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Bradley & Baker acts as a selling agent, but the firm sees its function as an integral part of the producer's organization

THE ROLE OF MIDDLEMAN in business transactions is ancient—almost as old as the art of trading itself. Many millennia back in history, two early men found that a go-between made their relations proceed more smoothly. At first glance, Bradley & Baker seems to fit into that pattern in the fertilizer and feedstuffs industry, but a more careful study shows a place in the field that is far more basic, and almost unique.

In a little more than 25 years, the company has grown from a small supplier of industrial chemicals to a nation-wide organization handling some 1.2 million tons of fertilizer and feedstuff materials, with a net value of \$70 million annually. Unlike many selling organizations, Bradley & Baker is willing, and actually prefers, to act as an integral part of the producer's organization, taking over traffic, billing, advertising, and collection operations when desired.

The partnership was formed in 1924 by William L. Bradley with Albert B. Baker. In 1948, Albert B. Baker, Jr., became a partner, and today he is responsible for operations in both phases of the business—fertilizers and feedstuffs.

Service to Producer

The younger Baker quickly points out that the firm's work is really different from the general middleman type of operation. The producer can load his product into a boxcar or vessel, and then Bradley & Baker can take over and complete the job whenever it's required. "Producers look upon us as part of their own organization, not as outsiders. We act with a definite contractual arrangement, and are paid in commissions per ton sold, scaled to the completeness of the individual operation."

A brief glance at some of the pro-

ducers for whom Bradley & Baker acts as sales agent shows the extent of the operation—some 500,000 tons of triple superphosphate yearly from U. S. Phosphoric Products (a division of Tennessee Corp.); grain and feed by-products from Anheuser-Busch, Inc.; 125,000 tons of nitrogen fertilizers from Mississippi River Chemical Co.; citrus pulp and feed products from Minute Maid Corp.; and various products from a number of other companies including Glidden, Schlitz, and Procter & Gamble.

Concentrating on Fertilizer

For several decades the company has concentrated on the fertilizer field. As basic sellers of nitrogen, phosphate, and potash materials, its field men have the advantage of being able to talk the whole fertilizer field to real and potential customers. Because 30

years ago the fertilizer and feed industries were allied fields, it was natural the progression should be into the feed field. This is where Baker foresees the company's greatest immediate business expansion. He is planning an increased drive in the marketing of such by-products as brewers' dried grains, corn gluten feed, citrus pulp, and yeast from the brewery, citrus, and paper pulp industries.

No plans exist for any expansion into the pesticide field. "We'd better stick to the things we know best," is the Baker point of view. "After all, the two industries we now serve are growing, and we believe there's plenty of opportunity for expansion in our current field."

Bradley & Baker officers fully appreciate that domestic production is the backbone of their business, but no matter in which position it's placed, the import end is the most interesting part of the entire operation.

Nitrogen Imports

Limiting imports to nitrogen fertilizers, the firm has handled the full American shipments from the Dutch nitrogen industry for some 30 years—in a continuous program except during World War II. It believes it is the only one, excluding some importers of Chilean nitrates, to have done so with consistency over a comparable period.

Some 15% of the firm's total fertilizer business is represented by imports, but that amounts to impressive nitrogen tonnages. Baker feels that nitrogen imports are normal, and have a definite place in our economy. From a political viewpoint, the current import situation is quite different

The Management . . .

Albert B. Baker, Jr., and Albert B. Baker, Sr.

Plenty of Room for Expansion in Fertilizer and Feed



from that of pre-war years; the United States Government is now committed to expansion of international trade, particularly with friendly nations. From historical and custom standpoints, imported fertilizer is normal in the southeast—the fertilizer industry began there with imports of Chilean nitrate. Plants were set up in Baltimore, Charleston, and Savannah. Until the late 1920's, basic needs were satisfied largely by imports, and as far as the trade today in this area is concerned, there is no distinction between imports and domestic production. In other sections of the country this is not the case. For example, midwestern farmers are more likely to buy domestically-produced materials.

Domestic Policies and Imports

The key to imported nitrogen's holding its share of the American market is a realization that domestic policies of price, terms, and quality must be followed. Incomplete understanding of this necessity has caused many companies to fail in the past. Some have imported fertilizers in bags—guaranteed to get hard in storage. Farmers insist on a perfect bag, with the contents free-flowing. Bradley & Baker uses the technique of importing in bulk, storing, and then packing to fit the customer's needs.

Baker feels that one big reason for the firm's success with imports is better service. It has seven entry ports, from Virginia through the Gulf Coast, with a shipping capacity of 5000 tons of nitrogen fertilizer per day—a level claimed to be several times the capacity of most competitors. "Our customers generally want shipments at the same time, and they don't like to wait."

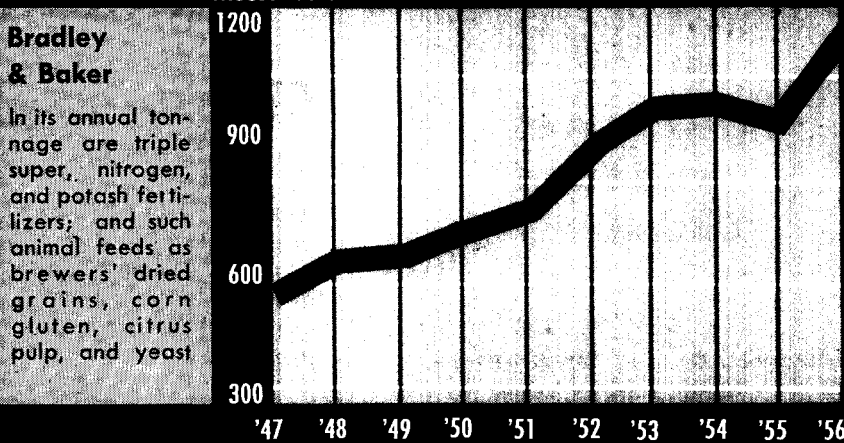
Trade Names in Marketing

Another marketing approach used to advantage is the value of the trade name. After years of use, the farmer knows the product and becomes prejudiced in its favor. Nitrolime, Cal-Nitro, and Tencor Triple (Tennessee Corp.), and Steamboat Brand (Mississippi River Chemical) are some of the names that the farmer knows well, and Bradley & Baker aims to see it stay that way.

The firm is not worried about current nitrogen surpluses. "With today's growing population, and increasing awareness of needs all over the world, it's not going to be many years before nitrogen demands will soar. As long as people are not getting sufficient food in many parts of the world, we don't have too much nitrogen."

Annual Volumes of Fertilizers & Feedstuffs

Thousands of Tons

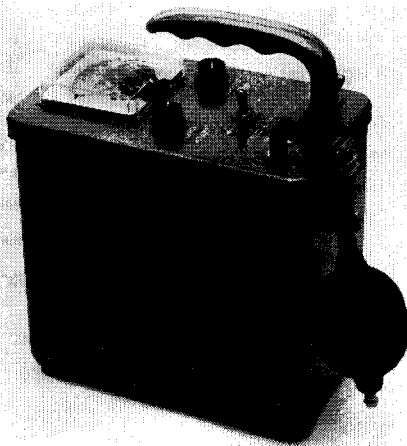


Bradley & Baker

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