

# British Co-operation in War-Time

*It is rendering an important service in the time of the Empire's Testing*

By a British Co-operator

The co-operative movement in Great Britain consists of three main divisions. They are the agricultural, productive, and distributive societies. The distributive societies are the greater in number, membership and influence, and through their national federations have entered the field of production on a wider scale than even the distinctly productive societies, and now are extending their agricultural activities. It is usually they who are designated when the term "industrial co-operation" is used.

In 1916 these distributive societies numbered 362, with a total membership of 3,529,227. They employ 115,651 persons. They are controlled by committees of management elected from the members, each member having one vote. These societies vary in size from a few score members only, to 50,000. Twenty-one societies have each a membership of over 1,000, but over 800 societies have under 1,000 members each.

The share and loan capital of the distributive societies in 1916 amounted to £53,323,352. The bulk of the trade is in groceries, provisions and bread, which goods practically all societies sell. The greater number have also shops for the sale of meat, drapery and clothing and footwear. A large number have milk retailers and a few own farms from which they draw supplies. The total retail sales for the year amounted to £121,628,550.

## Recognized by Food Controller

Membership and trade have increased rapidly during the war, and the rate of increase would have been greater but for the difficulties of obtaining supplies. Co-operative service to the nation since the outbreak of hostilities cannot be adequately appraised. Co-operators have found the way in their treatment of employees called up for service. They have done much to steady prices. Their position has been recognized by Lord Boddard, the food controller, who recommended the inclusion of co-operative representatives on all local food control committees. Even when traders as such are excluded, he said, co-operators could be admitted as representing the interests of the consumers.

For purposes of wholesale trade and manufacture societies in England and Wales are federated in the Co-operative Wholesale Society, Ltd., and in Scotland in the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society, Ltd. These organizations are familiarly known as the C.W.S. and the S.C.W.S. Their sales for the year amounted to £66,732,484. Though there are slight differences of detail between the two, a description of the scope of the C.W.S. would be substantially true of both institutions.

The C.W.S. deals in practically every commodity which retail co-operative societies sell. Its headquarters are in Manchester. It has branches at Newcastle and London; depots at Bristol, Cardiff, Northampton, and salerooms in half-a-dozen other towns. Through these, last year, it sold goods to the value of £52,230,974.

If this total £16,263,385 was for goods produced in its own factories and workshops. It mills flour, bakes tea, churns butter, cures bacon, and manufactures biscuits, jams, cocoa, chocolates and sweets, margarine, patent medicines and sundry articles innumerable. It

weaves cotton and wool fabrics, and makes men's and women's clothing and underclothing.

It manufactures hats and shoes at the rate of over two million a year, and soap quantities of some half a hundred tons a week. It possesses dairy, and other farms in England and tea gardens in Ceylon and India. Its shipping depots are in Holland, Denmark, France, Spain, West India, the U.S.A. and Canada. And, its resources and confidances are continually multiplying.

In his brief statement of the trade interests and needs of the English people, it is necessary to have any appreciation of the service rendered by

the co-operative movement to the nation during war time can be made. The important fact is that this complex organization of manufacturers and distributors exists for the service of producers and consumers, and protects both from exploitation by middlemen. This has been its most significant service.

The matter can be made clearer by describing the co-operative treatment of a single commodity—bread. This vital article of food has been sold by co-operative stores consistently below the price charged at competitive shops. The returns published month by month by the ministry of labor prove this. For instance the official figures showed that on September 1 the predominant price of bread in private trade was

chaser's dividend or discount which co-operators receive. On September 17 the government-controlled price of bread came into operation. Co-operative stores sell at (and in many cases below) the controlled price and pay dividend on purchases in addition.

Many of the finest bakeries in the country are owned co-operatively and in the early days of the war, before the government was in a position to do the work itself, large contracts for bread for the troops were executed by these bakeries. Praise of the quality was universal.

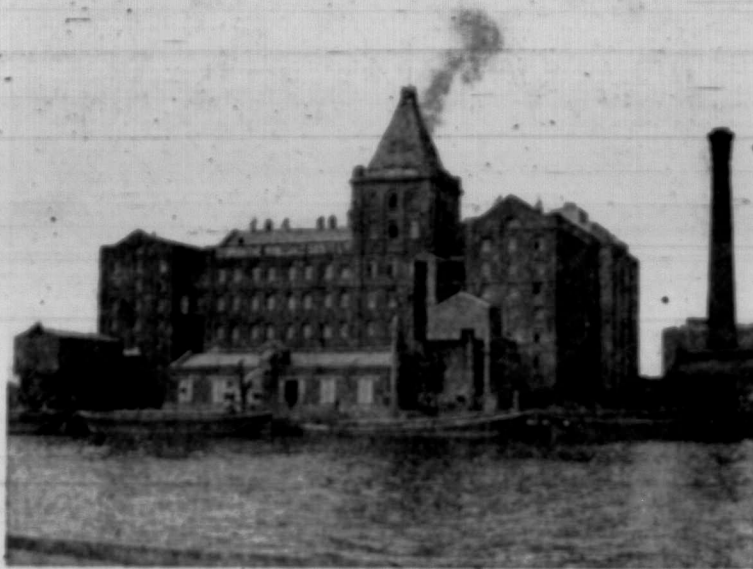
## Co-operative Flour Mills

The efficient organization of the bread trade has in part been made possible by the co-operative flour mills. The C.W.S. owns eight. The principal ones are excellently placed in the ports of Manchester, Newcastle, London and Bristol, and land has just been purchased for another at the port of Liverpool. At each of these the wheat can be unloaded directly from the boats to the silos of the mill. The total output from these C.W.S. mills last year was 3,185,963 sacks (a sack is 280 lbs.). The C.W.S. can claim to be the largest flour millers in the United Kingdom. The fact was recognized by the government in the selection of one of the C.W.S. mill managers for work on the Royal Commission on wheat.

