

EDUCATION, COÖPERATION, LEGISLATION

(1) Education to Develop Power, (2) Coöperation 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

Four Big Issues

MR. W. T. Bost, the brilliant correspondent of the Greensboro News, mentions four big issues which the political leaders of North Carolina will have to reckon with in the campaign next year. The four big problems in the order that he gives them are:

1. A juster system of taxation.
2. Race segregation in land ownership.
3. Rural credits.
4. Township system of government.

This begins to look as if the practical issues that really benefit the farmer are going to get attention. At the same time it should be remembered that townsmen having run politics so long, it will take vigorous effort on the part of the farmers to compel action on questions affecting the farmers' welfare. In this state, where 80 per cent of the people get their living from the farm, there was not a single farmer on the state platform committee of the dominant party last year, nor have farmers been conspicuous in shaping the policy of any political party in the state. It is high time for a change in the treatment of our rural people and rural problems.

Texas Coöperative Cotton Gins Prove Big Success

IF THE dairy farmers and grain farmers of the West own and run their elevators and creameries on the coöperative, patronage-dividend plan, why shouldn't the cotton farmers of the South own and run their cotton gins and cottonseed oil mills on the same plan—that is to say (1) pay legal interest on capital stock and (2) divide all other profits on the basis of patronage—non-members getting patronage dividends at one-half the rates allowed members.

We don't mean by this that farmers ought to begin a boycott of any existing gins or cottonseed oil mills, or that coöperative gins and mills should be started in opposition to honestly conducted plants of this kind now running on the old capitalistic basis. But wherever a section needs a new cotton gin or a new cottonseed oil mill, or wherever there is a good chance to buy out a gin or mill on a profitable basis, the farmers will do well to inquire if a group of them cannot get together and take another step toward hastening the time when the farmer will own all the businesses engaged in marketing or finishing farm products.

Out in Haskell, Knox and Fisher Counties, Texas, the farmers are already getting this idea and operating a number of successful cotton gins. Writing in the Farmers' Fireside Bulletin, Manager J. N. Hudson of the O'Brien gin says:

"In the spring of 1910 we commenced to agitate the question of a coöperative gin at O'Brien, Haskell County, Texas. There had once been a Local Union at O'Brien, though at that time there was no local there. We made the third trial before we could effect a local with five members, though when we once got started we advanced very rapidly. We now have 100 paid-up members. There was a local a few miles west of town and we organized one a few miles east of town—at Dennis Chapel—and then we organized the three locals into a District Union and went into the gin business. On April 1, 1913, we paid the last dollar we owed on our gin, including the money advanced by our members to start the business, and on February 1, 1914, we returned to the membership \$23,000 profit on their business.

"In the summer of 1914 we built another gin about one hundred yards from the first one, and ginned about six thousand bales of last year's crop. The business transacted was \$40,000, with a saving of \$8,000, which was turned over to the membership on February 27, 1915."

Nor did the good work stop there. Mr. Hudson goes on to say that in 1913 this idea spread and five more gins were built, four in Haskell County and one in Knox, and last year one more was built in Knox and three in Fisher. He adds: "From the 1914 crop those eleven gins have ginned 52,000 bales of cotton, shipped 675 cars, or 16,875 tons of cotton seed, and their total business will reach \$420,000, with a saving of \$100,000 to the people. And when I say the people, I mean the men that planted and plowed the crop, and the little boys and girls who chopped the cotton and pulled the sacks up and down the long rows and harvested the crops."

Buy the Business With Patronage Dividends

THE farmers are certainly learning a thing or two. As J. Z. Green says, they are beginning to use their heads for something else besides hatracks. The building and loan associations have a catchy saying, "Buy a Home With Rent Money", and the farmers are beginning to learn that in the case of a business that markets or handles farm products, a business supported by the farmer's patronage, they can "buy a business with patronage dividends."

When the writer was in Denmark he was told that in a great proportion of that country's successful coöperative creameries the farmer-owners had never paid in one cent of capital. They had simply signed notes for their stock, borrowed money from banks on long-time payments, and then had let the profits from the creamery pay off the notes—a plan now being partly copied by tobacco farmers in some sections in getting control of tobacco warehouses. Almost the same idea has been used by these Texas farmers in getting possession of their coöperative cotton gins. The plan as explained by Mr. Hudson is as follows:

"If there is no organization where you want to build a gin, organize local Farmers' Unions and then districts, and then take an 'inventory' of the members of the district, each man subscribing to pay such amount as he would be able to pay in case he should be called on when the required amount is subscribed. Each man gives a note for the amount of his subscription. These notes are placed in the bank for collateral. Now the board of directors figure what cash they need to start the business, and make an assessment, each member paying his part according to his subscription. When this assessment is paid, each member receives a receipt for the same, which bears interest until paid by the company. The first money earned by the gin, after all other indebtedness is paid above expenses, goes to pay these assessment debts, with 10 per cent interest. Then you have your gin paid for, and it has never cost the membership anything, nor do they have a cent tied up in the gin. Now, all money above expenses that the gin earns is profit, and is returned to the membership according to their patronage by the bale."

