

CO-OPERATIVE MARKETING NO. FARM CURE-ALL

More Facts Needed Says N.B. Urdike

Leaders in Agricultural Reform Movements Often Impractical, Is Claim; Federal Research Valuable.

Price Charts Important

The present effort of the United States Chamber of Commerce to arrive at a farm program that will have the united support of all classes of farmers gives added interest to the following analysis of the farm problem by Mr. N. B. Urdike.

Mr. Urdike has been in close contact with the farmer and his problems for more than 30 years from the standpoint of both production and marketing. He holds that the chief help the farmer needs is such help as will enable him to solve his own problems as a business man. This help can best come in the way of figures on production and prices and the relation of one to the other, to be supplied by the United States Department of Agriculture and the state agricultural colleges. He holds too that there are too many agencies, not operated by farmers, which are trying to tell the farmer how to run his business. Mr. Urdike's analysis is as follows:

We are hearing much these days about co-operative marketing as the solution for all the troubles of the farmer. There is a real benefit to certain farmers in co-operative marketing. It is not a cure-all by any means. Those politicians and farm leaders who advocate co-operative marketing would have us believe that here lies the way out for all the farmer's difficulties.

If we will think back a few years we will call to mind how politicians heralded diversified farming as the cure-all for the farmer and his troubles. Then, after they came the politicians who talked of farm credit as the certain and sure way out. Whether the politicians came on the scene ahead of the over-enthusiastic farm leaders, or after, is hard to recall at this time. However, both these programs at different times took up reams of space in the agricultural press of the country and in the reports of the secretaries of agriculture. They also took up hours of debate at farmers' conventions.

Diversified farming has come and had done its part in aiding those farmers who were in position to be benefited by it. Farm credits have come, and this, too, has helped. Neither has been a cure-all. We have learned that diversified farming is of real value to those farmers living near big city markets. There are farmers who live 1,000 miles from any big city. There are others who live on land that is not suited to diversified farming. To talk cure-all to them in the shape of diversified farming is nonsense. Farm credits, too, have done their work, but the farmer's problems are still with us.

Co-Operation Sometimes Helps.

To hold out another cure-all, in the shape of co-operative marketing, is just another scheme to keep the farmer upset and to postpone the day when the farmer will realize his real position. By all means, let us have co-operative marketing wherever it is practical. It will help as diversified farming and farm credits have helped, but the farmer should be the first to refuse to follow any leader—be they from their own ranks or from the ranks of politicians—who hold this plan out to them as the cure for all their troubles.

Before we can get an understanding of what co-operative marketing will do and will not do for the farmer, let us look at the problem of the farmer as it is. When we do this, we must take in all the farmers, not merely a few of them. Here are some of the things that we discover at the beginning of our inquiry:

1. Some farmers, chiefly cotton and wheat farmers, compete in the world market. The cotton farmer is facing this to an increasing degree as cotton culture is extended to other countries. The wheat farmer is on every continent. His numbers are increasing. Cotton sells only to manufacturers who fabricate it into yarns and cloth. Wheat is sold only to millers who process it into flour.

2. Other farmers raise corn, most of which is consumed in our own country. Corn is sold to millers, who process it into meal. Most of it, however, is fed to hogs and cattle—on the farm.

3. There are the farmers who raise hogs. These men are farmers in the broad sense and their problems are wrapped up in the general farmers' problems. Some of these farmers raise the corn that they feed to their hogs. Others buy their feed corn.

4. The farmer who raises cattle is another of those whose problems are part of the general farm problem. Some of these cattle farmers live on the range and their cattle are brought up to the feeder stage on range grass. Others raise the corn that they feed to their cattle. Then there are still others who buy "feeders" and also buy the corn with which they feed them.

5. The dairy farmer is another who is part of the great farm family. Some of the dairy farmers raise their feed. Others buy their feed.

6. The sheep farmer is another. He not only sells mutton and lamb, but he sells wool. Here, too, the farmer sometimes raises his feed, or uses the range or he buys his feed. Sometimes he does both.

