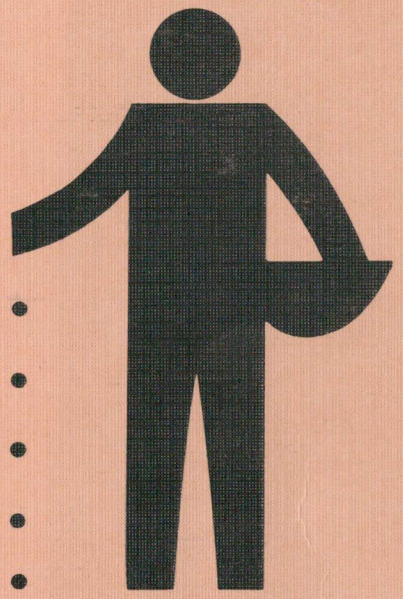
HISTORY



SASKATCHEWAN BRANCH

THE CANADIAN SEED GROWERS' ASSOCIATION

HISTORY

of the

SASKATCHEWAN BRANCH

of

The Canadian Seed Growers' Association

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INTRODUCTION

History is very important in today's fast moving world. We all, occasionally, need to look back and recapture the past. It is not only an enjoyable experience, but a constructive one as well. We can see our mistakes, recognize our accomplishments and are thus better able to learn from our past. History is a great teacher.

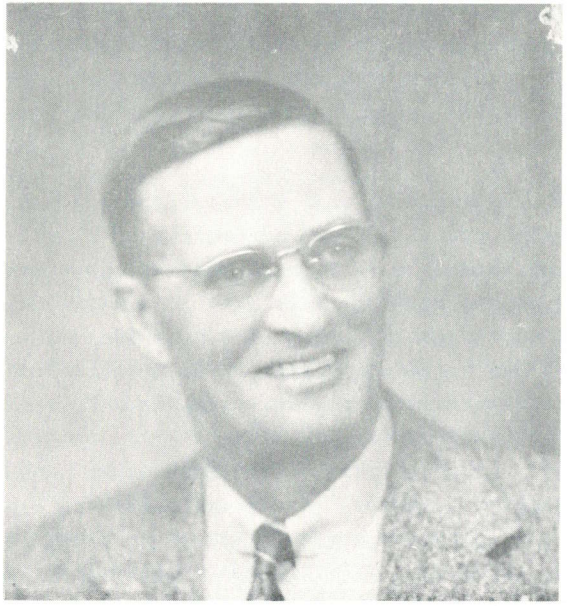
The Saskatchewan Branch of The Canadian Seed Growers' Association can look with pride on its history. This organization has a genuine concern for the welfare of Saskatchewan and its farm people. A few Saskatchewan farmers began to struggle in the early 1900's, with what was then a new and revolutionary idea, that the job of farming is greater than just the planting and harvesting of grain. The farmer must also strive to improve his seed. Saskatchewan can now boast of having many of the finest crops in the world, partly through the efforts of this organization.

Mr. Ernest Jackson began writing the history of the Saskatchewan Branch in 1970. He has been a very active member of the CSGA for over forty-five years. His recollections take us back to the formation of the Branch in 1929. Without his efforts, research and fine memory the compiling of this history would have been a difficult task indeed.

Three other officers also assisted in the final editing and organizing of the material, Mr. H.A. Lewis, a past president of the Branch, Mr. V.B. Holmes, who was Branch Secretary for many years, and the present Branch Secretary, Mr. E.N. Johnson. The Board of Directors of the

Saskatchewan Branch were also able to secure the services of Miss Kendall Kyle, a professional in this field, to review the manuscript and write the history as it is now presented.

It is hoped that in reading the material you will be able to recall the hard work, enthusiasm and enjoyment that the individual members experienced in building this strong Saskatchewan Branch of The Canadian Seed Growers' Association.



ERNEST JACKSON
ESTON, SASK.

Mr. Jackson became a member of the Canadian Seed Growers Association in 1928 and has continued his membership since that time. He is a past president of the Saskatchewan Branch and his recollections have provided much of the material found in this history.

ORIGIN OF THE CANADIAN SEED GROWERS' ASSOCIATION

Saskatchewan is known throughout the world for the production of excellent grain. Many individuals and groups have invested an incredible amount of ingenuity, creativity and hard work to attain this goal. The soil, some will say, is the reason for the quality of the crops, and certainly nature's gifts must be recognized, but as well it is essential to acknowledge the toil and risk that farmers undertake to make the soil produce. For years there has been a movement, in this province, to ensure that not only excellent crops are produced but that even better crops will grow in the future.

A major instigator for this movement was Dr. J. W. Robertson. He settled in Ontario at the turn of the century, establishing himself as a farmer. He enhanced his farm work with part time study at a nearby college. Throughout his career he held various posts that allowed him to influence the direction taken by the Canada Department of Agriculture. (Such positions were: Professor of Dairying, Ontario Agricultural College; non-resident lecturer, Dairy Husbandry, Cornell; Dairy Commissioner, Canada; Agriculturist at the Central Experimental Farm; Commissioner of Agriculture and Dairying, Canada; Principal, Macdonald College (McGill); Chairman, Commission of Conservation; Chairman, Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education; Director of Production of Crops for Eastern Canada, Canada Food Board; Chairman, Dominion Executive Committee, Agricultural Relief of Allies Fund; Representative of the Canadian Government

with the Peace Conference Delegation, Paris; Chief Commissioner of Boy Scouts.[1]) (Quite an impressive list!) His understanding of the farmer and his problems made him one of the greatest agriculturists of his time.

Dr. Robertson's role within the Government reinforced and developed his interest in crop improvement. In 1899, with $100 of his own money, Robertson organized a grain competition for Canadian boys and girls " ... Partly to learn whether the country could be readied to accept the principles and adopt the practice (of crop improvement) and partly to interest and educate boys and girls."[2] Boys and girls competed by sending Dr. Robertson the largest, most vigorous heads of wheat or oats from their fathers' farms. The best heads received prize money.

