

The Success of the Fraser Valley Milk Producers' Association

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The agricultural co-operatives which developed in North America early in this century, patterned on European models, were basically means by which farmers, generally of an independent and conservative nature, could retain a degree of independence as producers, but protect themselves through co-operative marketing against the pressures created by rapid urbanization and industrialization. The sharp recession of 1912-1914 caused dissatisfaction among farmers generally, and the wartime demands for increased production, the labour shortages and the sharp increase in prices during the four or five years which followed sharpened farmer unrest. In the 1913-1920 period milk producers tributary to most large North American cities began to take collective action as a result of consumer demands for quality control of the milk supply as well as in response to economic conditions.

The completion of the British Columbia Electric Railway line to Chilliwack in 1910 opened the rapidly growing Vancouver market to farmers in the Lower Fraser Valley, where climate and soil conditions favoured the dairying industry. The Fraser Valley Milk Producers' Association formed in May 1913, and began its business operations in March 1917. It was not only well in the vanguard of milk producers co-operating to control marketing,¹ it was also unique in having open membership, and it has been among the most successful, surviving the depression of the 1930's which caused the collapse of most co-operatives. The formation, the survival and the success of the FVMPA is an integral part of Lower Fraser Valley history.

Apart from the Hudson's Bay Company farming ventures, agriculture was not established in the Fraser Valley until the period of the Gold Rush. Then men who came to prospect took up land on the open prairie areas,

¹ H. E. Erdman, *The Marketing of Whole Milk* (New York: Macmillan, 1921), 183. Erdman had knowledge of twenty-six farmers' distributing companies operating in the United States in May, 1920. Of twenty-five of these only three had formed before 1913, and by 1917 eleven of the twenty-five were established.

or they cleared farms on the deltas. The insatiable Cariboo markets provided immediate cash returns. With the transition from a gold to a lumber frontier, markets opened for valley farmers in sawmills and logging camps and in the growing cities of New Westminster and Victoria, both accessible by water. Revolutionary changes in the dairying industry in the latter part of the 19th century allowed farmers to increase production and thus take advantage of marketing opportunities. The development of the centrifugal cream separator led to the establishment of creameries. Most of these were formed on a co-operative basis as a result of encouragement and educational programmes initiated by the provincial and federal Departments of Agriculture. The use of the Babcock test to determine the fat content of milk made herd improvement easier to achieve. The completion of the railroad and the improvement in cold storage and refrigeration facilities widened the markets available to dairy farmers. In spite of the problems of land clearing, dyking and drainage, the short frontier period, the widening marketing opportunities and the improvement in the dairying industry created a vigorous farm population unwilling to tolerate difficulties.

Within the valley a number of well-defined farm communities developed. Central to each was a school, a church and a community hall. Farmers' institutes became established in the main farm centres, supported and encouraged by the provincial Department of Agriculture. The meetings of the institutes became forums for the discussion of ideas and centres for educational programmes and social gatherings. The institutes facilitated the organization of agricultural exhibitions, co-operative creameries, the B.C. Dairymen's Association, the B.C. Livestock Association and the cow-testing associations.

The establishment of co-operative creameries gave farmers considerable experience in working together. Local creameries disappeared as road and rail transport gave access to the Vancouver market and farmers worked together to gain their share of the market. Richmond farmers opened a wholesale outlet in Vancouver and organized the Richmond Produce Company in 1904. In 1909 dairy farmers in the lower end of the valley who were shipping to the Vancouver market attempted to strengthen their position in negotiating with city milk dealers by organizing the Lower Mainland Milk and Cream Shippers' Association.

In the upper part of the valley most farmers continued to patronize Edenbank Creamery at Sardis or the Chilliwack Creamery. Edenbank, started in 1895, was privately owned by A. C. Wells, but the business was organized on a co-operative basis. Wells attempted to absorb as

much milk as possible and resisted amalgamation with the Chilliwack Creamery, a co-operative venture which was started in 1902. Edenbank suffered serious financial difficulties when the retail branch, opened in Vancouver in 1910, lost money heavily during the recession of 1913-1914. The Chilliwack Creamery, which had outstripped Edenbank soon after its establishment, continued to prosper, providing its patrons with a good return on their investment and an outlet which paid reasonable prices.

