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Denmark has a Farmer Ministry

Continued from page 12

The peasant is also his own banker. There are 536 co-operative savings banks in the country. Here the farmer places his savings. Here he goes when he wants a loan. The deposits in 1906 amounted to \$208,500,000, and the number of depositors to 1,352,000 (over half of the population), with an average deposit of \$154. Now the peasant is talking of organizing a great central bank for the whole country, a bank which will include all the co-operative societies and all of the labor unions as well.

But the co-operative story does not end here. The farmer does his own buying at wholesale. Through these purchasing societies he buys food for his cattle. Almost everything that he consumes comes to him at cost. It is purchased by central agencies made up from representatives of local agencies. The goods are then distributed to the stores, one of which is to be found in every village. Thus he gets his agricultural implements. Thus he buys his food and all his supplies. He saves the profit of the jobber and the retail dealer for himself. The turnover of the purchasing societies in 1907 was \$17,500,000.

Education

As was before stated, there is no illiteracy in Denmark. School attendance is compulsory up to the age of fourteen. This is usually followed by a period of from three to four years, when the children work on the farm. Above the elementary schools are the high schools. They are privately organized, but practically all of them receive aid from the state. The boys attend in the winter and the girls in the summer. The tuition is small and the students live in the schools.

Along with these high schools are the agricultural colleges, of which there are twenty-nine. They give a very thorough course in all of the things that relate to Danish agriculture. They also are aided by the state.

It is through these high schools and agricultural colleges that the Dane is educated. There are over six thousand students in attendance. The boys are trained in agricultural chemistry, in stock-breeding, in seeds, in the management of co-operative establishments. In addition, an immense amount of what might be termed extension work is going on all of the time. There are lectures and circle work. Excursions are made to Copenhagen and elsewhere, while the co-operative societies have special textbooks for the use of the farmers. The papers and the magazines are universally read, while constant political and agricultural meetings are being held.

Everybody in Denmark seems to be an agitator of some kind. And Danish culture is a product of it all. It is not hard and fast, it is a part of the thought of everyone. The education of the peasant is like the information of the American baseball "fan." It is a part of his life. The Danish peasant is saturated with the culture of his nation, the culture which has come from the mastery of his subject and a knowledge of the politics of the country.

The Lesson of it All

What does this experiment station in democracy teach? In the first place it demonstrates the controlling influence of a system of land ownership on the life of a people. Denmark is democratic, enlightened, and self-governed because the great bulk of the people have an interest in the soil. France, Holland, and Switzerland prove the same thing. It shows, too, that poverty can be reduced to a minimum and the well-being of all the people promoted by state aid and co-operation. Even wages in the city are determined by the agricultural situation. The ease with which men live on the farm and acquire holdings of their own compels the employer to compete with the land for his labor. The land question thus lies at the root of the wages question.

Further than this, the Danish farmer appreciates that he is a consumer as well as a producer. He has learned that his success in agriculture, is the result of his own efforts. It is not due to any bounty or subsidy from the state. He is not fooled into any belief in protection. He is a free-trader. He buys where he will in the cheapest market, and the cost of living is much below what it is in America. He is not afflicted by trusts or monopolies. There is sufficient competition in the world which seeks him out to enable him to pick and choose, and he is able to get the best that the world offers and at his own price.

Here, too, may be seen voluntary co-operation at its best. The farmer gets all he produces. And by education and the aid of the state he has increased the productivity of his labor. Like Switzerland and Germany, the little State of Denmark shows that the old philosophy of individualism has broken down, and there are many activities which the State itself must assume in order to protect the people and promote their common welfare.—Free Press, March 9, 1910.

Joseph Fels, Reformer

Continued from page 23

estimable people whose experience and outlook have been narrower, but his influence in this respect is always salutary. Mr. Fels is still very young as a reformer, but he has grown quickly. Encouraged by a wife whose sympathies, intelligence, and fearlessness are great and strong, he has given himself with his whole heart to the land reform movement throughout the world. Perhaps no man has done such effective and far-reaching work in such a short time. His arrival in the field of British politics could not have been more opportune. His liberal contributions to the movement for the taxation of land values, his close interest in the manner of spending the money, his energy in undertaking and carrying through tasks which are only possible to an independent and wealthy man, have advanced this movement to an incredible extent. Since Henry George proclaimed his idea to the world, its progress in public thought has been rapid and steady. If we may use the expression, that idea or truth has been happy in the men it has found to serve it in different countries and in different ways, and Joseph Fels is one of the greatest and one of the humblest of these servants.

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