In a presidential address, in 1904, Dr. Robertson states, "I had a wonderful response, and I paid that money in prizes with as much enjoyment as any money I have ever spent."[3] The results encouraged Dr. Robertson to believe that Canadian farmers were ready to try crop improvement. He approached a friend, Sir William Macdonald, of Montreal, saying, "here is a great chance to do some education work in progressive agriculture; to do something interesting, something attractive, something definite, something beneficial to the whole community, something easy and yet with plenty of difficulties. Farmers and their families may fail to appreciate the educational advantages of a plan or scheme set out in a written statement; but here is something which would be so helpful and instructive to boys and girls that they would go with it; and the habits of observation and thought and study would go on with them."[4]

Dr. Robertson convinced Sir William Macdonald that it would be worthwhile to donate $10,000 for prize money for this competition. Boys and girls under eighteen years had to select enough of the most vigorous heads of either wheat or oats from their fathers' farms, to plant one quarter of an acre. This seed was then planted and re-selected over a period of three years and the best final heads received prizes. To encourage the young people to participate, each year, the top one hundred heads were given prizes as well.

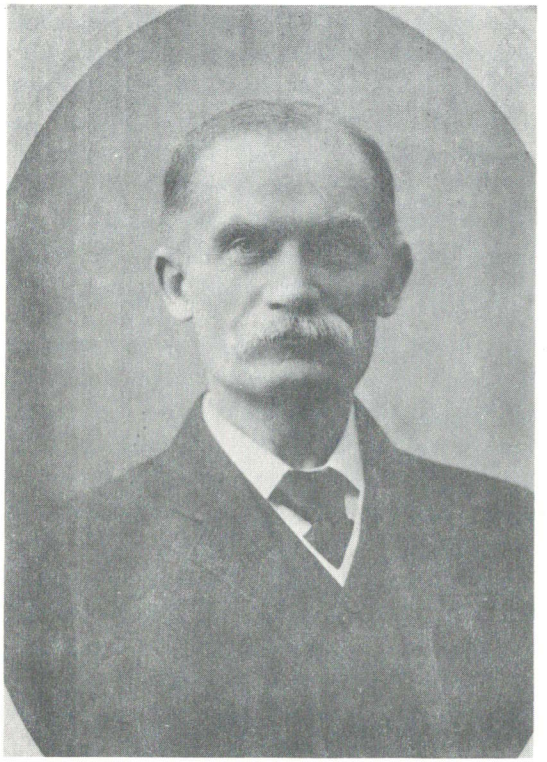
At the end of the first competition it was found that the percentage of increase in yield and total plant weight from the first selection in 1900 to the final selection in 1903 was quite significant, as indicated below:

	INCREASE	
	Grain Yield	Total Plant Weight
Wheat	18%	28%
Oats	19%	27%

These results initiated a campaign by the parents to organize an Association to further the principles that their children had learned through selection. In March of 1903 the Macdonald-Robertson Association was formed; a year later, in June, the name was changed to The Canadian Seed Growers' Association, CSGA. The new group had a membership of 246. Dr. Robertson was elected the first president, and Mr. George H. Clark, also a crop improvement enthusiast, became the first secretary.

At the CSGA's formation the membership's responsibilities were to hand select seed from a plot "... choosing in his selection the heads nearest the type which he has in mind and toward which he works and always from specially vigorous and productive plants."[5] The seed plot was prepared according to certain specifications, the grain was threshed, and all undesirable seed removed. The results were recorded and sent to CSGA headquarters, in Ottawa.

The methods for developing improved seed have changed radically during the CSGA's development, but throughout its history certain basic objectives have remained unchanged. In a presidential address, in 1904, Dr. Robertson clearly outlined the purposes of the Association. "The main purpose of this movement is to improve the crops of Canada by encouraging the general use of seed improved by selection, from varieties of which the produce is in demand or has a relatively high market value. The use of such seed would increase quantity of produce per acre; would make the quality better; and thus render rural occupations more profitable and the people who follow them more prosperous and contented. There are many difficulties in the way of progress. They attract rather than repel. The movement appeals to us all the more because of them."[6]



Dr. J.W. Robertson

"There are other fields, means whereby men enrich themselves not quite honorably or honestly; but this Association enriches its members only insofar as it benefits the public, by providing better seed and better crops and more information."

(Presidential Address, 1906)

FORMATION OF A SASKATCHEWAN BRANCH

The Saskatchewan farmer has always played a leading role in The Canadian Seed Growers' Association. The reasons for involvement are quite obvious; better crops mean better incomes and better general living conditions for the farmer. The Saskatchewan farmer takes pride in his land's ability to produce grain for a hungry world; therefore, it is not only his self interest that motivates him to improve his crops, but it is also his responsibility to see that crops are improved.

In December, 1928, Messrs. R.D. Kirkham, M.P. Tullis, and F.W. Townley Smith, the Provincial Directors of the CSGA circulated a letter to all Saskatchewan members calling them to a meeting at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, on January 8, 1929. The Saskatchewan Field Husbandry Association, SFHA, held its annual meeting at this time and they suggested that it could be recognized as the Provincial Branch. During this discussion it was found that of the 431 active members of the SFHA only 61 were actually members of the CSGA. (At this time there were 400 Saskatchewan members in the CSGA.) The Saskatchewan growers decided that it would be more advisable to form a Saskatchewan Branch separate from the SFHA. The members felt that although the SFHA was carrying on important work their basic objectives were too diverse to be adequately implemented by a Branch of the CSGA. A committee of five was thus nominated to carry out the work of organizing a Branch.

The committee was headed by the CSGA Provincial Directors and Messrs. W.J.F. Warren and J.C. Mitchell. At the first meeting Mr. R.D. Kirkham was elected president. A motion was passed asking the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Mr. F.H. Auld, to allow the Field Crops Commissioner to act as Secretary of the Branch. The request was granted and Mr. S.H. Vigor became the first secretary.

One of the first official acts of the secretary was to organize the first general meeting of the Branch. This meeting was held at the annual CSGA meeting, in June of 1929, at Winnipeg. Thirty-eight Saskatchewan members attended.

The first annual meeting of the Saskatchewan Branch of the CSGA was held January 14, 1930, at the University of Saskatchewan, with 52 members in attendance. The major question of discussion was that of finance. The members felt that they had three avenues open to them:

1. Fees direct from members to be paid to the Branch secretary.
2. A portion of National fees to be returned to the Branch office.
3. Contributions from outside sources.

The Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture, in 1930, supplied the new Branch with a grant of $300. In 1931 the National office agreed to send 25¢ of each membership fee back to the Branch, but this agreement was withdrawn the following year. All expenses incurred by the Branch were taken care of by the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture, Field Crops Branch.