When the British Columbia Electric Railway was completed to Chilliwack in 1910, Vancouver dealers offered the Chilliwack Creamery patrons 50¢ per pound butterfat for their milk.² Though this was less than the Lower Mainland Milk and Cream Shippers' Association was demanding, the dealers were not buying cheap milk, since the cost of transportation made the price of upper valley milk higher than they were willing to pay the lower valley bargaining association. It soon became evident to farm leaders that the dealers were attempting to play one end of the valley against the other. Among the men responsible for obtaining the first charter for a valley-wide organization in 1913 were John Oliver and W. J. Park of the Lower Mainland Milk and Cream Shippers' Association, J. W. Berry of the Richmond Produce Company and E. D. Barrow, president of the Chilliwack Creamery. Wartime conditions delayed the business venture but the work of recruiting members went on. In January 1917 at the annual meeting of the Fraser Valley Milk Producers' Association a resolution to go into business was supported by 848 members. The association was firmly based not only because of the well-defined character of the sixteen local associations formed in the valley but also because of the degree of consolidation which had already occurred. The formation of the co-operative was really an amalgamation of several co-operatives.

The newly elected directors negotiated contracts with milk-condensing plants at Ladner and South Sumas and with three retail outlets in Vancouver. Edenbank and the Chilliwack Creamery were leased that year and bought out early in 1918.³ This purchase enabled the association to continue setting the price of milk to wholesalers. When the Borden factory at South Sumas closed at a moment's notice in 1918 in an effort to weaken the farmer's position, the FVMPA put the creameries into full

² British Columbia, *Report of the Royal Commission on Milk, 1954-55* (Victoria: Queen's Printer, 1955), 28.

³ *British Columbian*, Mar. 5, 1918, 24. Berry reported that the association offered to purchase the Chilliwack Creamery for \$16,500 and Edenbank for \$11,000. Stockholders agreed to accept shares in the FVMPA. *FVMPA Minutes*, Feb. 9, 1918.

production in the manufacture of butter and cheese to absorb the surplus created as a result of the action of the Borden management. In 1919, when there was again lack of agreement over price, the association took the initiative and cut off the supply of milk to the South Sumas condensing plant, effectively driving the Borden Company from the valley.

A head office and a central distributing depot were established in Vancouver. Lower valley milk was sent there and to the Ladner Pacific Milk Condensary, and upper valley milk to the creameries. This reorganization of the milk-collecting system prevented overlapping and provided a saving of \$14 per day.⁴ The high returns from the fluid market and the lower returns from manufactured milk were pooled. The average price paid to members in 1917 was 67.3¢ per pound butterfat, and for 1918 it was 77.4¢, a considerable increase for farmers who had been receiving creamery returns. A deferred payment of 2.5¢ was kept back in 1917 and 2¢ in 1918 to provide the association with working capital,⁵ and at the end of the first year the 6 per cent dividend declared was paid in the form of stock in the association,⁶ strengthening the organization as the farmers prepared to enter the retail business.

In 1919 members were assessed on the basis of \$100 capital investment for each can of milk shipped daily. The dairymen signed notes for twenty months to a total of \$150,000. With the notes for security the directors were able to borrow the full amount from the Bank of Montreal. Several Vancouver dairies — the Standard, Turner's, Hillcrest, Mainland, South Vancouver and one or two smaller distributors — were purchased at a cost of \$250,000. The Standard Dairy building was used as a retail headquarters. G. W. Clarke, the proprietor, became a partner,⁷ accepting FVMMPA shares as payment. The dairy was modernized at a cost of \$40,000⁸ and the Fraser Valley Dairies Ltd. was incorporated with a capital of \$500,000 divided into 5,000 shares.⁹

The consolidation of retail outlets enabled the association to reduce the 120 delivery rigs which had operated in an overlapping competitive system to 60 rigs, even though there was a 10 per cent increase in the number of consumers.¹⁰ The average price paid to FVMMPA members rose

⁴ *Chilliwack Progress*, Mar. 8, 1917, 1.

⁵ *FVMMPA Annual Report*, Dec. 31, 1920, 9.

⁶ *British Columbian*, Mar. 5, 1918, 24.

⁷ In 1923 his shares were bought out.

⁸ A. G. Lytle, "Fraser Valley Dairymen Did It," *Farmers' Magazine*, Oct. 15, 1920, 9.

⁹ *British Columbia Gazette*, May 22, 1919, 1640.

