

This means that in 1951 the average spread between the prices paid to the producer and the prices paid by the consumer was 22.9 cents per pound for beef, 16.2 cents per dozen for eggs, 9.4 cents per quart for milk, 19 cents per pound for butter, 21.8 cents per half-pound for cheese and 25.7 cents per 15-pound bag for potatoes.

This margin reflects the charges of the middlemen, which have increased steadily since 1947. In 1951 this increase was more than double that of the 1935-39 period.

I do not mean that this difference was entirely absorbed by the middlemen. It must be recognized that products are no longer sold as in the past; today they are graded and packed, transportation costs are much higher than they were formerly; storage costs must also be reckoned with. However, it is a fact that the man who labours for months in order to raise a crop, who pays for the fertilizers, who does the ploughing and who spends all his energy in order to make his land produce, hardly gets 50 per cent of the price paid by the consumer; the balance is absorbed by distribution costs.

May I express the wish that steps be taken in order to reduce those heavy distribution costs and to devise a system which would protect both producer and consumer? The producer should receive a profitable price, so that he may not lose any money on his produce, while the consumer should not pay heavy distribution costs which only serve to enrich middlemen. The best solution to the problem would be the co-operative system which, in regard to production, is the method which treats the farmer most fairly. Others hold the same views. Mr. Leland Olds, one of the six members of the committee which, at the request of President Roosevelt, made a survey of the co-operative movement in Europe in 1937, stated in his report:

The co-operative way of life is not entirely new, although its application to modern production and the marketing technique belong to our times; the rural family which was self-sufficient before the industrial revolution was essentially a co-operative organization; the elements of the co-operative undertaking . . . local and regional, existed in the middle ages. However, the industrial revolution gradually whittled down co-operation. The number of services required increased, the volume of consumer goods went up also, and people began to buy on the market what was formerly produced at home.

The co-operative movement would therefore extend the co-operative way of life, which characterized the families of old, to the control of marketing, thanks to family co-operative groups. Formerly, the needs of the family determined and balanced production. Likewise, the needs of the members of modern co-operative societies control and stabilize production.

The government or governments, by promoting co-operation to the utmost, will act wisely. To those who might say that the co-operative system is socialism, I shall reply forthwith that they are mistaken. The co-operative system is based on family organization; the co-operative system is a larger family where those who exercise the same profession, the same trade, get together in order to produce more profitably, deliver goods of better quality, more carefully processed and in larger volume. Indeed, it must be noted that the most rabid enemies of co-operation are precisely the members of trusts, of monopolies, those organizations which disregard the producer and are intent on getting the largest possible earnings for capital. Why frown upon farmers when they endeavour to set up co-operatives, when the number of chain stores increases steadily; when lawyers, notaries, physicians and labour are forming their own unions and professional associations? That is another form of co-operation to which no one can object. Why then should not farmers have the right to organize? Indeed, co-operation is not socialism. On the contrary, co-operation develops in the individual a sense of responsibility; it stimulates initiative, inasmuch as in the co-operative movement each is paid according to his labour, according to his own efforts.

All governments should endeavour by every means at their disposal to develop co-operatives, especially in the field of production, in order to protect both the producer and the consumer. I do not think that at birth some are destined to become wealthy tradesmen, influential professional men, etc., and that the farmer, alone, must toil.

Communism is a timely topic; in certain quarters it is feared, and with reason. If we wish to fight communism, let us render to all the greatest measure of justice. The co-operative system well understood and well organized will render justice to all men, by requiring each and everyone to do his share, and to develop and perfect his own activities.

Before concluding my remarks on this subject, I shall warn my friends, the farmers, not to be in too great a rush in disposing of all their livestock at this time when prices are temporarily depressed. As the hay crop was plentiful in the East, it may be used to continue to feed livestock on farms. If the United States embargo is lifted next spring, the market will become more steady and the farmer will probably obtain better prices.

If livestock is disposed of now, there will be a scarcity of meat when the embargo is lifted; the consumer will suffer and the producer will not benefit. It is a danger against which those farmers who would be tempted to sell their stock at the present time must be warned.