delegation from Sioux Falls, who contributed much to the success of the convention. Expression of appreciation was also extended to various other agencies, including the COMMERCIAL BULLETIN AND APPAREL MERCHANT, the official association publication.

A special resolution pertaining to freight rates was passed by the association. It is an official protest to the Interstate Commerce Commission regarding any increase in commodity freight rates. The secretary was instructed to communicate with the South Dakota State Railroad Commission.

Generally speaking, the thirty-fourth annual convention is recognized as one of outstanding success and accomplishment.