7. Then we have the potato farmers, the fruit farmers, the tobacco farmers, the sugar beet farmers.

Farming Is Specialized.

Here is a range of activities and interests that are as complicated and as intricate as the entire range of manufacturing. Can we conceive of co-operative marketing carried on by those engaged in manufacturing? We can see the answer to that question all around us. Manufacturing has divided itself into specialization before it could even lay plans for marketing. The production and marketing of each manufactured article is a problem all alone, intricate and complex. Each of these specialized manufacturing industries has its own production and marketing experts. And usually each sticks to his own last, well aware of the fact that he has his hands full in his own industry and that he might become engulfed in failure should he attempt to engage in the "other fellow's business."

Now there is something further about farming, and it is common to all farmers, whether they are engaged in raising wheat or corn or cotton or cattle. The farmer cannot "regulate" production, as the manufacturer can. Nature intervenes here. A smilling season will bring a production beyond the hopes of the planter. A poor season and all too often the farmer finds himself with a short crop. In the case of the wheat farmer, if there has been a bountiful crop in the other wheat-growing sections of the world, he must, even then, sometimes sell his short crop at a low price.

Specialists Can Co-Operate.

Nature must be taken into account, too, by the cattle and hog raiser. Here disease may decimate the herds and a looked for profit be turned into a grievous loss.

How can we get all these diversified interests, these opposites, these complex situations, into a great scheme for co-operative marketing?

Those farmers who are specialists can co-operate to market their own special product. And, too, they are doing it. Some of them have been doing it for years. The citrus fruit raisers, the grape farmers, the beet sugar farmers, some general fruit raisers and to a degree the cotton growers and tobacco growers, now have co-operative marketing organizations. They have profited through these plans and will continue to profit. To them, co-operative marketing is a real solution.

It is conceivable that the wheat growers in America could, with government aid, build up a scheme for co-operative marketing, but there are so many farmers growing wheat and the fluctuations of good and bad crop seasons affect the production to such a degree, that it would be extremely difficult. Then the plan would have to take care not only of domestic markets, but of foreign marketing as well. It would seem to be an impossible undertaking unless the government undertook some such scheme as was intended in the McNary-Haugen bill. From the experience of those who sponsored that measure, however, it is evident that farmers generally would not agree to such a scheme applied to wheat unless it was also applied to corn and rye and oats and cattle and hogs and sheep.

McNary Bill Impractical.

The McNary-Haugen plan failed because it would have meant that the government would be to a large extent compelled to go into the general business of marketing agricultural products. Such an undertaking would have been so stupendous and would have required such immense sums of money to finance it that congress, much as it had at heart the interests of the farmer, felt that the plan would fail by its own weight on account of being unable to satisfy the diversified interests of so many different classes of farmers.

Let us look at the corn farmer. If he sells his corn as corn, he wants a high price. If he feeds his corn and sells it as beef-cattle or hogs he is more interested in the price of cattle and hogs than in the price of corn. If he is a "feeder" farmer and raises little or no corn of his own, he wants a low corn price. In this western country today the cattle raiser is praying for a bountiful corn crop that he may be able to feed his cattle profitably. In thousands of cases, however, the corn raiser and the "feeder" are to be found in the same farmer.

If corn is low it will go into hogs and cattle and be marketed on the hoof. If corn is high, there will be a tendency to sell it as corn for the reason that if it is fed, the stock may have to be sold at a loss.

Interests Not Stable.

In most instances too the wheat farmers are also corn farmers, and when they are also cattle or hog "feeders," where are we going to find him as a co-operative marketer? One may be anxious to co-operate in marketing wheat. The next year because of changing crop conditions, he may be anxious to co-operate in marketing corn, then another year may find him pushing co-operation in the sale of his cattle or hogs. We can hardly expect to find him an enthusiastic advocate of co-operative marketing for wheat, corn and hogs at one and the same time. As a seller of corn he is finding a market for raw material, as seller of hogs or cattle he is a manufacturer, anxious to buy his raw material—his feed—as cheaply as he can.