It was not until the second annual meeting, January 12, 1931, that a constitution and the by-laws were agreed upon. The major purpose of the Saskatchewan Branch was to service the pedigreed seed growers. The objectives of the Branch were agreed to be as follows:

> The objects of this Association shall be to further the interests of the members of the CSGA resident in Saskatchewan, to assist in the improvement of the field crops of Saskatchewan, and to further the other objects of the CSGA as defined in its constitution and by-laws:
>
> (a) Holding meetings of seed growers, farmers and other persons in order to encourage the production and use of registered propagating stock and to demonstrate its value in the improvement of field and garden crops.
>
> (b) Holding and encouraging exhibitions of farm products so as to demonstrate the value of registered seed.
>
> (c) Keeping in touch with institutions engaged in agricultural research so as to be able to advise the CSGA of the particular crop needs of this province and to cooperate with the Saskatchewan Seed Board.
>
> (d) Such other means as may be found expedient from time to time.[7]

The constitution was quickly acted upon at the second annual meeting. Members passed a resolution asking that no charge be made to the grower when his crop was inspected. This was a major concern of the Saskatchewan member as he was already experiencing the tightening financial situation created by the depression. The members wished the Saskatchewan Seed Board to take on the responsibility of inspection fees.

The constitution and by-laws outlined the membership for the Saskatchewan Branch.

> This Branch shall admit as a member any resident in Saskatchewan who is in good standing as a member of the CSGA. This Branch may, by a three-quarter vote of the members present at any regular meeting admit as honorary members any persons who have rendered distinguished service to the Association, or to the agriculture of Saskatchewan, or who are actively interested in the work of the improvement of field crops of this province and such members shall have the right to vote.[8]

The formation of the Saskatchewan Branch meant that problems specific to the Saskatchewan farmer would now receive special attention. A more united effort to expand the goals of the CSGA could now be carried out. The stress on Saskatchewan seemed to generate new interest in crop improvement, for within one year of its formation, the Branch increased its membership from 328 to 482. It did not take the Saskatchewan members long to realize that the formation of a Branch was indeed a worthwhile venture.

THE ROLE OF THE SASKATCHEWAN SEED GROWER

The original manuscript, by Mr. Ernest Jackson, of the Saskatchewan Branch history states that the early seed growers thought that "...wheat was wheat, oats were oats". Few farmers realized that there were a number of types - varieties, of each grain that they produced. For many, the notion that certain varieties grow better in certain environments, was a new concept. It was not until the latter half of the 19th century that discoveries were made to prove that variations existed in plant populations.

In the mid 1800's an Austrian monk, Gregor Mendel, performed experiments and found that if he isolated certain characteristics, they remained in the following progeny. He reported his findings in 1865, but almost thirty-five years elapsed before his work was given any notice. So it is of little wonder that Canadian farmers were naive about plant breeding and selection.

When Dr. Robertson entered the scene in the late 1800's, crop improvement work centered around visual testing methods. Different seeds and plants looked different and responded in different ways during germination, maturity and final use. Dr. Robertson was determined to teach the principles of visual selection to the Canadian seed grower.

The first CSGA members adopted the visual selection method which required the examination of: type of head, ease at threshing, non-shattering quality, straw length, straw strength, maturing time, disease resistance, chewability, etc. Crops were carefully inspected and seeds

that fulfilled the grower's idea of quality were chosen for further planting. The patience these early growers demonstrated in their selections is recognized by the high quality of grain the Canadian farmer has today.

The following briefly outlines the three methods used by the early 'Elite' seed growers:

Method One: The best 15 pounds of seed were hand selected from an 'elite' seed plot just prior to harvest. Heads were re-examined, threshed, cleaned and prepared for use in new plots the following spring.

Method Two: (Mother Foundation Method) Selection of 100 heads made. Inspected closely for head type, glume shape and other agronimic characteristics. They were then threshed and sown in separate rows the following spring. These head rows were threshed separately, weighed, checked for shattering, straw strength, etc. Heads are harvested and threshed for three separate years during which time plots were inspected and discarded at the slightest defect. At the close of the three year period the grower bulks the seed to sow his plots.

Method Three: (Single Line Method) From several single heads which are kept separate for three years and until each head has produced a fair volume of seed. Best plots put to yield and baking tests by the Dominion Cerealists of the Federal Department of Agriculture. Repeated for three years and best plots retained for 'elite' seed plot work.

These first 'elite' seed growers could conceivably be classed as Plant Breeders.

Harvesting by the 'elite' seed grower was far more tedious and difficult than today's methods. In single head selection and the three year progeny system harvesting was done by hand. The threshing consisted of flailing the grain with a heavy stick. The grain was then placed in a bag and beaten to finish the procedure. Some 'elite' seed growers used small threshing cylinders and primitive seed cleaning machinery. Today, most 'elite' seed growers have special small seed cleaning and processing equipment.

The early methods of crop improvement had many faults, the major one being that it was almost impossible to introduce any kind of consistency in the program. Growers' notions of quality could easily differ. The first bulk pedigreed system, visual selection, was used until the early 1930's. By that time Plant Breeders with the Dominion Experimental Farms system and some of the Canadian universities had developed new and better seed varieties. This new system is definitely an improvement as the Plant Breeder uses not only visual selection but the genetic selection, discovered by Gregor Mendel.

The move away from individual production of Breeder Seed began in the late 1920's. The Federal and Provincial Governments, Board of Grain Commissioners, cereal chemists and baking test labs were gradually working toward stabilizing the pedigree system. It became apparent to the seed grower that no individual could afford the time and expense to develop new varieties that would be acceptable for licensing and distribution.

A new era for the seed grower had begun. With the organization of bodies held directly responsible for the

development of new varieties, the degree and quality of seed improved rapidly. Now plant breeding experiments are carried on year round with the use of greenhouses in special southern experimental stations in Mexico and the United States.

The job of the modern Select seed grower is to obtain Breeder seed and increase the volume of pedigreed seed. Pedigreed seed is clean seed produced from field inspected crops and graded in accordance with the requirements of the Canada Seeds Act with respect to purity of variety, germination, relative freedom from weed seeds, etc.

A Select seed grower applies for a few pounds of recommended Breeder seed from the CSGA, which, since 1940, has arranged for a committee in each province to deal with the applications. The grower must have suitable land as required for plot work, special seed cleaning machinery and meet other specific conditions before he qualifies for an allotment of Breeder seed. The rules and regulations determining the conditions for planting seed are continually reviewed by the CSGA. They are changed with the advent of new knowledge and information. In 1945, for example, discussion centred around the importance of isolating pedigreed plots from other varieties. Various regulations were then adopted, depending on the type of crop, to insure that isolation requirements were upheld.

