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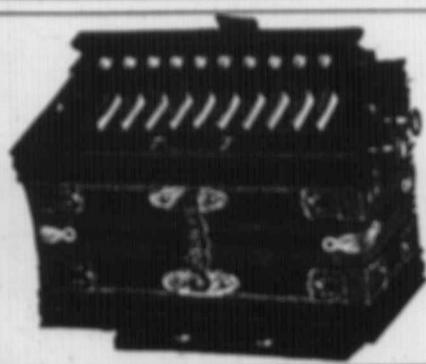


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the advocates of the co-operative movement and for the students of social problems. Are our villages doomed? How eliminate the middle man? How best regulate or control big business? Under modern conditions can a class organization bring about economic reform?

With regard to co-operative enterprises in general, 45 per cent. of the districts in Alberta have never had any. When tried they have usually proved successful. They include elevator companies, co-operative stores, lumber yard, livestock association, co-operative buying of flour, feed and twine. In one Mormon district there is a successful co-operative mill and also a water system. Success is attributed in various cases to "meeting demands," "lowered prices," and "brought the merchants to time." One co-operative store failed because of "too much faith in humanity," another because of "insufficient capital and non-loyalty of shareholders," others because of poor management or local competition or individual greed and lack of co-operative spirit. In Saskatchewan only two-thirds of the districts have tried co-operative enterprises. These have been successful with two exceptions, due to a lack of interest. In Manitoba at least half the districts have not tried co-operation tho the ventures have been nearly all successful.

In Alberta, in the districts reporting 70 per cent. of the land is held by residents. In three places 50 per cent. is held by speculators; in several places large areas are held for speculation. In quite a number of districts land is still held by the Canadian Pacific Railway and Hudson's Bay Company. In one district all are renters, in another over half the old timers have moved away and rented their places; one district is all homestead land. In Saskatchewan in 90 per cent. of the districts practically all the land is held by residents; in the other 10 per cent. about half is held by renters and apparently in some cases a very large proportion is vacant and held for speculation, in some districts as high as 50 to 60 per cent.

Renters and Owners

In Manitoba, in most districts reporting, 90 per cent. of the land is held by residents. In one district a large amount of land is occupied by renters; in a few districts considerable held by speculators. These figures for Manitoba are supplemented by information from the secretaries-treasurers of the various municipalities. From the figures received it is estimated that one-sixth of the farm land in organized municipalities is unoccupied. One out of every ten farmers is a tenant. One in five of the owners of farm lands lives outside of the municipality in which their land is situated and of these one in seven lives outside the province. Those municipalities which gave no returns are mostly in the outlying part of the province and hence the estimate with regard to unoccupied land is on the conservative side.

Is the investor in farm lands a benefactor of the community? By whose effort are unoccupied farm lands increased in value? Has the community any claim on this "unearned increment"? What claim and how can the community collect? Is the absentee landlord interested in securing social advantages? Are we to have a system of free-hold farms, or a system of farm tenantry? What was the purpose of granting free homesteads? Has that purpose been accomplished or frustrated?

Economic progress is undoubtedly a most important factor in social welfare, and as such is a matter of concern to the educator and moral leader, not less than to the business man. Here if anywhere is a place for government action. How can such action be secured? From the standpoint of the community at large, one views with apprehension the apparently growing division between "town" and "country." Undoubtedly the farmers' organizations have done much to improve the social and economic conditions in the prairie provinces. Probably under existing conditions a sharply defined class organization is necessary. Yet no sectional activity is adequate to the needs of rural life. Certain functions now performed by the town, and performed perhaps in a very unsatisfactory way, are still very necessary in our present economic system. Other functions will become more and more necessary as social advantages are more highly prized and more widely available. Rural co-operation, as now practiced, is accomplishing much. It will accomplish still more as it is increasingly possessed of the co-operative spirit.

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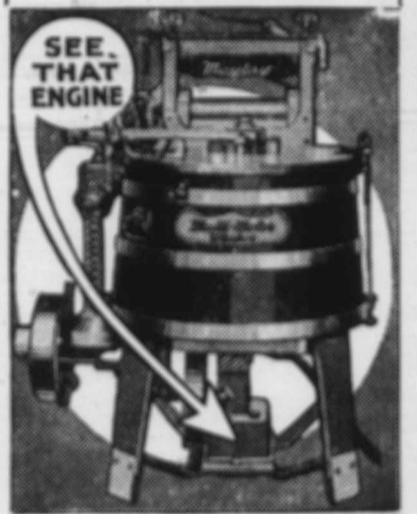
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