¹⁰ Lytle, 9.

to 90.9¢ with a 3¢ deferred payment,¹¹ but the retail price of milk in Vancouver remained at 14.03¢ per quart,¹² lower than in any large city in Canada or the United States, except Ottawa.¹³

The association received a setback in 1921 with the sharp recession of that year. The drop in prices was accompanied by a loss of membership, which was serious because it was the largest shippers who defected, in several cases men who had been charter members of the association. Though the Fraser Valley Dairies Ltd. had absorbed the major dealers in Vancouver, it was not possible to prevent new dealers from going into business. Selling all their milk on the fluid market, the independent dealers were able to offer farmers a higher price than the FVMPA settling rate. Over the years the difference varied, but usually the independent received 7¢ per pound butterfat more than the association member, a considerable difference.

In 1923 J. W. Berry, president of the FVMPA, and E. G. Sherwood, general manager, both resigned. Berry stayed in the co-operative, but his resignation from the presidency was an indication that his policies had not been accepted by the membership. The dual office of general manager and president was taken over by one man, W. J. Park, a Pitt Meadows dairy farmer and reeve of that municipality. His policies, supported by the membership, shaped the character of the association. Berry and Sherwood had been interested in limiting production, in favoring the large shipper and in maximizing profits. Park represented the farmers who supported the FVMPA as an agency with the power to regulate the market. It had been necessary to go into business to achieve their objective. Their aim was to maintain open membership and to handle as high a volume of milk as possible; their ideal, to absorb all the milk in the valley.

Under Park's leadership the directors conducted an aggressive campaign which brought the membership up to 2,140. A journal called *Butterfat* was started which kept members in touch with developments within the organization and gave them information about good farming practices and the benefits of co-operation. A new retail outlet was built in Vancouver and a utility plant erected at Sardis where butter, cottage cheese and skim milk powder were produced. In 1920 a condensary had been built at DeLair and leased to the Pacific Milk Company for five

¹¹ *FVMPA Annual Report*, Dec. 31, 1920, 9.

¹² Lytle, 9.

¹³ *British Columbian*, Jan. 27, 1920. Statistics submitted by M. B. Coatsworth to the B.C. Dairymen's Association.

years. When the lease expired, the company was bought out. The returns from all markets were pooled and transport costs were based on the distance from the city markets.

As the efforts of the FVMMPA stabilized the market, there was a tremendous increase in production. The utility plant at Sardis and the DeLair condensary handled it, but the association members who had built the plants resented the fact that they had provided a stable market for those who had not shared the cost of disposing of the surplus. Independent shippers felt that the association itself had created the surplus by accepting all available milk. Shippers who maintained a steady production had to pay the heavy costs of feed for cows freshened in the winter. Independents, most of whom engaged in winter dairying, claimed that they earned their place on the fluid market and resented the suggestion that they should receive the same returns as shippers who milked grade cattle for a few months of the year. Intense bitterness developed between independents and association members. The FVMMPA tightened control over their membership (it became increasingly difficult for producers to leave) and moved rapidly toward support for legislation to equalize returns from sales.

At the request of Okanagan fruit growers, who had co-operated to stabilize their market by central selling and by building storage facilities, E. D. Barrow, Minister of Agriculture in the John Oliver government, brought in a bill in 1927 to deal with the sale of agricultural produce. The Produce Marketing Act was passed, but attempts to provide the same relief for dairy farmers met with violent opposition from Vancouver Members of the Legislative Assembly and from the mayor and council of the city. A royal commission was appointed to conduct an inquiry into the milk industry. Before its work was completed Barrow met personal defeat when the Liberal government lost the election of 1928. The Commission's report, presented to the Conservative government of S. F. Tolmie, recommended legislation which would equalize returns to the producers. It was suggested that a committee be appointed which would assess independent producers who had a disproportionate share of the fluid market and use their contributions to compensate members of the co-operative.¹⁴ A private Member's bill was introduced by J. W. Berry, Conservative Member from Langley, and, in spite of considerable controversy, the Dairy Sales Adjustment Act was passed.

Milk control came into effect on January 1, 1930. By May 95 per cent

¹⁴ British Columbia, *Report of the Milk Inquiry Commission, 1928* (Victoria: King's Printer, 1929), 110, 111.

of the producers had complied with the orders of the Milk Board set up under the new legislation. Collections were made and adjustment cheques sent out. The Milk Board report issued in December, 1930, showed that in spite of an increase in production of almost 600,000 pounds of butterfat, the average settling rate for 85 per cent of the dairy farmers¹⁵ had increased from 57.77¢ during the first nine months of 1929 to 66¢ for the same period in 1930.¹⁶ A comparison of prices for nine Canadian and five American cities showed the retail price of milk to be lower in Vancouver than in any city except London, Ontario, and the spread between producer and consumer price to be the smallest of the fourteen cities.¹⁷ There is little doubt that association members had good reason to be satisfied with the effects of the legislation. In a world plunged into depression they inhabited an island of relative economic stability. For them it was a golden period long to be remembered.