The grower plants the Breeder seed on a small plot from which is harvested a category called 'Select' seed. Each year the grower sets aside a portion of the harvested seed

from the original plot to be replanted to produce more Select seed. The Select seed is planted, then harvested and called 'Foundation' seed. When this seed is planted and harvested the resulting seed is termed 'Registered'. This seed is again replanted and reaches the final stage in pedigreed production. It is called 'Certified' and is distributed to the public for crop improvement. At no time is Breeder or Select seed available on the open market. The above terminology for the seed categories was introduced to the Saskatchewan Branch for adoption by the CSGA in 1968 and is in use at the present time. They are the categories of pedigreed seed for cereal grain crops. Before 1968 the categories were Breeder, Elite, First Generation Registered (and succeeding generations), and Certified. There are only three categories of pedigreed seed when applied to forage crops and rapeseed; namely, Breeder, Foundation and Certified.

The seed grower's crops are inspected annually by an official of the Plant Products Division, Federal Department of Agriculture. The inspector does not give the crop its pedigree; he only reports on the conditions of the crops with respect to purity of variety, isolation, weed content, etc. The report is sent to the head office of the CSGA. They issue a certificate of pedigree if the requirements are fulfilled.

Initially the demand for pedigreed seed needed little publicity on the prairies. Farmers found it difficult to ignore the positive results that neighbouring farmers had in using improved seed. For several years after the creation of the CSGA the demand for improved seed was far

greater than the supply. Many growers were so enthusiastic about the results from the use of pedigreed seed that they often supplied their neighbours with a few bushels at no cost until the farmer harvested the seed from the resulting crop and was satisfied.

The use of pedigreed seed must be supplemented by education. Often the demand for pedigreed seed was isolated from the understanding of the functions of the seed. One seed grower recalled a request he received from a large scale farmer for a few bushels of a new rust resistant variety. The purchaser wanted to mix this seed with a bin of his own seed in the hopes of making the whole bin rust resistant! Today the incident would be scoffed at but in the early 1900's the information that we now have at our fingertips was not accessible.

The job of a seed grower is one of patience, knowledge and experience. Membership in the Branch does not immediately give the member the right to become a Select seed grower. Simply stated, the member has to prove himself before he is given the responsibility of producing Select seed. In 1927 a resolution was passed by the CSGA stating that growers had to serve a period as an 'apprentice' before becoming an 'elite' grower. In 1941 the term 'apprentice' was changed to probationer. In 1969 it was decided that each probationer should attend Probationary Short Courses offered each summer by the Saskatchewan Branch at the research centres of the Canada Department of Agriculture and the University.

Applications for Breeder seed by established Select seed growers and also those growers wishing to begin a probationary period, are made to the Provincial Seed Distribution Committee. The membership of this Committee is appointed by the CSGA and includes representation from the Federal and Provincial Governments, the University, the Seed Trade, CSGA and the Saskatchewan Branch. The Committee reviews the past pedigreed seed production programs of the applicants to determine the growers who have the necessary qualifications.

DISTRIBUTION OF PEDIGREED SEED

An objective of the Saskatchewan Branch, as previously stated, is to "encourage the production and use of registered propagating stock and to demonstrate its value in the improvement of field and garden crops". The seed grower's function is of little value if his product is not used by other farmers. His reason for developing pedigreed seed is for general crop improvement throughout the province, so he must concentrate his energies on work which ensures that the public has access to his seed.

In the early Twenties the cleaning and marketing of pedigreed seed was a perplexing problem. There was little organized contact with the public and thus large quantities of pedigreed seed were lost, since the grower's only other method of getting rid of his seed was through the country elevator. Pedigreed seed sold at the country elevator was mixed with other grain and thus was categorized as commercial grain and its value lost.

The cleaning of seed was extremely difficult for the grower. The expense of the specialized equipment was too costly for most growers and thus the weed seed content was often too high for his grain to be considered for pedigree.

Through the efforts of the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture and the Field Husbandry Department of the University of Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Registered Seed Growers' Cooperative Association, Ltd. was established in 1924. This Cooperative was formed to solve some of the

major cleaning and distribution problems of the pedigreed seed grower. They arranged with a private seed cleaning company in Moose Jaw to process and warehouse pedigreed seed for members on a tariff basis. Four Hundred non-profit shares were issued at $5.00 each. The members received pool prices for the seed. Extremely high standards were maintained by the organization.

Business expanded over the years to the point where new facilities were required. Negotiations were started with the Canada Department of Agriculture for the building of a new seed cleaning plant in Moose Jaw. The building was completed in 1929.

The CSGA played no direct role in establishing the Cooperative, but some Saskatchewan members helped organize and later used the facilities. The Cooperative was an extremely important development for seed growers. The production of registered seed increased significantly. For example, a new record of 24,000 acres of 'registered' seed was reported in 1926, an increase from 4000 acres the previous year.

The position of the pedigreed seed grower was definitely stabilizing, but this security was very short lived. At the time of the formation of the Saskatchewan Branch in 1929, the depression was already threatening the prairies. The'dirty Thirties' resulted in a definite set-back in the production and distribution of pedigreed seed.

Hard times did not destroy the initiative of the Saskatchewan Branch. Attempts to alleviate and improve the situation were still continued. The pedigreed seed

grower now had some cleaning and storage facilities but he needed a more accessible route to the public. The early work of the Branch was concentrated on acting as a clearing house for the seller and the buyer of pedigreed seed, in the hope of establishing a more concrete seed sales set-up. The Branch adopted various methods for distribution of pedigreed seed. They recognized the importance of publicizing their activities and thus prepared material for distribution on the use of good seed. They encouraged members to take an active part in local seed fairs, the Provincial Seed Fair, the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair and the International Grain and Hay Show. The Branch took an active part in the organization aspects of these events, as they realized it would further publicize the work they were doing. It would educate the public in relation to the importance of good seed and thus make it easier for the grower to distribute his pedigreed stock.

These activities, although they increased the distribution of pedigreed seed, were not enough to distribute the product more widely. In 1933 the Saskatchewan Branch took an active part in the Dominion Provincial Seed Exchange Policy adopted by the Field Crops Branch of the Department of Agriculture in cooperation with the grain handling companies. Bulk carloads of pedigreed seed were delivered to points where elevator agents were directed to exchange this seed for commercial seed. The farmer would specify the amount of pedigreed seed he wanted and would then be told to supply a specific amount of commercial grain in exchange. The Seeds Branch of the Canada Department of Agriculture assisted with the transportation costs.

