

# SOME VIEWS ON BULK HANDLING OF GRAIN

BY J. D. BROWN  
 President of the Farmers' Union of Oregon and Southern Idaho.  
 Ever since the Northwest began to develop its grain growing industry the farmers engaged in raising grain have been handicapped by the necessity of supplying sacks in which to market their product. The Middle West, Minnesota, the Dakotas and Canada in turn have discarded sack handling in favor of more modern methods, but the Northwest has clung to the burlap bag.

Each year a new supply of sacks has been imported from the Orient, shipped into the grain country, filled with wheat, and shipped out to domestic markets abroad. Fifty million sacks have been required for the Northwestern States. Fifty million sacks each year have been filled with grain and sewed at the threshing machine and fifty million times the "buckler" has had to bend his back and buckle his limbs to put them into piles. Usually these sacks were hauled to the granary or shed and again the farmer bent his back and buckled his limbs to set them loaded into his

wagon and at the shed the process was repeated. When he was ready to haul his grain to the warehouse the loading and buckling was again resorted to, and so on through the whole procedure of unloading the sacked grain at the platform, piling (from floor to rafter plates) in the warehouse, loading cars, unloading at the terminal docks and, after cleaning, mixing and re-sacking, putting it on shipboard.

From start to finish, the sack-handling process has called for strength and strain upon man-power. It has been said that it took "a strong back and a weak head" to do this work. At any rate, thousands of boys from the ranches who could not stand the strain looked for easier jobs. If agriculture has been neglected and our farm lands undeveloped we may charge it, at least in part, to the system of bulk handling of grain.

The farmer has not been the sponsor for the bulk handling system. For some time the farmer has been convinced that the grain sack is an economic waste, and this notwithstanding the effort which has been made to hoodwink him into believing that the sack was indispensable. The real responsibility for the grain bag lies with the grain buyers, who usually were the same parties who imported the sacks. The sack business was profitable, so why should they not require that the grain they bought be put up in sacks? The farmer paid the premium, coming and going. By manipulating the prices of sacks enormous profits were made, and the grain sack profiteer clung to the neck of the grain grower as the Little Old Man of the Sea fastened himself upon Noah's Bull.

The Farmers' Union was the first organized protest by the farmer against the grain sack. This organization struck first at the big profits in the bag business. By lumping orders and buying sacks in large numbers from the jobbers and importers, it cut out much of the profit that had gone to the wholesaler and retailer, and saved the farmer millions of dollars which would otherwise have gone to the profiteer. This, however, accomplished only partial relief. Although the excessive profits were eliminated, the economic waste in handling and re-handling, buckling and loading, still remained. Both economy and convenience demanded that the bag itself must go.

Before the farmer could adopt the bulk handling system at the farm and at the shipping point, it was necessary that bulk handling facilities be provided at the terminals and seaports. The farmers had no money to build terminal elevators and the grain buyers would not build them because of the profits in the sack business. For

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in this district, the Farmers' Union several years ago sent a delegation to the seacoast cities, endeavoring to prove the need of bulk elevators. This delegation was at first received coldly and its arguments given scant attention, but with courage born of faith they pressed their case. First one, then another community has seen the force of the arguments presented by this farmers' delegation and the organization it represented. Terminal elevators have been built or authorized in all of the seaport cities. The farmers have won, and it is only a question of time when bulk handling will be the rule.

Conditions arising out of the war have facilitated the bulk handling movement. It has been necessary to move much of the grain from the Northwest eastward by rail, and these shipments have been made in bulk, even though the grain was received at the warehouse in sacks, for there are no provisions in Eastern markets for handling sacked grain. Many elevators have been and are being built by the farmers in the grain growing section of the inland country. It is estimated that the present season will be about two hundred of these elevators ready to receive wheat from the farmers' wagons. Two hundred elevators with an average bin capacity of forty thousand bushels will permit of eighty million bushels of bulk grain being stored at the track side. With facilities for rapidly and efficiently receiving and shipping at the same time, and allowing the normal rate of turn-over, elevators should handle in a season several times their capacity, and in 1918 nearly one-half of the grain from the Northwest should pass through these elevators. Astoria and Portland are building immense terminal elevators. These houses will each be of one-million bushel capacity and will be capable of cleaning and handling grain either for domestic or export shipment. More elevators must and are bound to follow, to care for the volume of bulk grain which the farmer will move forward to the terminals. Summing up, the bulk shipping movement is a splendid example of what the farmer can accomplish through organization and co-operation.

## GLOYD GEORGE IN WALES



The "Fighting Welshman," from his latest photograph, taken at his old home in Wales. He is being received by the mayor of Neath, Alderman Hopkin Morgan.

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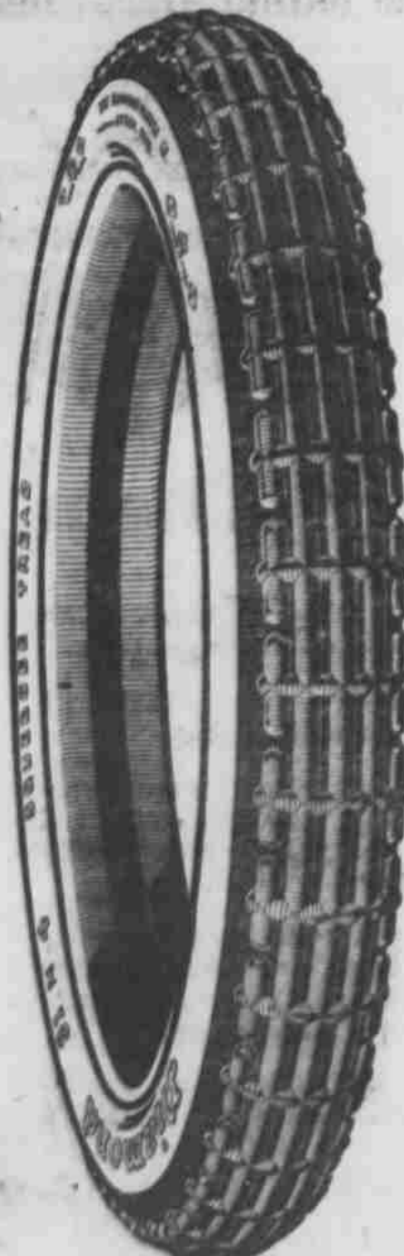
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