In August 1930, eleven dairies in Vancouver, representing 94 per cent of the retail outlets, amalgamated to form the Associated Dairies, a move initiated and largely dominated by the FVMMPA. After the formation of the merger, the co-operative sold surplus milk only to outlets affiliated in the Associated Dairies. This created bitterness. Independent dealers, who built up their custom in Vancouver to a large extent by decrying the quality of association milk, were only too anxious to have it during periods of shortage. The attempt to control the retail market in 1930 was, as in 1919, no guarantee against new competition emerging or affiliates breaking away.

In February 1931, the Supreme Court of Canada found the Produce Marketing Act to be unconstitutional. The powers of the committee to impose levies were judged to be indirect taxation, and the powers to determine routes of shipping and quantities of goods to be sent beyond the province were declared contrary to the Dominion's control of trade and commerce. On both counts the Act was judged to be *ultra vires* of the provincial legislature. This decision, pronounced by Chief Justice Lyman Duff, foreshadowed the fate of the milk legislation and increased the determination of independents to destroy the Milk Board.

The FVMMPA followed the practice of paying farmers an advance in

¹⁵ *Province*, Dec. 27, 1930, 9. The FVMMPA was able to supply figures for 1929. The 85 per cent must represent FVMMPA members. It seems obvious that 15 per cent of the farmers (independents) must have suffered a decrease in returns, since prices did not rise.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

the middle of the month. After the settling rate was determined a second cheque, sent early the following month, covered the balance of the farmer's returns. In early June 1931, many of the association members received a debit notice in place of a cheque. The depression struck the Fraser Valley dairy farmers as suddenly as the stock market had crashed in New York almost two years before. Increased production was the main reason for the disruption of the market. A mild winter and early spring contributed to the increased yield. Sporadic shippers, sheltered within the FVMPA, increased their milk production as jobs in sawmills and lumber camps became scarce. The huge surplus, diverted into manufactured products, meant greater dependence on world markets where fierce competition forced down prices. American tariffs cut off some exports. Canadian tariffs offered little relief to Fraser Valley farmers faced with competition from other parts of the Commonwealth and of Canada. Butter from New Zealand, where production costs were lower, and from Alberta, where wheat farmers had turned to dairying, intensified the competition.

To many members of the FVMPA the crash was associated with the invalidation of the marketing legislation, and this increased their bitterness toward the independents who had challenged it. Strong representations were made to secure federal legislation, but the Natural Products Marketing Act of Bennett's "New Deal" was also found *ultra vires*. Dr. K. C. MacDonald, Minister of Agriculture in the Pattullo government, drew up provincial legislation. It was found to be valid in the Shannon case.¹⁸ This reversed the Duff decision, but that was of little help to members of the FVMPA. The marketing boards set up under the Act did not possess the power to equalize returns. The boards were made up of two representatives from the co-operative, two from among the independents, who frequently refused to co-operate, and a chairman chosen by both groups. It was difficult for groups so bitterly opposed to work together, but the main weakness to this structure was the assumption that marketing control should be left entirely to producers.

Increased production, failure to obtain legislation to equalize returns and low returns from manufactured milk products made the burden of the surplus so heavy that the FVMPA closed its membership in 1936. Throughout the period of the Depression the farmers in the co-operative remained locked in by their own rules, and there was nowhere else to

¹⁸ In 1938 the judicial committee of the Privy Council upheld the decision of the British Columbia Court of Appeal that the Natural Products Marketing Act (British Columbia) was valid. Later orders of the Milk Board set up under the provisions of this Act were declared invalid.

send their milk. Independents gradually gained almost 80 per cent of the fluid market, while association members continued to absorb the surplus and receive returns so low that it became very difficult to upgrade barns, equipment or herds. The sense of discouragement and defeat was overwhelming.

It was the war which brought relief. The price of manufactured milk products increased, improving the position of the FVMPA and removing their need for an equalization of returns. From September 1, 1942, when the marketing of milk came under the control of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board, until July, 1946, when control was removed, there was peace in the industry because of controlled marketing, good prices and expanding markets. When the controls were lifted, a neutral one-man board was appointed with power to fix prices to producer and consumer. This prevented price-cutting at the retail level, but fierce competition at the wholesale level brought chaos to the industry.