This plan was extremely popular and a considerable amount of seed moved under it. The major problem with this program was that many seed growers did not have carlot quantities of seed for sale and could not take advantage of the bulk carlot program. The program was discontinued in 1942.

The Saskatchewan Branch organized a distribution program that involved the buying and selling of pedigreed seed in less than carload quantities. It was sold in sacked and sealed lots. In both this method and the Seed Exchange Plan a small percentage of the seed grower's cash return for his seed was kept by the Branch and used to establish the funds of the organization. The Branch assisted growers with their transportation charges and processing costs when the grain was sent to the centralized cleaning plants. The grower repaid these costs when the seed was sold by the Branch. The above program was discontinued in 1948.

By 1947 the need for an organized sales agency, on a larger scale, was evident to the Branch. At the 1948 annual meeting the members voted unanimously to initiate plans for a commercial seed sales agency. At subsequent Board meetings it was decided the best type of organization would be a cooperative. With the help of the Saskatchewan Departments of Cooperation and Agriculture, the Saskatchewan Seed Grain Co-operative Ltd. was organized with its head office in Moose Jaw. At a special meeting, March 31, 1948, the by-laws of the organization were adopted. Membership was open to growers of pedigreed seed, in Saskatchewan. The basic objectives of the new organization were to:

(a) increase the use of pedigreed seed;

(b) organize pedigreed seed growers to market their grain cooperatively;

(c) work closely with all agencies interested in promoting the use of pedigreed seed.

A great deal of time and effort was involved in establishing the Cooperative. The Board of Directors met a total of fourteen times during the Company's first year. The Cooperative carried on a very successful operation for about fifteen years. They moved more pedigreed seed annually than had been distributed in earlier years by the Saskatchewan Branch.

In the early Sixties there was a move by the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool to set up services similar to those offered by the Saskatchewan Seed Grain Cooperative, Ltd. Therefore in 1963 the Cooperative ceased their operations and their activities were taken over by the Wheat Pool.

Pedigreed seed had been available to purchasers in relatively small, sacked and sealed lots. This was an inconvenience to many farmers who used larger quantities. Seed growers became interested in developing a plan to move the Certified category in bulk. Mr. Joe Murray, of the Manitoba Branch and Mr. Gordon South, of the Saskatchewan Branch, in 1962, initiated the development of a system whereby bulk Certified seed might be distributed. They devised a plan in cooperation with Mr. L.C. Bell, of the Plant Products Division, Canada Department of Agriculture, which was acceptable to all

concerned parties. This process eliminated the need for bagging Certified seed and has proven very popular with the farm purchasers.

The seed growers had now developed an efficient system for the distribution of pedigreed seed for crop improvement; yet it was felt that more should be done to try and increase seed sales. In 1960 at an annual Interprovincial meeting of representatives of crop improvement groups, it was decided that one of the major obstacles in distribution was the Canadian Wheat Board's quota delivery system for commercial grain to the elevator. Many farmers, as a result of this quota system, could not finance the purchase of pedigreed seed. It was felt that every farmer should have the opportunity to buy pedigreed seed to improve his crop for the market.

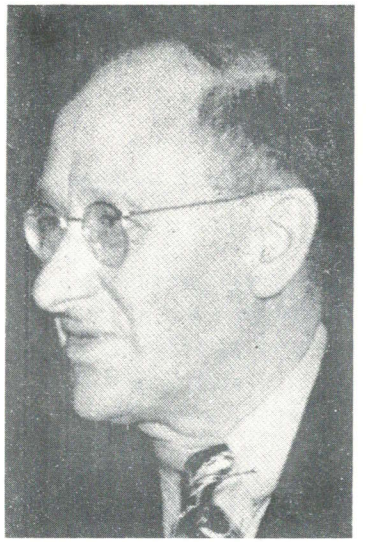
In that same year, at a meeting of the Western Weed Conference held in Winnipeg,the Saskatchewan Branch met with representatives of other crop improvement groups to discuss strategy for changing the quota delivery system. At the previous meeting Messrs.Jim Farquharson and Ernie Jackson, of the Saskatchewan Branch, and Joe Murray, of the Manitoba Branch, were delegated the responsibility of preparing a brief outlining the problems with the Quota system. A delegation was sent from the Winnipeg meeting and was authorized to present the brief to the Canadian Wheat Board. The brief asked that farmers be allowed to over-deliver their quota to finance the purchase of 50 bushels of pedigreed seed. The Canadian Wheat Board agreed to the proposal recognizing the importance of improving crops and consequently improving the quality

of Canadian grain on the export market. This procedure has been followed up to the present with representatives of the Western Seed Growers' Associations approaching the Canadian Wheat Board annually to have the over-delivery privilege continued. At present a farmer can over-deliver his quota of commercial grain, up to 400 bushels, in order to finance the costs of pedigreed seed for his own crop improvement purposes.

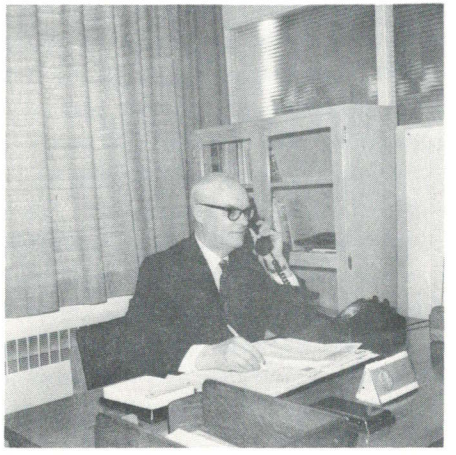
The price of pedigreed seed has always been of concern to the seed grower. The time, energy and expense he encounters in taking the responsibility of producing pedigreed seed is great. The purchaser of such seed expects to pay a reasonable price.

In the mid 1940's the Saskatchewan Branch organized a meeting of representatives of various groups interested in pedigreed seed for crop improvement, including the seed trade, elevator companies, the Federal and Provincial Departments of Agriculture, the University, etc., to discuss field inspected grain production, markets, and price recommendations. Discussion included acreage and volume in production, quality of seed, demand for seed, past distribution, new variety developments, climatic and disease conditions and production costs. The group then arrived at price estimates, which they deemed to be fair and reasonable for both the producer and the purchaser. These prices were suggested to the buyers and sellers of the pedigreed seed. As time went on, representatives of similar agencies in Alberta and Manitoba joined the meetings to discuss the subjects on a 'prairie wide' basis. Today similar annual meetings rotate between the three prairie provinces, but the suggested pricing of the seed was discontinued in 1971.

