

## EDUCATION, COÖPERATION, LEGISLATION

(1) Education to Develop Power, (2) Cooperation to Multiply It, and (3) Legislation and Good Government to Promote Equal Rights and Human Progress—Plain Talk About Men, Measures and Movements Involved

By CLARENCE POE

### Another \$240,000,000 Lost to Cotton Farmers

**I**N The Progressive Farmer of November 9, 1912, we published an editorial article, "A \$300,000,000 Robbery: the Serial Story of a Crime." In that article we took up the cotton crop of 1911 and traced the course of prices from start to finish.

On August 12, 1911, just before the new 1911 crop began to come in, as we pointed out, our market reports quoted middling cotton at 13¼ cents a pound.

By September 30, when the farmers began to sell, it had dropped to 10½ cents.

In October prices went to 9 11-16 cents.

November 18 quotations were 9½ cents.

And farmers who were only able to hold out till Christmas-time were forced to sell at 9 1-8 cents.

By New Year's, of course, most of the poorer farmers had sold, and prices in January climbed back to 9½ cents.

In February they went to 10 3-8.

In March to 10 13-16.

In April to 11 cents.

In May to 12 cents.

In August to 12¾ cents.

In other words, August prices represented an advance of nearly \$300,000,000 over the low prices of Christmas-time—an advance that went largely into the hands of the speculative and commercial classes instead of going to the men whose brain and muscle made the crop.

We have now suffered a similar experience with the 1914 crop. The prices a few months ago were only six to seven cents a pound for middling cotton; now nine to ten cents. On a crop of 16,102,000 bales of 500 pounds each (the United States Government estimate) three cents a pound increase in price represents an advance of \$241,530,000 in total values. In other words, since the cotton crop of 1914 largely passed out of the hands of the men who grew it, its value has advanced nearly a quarter of a billion dollars—an advance which, like that of three years ago, has largely gone into the pockets of merchants, landlords, and speculators, instead of producers.

war zone and English and American mills anxious to capture the trade of any European mills that close, there is likely in any case to be but a small decrease in the world's cotton consumption in the year 1914-15. . . . While changed conditions may have afforded justification for a drop to twelve-cent prices, a drop below ten cents was not and is not justified by conditions now existing."

### What the Government Should Have Done

**O**UR first effort then was to prove that the world was going to demand cotton and that farmers ought therefore to hold instead of being stampeded by those who talked of a ruined demand and five-cent prices.

Our next effort was to show that in an abnormal and unprecedented condition such as then prevailed it was the duty of the Government to come to the farmers' relief. But at the same time, we constantly urged that plans for relief should be practical instead of ideal. The proposition to compel acreage reduction by law we pronounced "utterly impracticable" as early as September, and all later experience fully confirmed this view. We also declared in September:

"We have absolutely no hope that Congress will buy one bale of cotton, no matter what happens, and the wise plan, it seems to us, is to concentrate all our energies on plans there is some hope of bringing to pass, without taking up precious time advocating anything else.

"But we should demand, and have a right to demand, that currency shall be so issued that any farmer in the South may borrow at least five cents a pound on cotton until the market becomes normal again.

"Beyond this the Government may refuse to go, but we believe even this will make it unnecessary for a single pound of 1914 middling to be sacrificed for less than ten cents—and insure materially higher prices next year."

We still believe, as we believed then, that it was a great tactical mistake to ask the Government to buy cotton at twelve cents a pound. We do not believe that it was the Government's duty to buy; we do believe it was the duty of the Government to make funds available so that farmers might have borrowed five, six, or seven cents a pound at not over 6 per cent interest. And in failing to do this the Government failed to render agriculture such help as we believe it would have extended to our banking or commercial interests in like plight.

### Three Lessons We Should Learn

**A**LL this, however, is now of the past. We mention the facts now simply for three purposes:

(1) To warn our people against being led astray by wild statements in times of panic. We know now that a law to prohibit cotton planting this year would have been absurd. We know that the men who said there would be no demand for half the crop simply jumped at conclusions without investigating the facts.

(2) To point out the advantages, in all legislative matters, of asking not for what we should like to have but for what there is some chance of getting. We know that many leaders of our farmers honestly thought that the way for cotton farmers to get what they wanted was to ask for ten times more than they expected. We believe now, however, that these leaders will admit that we thereby simply discredited our cause. It may be good policy among horse-swappers sometimes to ask \$375 for a horse you expect to get \$75 for, but such methods hardly work in Washington.

(3) The need for an adequate system of rural credits. A bale of cotton is the best security in the world. It doesn't rust, rot, wither, blight, or canker; weevils don't eat it; moths do not corrupt it, and it is one of the most troublesome things in the world to steal. If there is anything in the world better security than cotton, it's land. And yet with both land and cotton—collateral that ought to give the Southern farmer about the lowest interest rate in the world—the fact is that he pays about the highest rate in the world.

Something has got to be done about this. The usury and immorality of crop liens and "time prices" must be attacked. We must have banking institutions that will serve our agricultural interests as adequately and cheaply as our city banks now serve our commercial interests. If we had had a proper rural credits system last fall this \$240,000,000 increase in 1914 crop values might have been largely saved to the man whose sweat made this crop.