Of course the interest rate allowed by contract in Texas (10 per cent) is higher than in most other states, and we would not commend the 10 per cent feature of the foregoing plan, but otherwise it is all right. And wherever there are Local Unions or farmers' clubs they will do well to consider if they cannot strengthen themselves by federating or organizing into a "district" as was done in the cases mentioned by Mr. Hudson.

Profitable Marketing Means Coöperative Marketing

IT CANNOT be too often emphasized that profitable marketing means coöperative marketing. Here are two illustrations that came to our attention last week. The first is that in one Alabama neighborhood sometime ago, farmers became interested in growing better livestock and took up hog raising. But because they gave no attention to the marketing end they crowded their little market town with 600 hogs, whereas it had previously been absorbing probably not more than a hundred, with the result that a large proportion of the hogs were sold at 2½ to 3½ cents a pound gross when Kansas City was paying 6 cents a pound gross. There is a story about a little boy who said that "salt is something that makes Irish potatoes taste mighty bad when you don't put it on 'em", and this story simply indicates that coöperation is something that makes marketing very unsatisfactory when you don't apply it.

In the other instance a group of North Carolina farmers obtained the services of a Government expert in cotton grading, and on one lot of 375 bales officially graded, and shipped to Norfolk, Virginia, a clear profit of \$800 was realized over and above the prices offered by the local cotton buyers. As the friend said who told us this incident: "This illustrates the advantages both of expert grading and also the advantages of selling in large quantities. For both of these results coöperation is necessary—the organization of farmers' marketing associations. In this same county an investigation last year showed that the men marketing as much as ten bales at a time averaged

\$1.15 more a bale than those who sold single bales."

Respect Law Because It Is Law

SOUTH Carolina the other day voted overwhelmingly for state-wide prohibition, whereupon the Columbia State, which has been the most conspicuous newspaper opponent of prohibition, came out in an editorial utterance which everybody from one end of the South to the other ought to read:

"The vote yesterday leaves for The State, and for honest, manly citizens who would have this South Carolina a fit place for themselves and their children to live in but one thing to do, and that is to uphold the law. If any honest man there be who thinks that he cannot live where the whiskey traffic is outlawed, he owes it to himself to go, and stand not upon the order of his going, to some land where it is lawful. To remain and encourage, tacitly or actively, an unlawful traffic will be to become a breaker of the law, and an enemy of the commonwealth."

It is this spirit, the spirit of bowing to the will of the majority, of accepting frankly the results of our processes of law, however disagreeable they may be to us personally at any time—it is this spirit on which rest the foundations of civilization and safety. He is usually a childish weakling and a contemptible man not to be trusted who will not abide by the results of the game, played according to the rules—he is "not a good sport" and men rightly despise him—and the same thing is true of the citizen who will not honestly wait for and accept the verdicts of juries and courts and elections, these being the established rules set up by the people for the settlement of causes and cases.

The spirit of lawlessness is becoming entirely too strong in the South, and is hurting our reputation the world over. It is timely and fitting therefore to recall the notable words of the great American philosopher, William James, in a public address years ago:

"Democracy is still upon its trial. The civic genius of our people is its only bulwark, and nothing can save us from degeneration if the inner mystery be lost. That mystery, at once the secret and the glory of our English-speaking race, consists in nothing but two common habits, two inveterate habits carried into public life,—habits so homely that they lend themselves to no rhetorical expression, yet habits more precious, perhaps, than any that the human race has gained. They can never be too often pointed out or praised. One of them is the habit of trained and disciplined good temper towards the opposite party when it fairly wins its innings. The other is that of fierce and merciless resentment toward every man or set of men who break the public peace."

Take this standard of judging the "civic genius" of your county and see how your people stand. Are they willing to abide by and accept the verdict of law, and are they fiercely resentful of any man who, unwilling to abide by law, becomes instead "a breaker of the public peace"? This is a good test of a people's progress in civilization.

Minor Matters

THERE'S many and many a backward neighborhood in which it is almost impossible to get neighborhood action by voluntary means. The residents have no farmers' club or Local Union, and there is not local leadership enough—not enough persons who are willing to give time and trouble and energy in arousing the indifferent—to make any such organization a permanent success. Hence there is no community life, no coming together of the people to consider and act upon all the vital matters affecting community progress and community welfare. Inevitably, therefore, such neighborhoods stagnate. With the township system of government the voters would be summoned as citizens to come together at least once a year, and gradually the little leaven would leaven the whole lump. We must give rural communities local self-government.

Don't dismiss the idea of coöperative cotton gins without giving it more attention. Why shouldn't the ginning profits go back to the men who created them? Read what Mr. Hudson says about the success of this idea in the counties mentioned and then talk up the subject in your farmers' club.

President Mobley of the Arkansas Farmers' Union writes us: "We're with you in the twelve-cent cotton fight. I am calling a state meeting to inaugurate a state campaign to induce the farmers to keep cotton safe from fire and water, as they keep corn, grade it, borrow money from the banks, hold, and market gradually through a county committee coöperating with a state committee."