

Co-operation carries with it an idea that seems to have been overlooked by the majority of our members. To bring the point out clearly, I shall briefly refer to those societies formed for the purchase of supplies for their members. Agents or officers are elected with full authority to transact all the business, and the individual accepts the price put upon the goods without question, having of course, the right, through the Executive Committee, or otherwise, to investigate the books of the concern. In other words, in joining a society of this kind he surrenders the right to barter as an individual for his goods. It will logically follow that one who joins a co-operative society based upon either of the forms enumerated, must surrender to some extent his individuality. This is the key-note to the whole proposition. Upon the proper acceptance of this depends the success of any co-operative enterprise. It is useless to talk about the co-operative handling of cotton or any other crop, at the same time allowing the individual to have absolute authority over the disposition of his portion. This surrendering of all rights to an authorized agent, with authority to sell when and where he pleases, may seem radical to some, but that is exactly what co-operation contemplates, and whether or not we are ready for it, the membership must decide.

It is noticeable that organizations which have been uniformly successful in handling perishable products, such as fruit and berries, for their members, have insisted upon this principle.

The reason for insisting that societies formed to handle farm crops should be co-operative, are obvious to most thinking people, but it may be well at this point to discuss the relative merits of private stock companies and co-operative companies. In the very nature of things the stock company measures its success by the earning capacity of its capital, and naturally expects to secure for its stockholders all the profit that the trade will stand. A company of this character, though organized by members of the Farmers Union, and for the primary purpose of assisting all members, whether stockholders or not, in the sale of products, has no reason to hope for the patronage of such membership except as it can demonstrate superior ability for selling that which it handles than its competitors upon the same scale of charge, or can make sales for a smaller fee. It is very clear that the company will not, so long as it represents the whim of individual producers, become a strong factor in fixing and maintaining prices.

To insure success in fixing equitable prices, and making sales at a

minimum of cost, every producer, or a sufficient number of them at least, to control the bulk of the crop, must be given a direct personal interest in the organization. Many have held contrary opinions, I am aware. The impression was at one time general that if an institution was founded by some of the members, others would support it because it was a Farmers Union concern. But history has clearly demonstrated the fallacy of such an argument. It shows a weakness in calculation when we rely upon sentiment alone to insure the success of an enterprise. We have omitted an important element—the individual and his pocket-book. Little it matters whether a private company is operated by his brother members or outsiders, so long as they remain independent and there is no concerted action among them in the same direction; he may be expected to buy service wherever he pleases. The Farmers Union started out to change the old order of things and substitute a plan of its own. It has always been possible to ship products to large centers, and secure an advance of money pending the sale, but this carries with it no pooling of interests in the sale. If we have any mission at all to fill, it is to pool the interests of our members and sell products through our own agencies.

Co-operation is not at all complicated. Its workings are very simple. Necessary working capital is paid a fixed rate of interest for its use and all products are handled for a fixed charge. The stockholder's interest in the affair is no greater, except of course, the interest on his money, than that of a non-stockholder who furnishes the commodity to the company, because after paying interest for capital used, salaries and incidental expenses, and providing the necessary sinking fund, any surplus is returned to the patrons in proportion to the amount of patronage. In my humble judgment this is the only way we have hope to enlist a sufficient number of producers of corn, wheat, oats, cotton, tobacco, or any other farm crop in an effort to handle the product.

It is unnecessary to add that such an enterprise must cover more territory than a township, a county, or a state. Its power and influence must be felt over the entire belt where the product is grown. We hear lots of advice about marketing the crop gradually, but will someone please explain how that very necessary thing is to be done when every producer, every business concern, and every state acts independently. To accomplish this, sectional lines must disappear and some agency be given power to pro rata the sales. Most producers not being able to carry their own crops

indefinitely, will need financial assistance, which can be secured as intimated before,—when the system is in proper shape to guarantee the loans.

Receipts for produce stored must be uniform, so that they may be used as commercial paper. Some Federal legislation along this line will doubtless be necessary. It may be well to state in this connection that Senator Aldrich claims his financial measure, which may be enacted into law by the present Congress, makes just such a provision. Please bear in mind that I am expressing no opinion as to the merits or demerits of the Aldrich bill, but merely stating a report. Necessary legislation can be secured with the proper efforts, if it has not already been done, when the time comes for agitation.

Brethren of the organization, let me appeal to you to study this question of co-operation seriously. We have suffered some hard knocks in the past, but experience has taught us many things, the greatest of which is, we must work out our own salvation. We have been a mighty power notwithstanding the incompleteness of our system. Let us take another forward step and perfect a gigantic co-operative organization.

A. C. DAVIS,

Secretary-Treasurer.

Rogers, Ark., Dec. —, 1911.

Capella Local No. 1290.

Dear Editor: As I have not seen anything from this local, I will write a few lines to let the Brother union men know what we are doing.

We have some good union men in this local, and we also have some dead heads. There are some of the members who have not answered to their names this year, 1911. If they would come out to every meeting, there would be some business done in this local. We want to see if our members can't wake up and come out again. If we will only co-operate we can save money this year. The Union men are pooling their tobacco at Walnut Core, and are doing very well. They have pooled about 1/4 of a million pounds already and they are well pleased with the price they are getting. They say it is the only way to market the weed. We want to do more Union business another year, and I beg the members to come out and put their shoulders to the wheel and help push the good work along. I would like for more of the members to read the Carolina Union Farmer, and if you want to subscribe for it, see your secretary and treasurer of each local and he will help you get it. If this escapes the waste basket we may hear from Capella again.

PETE SMITH,  
Secy. and Treas.

R—1, King, N. C.

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