

WHERE THE PRODUCER COMES IN.

Prices received by producers of the United States for staple crops averaged about 22 per cent lower on March 1 than on that date a year ago; about 10 per cent lower than in 1911; 19 per cent lower than in 1910, and 10 per cent lower than on March 1, 1909. The average of prices increased one-sixteenth of one per cent from February 1 to March 1 this year. A year ago the increase for the same period was 3.2 per cent, and an average increase of 1.9 per cent during February of the last five years.

The above figures would present a strange contrast to the cry of the high cost of living during the past three years if there were not other factors that play a more important part in the cost of living than the prices paid to producers for staple crops. The staple crops are sold as raw materials and the great bulk of them must pass through a more or less extensive process of manufacturing before being ready for the final consumer.

There has been no decrease in the number of unnecessary middle-men handling raw materials between the producer and manufacturer. And the unnecessary distributing agencies between manufacturer and consumer will never be less than they are at present until they are forced out by a reform that will establish as nearly as possible a direct economical method of distribution. Direct marketing and direct distribution of raw materials and manufactured products would eliminate a great army of millions of men who are now living off the labors of the producers and consumers and adding nothing to the wealth of our country.

They are parasites sucking their wealth from the blood of two classes, the producers and the consumers; and these classes make up the bulk of our population. Understand that I speak of unnecessary middle-men and more than half of them could well be eliminated.

The manufacturer converts the raw materials into the finished products and thereby enhances its value. This is a necessary expense attaching to all raw materials that require manufacturing before being consumed and this includes the great bulk of all crops.

But manufacturers have combined to form monopolies and thereby arbitrarily fix prices on their products. This is an artificial and oftentimes an illegitimate increase in the cost to the consumer because the value or usefulness of the commodity is not correspondingly increased, and it does not depend upon the natural law of supply and demand.

The National Government has been trying in a way to break up these unrighteous monopolies, but so far it has not resulted in relieving the consumers from the burden of fictitious values. We may hope for relief when the tariff wall is broken down and some of the trust magnates are sent to the penitentiary.

While the manufacturers have resorted to illegal combinations that they might exact unjust and unearned tribute from the consumers, the distributors have made use of methods equally as indefensible, unjust, and not right. They have established an unnecessarily expensive method of distribution and maintain and enforce it by unlawful means, the boycott. Through the power of their organizations they prevent the manufacturer, and the wholesaler as well, from selling direct to the consumers, even in large quantities and for cash. This rule is enforced against manufacturers and wholesale dealers of fertilizers, farm implements and ve-

hicles, hardware, clothing, shoes, groceries, etc. Some manufacturers are selling their products now under fictitious firm names to the farmers' warehouse companies to avoid boycott by merchants.

I happen to know that just recently the approval of contracts for several hundred tons of fertilizer to be delivered direct from the manufacturer to the farmers for cash was held up by the home office of the company pending an investigation. Other contracts of the very same character had just been approved. It became known later that two or three merchant dealers had communicated with the manufacturer and, we presume, had threatened to boycott his goods.

It may be said in defense of the action of these merchants that they were simply living up to the rules of their organizations and protecting of their own interests, but it was a threatened boycott in restraint of trade to the extent of preventing a manufacturer from selling direct to the consumers.

Of course, transportation is an item of expense that must be met. It obtains between producer and manufacturer and from manufacturer to consumer. It is a necessary expense. When the rates are just and equitable no one will complain; but in North Carolina the rates have been discriminating and unnecessarily high. It is to be hoped that the committee appointed by the Legislature will secure from the railroads rates that are fair and reasonable.

This article was begun by a statement of the fall in prices of farm crops. No attempt has been made to explain the reasons therefor. We wanted to show that the farmers are not responsible for the high cost of living. He gets only forty cents out of the consumers' dollar; the other sixty goes to a part or all of these other agencies. The majority of farmers are not making any money beyond a scant living. These other classes with the bankers are gathering in the wealth of the country. A generation ago the farmers owned nine-tenths of the wealth of the nation; to-day they own less than four-tenths.
H. Q. ALEXANDER.

A NEW SIDE SHOW.

Tommy had been to the circus with his father and was telling mother all about it.

"But," he said regretfully, "there was one side show we didn't see."

"How do you know you didn't?" asked his mother.

"Well," explained Tommy, "just as we were leaving I heard Mr. Jones tell papa that he'd better stick around so as to see some of the pretty chickens."—The Popular Magazine.

Bacon—"This paper says there is a spring in Nevada whose waters taste like chicken soup."

Egbert—"Well, I've often had chicken soup that tasted like spring water."—Ex.

TAR HEEL SKETCHES.

(Continued from page 1.)

town, and predict that he was making a bad move, but I have never known that kind of farmer to fail in other lines of business activity. It requires closer economy and better business management to farm successfully than in almost any other occupation." This lawyer was then running a six-horse farm and improving it every year and he knew what he was talking about. The idea that farming as a whole can become a successful business without a sane and sensible co-operative marketing system will always remain as it is now—an empty dream.

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