Kenneth Kiernan, who became Minister of Agriculture when the Social Credit government came into power in 1952, had very serious problems to deal with. In response to consumer demand, decontrol at the retail level was implemented. Canada Safeway dropped the price of carton milk sold in their stores, and the resulting competition became intense. The FVMPA, as a co-operative, deducted expenses and divided the profits among members, an advantage which aroused resentment among the other agencies, who were equally unable to pay the fixed price.

In September 1954, Kiernan appointed J. V. Clyne as commissioner to conduct an investigation into all aspects of the supply, production and marketing of milk. Commissioner Clyne realized that the large surplus which had created the problem would disappear within a few years. He found that the barn-inspection system had broken down in the Fraser Valley, though it continued to operate in other parts of B.C., an indication that FVMPA members constituted a powerful voting bloc. It was apparent that the co-operative with its open membership had sheltered many inefficient farmers.¹⁹ It also became evident that the FVMPA was supplying milk to many distributors who had switched their custom to the association in order to obtain good quality milk in sufficient supply. This effectively exploded the myth of the independents that they had "earned" a right to the fluid market because they produced superior milk. The decision made by FVMPA directors during the war years to

¹⁹ *Report of the Milk Commission, 1955, 30.*

supply "accommodation milk" to independent dealers had proved to be an effective way to invade the retail market.

Clyne recommended that only farmers meeting high standards and producing milk of good quality should be licensed to ship to the fluid market, but all farmers meeting those standards should be allowed their proportionate share of the market through a quota system. Consumer price would not be controlled, but producer price would be determined by a formula which would recognize a measure of change in producer costs and in the purchasing power of money. It would also contain a supply-demand factor.

Because it had been impossible to frame valid legislation which would equalize returns from the fluid market, the adoption of a single agency had frequently been proposed as the only means whereby the market could be equalized. This would have meant the destruction of the co-operative which had come to mean much more than a marketing agency to its members. By implementing a formula and fixing producer price to it, the association could be allowed to retain its identity. The basic principle of the Clyne report, that every dairyman producing good quality milk should share equally the fluid market and the burden of looking after the surplus, was in essence the goal of the thirty farmers who had organized in 1913. Clyne had made use of expert advice not only in the dairying and marketing field, but also in the legal field. His confidence that valid marketing legislation could be drawn up proved to be true, and the Milk Industry Act, passed in 1956, remains in operation.

There are a number of factors which explain the ability of the FVMPPA to survive the long difficult years when equalization of the market remained their constant goal. The compact nature of the Fraser Valley was a geographic advantage which made organization easier. Frontier farms were established during a period when revolutionary changes in farming and transportation provided many marketing opportunities. This created an aggressive farm population unwilling to be denied advantages. The decisions to enter the retail trade in 1919 and to build manufacturing plants in 1924 provided the association with control over production and marketing of milk. Without the advantages of a compact geographic unit and an aggressive farm population this control would have been impossible to attain. Without control over production and marketing it is unlikely that the co-operative could have survived, particularly during the Depression years. A revolving capital plan adopted in 1933 provided working capital during the 1930's and permitted the build-up of reserves

during the period of wartime prosperity, permitting the FVMPA to compete successfully in the hectic post-war period.

The solid basis of regional organization upon which the association was founded was an important factor. As the years passed it became increasingly evident that the success of the co-operative depended to a large degree on the strength of the locals, which provided a forum for individual members to air grievances, discuss policy and originate ideas. The sense of involvement did a great deal to prevent alienation. For many members the co-operative became a "religion," and this fanatical loyalty provided a social control which prevented many members from attempting to leave the organization. The ostracism which inevitably followed such action was hard to bear in farm communities where the FVMPA local was firmly established.

Shrewd leadership, capable of guiding but always responsive to the membership, played an important role in the success of the FVMPA. Among the men who emerged were E. D. Barrow, who played a key role in the early organization; W. J. Park, responsible for the reorganization in the 1920's, and W. L. Macken, a Chilliwack businessman who joined the directorate in 1923 and was president from 1935 to 1947. Macken was the only director who was not a farmer. As secretary-treasurer of the Chilliwack Creamery he had contributed to the success of that organization, and he was constantly involved in community affairs. His competence as a businessman was an asset, but his greatest contribution was his ability to interpret legislation, to explain policies and to make clear the goals of the FVMPA. The faith which members had in Macken strengthened their loyalty to the co-operative. But their faith was based on more solid ground. The initial success of the association created a body of loyal members who never forgot that their returns had doubled within the first year or two of the FVMPA's operation. The period of stability at the beginning of the Depression convinced them of the value of marketing legislation, which could be best achieved through their co-operative.

