

prefers to go to the regular dealer and pays his added profit. Here is the remedy. The farmer must study the art of marketing produce and the business end of it as well as the producing end. They must then combine into a co-operative association, the extent of the association depending upon local conditions, raise the money to build a co-operative market by stock subscription, hire experienced men to manage the market, furnish their produce to this market in good condition, and eliminate the middle-man from the transaction entirely.

The immediate results of such a co-operative enterprise would be for the producer to get more for his share of the work, the consumer to pay less, and the quality of the product to be improved. It is easy to understand how co-operation can give more to the producer and at the same time take less from the consumer. The farm price of corn ranges from twenty to forty cents a

bushel, the wholesale price in cities from \$1.00 to \$1.75. The Kansas farmer gets fifty-three cents a bushel for his wheat and buys flour made from wheat on a basis of one dollar per bushel. The fruit grower gets \$1.50 per barrel for his apples and we pay \$6 for them in the city. The sheep raiser gets six cents per pound for his mutton and we pay twenty cents for it. The farmer gets ten cents per dozen for his eggs and eight months later they are taken out of cold storage and sold to us for thirty-five cents. The system is devised to prevent the consumer from dealing directly with the producer. The number of links in the chain of distribution has been increased beyond all reason, with the result that we pay too much for farm produce and the farmer gets too little. The farmer and his patron must get together to eliminate the excessive middle profits.

In this system of business-like, profit-sharing co-operation the farmer plays

the largest role. He must take the initiative and the consumer will gladly unite with him. He must manage his own business and not leave it to others. This will mean that farmers must become business men. I doubt whether one out of ten farmers can tell offhand what it costs to produce a bushel of corn, wheat or potatoes, or a pound of mutton, pork or beef. But without a knowledge of the cost of production it is quite impossible to have any such thing as a business of farming. The farmer must first learn what it costs to produce his crops, then the cost of distributing these crops, and then do all his work on a business basis.

The merchant's business is based on the principle of buying at wholesale prices and selling at retail. The farmer, on the other hand, buys at retail and sells at wholesale prices. He buys farm machinery, fertilizers, groceries, clothing, etc., of retail dealers. He sells his produce to commission men or

wholesalers, and of course at wholesale prices. The merchant complains that it is difficult to make a living at his business with shrewd methods. How does the farmer succeed in making both ends meet, with his utter lack of business method? The average farmer's knowledge of market conditions is so meagre that dealers vie with one another in getting to the farmer first and securing his produce. This does not mean that there is any competition among buyers which would tend to raise the price of produce to the farmer, but merely that the farmer is considered an easy prey.

What is the remedy? In plain English the farmers must own co-operatively their packing houses, cold storage plants, cotton gins, cotton mills, warehouses for all sorts of farm produce, elevators, flour mills, stock yards, creameries, cheese factories, sugar factories, woolen mills, or they will never get a square deal. The material must be kept under the control of the farmers until the finished product is delivered directly into the hands of the consumer. When the farmer sells his wheat in the form of flour, his wool and cotton in the form of cloth or garments, and his cattle and hogs in the form of steaks, roasts, lard and bacon, then the cost of production and distribution will be reduced nearly one-half, the farmer will make a larger profit, the consumer will pay less for his necessities and the quality of the products will be improved.

But this is only one side of agricultural co-operation. By it the farmer retains control of his crops and turns them over to the individual consumer. But the farmer is a consumer himself as well as a producer. An enormous exchange of products will take place between the farmers' unions in different sections of the country. Fruits will be exchanged for cotton and woolen goods, flour or pork and vice versa. In other words the co-operative method must be adopted in buying as well as selling. The one item of farm implements is a large factor in the expenses of the farm. A farmer generally buys one tool at a time at the retail price. As soon as the farmers of a given locality form a co-operative union they find it possible to buy their wagons, machinery and household furniture in collective orders at twenty-five to forty per cent. less than in individual orders.

