

The Cooperative Marketing of Fruit *

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BEFORE taking part in any cooperative movement, however large or however small, it is absolutely essential one should thoroughly understand what cooperation really is, what the object of cooperation is, and what are its great and beautiful principles. Unless the membership of all cooperative organizations thoroughly understand this it is a difficult matter to make the movement a success.

What is cooperation? Cooperation is the power of individual effort associated for the common welfare.

Therefore, when allying himself with any cooperative movement, the individual must be prepared if necessary to make sacrifices, having absolute faith that if called upon to do so, the sacrifice, being for the good of all, is therefore ultimately for his own good. There is no place in any cooperative organization for the selfish, grasping, greedy man, for the very spirit of cooperation is unselfishness and a readiness to help one another, a splendid brotherhood of interests.

There are some people we meet who speak of the cooperative movement that has obtained such a firm footing in the Annapolis Valley as though it were something new, as though it were a dreamer's ideal, as though it were an experiment, but I can assure you that cooperation passed the experimental stage years and years ago, and is now recognized to be the only means of remedying many of the evils and disadvantages under which we labor.

The cooperative movement started, as most successful movements do start, very humbly, and has only succeeded by actual demonstration continuously maintained, that it is not only right in principle but that it is justified by its success financially.

The idea of cooperative effort was first evidenced in Scotland over one hundred years ago, but it was not until 1844—seventy years ago—that it took a really tangible form. In that year a number of Rochdale weavers, who had long been discussing various social problems, came to the conclusion that profits derived through dealings in the necessities of life, should be paid out on the same basis as they are paid in—that as they are first reckoned and obtained on the purchase price, they should be paid out as dividends on purchases, while capital should only receive a fair interest. This seemed to have been the original discovery by these Rochdale weavers. They held very strongly that profit made out of the people in front of the counter should be paid back to these people who created the profit after a fair interest had been paid on the capital required to maintain the business.

In ordinary business capitalists invest their money only when they have an assurance of a good return and there is no inducement to the capitalist to invest unless there is some indication that the business under consideration will give him a better return than, say, as your funds are invested. There is therefore no inducement to the capitalist to invest his money in a cooperative concern because he will never under any circumstance get a large return, and in addition it is contrary to true cooperative principles for outside

capital to be used. No cooperative concern works for profit and the difference between cost and actual return is rebated. It is true certain so-called cooperative organizations invite outside capital. I know of one in Canada that is advertising its stock for sale, but I wish to place it on record that such an arrangement cannot exist under a true cooperative system. In any true cooperative concern the only stock holders are the actual cooperators.

These Rochdale weavers tried the experiment of running a shop, or as we should call it, a store, that should belong to the customers and their efforts were attended with immediate success. It held the germ of a great ideal, that no individual should be allowed to amass a fortune out of the necessities of life to the community. Out of that humble beginning and out of that great ideal has grown that great, that mighty organization known as the Wholesale Cooperative Society of Great Britain, an organization with a yearly turnover exceeding \$600,000,000.

It must not be supposed, however, that this movement was allowed to grow without strenuous opposition. In this direction I would like to direct the attention of those who are so foolishly opposing cooperation in the Annapolis Valley, to history, which clearly demonstrates how futile is opposition, for cooperation has shown repeatedly that it has some great principle of life within it which makes it grow steadily. It makes an appeal to the cool reason of man unlike the hot pride and passion of war, and even, if I may say so, the enthusiasm of religion. Note how opposition acted as a spur to the humble pioneers of cooperation in England, and tended very largely to hasten its development.

The people who were most seriously affected by the Rochdale weavers were the retail merchants, for the cooperators considered these merchants unnecessary and expensive encumbrances between the manufacturer or producer and consumer. The merchants, therefore, through the press, which was largely supported by their advertisements, heaped ridicule on the movement.

This had the reverse effect to what was intended and simply directed attention to the several cooperative stores that had come into existence, and made people think that after all there must be something in what these cooperators were doing, with the result that many other cooperative societies were formed, and the membership of all existing societies was much increased.

Finding that their first move to destroy these societies had miscarried, the merchants tried other tactics, and through their association gave notice that any wholesale merchants or manufacturers having any dealings with the cooperators would be boycotted. At that time the cooperative societies were not many in number, and at first the boycott was a serious matter to them, but as is often the case, opposition caused them to adopt a more vigorous programme and carry their cooperative movement a stage further, resulting in all the societies amalgamating under one head, the present Cooperative Wholesale Society. The boycott I have referred to proved the finest advertisement the movement could have had, and proved to the world at large that cooperation was accomplishing what it set out to do. The natur-

al result was that the membership of the societies still further increased, and again many new societies came into being. All the societies collectively formed a very powerful organization, which being under the boycott immediately proceeded to make other arrangements for obtaining the goods necessary to run their business, and resulted in a still further strengthening of the movement.

The Cooperative Wholesale Society was formed in 1863. A sentence taken from the prospectus sums up in a few words the object of the whole movement. "The object of the society is to bring the producer and consumer of commodities nearer to each other, and thus secure for the working classes those profits that have hitherto enriched only the individual."

The Cooperative Wholesale Society is the central association for the subsidiary companies in the same way as the United Fruit Companies is the central for all the Cooperative Fruit Companies in Nova Scotia.

All the subsidiary societies operate large stores, in which are handled practically every article that one can imagine. These include groceries, drapery, millinery, furniture, hardware, fish, meat, poultry, dairy produce, and so forth, and in connection with each society there is a large bakery. The members can obtain absolutely everything they require in the world, through their own store. These subsidiary societies obtain all their supplies from the central, which acts as buyer, manufacturer and distributor. All the trade of the central is done in goods bought by their own buyers at home and abroad, and distributed to the retail societies from its warehouses. One general principle runs through all the purchasing done by the Cooperative Wholesale Society buyers, namely to go direct to the source of production, whether at home or abroad, so as to save the commissions of middlemen and agents.

In New York, Montreal, Spain (Denia), and Sweden the Cooperative Wholesale Society has purchasing depots with resident buyers, whose office it is to purchase and ship home the productions of these countries as required by English cooperators. On arrival in England the goods are divided among the warehouses at Manchester, Newcastle, London, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Leeds, Huddersfield, Blackburn, Northampton, etc., so that the subsidiary societies can conveniently draw their supplies as needed. The total amount of the goods imported direct by the Cooperative Wholesale Society from foreign countries in the twelve months ended December, 1911, was \$35,363,350.

(To be continued)

Mr. A. H. MacLennan, B.S.A., Demonstrator in Pomology, Ontario Agricultural College, Guelph, Ontario, has been appointed lecturer in horticulture at Macdonald College, P.Q., succeeding Mr. F. M. Clement, B.S.A., who has recently been appointed director of the Vineland Experiment Station, Ontario. Mr. MacLennan graduated from the Ontario Agricultural College in 1908, and for the past four years has been connected with the horticulture department at that institution, where he has had a very wide experience. He has been closely identified with the Ontario Vegetable Growers' Association, and has done much valuable work for their experimental investigations, and will be a valuable acquisition to the staff of Macdonald College.

*Extract from an address delivered before the last annual convention of the Nova Scotia Fruit Growers' Association.