

Both purchasing and marketing co-operatives have continued to grow since 1940, but the most spectacular gains have been in the service field. Before 1930, financial co-operatives (*caisses populaires* and credit unions) had been practically limited to Quebec, but during the Thirties special legislation facilitating the development of credit unions was enacted in a number of provinces. The numbers, membership and assets of credit unions and *caisses populaires* have since grown with great rapidity. Co-operative insurance in the life, medical and automobile fields also has developed greatly during the last 25 years. Rural electrification co-operatives, particularly in Alberta, have brought electric power to thousands of farm homes; and co-operative housing has taken great strides in Eastern and Western Canada.

Co-operatives in 1971

For the year 1971, the Department of Agriculture received reports on 2,389 co-operatives, excluding credit unions, with a total membership of 1,772,000 and a total volume of business of \$2.38 billion. These co-operatives fall into the following classes: marketing and purchasing (1,210), fishermen's (73), service (713) and production (393). The marketing and purchasing co-operatives were served by seven co-operative wholesales.

Marketing and purchasing co-operatives

The total volume of business of the marketing and purchasing co-operatives amounted to \$2,266 million in 1971, the highest on record. This was an increase of \$192 million, or 9 per cent, over the previous year, and a fifteenfold increase over 1932, the first year co-operative statistics were tabulated. However, the number of co-operatives has been steadily declining since the peak year of 1950, reflecting the trend of consolidation into larger units.

Marketing of farm products accounted for 62 per cent of the total volume of business in 1971, distribution of farm supplies and consumer goods (purchasing) for 36 per cent, and service revenue and miscellaneous income for 2 per cent. The volume of purchasing business, though only a little more than half that of marketing, has increased at a more rapid rate. Marketing business in 1971 was triple that in 1946, but purchasing volume increased more than eightfold in the same period.

The value of grains and seeds marketed by co-operatives in Canada is greater than that of any other commodity. Grains and seeds, and livestock and livestock products, are marketed chiefly in the Prairie Provinces. Dairy products are handled in all provinces except Newfoundland, with Ontario and Quebec together accounting for 51 per cent of the total in 1971.