Not only are they the largest but the equipment of their mills is among the most perfect. The Sun Mill at Manchester has an output of 140 sacks of flour per hour. In the granaries of this mill 20,000 tons of wheat can be stored. They can be filled directly from ocean-going steamers by their own elevators.

The annual requirements of wheat for the C.W.S. mills is twenty million (20,000,000) bushels. On its own estates it grows now a small quantity of English wheat, but its agricultural developments are still in their infancy. Even if they increase on the scale which many co-operators hope, the C.W.S. must still, like the nation as a whole, be dependent on over-sea supplies. To grow wheat for its own use it is necessary to go out of England. It has begun in North America, the granary of the world.

Continued on Page 20



One of the Big Flour Mills of the Co-operative Wholesale Society

11d. against 11d. in co-operative shops. And this statement does not take into account the pur-

chase

done so. It has begun in North America, the granary of the world.

## Public Ownership of Coal Mines

Why This Natural Resource Should Be Nationalized.

By Edward Ellis-Gore

Coal is a natural resource. God, not man, through nature's processes made it. One hardly needs an argument against private ownership and control of air, sunshine, water, land, or coal; it is self-evidently unjust and absurd. All the facts and arguments are against it. When Mr. Baer gravely declared that God had given the ownership and control of coal to himself and others as trustees of providence the people laughed. Providence never did intrust Baer and his ilk with these natural resource public necessities, they obtained them by injustice and viola-

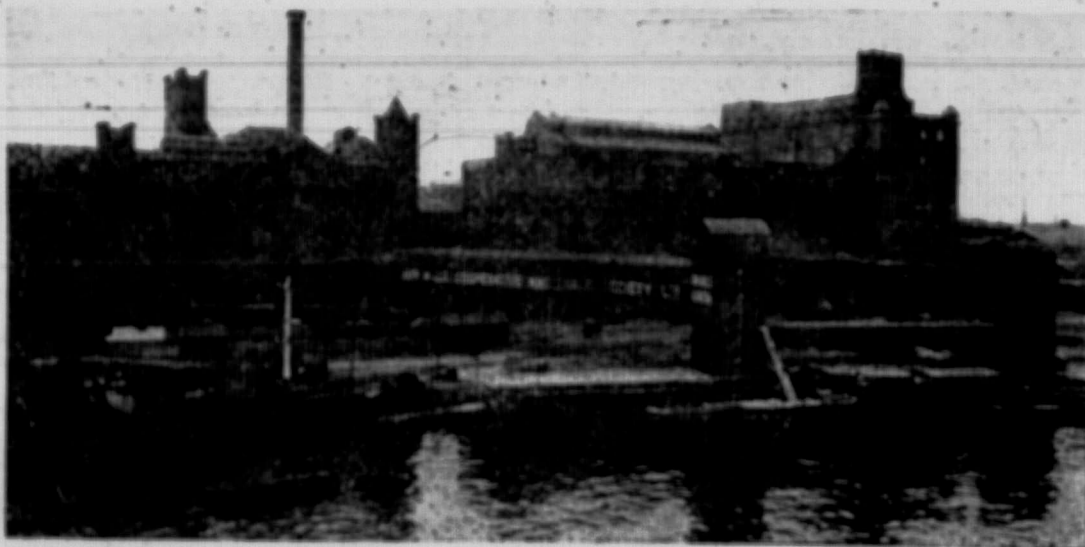
tion of law; and if providence ever had so intrusted these things to Baer, he and the other coal barons had long since proven themselves embezzling trustees, betraying their trust and robbing the people for whom the coal was intended. Therefore they should be dismissed from their job. As coal is a natural product, "not made with hands," no man has a moral right to more than his share. It should be appropriated by the government and be mined, transported and sold to the people at cost, including a fair tax for government use only.

Coal is peculiarly subject to unjust and cruel monopoly under private ownership.

1.—At the mine. The individual who owns coal under his land is unable to mine it properly as an individual and is compelled to sell or lease to the coal magnates at the price they choose to pay or leave his coal prospect undeveloped while their company steals it by tunnelling under.

And if he secures enough financial help from independent capitalists to put in the needful machinery and labor to work his mine, the difficulty of getting the coal to market is

Continued on Page 20  
An address by the editor of Real Democracy at the Public Ownership Conference held recently in Chicago.



THE C.W.S. FLOUR MILL AT MANCHESTER, ENGLAND