

## HISTORY OF O.F.A.

- During depression of 1930, no farm organization in Ontario.
- As economy began to improve, concerns expressed for need for some sort of farm organization.
- 1938 - Association of Counties Council in annual meeting took initiative to form a farm organization through the agricultural committees of County Council. Originally called Chamber of Agriculture.
- 1940 - By this time, Chambers of Agriculture had been formed in most counties. Most local organizations were comprised of representatives of township councils. The Agricultural Representatives acted as secretary. A decision was made to broaden the base and call for representation from Co-ops and Commodity groups. Name changed to Federation of Agriculture. Ontario Federation constitution changed to provide for membership by any farm group. Autonomy of each group to be preserved.
- 1949 - Co-operators Insurance developed.
- 1954 - Legislation passed to allow for collection of Federation membership fees as a levy on farm assessment and paid with taxes.
- 1954 - Ontario Farm Union Local formed in Bruce County by a group of farmers who felt that O.F.A. was not responsive to their needs.
- 1955 - O.F.A. Incorporated.
- 1964-1967 - Ontario Farm Union continued to grow. Discussion between O.F.A. and O.F.U., re amalgamation. Some joint action, e.g. Ottawa March - May 24th, 1967.
- 1967-1968 - Committee of O.F.U. and O.F.A. to work out plans for one farm organization.
- 1968 - O.F.A. imported first tractors.
- 1968 - Report of one farm organization presented to both O.F.A. and O.F.U. annual meetings - Accepted by O.F.A. Rejected by O.F.U. with direction to return to work out membership. (Proposal was for a compulsory levy on farm product. O.F.U. wanted voluntary membership fee.)
- Feb. 1969 - One Farm Organization Committee talks broke down. O.F.U. walked out of discussions.
- Feb. 1969 - O.F.A. decided to go to farmers with the proposal with the modification that it be direct membership. Asked Malcolm Davidson to head up a Campaign Committee for a vote as soon as possible.
- March 1969 - Campaign Committee formed. Composed of prominent farmers who had been active in both O.F.A. and O.F.U. O.F.U. immediately expelled the members of the G.F.O. Campaign Committee.
- May 1969 - Legislation passed providing for a General Farm Organization if 66-2/3 of farmers voted in favour.

## History of O.F.A. - Cont'd.

- June 24, 1969 - Vote on G.F.O. held - received 44% of vote from 90% of farmers who voted.
- July 3, 1969 - General meeting of O.F.A. to consider future ended in another attempt to form a new Committee. People named to Committee met once and refused to act.
- Early August, 1969 - Directors (Members) meeting of O.F.A. directed Executive to bring forth a proposal for complete reorganization of O.F.A.
- Sept. 12, 1969 - O.F.A. Executive proposal adopted by Board of Directors (Members) and immediately implemented.
- Sept. 12, 1969 - First I.S.M. enrolled. Fees - \$20.00 per year.
- Nov. 9, 1969 - Annual Convention ratified reorganization plan. Increased fees to \$25.00 with \$5.00 to be returned to counties. 758 I.S.M.'s.
- 1970 - O.F.M.A. incorporated.
- Dec. 1970 - O.F.U. amalgamated with other Farm Unions to form N.F.U.
- Nov. 1971 - Area office policy adopted. \$5.00 portion of membership fee, plus County Federation dues to be used to finance area office. 6,800 I.S.M.'s.
- Jan. 1, 1973 - County Federation membership dues paid via C.I.A.G. rebates. Rebates sent to O.F.A. O.F.A. accepts rebates as payment in full for County membership fees.
- May, 1973 - Board of Directors increased to 125. 75% representation by I.S.M. regions. 5 seats by right of office. Balance of seats - representation from Commodities and Co-ops. (Corporate members)
- Nov. 1983 - I.S.M. membership (Individual Service Membership) changed by O.F.A. convention to Farm Family Membership (F.F.M.) to reflect changes in farming community.
- Nov. 1985 - Lambton Federation sponsors resolution to O.F.A. convention re: proposal for check-off to fund general farm organizations. Committee struck to investigate and prepare report.
- Nov. 1987 - "Mandatory Refundable Check-Off Report" accepted by O.F.A. convention.
- Feb. 1990 - O.F.A. convenes meeting of all Commodity, Educational, Co-operative Groups, Marketing Boards and General Farm Organizations (G.F.O.'s) to discuss issue of stable funding for G.F.O.'s. Meeting endorses concept of stable funding for G.F.O.'s through Farmer Registration System.

## IMPLICATIONS OF HISTORY

- Original ties with local municipal councils still exists in a few areas, e.g. township council representation on County Federation Board.
- County Federations originally organized as local autonomous groups. That autonomy still guarded by county organizations.
- O.F.A. originally conceived as a Federation (where the groups who joined agreed to unite by compact under a central governing authority). In practice, this was never achieved but was in practice a Confederation (where groups united with others for common purpose without giving up autonomy).
- The "Federation" was strengthened by the instituting of levy which was paid to the member (County) group.
- In 1954, the formation of the first farm union local was the first indication of dissent in the "membership" of the Federation.
- Incorporation of O.F.A. to protect individual members of the Corporation from personal suits. Also to give semblance to legal status.
- In the period 1964-1968, it was recognized that the battle for status as G.F.O. between O.F.A. and O.F.U. was reducing effectiveness of both organizations and a sincere attempt was made to bring about a uniting of the two organizations. O.F.A.'s decision to force a vote of all farmers resulted, confusing farmers and almost a total breakdown in both organizations. Both organizations reviewed their position and took different approaches. O.F.U. to build a national organization of direct members. O.F.A. to build a direct membership provincial organization.
- The reorganization of O.F.A. was intended to:-
  - (a) Open more direct communication with farmers.
  - (b) Prepare way to move more directly and quickly to solving farmer problems.
  - (c) Build a feeling of cohesiveness within the membership.
  - (d) Provide a more tangible, direct service to individual farmers.

- Membership growth in O.F.A. was steady but slow. Farmers were saying they still didn't see achievements - organization hadn't changed that much. Area office policy adopted to make O.F.A. more visible. With the influence of full-time workers at the local level, membership increased, organizational activity increased. Income from county Federation levy declined. Farmers questioned why they should "pay twice" (on the levy to support the county Federation and via direct payment to O.F.A.). With the decline of income to county Federations, there began a decline in county dues to O.F.A. O.F.A. moved to assure a constant income from this area by initiating the transfer of C.I.A.G. expense payments to O.F.A. in place of county membership fees. Some areas saw this as an invasion of private domain and a new threat became obvious - that of creating a split (county Federation autonomy and status vs I.S.M. effectiveness).

- O.F.A. moved on a program to have I.S.M. Directors integrated with county Federation. This worked to amalgamate I.S.M.s into the county Federation. Regional Directors "should provide an effective representation for I.S.M. members and county Federations".