

Despite all the setbacks during the Depression, farmers continued to give their support to co-operatives, so that the basic strength of the movement was unimpaired. Indeed, the 1930s brought a revival of interest in co-operative purchasing. The grain-marketing co-operatives, especially the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, assisted farmers in organizing new co-operatives. With lower prices for farm products, savings on the purchase of farm supplies became more important. For example, in the Prairie Provinces the mechanization of agriculture led to special interest in savings on the cost of petroleum. A small group of farmers organized Consumers Co-operative Refineries Ltd. in 1935 and built the first co-operative oil-refinery in the world. This was the beginning of an upsurge in co-operative purchasing in Canada, which continues to this day.

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 20 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 1966

For the year 1966, the Department of Agriculture received reports on 2,538 co-operatives, excluding credit unions. They had a total membership of 1,625,300 and a total volume of business of \$1.95 billion. These co-operatives fall into the following classes: marketing and purchasing (1,420), fishermen's (83), service (663) and production (372). The marketing and purchasing co-operatives were served by eight co-operative wholesales.

In 1966 there were 4,871 credit unions with 3,953,200 members and \$2.9 billion in assets.

Marketing and Purchasing Co-operatives

The total volume of business of the 1,420 marketing and purchasing co-operatives amounted to \$1,874 million in 1966, the highest on record. This was an increase of \$99 million, or 5½ per cent, over the previous year; and a thirteenfold 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 66 per cent of the total volume of business in 1966, distribution of farm supplies and consumer goods (purchasing) 32 per cent, and service revenue and miscellaneous income, 2 per cent. The volume of purchasing business, through only half that of marketing,