

The Carolina Union Farmer

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EDITORIAL COMMENT.

DIRECT SELLING AND BUYING.

In the counties that grow sweet potatoes for the market farmers have been disposing of this product on the local markets at \$1.00 per bushel this spring. In the counties where farmers have been buying seed sweet potatoes they have been paying \$1.75 per bushel. Allowing twelve or fifteen cents a bushel for freight charges, it leaves the middlemen sixty cents per bushel for the simple act of transferring this product from producer to consumer. In many other instances, the percentage of profits that go to distributing agents runs up to a hundred per cent and above. As long as we maintain a distributing or selling system that costs an average of sixty per cent to get farm products from producers to consumers can we ever hope to make the business of farming as profitable and as attractive as other vocations? And as long as we are content to maintain a dozen distributing agents where one could do the work (under co-operative selling and buying) more satisfactorily and more economically, do you think "tariff reform" or even "bursting the trusts" could help this sort of business suicide which we, as a class, are guilty of?

CONGESTING LOCAL MARKETS.

Depending upon local merchants to buy our products and then rushing our products upon the local markets regardless of economic demand, is a disgusting and ruinous method of doing business. If the local dealer has no market for the products at home he must hunt up a place to sell them, and as handling farm produce is a side line with him he isn't expected to be in touch with many good places to dispose of these products, and with the element of uncertainty that confronts him, he doesn't feel like risking much of a price, so he bids low on the products and gets them, because the unorganized farmer, with no selling system of his own, has never looked up any other place to sell his products except in the local stores of his nearest town. Under this method of selling the more congested the local markets become the lower the prices descend, and the harder it becomes for farmers to realize even a small profit for their industry.

WORKING HARD FOR BENEFIT OF OTHERS.

Where we work hard through long hours and put into practice methods that increase the output of our farms we flatter ourselves over the results, and the world applauds us, but when we permit others to fix the prices of our products lower and lower, as we congest the local markets, we must keep it in mind that the distributors and consumers of our products become the real beneficiaries of our labor and our industry, and until we

establish, own and operate a marketing system of our own, we can never hope to become the beneficiaries of our own industry and our economies in production.

ACCESSIBLE LOCATIONS.

In building our warehouses and other distributing enterprises we should first select with care the site. It should be selected with special consideration of its accessibility to its prospective patrons and its prospective enhancement in value as an asset. As a rule, it isn't a wise policy for a County Union to promote and establish an enterprise for the whole county at some small town or flag station just because land is cheap there, or because a site has been donated. If we succeed in establishing a selling system that will bring producers and consumers closer together, the places of business should be located near the consumers to prevent the necessity of useless handling and shipping. In a State like North Carolina, where there is great diversity of farming interests, distributing warehouses should be established in the larger towns and cities first. While the real estate part of the assets will cost more in the larger places these assets will, if purchased right, grow in value much faster than in the smaller places and in that way will put the stock of the corporation at a premium, and thus give to the corporation a more attractive commercial rating as the years go by.

CO-OPERATION OR CORPORATION.

Discussing the necessity for a business system of selling and buying, Benjamin West makes the following comment in Texas Farm Co-operator:

"Corporation is better than co-operation for these times, as any one can understand dollars paid as dividends, the very feel of money as it touches the hand is a satisfying certainty that he has profited, but the mind untrained to the intricacies of Savings being equal to profit does not so easily grasp to the co-operative enterprise, is more practical as mills and the trading would unhesitatingly recognize them as a regular system of business on a large scale and banks only ask as to reliability before accommodating them. All systems of business are less disposed to recognize the purely co-operative enterprise, throwing expensive and cumbersome regulations around transactions with them. Those working for a corporation know they must make good in showing profits paid to stockholders and in proper treatment of customers, while in a purely co-operative enterprise where profits are not shown in records of the business, since there is no way to show what each has saved the business and its patrons. To put it in a nut-shell, a dividend in the shape of a Ten Dollar Bill placed in the farmer's hand is much more convincing as to what he has made, than a slip of paper with figures showing what he has saved, the feel is not there."

DIFFERENCE IN DETAIL ONLY.

Whether we agree or disagree with Mr. West in his conclusion, it is a fact that the principle of co-operation can be applied through a corporation, and if the corporation is owned by the parons who get their benefits in form of dividends on their own capital and patronage, then the corporation becomes co-operative in results. Therefore, instead of concluding that "corporation is better than co-operation," as Mr. West expresses it, why not say that what we need is "both corporation and co-operation," for in this age of commercialism one can not be successful for the farmer without the other. If, in the distribution of profits, dividends are made both upon capital invested and patronage furnished, the corporation would become still more co-operative, and its benefits might thereby be extended to the organized farmer who, for lack of means, has not become a stockholder, and if deemed advisable, his dividends on patronage could be applied to payment of stock in the corporation, and his own

patronage would thereby render him able to become a shareholder in the stock of the corporation. Whatever may be said as to the theory of co-operation, it is the opinion of those who have studied the proposition deeply, that no co-operative method can be put successfully into operation in this country without capitalization and corporation, and along with the building of the corporation (which at best must progress slowly) its stockholders and patrons must be taught by actual demonstration what co-operation means and its possible benefits, for the biggest and strongest co-operative corporation can not succeed without the support and patronage of the would-be co-operators.

WHO SHOULD DO THE PRICING?

A lady correspondent to the Mississippi Union Advocate says:

"I hope and trust that I will live to see the day when the merchant will have to ask old 'red neck' what he will take for his cotton, corn or potatoes, and all other things we can raise. We now have to ask them what they will give us. I do not blame the merchant if he can get cotton for three cents for taking it. I blame the farmer that lets him have it. The farmer could be as independent as they are if they would stick to each other and conserve their interests."

That farmer's wife has the right conception of the duty of the men on the farm who wear the pants and pretend to be independent. Certainly the farmer has just as much right to put a price tag on his products as the merchant has to put it upon his goods. He has just as much right to price his products as the lawyer, the doctor or the dentist has the right to price his services. If he had been exercising this undenied right all these years, the bulk of the wealth and comforts and conveniences in this country would be in the rural districts, among the real wealth producers, instead of being controlled by non-producers. But, if we meekly surrender the right of price fixing to other classes, can we reasonably be surprised, if these other classes eventually own all the wealth of the country, farming lands included? The right that others assume to price our products can never be successfully contested by farmers as individuals. There is but one way out, and that is through organization and "co-operative corporation"--capitalized business supported by co-operative patronage.

THE PARCELS POST.

"More about the Parcels Post" is the title of an article on first page, written for the Carolina Union Farmer, by Col. J. Bryan Grimes, Secretary of State and a member of the A. & M. Local, No. 1047. Col. Grimes is one of the original movers for a general parcels post and his treatment of the bill now under consideration is very clear and any farmer who will take time to read can easily understand the present situation as relates to the "imitation parcels post" that some of our representatives desire to give the people in order that the express companies may continue to rob the country.

THE FARMERS UNION PLEDGE.

We are printing in another column the pledge recently circulated by the State Secretary for signers. A large number of these pledges have already been returned to the office of the State Secretary properly filled out but there are many in all parts of the State who have not yet sent in a pledge. This pledge is as much for the Tobacco Farmers of the State as the Cotton Farmers, and every farmer of the State, whether a cotton or tobacco planter, should obligate himself as prescribed in this pledge. If no signatures have been taken in your territory, cut out the blank on another page of this paper and have the members of your local sign it, then return it to E. C. Fairless, Secretary, Aberdeen, N. C.