In earlier years, the railway companies provided a special tariff on freight rates for moving pedigreed seed. The rates were lower than for moving commercial grain. This privilege was removed in 1946 by the railway companies. The Saskatchewan Branch in cooperation with the Alberta and Manitoba Branches prepared a brief to the Royal Commission on Transportation to restore the special tariff. Their efforts were not successful.



Mr. S. H. Vigor, Branch Secretary from 1930 to 1947.



Mr. V. B. Holmes, Branch Secretary from 1948 to 1969.

THE SASKATCHEWAN BRANCH AND THE PUBLIC

One of the more idealistic goals of the seed grower is to see all farmers in Saskatchewan using some pedigreed seed for crop improvement purposes. To achieve this goal the Saskatchewan Branch uses various techniques to introduce the value of pedigreed seed to the public.

At the first annual meeting in 1940 the Branch recognized the need of publicity for good seed. One immediate opportunity for this was to take part in the World's Grain Exhibition and Conference to be held in Regina. The President, Mr. R.D. Kirkham, was appointed by the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture to a committee which organized and promoted the interests of the Province for the Exhibition. The Branch members were extremely enthusiastic about the upcoming event, but the weather did not want to cooperate. 1932 was such a bad year that it was decided to postpone the event until 1933. This year, however, was not considerably different than 1932, but the Exhibition was held regardless of the dust and drought. The event was a real success for the Saskatchewan agriculturalist. The Committee, organized by the Department of Agriculture, did a great deal of publicity work, encouraging farmers to participate at local seed fairs. They emphasized that pedigreed seed should be used for all exhibits. Saskatchewan farmers walked off with most of the top honors, including 59% of all the prizes!

In conjunction with the Exhibition, a Conference was held, bringing together agricultural specialists and farmers to discuss all phases of crop production and marketing procedures. The knowledge and experience gained by members of the Branch through this experience convinced them of the necessity of continuing to participate and to promote Seed Fairs at the local, provincial, national and international levels. These Seed Fairs often did more to publicize the value of good seed than any other promotional campaign.

In 1935 the Branch donated a trophy for the best exhibit of threshed grain in the class for registered wheat at the Provincial Seed Fair held annually in Saskatoon during the University of Saskatchewan's Farm and Home Week.

The Saskatchewan Branch has carried on an extensive publicity program over the years, keeping the members informed on the latest developments on cropping practices. The Branch has representation on various provincial Advisory Councils which prepare yearly recommendations on cropping practices. For instance, the annual publication, "Varieties of Grain Crops in Saskatchewan" prepared and distributed widely by the Saskatchewan Advisory Council on Grains Crops, is sent to members of the Branch. The farmers of the province also get the same information through distribution by elevator companies, the seed trade, the University, and various Government departments.

To encourage farmers in the province to use more pedigreed seed of recommended varieties for crop improvement purposes, the Branch has prepared numerous

circulars, posters, press releases, etc., which were widely circulated. Radio and television facilities are used as well to spread the word about the importance of using good seed. In 1949 the Branch purchased a film entitled "A Sower Goes Forth" for use by extension agencies in the province.

In 1959 the CSGA initiated a publicity program at the National level and all Branches were asked to participate. The Saskatchewan Branch benefited from this program and also continued its own advertising campaign in Saskatchewan that dealt specifically with local needs. In 1963 the Branch expanded its publicity program in cooperation with the Alberta and Manitoba Branches.

In 1961 the Federal Minister of Agriculture declared March as Good Seed Month across Canada. The Branches take an active part in this program. It is intended that this Month be devoted to the promotion of the use of good seed. Large sums of money are set aside for advertising, usually with radio spot announcements and newspaper articles.

In 1974 a new and adventurous undertaking by the Branch was the publication of the Saskatchewan Seed Directory which was distributed to 68,316 farmers in the province with the "Farm Light and Power" publication. It lists the seed growers in the province who had field crops inspected in 1973 for pedigreed status. The information is provided to assist prospective farmer purchasers in obtaining their seed for planting in 1974.

The Branch also is active in keeping its members well informed on new developments. The annual short courses offered each summer to probation and select growers and to forage growers serve to keep members in tune with new developments. Newsletters are also published periodically to keep the growers informed.

These endeavours are necessary for the Branch to continue functioning as a productive unit. They act not only to encourage improvement by the pedigreed seed grower but they also encourage and educate the public in relation to the absolute necessity of crop improvement.

FINANCES AND THE SASKATCHEWAN BRANCH

The first funds of the Saskatchewan Branch, as already mentioned, were from a donation of $300 from the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture. The Saskatchewan Branch proposed a plan, at this point, to have part of the funds returned on a per capita basis, from the CSGA membership fees. This plan lasted for only one year - 1930. The Branch then agreed to collect a membership fee from the Saskatchewan members to finance the organization. By 1950 the CSGA collected all fees and returned a portion to the various Branches.

In addition to this source of funds the Branch built up a reserve from the small deductions on all pedigreed seed sold through the Branch, when it was involved in marketing operations. This fund, in addition to the regular assessment fees, has supported the organization for several years. At the dissolvement of the Saskatchewan Seed Grain Cooperative, Ltd. the Branch received an allotment of slightly less than $10,000 which added substantially to the funds built up by the Branch through its marketing operations up to 1948.

Prior to 1962, the Saskatchewan Branch was financed by a regular membership fee. Since that time, the Branch adopted a policy of an assessment fee on an acreage basis. It is collected by the CSGA and paid to the Branch.

THE SASKATCHEWAN BRANCH AND THE UNIVERSITY

The efficient functioning of the Saskatchewan Branch is dependent on support from organizations, especially the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon Campus. The Branch has always received encouragement, support and expert assistance from the University, especially through the College of Agriculture. The interest shown by the staff and students of the College has been very valuable to the seed grower. The College, in turn, has a deep rooted interest in the work of the Branch.

The College has worked closely with the Branch since its beginning. They provide many valuable services to the pedigreed seed growers. One of the objectives of the College, like that of the Branch, is the promotion of the use of good seed. As well, they are constantly working on developing improved agricultural production techniques. The College acts in a consultant capacity to those interested in all phases of seed growing and processing. It is an invaluable resource centre for the Branch.

The Extension Division, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon Campus, sponsors University Farm and Home Week each January. This is a leading agricultural conference in the province where qualified speakers provide information on the latest developments in various fields of agricultural activity. This event has been carried on since 1931 and is well attended by farm people. The

Saskatchewan Branch is one of the original participating agencies in this yearly event and holds it annual meetings during Farm and Home Week.