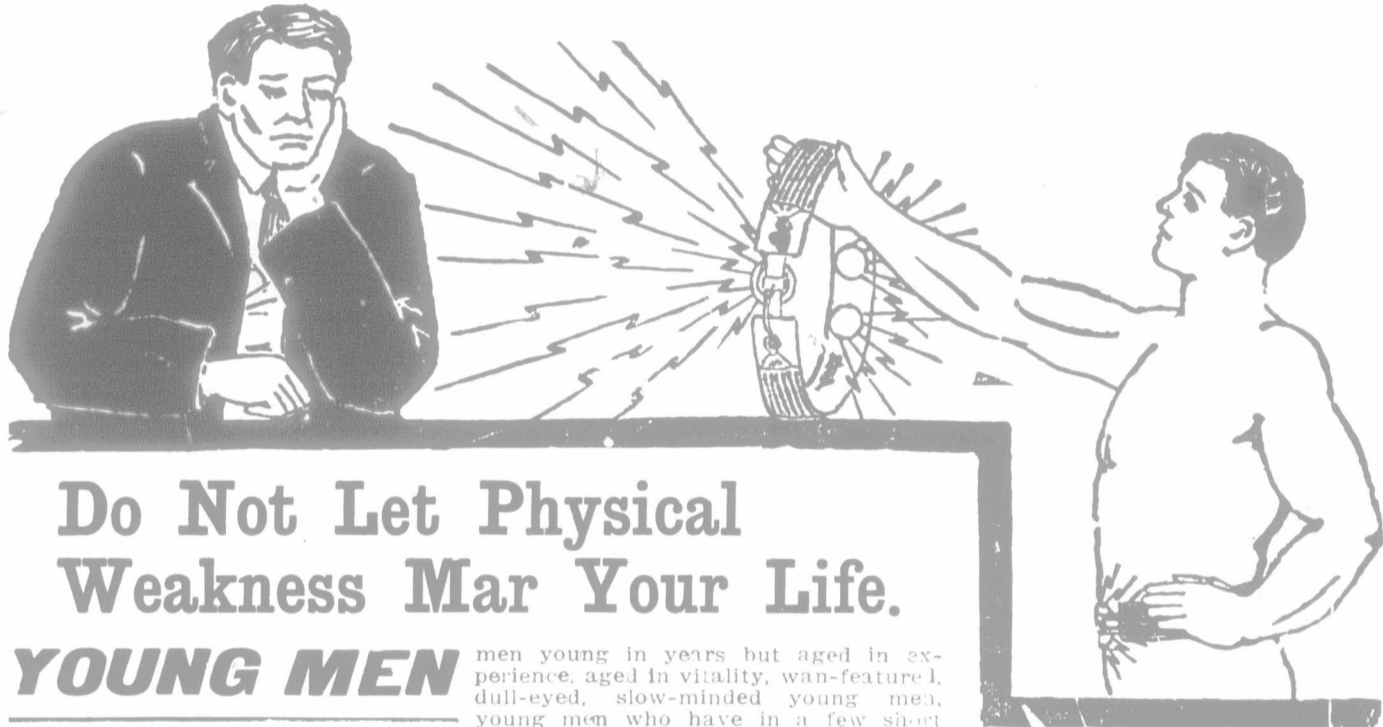
We have seen a hundred farmers lined up along a market, underbidding one another in their efforts to sell a few bushels of potatoes, carrots and onions. By combining their forces these same men could construct and maintain a good market which could be operated by five men, thus saving the time of the other ninety-five.

But how are co-operative associations of farmers to be established? They should be local institutions at first, but the larger the better, since the cost of production and maintenance will thus be cut down. In the management of these small unions, men with the right business skill will be developed. Later an affiliation of the local unions into larger associations will naturally follow in order to keep in better touch with market conditions and to regulate more equitably the distribution of the various farm crops.

The co-operative movement among farmers has come to stay. There are nearly one million men in it at present, not for political purposes, but for the purpose of attending to their own business. That is the reason why the movement brings results with so little noise. There are already more than 700 co-operative grain elevators owned by the farmers who produce the grain. One of them, in Ruthven, Iowa, saved the farmers in one year five times the total capital invested. An association of farmers' wives in the same town secured to its members five cents per dozen more for eggs than they could otherwise get. Co-operative cotton gins in Oklahoma pay two dollars per ton more for cotton seed than other gins. A large co-operative creamery in Iowa pays three cents per pound more for butter fat than the farmers had previously received. These and many other similar results have been achieved in increasing the farmers' profits, and at the same time the price of the finished product to the consumer has been lowered.

E. V. WILCOX,  
Dep't of Agriculture.

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