

Cooperative Marketing of Farm Products Successful For New Hanover Farmers

Cooperative marketing has proven a success in business transactions in North Carolina, as well as in other states. It was established in this state in 1912 and the co-operative plan has been tried in all kinds of business and is now being worked out on the farms.

The Saturday market held in the city auditorium is proving that co-operative marketing is possible. Wilmington is drawing to its market farmers who are willing to make grading of farm products a success and securing the cooperation of the townspeople. Not only this, but others like Pender, Brunswick and Sampson, have proven cooperative marketing can and will be made possible.

The trials and tribulations of the period of inflation have put men to thinking who are developing more constructive work than ever before, so it comes to us at last that the value of our agricultural products stand out far ahead of anything else that forty per cent population lives on farms; that upon their prosperity depends largely the welfare of our city dwellers and we ask ourselves the question, what have we done in the past to assist our farming communities?

It is true that our United States States government has established experimental farms that the department of agriculture cooperates in many ways. We have our State Extension Divisions which endeavor to bring about the use of better seed and better live-stock, deal in plant diseases and control measures and assist generally in an educational way, just as our railroad and State agents and demonstration trains and our chambers of commerce try to train the younger generation on the farms with boy and girl clubs, home economics clubs and other projects.

All this is very helpful and of material assistance in helping the farmer to start off properly, but what are we doing to keep the boy on the farm, to make an hour's farm labor worth as much as one hour's city labor, and to make the returns from farming operations lucrative enough to start a movement back to the soil? Why is it that the condition of our farmer today is certainly far from prosperous?

We have enjoyed a comparatively fair crop and one would think that with the old popular cry of one dollar wheat and twenty-five cent cotton realized our farmers should be prosperous, but it is not so. Statistics show that, taking the value of farm products compared to manufactured products as one hundred per cent before the war, this value declined during the war to sixty-two per cent and today, notwithstanding the comparatively higher prices of farm products, it is only sixty-seven per cent. Therefore, the farmer has to spend a bale and a half of cotton today to buy the same thing that he could buy for a bale of cotton before the war.

What is necessary to make the buying power of farm products one hundred per cent of manufactured products and thereby give him an even break? The manufacturers are being thoroughly organized. They watch production—they market systematically and by establishing high standards, create satisfactory consumption. The farmer can do likewise, for the answer has been found in this answer is "cooperative marketing."

Have you ever traveled through the states of California, Washington, Oregon or the agricultural portion of Colorado? If you have, you will agree with me that the change in the farming communities of these states during the past few years is nothing less than phenomenal. As we travel along their splendid roads, through miles of fields and orchards well kept and cultivated, as we see their splendid homes and farms, as beautiful churches and parks, we wonder what has happened. We know they did not always enjoy this prosperity for, just a few years ago, they were just as badly off and may be worse than we were. This wonderful change has been brought about within a very short time by Cooperative Marketing and nothing else.

This idea was first advocated by a young attorney in California. Today this young genius is general counsel for some fifty co-operative marketing associations throughout the United States, all of them organized according to proper business principles and covering very many farm products. They are organized just like merchants and manufacturers are. They recognize the law of supply and demand and are trying to guard against surplus marketing. They improve the quantity and standard of their products and of their packages; they help to create a demand for their output by national advertising. They are not holding organizations, but endeavor to guard against dumping and to establish a proper distributing system throughout the year on a supply and demand basis. Some efforts have been made in this direction in other sections. We have the Wheat Growers' association in west Texas and the Rice Growers' association in south Texas; and while the latter has made good progress, it has never been successful or otherwise rice would not be selling today at ruinous

prices. In the Rio Grande section, we have a Fruit Growers' association, which has done considerable good, but which lack of transportation facilities has hampered materially. We have a Peach Growers' association and recently you have noticed that our onion farmers in the southwest have banded together in an effort to market jointly. We all know what tragedy onion growing has been, and we hope this movement will be successful but, after all, our real money crop is cotton and there the task is a big one but, by no means, an impossible one.