The association failed in its attempt to gain complete control of the milk production in the valley. This apparent failure may have been an important factor in ensuring the success of the co-operative. Though the independent producers gained a disproportionate share of the fluid market and ensured the survival of the independent dealers, they presented a challenge to the FVMPA; they prevented the formation of a dangerous monopoly, and they forced co-operative leaders to clarify

constantly association aims. The clear understanding which members had of their goals was one of the healthiest aspects of their intense loyalty.

The independents provided a target for the resentment of co-operative members during their long and frustrating struggle to achieve controlled marketing. This had the effect of preventing them from blaming the political system and was, in part, the reason agrarian third-party political movements failed in the Fraser Valley. Their inherent respect for British justice and the parliamentary system prevented them from questioning the judicial system or the process of validating legislation prolonged by the working of a federal system. The fact that frequently at least one of the judges dissented from the judgments must have created considerable doubt about the process. Instead, their resentment tended to focus, in part, on the lawyers who benefited most from the litigation, but mainly on the independents who initiated the action to contest the legislation.

The success of the Fraser Valley Milk Producers' Association resulted from a unique combination of economic, geographic and human factors, from a fortunate timing of events and from an opposition which, though it created problems, directed the farmers' discontent away from their own organization. An examination of the reasons for the success of the FVMPA reveals a good deal about the co-operative, and consideration of the effects of that success reveals the significant role played by the association in the economy of the valley and in the milk industry of the province.

By providing a secure market the FVMPA allowed farmers, attempting to become established on a small scale, to begin farming with a few cows and to gradually increase and upgrade their herds. This function was important in an area where land values were high and where urban sprawl has constantly threatened the preservation of agricultural land. The protective role also sheltered inefficient farmers who were a burden to the association. The "one man, one vote" rule in the co-operative gave these shippers the power to prevent the passage of many of the measures to ensure quality control and steady production which the directors and the more progressive members constantly urged. This delayed certain aspects of the inevitable transition to agro-industry. But the delay meant that the changes came at a time when general economic conditions were good, and much less harm was done to the small producers within the association who were phased out by the implementation of government standards after the passage in 1956 of the Milk Industry Act. It was the independent producers who lost ground as the market demanded a larger and surer supply of milk. The FVMPA shippers could provide this service

because they marketed co-operatively. It was those among them who were full-time, efficient dairymen who made the transition to the demands of agro-industry without losing their individuality as producers. In a technological society in which individual initiative is increasingly restricted by the growth of government, business and commercial institutions the Fraser Valley Milk Producers' Association exhibits a unique combination of farmer direction and business management. As Canadians become increasingly aware of the domination of their economy by multi-national corporations, the FVMPA provides an example of a company owned and controlled by its members.

The surplus milk used in the manufacturing plants continues to be an important factor in the milk industry. On several occasions the FVMPA has been able to supply fresh milk when other dairies have had shortages.²⁰ The association, which for years created a stable fluid market by absorbing the surplus milk, though this meant engaging in less profitable production, now performs the same function in the province. The Bulkley Valley producers were brought into the FVMPA as associate members in January 1968; the Comox Co-operative Creamery Association merged with the FVMPA in January 1969, and a year later the FVMPA purchased the home delivery business of Jersey Farms. Again they were absorbing an important but less lucrative branch of the milk business in contrast to dairies which concentrated only on supplying supermarkets.

These recent decisions of FVMPA directors and members to expand their membership throughout British Columbia and their marketing throughout western Canada and their decision to provide service in as many areas of the milk industry as possible have precedents in the decisions made to go into business in 1917, to retail milk in 1919, to increase membership and farmer control in 1923 and to handle the surplus in their own plants in 1924. The clear-sighted view of the Parks and the Barrows and those who caught their vision, that the farmer could best safeguard his ability to produce as an individual if he marketed co-operatively, made possible the success and survival of the co-operative. This conviction that the individuality of the producer should be preserved underlay their belief that government control should ensure equality of access to the fluid market. The soundness of these principles has been largely responsible for the past success of the Fraser Valley Milk Producers' Association.

²⁰ *Butterfat*, March-April 1970, 16.