The University supplies the facilities and the expertise for the annual Select and Probationer Short Courses offered by the Branch for seed growers. These Short Courses, which started in 1945, are of extreme importance to the pedigreed seed grower. They ensure that a certain level of competence is always maintained by growers.

The forerunner of the Short Courses was the yearly Field Days organized by the Branch to demonstrate new varieties, seeding techniques, weed problems, etc. The first Field Day was held in 1932 at the farm of Mr. R.D. Kirkham, then Branch President. In addition there were other Field Days held that year at various Experimental Farm Stations and at the University. These events were the central focus for the education of the pedigreed seed grower. They were enthusiastically attended. Agriculture students acted as judges at the Field Days. In 1936 the Branch donated a silver medal to the judges to show the growers' appreciation for the students' hard work.

Assistance does not flow only from the University to the Branch. There is a reciprocal relationship between the two organizations. The assistance from the Branch comes mainly in the form of first hand knowledge of farmers' problems. This knowledge often acts to direct the College's research projects. In a more direct way the Branch also assists the College through grants and scholarships.

In 1947 the Branch supplied a $2000 grant to the College to research the inherent genetic effects on cereal crops through use of the chemical weed spray, 2,4-D. When 2,4-D came on the market most farmers readily accepted it as useful. The Branch remained somewhat sceptical and would not allow growers to use it on their crops until they were certain that it would have no harmful effects on the genetic make-up of seed.

In 1958 the Branch made available to the most deserving student, entering the College of Agriculture, an annual $300 bursary. Nine $1,500 scholarships were awarded to students in the College of Graduate Studies for studies in agricultural marketing research and related problems during the period 1961 - 1970. In 1973 a $250 bursary, to a needy and worthy student entering the second year of the School of Agriculture, was established.

From 1970 to 1973 the Saskatchewan Branch provided a grant of $1000 per year to the Crop Science Department of the University of Saskatchewan to test the comparative seed purity, yields and crop quality of Certified seed and common farm grown seed of the same variety. An additional grant of $1000, making a total of $4000 for the project, was also provided to cover the cost of new machinery required in the University seed processing plant.

The project was conducted under the supervision of Dr. Herman Austenson. Yield increase through the use of Certified seed was not as high as the Branch Officers

had hoped it might be, but the seed quality and freedom from weed seeds was much better than in the common seed grain.

Information is of little use if it is hoarded. The flow of information between the Branch - practical expertise, and the University - scientific expertise, demonstrates how information can be best put to use. Both organizations can only benefit from such a relationship.

THE SASKATCHEWAN BRANCH AND THE DEPRESSION

The 1930's were a time of frustration and hardship for all Western farmers. The pedigreed seed grower was particularly hard hit by the years of drought. The precious seed of new varieties was often lost to the uncompromising weather conditions of the"dirty 30's". If the grower, after extreme hardship, did manage to grow a few bushels of pedigreed seed his work was certainly not well rewarded. One grower's experience, as cited by Mr. Ernest Jackson, is indicative of the general experience of that time. The grower cleaned and loaded over the platform, in bulk, a carlot of 'Second generation' Marquis of "...outstanding sample quality". He realized 45¢ per bushel, of which a small percentage was taken for the Branch fund, leaving him with very little to show for his labour. This gentleman can, even in his misfortune, be considered more fortunate than the many who had no grain to sell even at low prices!

In Mr. Jackson's words,

> "During the dry Thirties the pedigreed seed grower and particularly the 'elite' grower who worked with head row plots, had not only the selection work to do but had, also, the drought, wind, rust, frost, grasshoppers and other natural hazards to deal with. Some of our elite growers remarked that their elite plots would not have survived the drought of the dirty Thirties but for the fact that their plots were seeded in spaced rows on summerfallow, and some growers used sprinkler irrigation."

Many 'elite' growers did experience complete loss of their stock. The Branch worked hard to counteract some of the devastations of the Thirties. In 1931 the Branch distributed pedigreed stock to growers who had lost their seed. In 1932, $150 was allocated to the Branch's Educational Committee, who decided to distribute 'First Generation' Marquis wheat, to Branch members in the relief area. The members were responsible for paying the transportation costs. The United Grain Growers' and the Searle Grain Companies assisted in this program by donating 102 bushels of stock to go along with the Branch's 100 bushels.

In 1935 the Branch initiated a program, that carried on to the depression's end, of distributing 50 two-bushel lots of 'elite' stock to growers who had lost all their seed. The grower was to repay the Branch for this seed when he harvested the following fall.

The Thirties did not hinder the general programs and desire for improvement by the members. In the mid-Thirties a group of seed growers travelled to Mr. Seager Wheeler's farm and examined his use of trees for protection against soil erosion and for moisture retention.

In 1937 the Branch acted as host for the National CSGA annual meeting in Saskatoon. Hard times did not destroy the Branch's morale for this meeting was attended by more members than any National annual meeting up to that time. The enthusiasm of the Branch members seemed to be spurred on by difficult times. It is a good indication that an organization is strong if its members continue to rally round even when problems seem insurmountable.

THE GENERAL CONCERNS OF THE SASKATCHEWAN BRANCH

The Saskatchewan Branch has involved its members in many programs since its beginnings. Since the interests of the Branch are specifically those of production and distribution of pedigreed seed it is necessary that the Branch concern itself with the general farming conditions in the Province.

In 1954 the Branch presented a brief to the Royal Commission of Agriculture and Rural Life. The brief set out the Branch's history and listed its activities and major problems. In 1956 portions of this brief were presented again to a special select committee of the Saskatchewan Legislature asking for studies of the most pressing agricultural problems, specifically in relation to the production and distribution of pedigreed seed.

In 1956 they approached the Cabinet of the provincial government asking for the establishment of central modern cleaning facilities so that farmers in the province might be encouraged to use clean seed. The pedigreed seed grower has always been concerned with adequate cleaning facilities.

In 1948 the Branch decided one method for cutting down on disease would be to place health tags on all bags of seed. The idea was sound, but hardly practical, for it would entail performing various seed tests on all bags of grain. At this point certain specifications concerning disease had already been adopted; for instance barley was field tested for true loose smut content.