It is mainly lack of understanding that has kept the business man and the professional man from doing his share in assisting co-operative marketing. In 1920, the first effort at co-operative marketing was made. Today associations are existing in Oklahoma, Texas, Mississippi, Arizona, North Carolina, Alabama and Tennessee. In 1920 150,000 farmers have been signed up with an approximate output of three million bales. Do not understand me to say that these associations will handle three million bales of cotton this year, for I do not think they will reach this amount, but they have already obtained sufficient standing to make their influence felt in the cotton market and to help to stabilize it. Their method of standard grading and classification and their ability to sell large lots of equal running grades has attracted the attention of large buyers and the Dallas office of the American Cotton Growers' exchange the other day had one order for 50,000 bales from Japan. The War Finance Corporation has assisted them with large advances, the Texas Farm Bureau Cotton association alone receiving a credit of \$9,000,000 for the purpose of handling Texas cotton.

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The time has passed when we want to insist on the farmer turning loose his cotton as soon as he gets it so we can collect. As much as I like to collect what we have on our books, I would much rather inconvenience myself

self some and let the farmer handle his cotton through this association, thereby obtaining a reasonable advance against his warehouse receipt, with which he can pay the larger part of what he owes and then wait and have his crop, together with the crop of other farmers marketed gradually throughout the season, in this way stabilizing the market. The more thorough this is worked out and the wider the support that is given to this movement, the less will be the hardship on any one of us and the greater will be the results; but it needs the combined effort of all, bankers and merchants.

There is no question of the economic soundness of co-operative marketing. The strong bankers in the United States have approved it. Leaders of finance like Bernard Baruch, Thos. W. Price, Otto H. Kahn, and countless others are advocating it. It has the approval of the secretary of agriculture and the President of the United States, and if you hear any one talk against it, you may rest assured he either puts a personal, selfish interest ahead of community welfare or does not know what he is talking about.

Let us get behind the farmer throughout this country and assist him in establishing sound and safe co-operative marketing associations for his various products, and it will not be very long until we shall be able to show that farming is not only a healthful and ideal way of living, but also equally as remunerative as occupations in the city, and with the many inducements held out to the farmer today, good roads, automobiles, telephone, radio, artificial light and other conveniences, farming will become as attractive as it should be, provided it can be made to pay and we shall establish the real basis for their prosperity as well as for our own.

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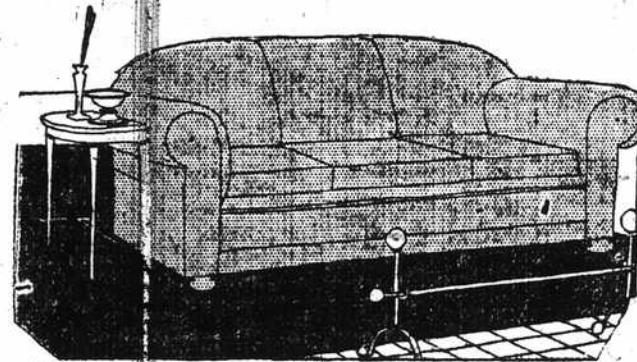
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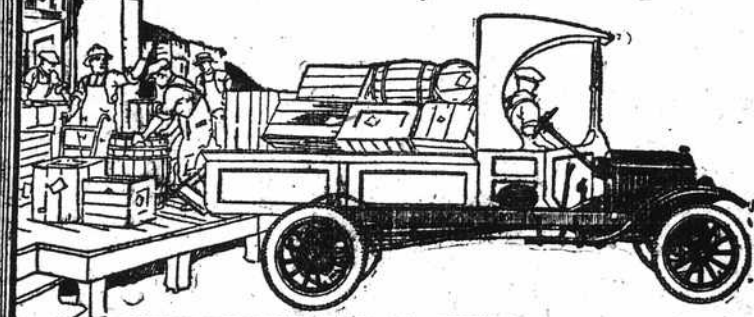
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