

THE CAROLINA FARMER

UNION



Vol. 5. No. 44.

GASTONIA, N. C., NOVEMBER 2, 1911

One Dollar a Year

Why Farmers Should Organize and Stay Organized

II—To Co-Operate as a Neighborhood.

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Every wide-awake, progressive rural community can make a Local Union the biggest asset in the community, if the citizens will set themselves to the right kind of efforts, through the application of the principle of neighborhood co-operation. A local organization of farmers in a vicinity has a field of usefulness that is limited only by the intelligent activity of its members. Through the local Farmers' Union a closer relationship is developed and maintained in a vicinity where community interests are common to all, and these community interests, such as better school facilities, extension of rural telephone service, establishment of rural libraries, the building of better roads, etc., can not be promoted successfully except through some kind of neighborhood co-operation, and as education must precede the adoption of every reform or progressive idea, there is no better place to educate than in the Local Union. But it is not my purpose to sermonize at length upon the far-reaching and beneficent effects of closer relationship and neighborhood co-operation to promote general community interests, such as I have mentioned, but to refer to some thing specific—something that concerns the direct personal and material interests of the farmers of a rural community, and suggest some ways that these class interests may be advanced through neighborhood co-operation. In fact, it will be my endeavor, through these articles on "Why Farmers Should Organize and Stay Organized," to stick close to the idea of direct class interests, for that is the part which farmers are most interested in, and it embodies the real problems to be solved, as they affect the business side of the farmer's life.

The average farmer isn't able now to buy, on his own individual account all the modern labor-saving farm implements that he needs for the farm, and the average farmer will never be able to pay for the implements and farm machinery which he must have if he produces his crops as economically as the big landlord and capitalistic farmer whose extensive farming operations justifies the outlay for all the modern farm machinery needed to produce and harvest crops at minimum cost. Unless the average farmer (and the average farmer is the small farmer) can have the use of the kind of farm machinery that is used on the big plantations and on the corporation-

owned estates, he can't compete successfully with them in production, and it is only a question of time before he or his descendants will be forced into bankruptcy. There is one way, and one way only, that the small farmer can get the use of the labor-saving farm machinery needed, and that is through neighborhood co-operation in the purchase and use of the needed implements and machinery. In this way all the members of a Local Union, who desire it, can have the use of harvesters, shredders, threshers, stump-pullers, potato planters and diggers, manure spreaders, wood-sawing outfits, co-operative repair shops, feed mills, etc. If individual ownership is preferred to co-operative or joint ownership, each individual can purchase a separate implement or machine, on his own account, and there can be a co-operative exchange of the use of these under satisfactory regulation. Neighborhood co-operation of this kind would be in harmony with the best principles of economy and is highly practical.

Then again, thoughtful, progressive farmers can make neighborhood co-operation pay in breeding and growing pedigreed live stock. A neighborhood Local Union can specialize in breeding and keeping up to a high standard any particular breed of hogs, cattle or horses and, after getting an established reputation for certain breeds, it wouldn't be hard to find a steady and profitable market for them, and the same principle of neighborhood co-operation may be applied with good results in the production of thorough-bred poultry. This principle of neighborhood co-operation may also be applied to seed selection and improvement, and also to diversification of crops by any number of members of the Local Union making a contract with each other to plant a sufficient amount of fruits, vegetables or special crops to make car-load shipments from their local station to the best markets.

Neighborhood co-operation in selling and buying can be made fruitful of splendid results. By proper classification and packing in bulk, better prices can be obtained than when sales are made, as individuals, to local merchants. By bulking the perishable products of the neighborhood together and letting the local selling agent be backed up by each individual member in a guarantee of the freshness of eggs, butter, etc., and also in a guarantee of pure-bred stock and poultry, consumers and purchasers will pay a higher price than for promiscuous and poor assort-

ments of products with nothing to indicate where they came from and with no guarantee as to quality and freshness. Equally as good results may often be obtained by co-operative buying, at the home town, from local merchants, if a Local Union will join together in their purchases and let the local secretary or trade agent do the buying, in bulk. For instance, if each member buys a half dozen rolls of fence wire, as individuals, scattering the purchases at different places, there is no concession made in price, but if two dozen members of a Local Union tell their trade agent to go on the market and buy one hundred and forty-four rolls of wire, every local dealer bids strongly for the sale, and they cut the margin of profit down to the minimum, and there is thus a big saving to each member, and don't forget that any local dealer can afford to cut the price on any kind of large sale, for a paid clerk can deliver a big purchase almost as quickly as a small purchase. The clerk's time consumed in "talking" to make a big sale isn't much more than is consumed in making a small sale—and the proprietor of the store has to pay his clerks to talk! What will apply in the purchase of fence wire will also apply in other things, even to small articles like package soda, baking powders, and other case goods. All that is necessary to get close to wholesale price on small things of this kind is to make the purchase in original case packages. It doesn't require much more of the dealer's time to deliver a case of soda than to deliver a 5-cent package of soda. By neighborhood co-operation in buying you save the merchant's time and he can well afford to make big concessions in price when you buy in bulk instead of little packages that has to be wrapped and delivered to each man under the old expensive individual method of buying.

I have thus referred to the possibilities of neighborhood co-operation to show what can be done at home, in your own district, through your own Local Union, even if your local organization were independent and separate from all other Local Unions. In our dreams of co-operation in its larger meaning, I sometimes think we are inclined to overlook the possibilities of neighborhood co-operation at home, through our Local Unions, and I am frank to say that it has always been my opinion that we can never reap the best re-

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