Although the suggestion of health tags was not possible the idea of cutting down on disease was firmly imbedded in the members' minds and they refused to be put off by one failure. It was decided that instead of taking on the complete problem, it might be wiser to attack the problem piece by piece. True loose smut disease in barley seemed to be one of the pedigreed seed growers' worst problems, so the Branch initiated a campaign to try and gain control of the disease. A committee was set up, including Mr. L.C. Bell of the Plant Products Division, Canada Department of Agriculture, and four Branch members, Messrs. Rugg, Jackson, Ingham, and Farquharson, to study the problem. In 1955 a seed control area for true loose smut was set up near Kelvington, Saskatchewan. A new test for true loose smut, the embryo test, was used in the area. The embryo test proved to be a very reliable test for determining the amount of true loose smut present in barley. The seed control area was a success.

In 1953 the Branch adopted a policy, established by the Plant Products Division, not to certify barley if there was more than .5% true loose smut present. Through the use of the now verified embryo test it was possible to easily detect the disease content. In 1955 the Branch recommended, to the CSGA, that field inspection for true loose smut be replaced with the embryo test. This suggestion was made in the hope of getting a uniform disease control percentage on pedigreed barley throughout Canada. At this time other provinces were not using as high a standard as Saskatchewan and therefore barley with higher percentage of true loose smut could still enter this province. The CSGA acted on this suggestion and there are now national controls on the

percentage of true loose smut allowable for a pedigree. This was a very ambitious project but all Canadian barley growers have benefited from it.

The Branch is not always involved in the serious work of crop improvement. It also takes great pride in each individual's participation. In 1961 a 'Jim Farquharson Night' was held at University Farm and Home Week in recognition of this grower's outstanding contributions to the CSGA and the Branch.

One long standing member of the Saskatchewan Branch was Mr. Seager Wheeler of Rosthern. As a seed grower and plant breeder, and as an exhibitor of grain, Mr. Wheeler was recognized far beyond this province's borders. Queen's University conferred an honorary Doctor of Laws degree upon him. In 1967 he was made a member of the Agricultural Hall of Fame and in 1972 the Saskatchewan Hall of Fame.

These are only two examples of special attention that has been given to individual members. Many more have been honored by the Branch and other organizations. Each individual member is considered extremely important for without him the Branch could not function.

FOOTNOTES

1. W.C.T. Wiener, History Edition, Handbook No. 3
2. Ibid, President Robertson's Address, 1904
3. Ibid
4. Ibid
5. Ibid, President Robertson's Address, 1905
6. Ibid, President Robertson's Address, 1904
7. By-Laws and Constitution of the Saskatchewan Branch of The Canadian Seed Growers' Association
8. Ibid

OFFICERS OF THE SASKATCHEWAN BRANCH 1930 to 1975

BRANCH SECRETARIES

1930-1947	S.H. Vigor,	Regina
1948-1969	V.B. Holmes,	Regina
1970-	E.N. Johnson,	Regina

BRANCH PRESIDENTS

1930	R.D. Kirkham,	Saltcoats
1931-1932	G.S. Canfield,	Wild Rose
1933-1935	F.W. Townley Smith,	Lashburn
1936-1937	H.G. Neufield,	Nipawin
1938-1939	G. Avery,	Kelso
1940-1942	J. Rugg,	Elstow
1943-1944	R. Platte,	Nipawin
1945-1946	W. Knox,	Tuxford
1947-1948	Ernest Jackson,	Eston
1949-1952	J. Farquharson,	Zealandia
1953-1954	S. Ingham,	Balcarres
1955-1956	G. South,	Whittome
1957-1958	R. Kirkham,	Saltcoats
1959	T.C. Boyes,	Kelvington
1960-1961	W.A.V. Allan,	Codette
1962-1963	F. Mohler,	Maymont
1964-1965	G.H. Beatty,	Watrous
1966-1967	E.E. Jackson,	Eston
1968-1969	J.E. Deck,	Brooksby
1970-1971	S.W. Phillips,	Tisdale
1972-1973	H.A. Lewis,	Gray
1974-1975	I.C. Boyes,	Kelvington

BOARD MEMBERS WHO DID NOT SERVE AS PRESIDENT prior to 1975

W.J.F. Warren,	Belbec	C. Geal,	Nipawin
Seager Wheeler,	Rosthern	J. Scowen,	Nipawin
J.C. Mitchell,	Dahinda	S.W. Eastman,	Melfort
W.J. Saunders,	Marshall	E. Vermette,	Elrose
L.E. Kirk,	Saskatoon	F. Hetland,	Naicam
T. Teare,	Marquis	H. Gjesdal,	Birch Hills
J. Rugg,	Elstow	W.D. Heenan,	Regina
H. Bracken,	Hudson Bay	G.M. Williamson,	Swift Current
Mrs. M. Jenkins,	Kelvington	H. Martynse,	Kandahar

Advisors to the Board of Directors.

From 1931 to 1940, a senior staff member of the Field Husbandry Department of the University of Saskatchewan was elected to the Board of Directors as a member to act in an advisory capacity. In 1941 the By-Laws of the Branch were changed to include a board of advisors, selected by the directors, from the University of Saskatchewan, the Plant Products Division of the Canada Department of Agriculture, the National Research Laboratories and other branches of the Canada Department of Agriculture, and the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture. The advisors attend all board meetings and participate in the discussions.

Those who have acted as advisors are:

L.E. Kirk,	University of Saskatchewan
J.B. Harrington,	University of Saskatchewan
K.W. Gordon	University of Saskatchewan
L. (Gus) Bell,	Plant Products Division, CDA
T.W.L. Burke,	Plant Products Division, CDA
W.J. White,	University of Saskatchewan
L.H. Shebeski,	University of Saskatchewan
W.H. Horner,	Saskatchewan Dept. of Agriculture
R.E. McKenzie,	Saskatchewan Dept. of Agriculture
R.D. Ramsay,	University of Saskatchewan
P.M. Simmonds,	Canada Dept. of Agriculture
J.L. Bolton,	Canada Dept. of Agriculture
J.H. Gerrie,	University of Saskatchewan
B.J. Sallans,	Canada Dept. of Agriculture
A. Wenhardt,	University of Saskatchewan
H.R. Baker,	University of Saskatchewan
R.P. Knowles,	Canada Dept. of Agriculture
J.E. Dehm,	Saskatchewan Dept. of Agriculture
D.R. Knott,	University of Saskatchewan
H.R. Clark,	University of Saskatchewan
R.D. Tinline,	Canada Dept. of Agriculture
G.R. Stretton,	Plant Products Division, CDA
K. Kirkland,	University of Saskatchewan