### Organize a Marketing Association Now

**W**ITHOUT waiting for the Government to work out a rural credits system, however, there are some things our farmers should do for themselves. In fact, the more efficient our farmers become in solving their own problems, the more they can get the Government to do for them. God helps them that help themselves. Power is given to those who have power.

And our farmers through organization may certainly do much for themselves to better market conditions. If the members of the Local Unions, Sub-Affiliates, or other farmers' clubs or the individual farmers in your part of the county will begin now to make plans to market your cotton next fall in 25, 50, 100, or 500-bale lots, it is impossible to say how much you will gain.

1. Where large quantities are sold together it is easier to get competitive bidding and therefore higher prices.

2. You will doubtless get the advantage of higher prices for grades above middling—profits that are usually almost wholly lost to growers. As the farmers said in one county where a Government grader did work last year: "Buyers had never before recognized any grades above middling."

3. The poorer and less well informed farmers who are now frequently imposed upon will be protected by this cooperation with their stronger neighbors.

4. If prices are low and you wish to hold your cotton, it will be much easier to secure favorable terms from banks and warehouses if you concentrate your holdings.

5. By pooling your cotton seed you will also get better cash prices, or if you exchange cotton seed for meal, it will be easier to get "a ton of meal for a ton of seed" or better.

Just one more word of caution: It takes longer to organize a marketing association than you think. If you are to be prepared to get full value for your 1915 crop, it is none too early to ask your neighbors to meet somewhere some Saturday and see what you can do about it. Of course, a marketing association should not be confined to cotton but should also aim to market corn, hay, livestock, meats, etc. A general farmers' marketing association like that reported last week from Lafayette County, Mississippi, will probably be best.

### "T Jes' Wants to Sleep With That Money One Night"

**W**E MUST have a better rural credits system and we must have cooperative marketing, but even these will not make the South prosperous, unless we make our farms self-supporting. As Prof. E. C. Branson has so frequently said, the South's wealth-producing power is tremendous; its wealth-retaining power is absurdly small. Our Southern farmers make millions and millions of dollars worth of cotton and tobacco, but pay it right out again for Western corn and hay and meat, plus the middlemen's charges and the freight bills. As Commissioner E. J. Watson says:

"We have been doing seemingly great things, looking only on one side of the ledger and paying no attention to the other—the spending side and the soil exhaustion side."

Now it is time for our people to learn that it's not what we make but what we save that counts. What boots it to have a billion dollar cotton crop if all of it goes to merchants in the South, farmers in the West, and railroads between here and there? Mr. J. Z. Green reminds us of the saying of the farmers in a section of diversified agriculture: "We don't handle so much money as you folks in the cotton and tobacco sections, but we keep more." What good does it do us to "handle" money if it doesn't stay with us?

The fact is that some of us don't even get to handle it. Thousands and thousands of our farmers are in the plight of an honest old darkey in our old home county. He went to the storekeeper in the fall with three bales of cotton and the merchant figured up his account. "The \$120 for your cotton just lacks \$3 of paying you out," he said. "But please, sah," pleaded the old darkey, "won't you let me have it jest for tonight and I'll fetch it back to you tomorrow?" "What for?" was the rejoinder. "Why, jes' because I wants to sleep with that much money one night," was the darkey's answer.

We need just two things to make our cotton sections prosperous, (1) individual action whereby each farmer will aim to make his own farm self-sustaining; (2) cooperative action whereby all the farmers in a neighborhood will work together to improve marketing conditions, credit facilities, etc., etc.

The world is only saved by the breadth of the school-children, and Jerusalem was destroyed because the instruction of the young was neglected.—"The Talmud."

### The Fight to Save Cotton Values to Cotton Growers

**I**T IS gratifying at least to recall that The Progressive Farmer has done its part in the effort to save this enormous increase in 1914 crop values to the men who earned it. "What Are You Going to Do for the Man at the Bottom?" was the title of a circular letter we sent to every Southern Congressman in August, and we continued to point out that the man who actually plows and hoes cotton is little known to town and city bankers and would not get relief from them unless special legislation were adopted. The full program we advocated may be briefly summarized as follows:

1. We urged farmers to hold cotton.
2. We pointed out the reasons why prices should go higher.
3. We urged policies for helping the debt-ridden to hold.
4. We insisted upon reasonable rather than radical plans.

It is now easy enough to see what a panic the South was in last fall. In nearly every cotton meeting we attended and in nearly every daily paper we read somebody proclaimed that not more than half the cotton crop could possibly be used; that mills on the continent of Europe would not run, and that English mills would be on half-time. We even heard it declared that cotton would go to four cents a pound. We had to face orators who declared that the whole South should be prohibited by law from growing a lock of cotton this year.

It was this spirit of panic especially that The Progressive Farmer and the writer sought to quell. Over and over again we pointed out that the mills of Germany, France and Austria combined had only 15 per cent of the world's spindles; that English mill workers were largely women and children who would not be called to war, and that English mills would run practically on full time. As we said on September 26:

"The wild talk about having to carry over half the crop till next fall is doubtless responsible for much of this panic; and The Progressive Farmer has been almost alone in everlastingly swatting this falsehood—a falsehood apparently started or perpetuated by 'bear' speculators and other unscrupulous men anxious to buy cotton cheap. . . . With only a small proportion of the world's spindles in the