

The CAROLINA

Union FARMER



Vol. VII.—No. 5.

RALEIGH, N. C., JANUARY 30, 1913.

One Dollar a Year.

Gentlemen of The General Assembly, you will have aught to fear when you make ample provision for the education of the whole people.---From Inaugural Address of Charles B. Aycock.

Co-operation

C. W. Brooks, Sec'y Tennessee Farmers' Union

No subject pertaining to and of vital interest to the farmers of this country is being more discussed in the public print than co-operation. Farm journals of every class are giving this subject a prominent place in their columns; high class magazines are not overlooking this interesting topic; editors of the great dailies join in the discussion and the President of the United States recently sent out a letter to the Governors of the various States in which he set forth the advantages that may be obtained through co-operative credits.

To some it may appear that we are having a surfeit of argument and explanation in favor of co-operation among farmers. But we must not overlook the fact that men must be educated to the needs and benefits of co-operation before co-operative business associations can be successful. The isolation and freedom from restraint, as relates to his personal actions, has produced in the mind of the farmer a kind of individuality that rebels at the idea of pooling his interests with that of his neighbors and fellow farmers. For generations farmers have been conducting their affairs independently. This practice, handed down from father to son, has become, in effect, a tradition from which the farmer is loath to part. It is this cherished independence that puts the farmer's products on the markets in competition with every other farmer. And it is through this weak point that the "Middleman" enters the farmer's garner and robs him of sixty-five cents of every dollar's worth of farm products he markets.

Undoubtedly the American producers and consumers are weighted down with the most extravagant system of distribution the world has ever seen. With consumers paying three times as much for an article as the man received for producing it, the distribution of farm products becomes an economic problem that should engage the attention of every farmer and of every patriotic citizen as well. For, where such conditions exist it must of necessity be a land "where wealth accumulates and men decay."

As a result of thus robbing the agricultural class of the just rewards of their toil, although agriculture is the true basis of all prosperity, we find the farmer is rapidly losing his proportion of the wealth of the country.

In 1860 the farmer owned one-half of the national wealth.

In 1870 a little more than one-third.

In 1880 a little less than one-third.

In 1890 a little more than one-fourth.

In 1900 a little more than one-fifth.



CHARLES B. AYCOCK.

In 1910 one-sixth.

In 1920—What?

Capital having cornered most of the great industries, the railroads and mining interests of the country is now turning toward our agricultural lands with a view of controlling them. Thoughtful Americans look on corporate control of agriculture with more or less anxiety and on the encroachments of foreign capitalists, who are now investing millions in American farm lands, with fear and forebodings. The holding of large tracts of land by crowned heads, foreign syndicates and absentee landlords is un-American and a deadly menace to the public welfare. The inevitable result of landlordism and tenancy is inefficiency and retrogression. A nation of home owners is the only foundation for true progress and lasting prosperity.

It is folly to talk of checking this flow of wealth into the hands of non-producers by individual effort. Co-operation is the only remedy. Farmers must choose between organization and co-operation along various lines or a continued decrease in their holdings and continued increase in the number of landlords and tenants.

There is some hope in the fact that the co-operative idea is growing. It is coming with a rush, and is being tried out in many States and in many ways. Failures are to be reported, it is true, nevertheless, progress is being made. An awak-

ening is going on. Investigations are being made. Farmers are educating themselves along business lines and in the future they are going to have more to say about that seven billion dollars that is annually-added to the cost of their products after they leave their hands and before they reach the consumer. Farmers are demanding to know why they only get thirty-five cents of the consumer's dollar, and the consumer wants to know why he only gets one-third of what the farmer parted with for a dollar. Schemes for city markets, where vast buying associations will buy direct from producers and sell direct to consumers, have backers and doubtless many such concerns will be formed. This is a move on the part of the consumer to get more for his dollar, but it does not mean that the farmers will get more than thirty-five cents of that same dollar. If the thirty-five cents is to be increased it must come through an improved system of selling. There is going to be less cost attached to marketing, but unless farmers organize, pool their interests and sell in a systematic way, they will reap but little benefits from the change.

We should not expect a perfect system until many trials and repeated changes have been made, but we had as well understand that selfishness must give place to generosity to the extent that we are willing to help others that we may help ourselves. Co-operation means mutual responsibility, united action and each working for the interest of all. Co-operative movements will not initiate, develop and perfect themselves. There must be a real purpose and a conscious effort on the part of all interested. Nor will an enterprise once established run along automatically without the constant support of all concerned and the watchful care of men of ability. Outside help, such as papers, pamphlets and lecturers are of value only as educational factors, and a stimulus to action. Permanent value depends on local leadership. The prime necessity is that of finding men of vision, patriotism and judgment capable of adapting the local needs to outside conditions.

The Farmers' Union, covering twenty-three States, reaching from Virginia to California, is the greatest force in this co-operative movement. Through its educational and co-operative efforts it has brought many millions of dollars to the people of the South and West. As the business ability and vision of the farmers become greater, co-operative undertakings will become more numerous and more successful. It is in this field that the Farmers' Union is doing its best work. The true value of the awakening and development of a spirit of progress and rural uplift and a more proper appreciation of the responsibilities of citizenship brought about by the Farmers' Union is incalculable.