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## Co-operative Buying and Distribution in the Service

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The action of the recent Civil Service Federation Convention in delegating specific work to the Committee on Co-operation marks a new era in the development of co-operation in the public service.

The effort to reduce the cost of living by co-operative buying and distribution is no new thing in the public service. It has been practised in various forms for many years. As early as 1869, a Civil Service Co-operative Association was formed. A friend in the Service has sent the writer a copy of the circular distributed to the four hundred persons comprising "the employees of the Civil Government" at that time. This organization proposed the following plans of operation:—

"1. When any number of members wish to lay in a supply of any article of general consumption, as coal, firewood, flour, butter, &c., the Managing Committee may make out a list of the intended purchasers, and order the quantity bespoke, at wholesale prices, dividing it amongst the subscribers to the list. There is no doubt a large saving can be effected in this way at a small cost for management.

"2. Arrangements may be made by the Committee with existing tradesmen in Ottawa to take a specified discount off all their prices to members of the Association for payment in cash, or for cash at the end of each month. This is the principle adopted by the Civil Service Co-operative Association in England, and involves hardly any expenses of management.

"A third method, frequently adopted by such Associations in England, viz.: that of establishing a co-operative store, appears to us inapplicable to the circumstances of the Civil Service at Ottawa."

The capital stock of this first co-operative enterprise was limited to \$2,000, to be issued in units of \$10, and no transaction was to

be undertaken until \$1,500 had been subscribed and \$1,000 paid in. Ten per cent. was to be deposited on the estimated cost of each purchase, the balance to be paid when the goods were delivered. The Association would add a profit sufficient to cover expenses of management, and to pay 8 per cent. interest on capital, any surplus profit to be placed in a reserve fund. If the expenses of management were underestimated, an assessment was to be made on each consumer in proportion to his consumption. A small remuneration was provided for the Managing Committee for their attendance at the necessary meetings of the Committee, but it was "hoped that they would give their services gratuitously at first." (No such generous provision exists in the by-laws of the present-day Association.) A salaried secretary-treasurer was to be appointed, who should have a shed or out-building in which packages could be subdivided for distribution. The following were the first Managing Committee:—E. A. Meredith, President; Messrs. Taylor, Tilton, Alf. Todd, Ashworth and Coursolles. An interesting historic parallel is the fact that an Ashworth was included among the famous twenty-eight pioneers of Rochdale.

So far as can be learned, all of these promoters have passed away, Col. Tilton's demise occurring but last year. Mr. Walter Todd, son of the Alf. Todd mentioned, remembers in his boyhood days that the Association was active, and that for several years shipments came by boat from Montreal and were duly distributed. The exact year of the discontinuance of this pioneer Association has not yet been learned.

It will be noted that the co-operators of