We do not find anywhere else in industry any association between the raw material man and the manufacturer for the purposes of joint co-operative marketing. The same situation is found in the lumber industry.

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in varying degrees and in differing conditions is true all through the farming industry. The cure—all advocates make their mistake because they fail to realize that farming, or agriculture is an industry. It must be considered as an industry. As an industry it must work out its problems. Diversified farming is the answer in thousands of cases. More and better farm credits solves many vexing difficulties. Co-operative marketing will solve others. Neither of them will solve all the problems and there are many other problems that all of them together will not solve.

The farmers who have built co-operative elevators for handling wheat and corn may have saved themselves some of the spread between producer and consumer. That is not co-operative marketing, however. It assures the farmers who use these elevators that they will get the full market value for their product, with a minimum charge for handling. They are still victims of the great drift in market levels, however, due to supply and demand.

Denmark Not an Example.

We have held up to us as an example the co-operative marketing plans in operation in other countries. Particularly Denmark is cited. There are counties in some of the western states that are bigger than all of Denmark.

Besides, the chief efforts of agricultural in Denmark are directed toward dairying. What general farming is done is as a support to dairying. In a county where the farms are counted in a week's time, where all of the farm owners could be gathered together in a comparatively few meetings, where farm processes can be readjusted to suit a given purpose, co-operative marketing becomes not only possible but practical.

Then, with all their success in co-operation, would the Danish farmers' standard of living be considered as applicable to American experience? No. American farm problems must be solved with an American plan. The American farm producer is the most efficient producer in the world. In this country we have less than 4 per cent of the farmers of the world. This 4 per cent, however, produce nearly 70 per cent of the world's corn; 60 per cent of the world's cotton; 50 per cent of the world's tobacco; 25 per cent of the world's wheat and flax seed of the world; 33 per cent of the barley and 7 per cent of the potatoes of the world.

Americans Most Efficient.

These figures stated in a different way, mean that the American farmer raises more per unit of man power than the farmers of all the rest of the world. The American farms common benefit in any pursuit. It is not new—it has been used for centuries among industrial workers, producers, consumers, distributors, insurers, borrowers and lenders of capital.

Another thing to be borne in mind is that the term "co-operation" as applied to selling organizations, is often inaccurately applied to "profit-sharing." Co-operative selling can mean only one thing, and that is, the association of a definite list of individuals for the marketing of their own products only. The profits of such co-operation less any necessary expense, to be distributed pro rata among the members. If the matter of barter, and sale of their own products where different members receive different prices for their product according to the market at the time of sale, or where products of others not members of the association, are dealt in, it is not "co-operation." The proper term in such cases is that of "profit-sharing." In other words, the association instead of being a co-operative marketing association, becomes an ordinary business venture with the members as shareholders, subject to all the rules of trade.

Figures Are Big Need.

However, let us go ahead with our diversified farming plans, our farm credit plans and our plans for co-operative marketing—recognizing all the time, that they will be effective only in certain instances—and then place more reliance upon the intelligence of the individual farmer. Teach him the truth of the law of supply and demand. He knows it now, to a greater extent than some are willing to agree. Supply him through the Department of Agriculture, and state agricultural colleges, with the figures of past years—figures showing the relation of farm production and farm prices. Give him regularly charts showing production curves and price curves for all the principal farm products, then rely upon his common sense as a business man to cut his cloth accordingly.

Cure-Alls Are Worthless.

The manufacturing industry of the country is built more upon the uses to which individual manufacturers put knowledge of this character, than

it is upon any schemes of co-operative marketing. If we will put ourselves to the task of getting this same sort of knowledge into the hands of the farmers, they, too, acting upon their individual judgment, will be able to make use of it. They too will know that when there is a year of high wheat prices and high corn prices, or high prices for hogs and beef cattle, that there is a reason for it. They will know that that reason has its explanation in the operation of the law of supply and demand. They will know that with a shortened supply there will come a higher price and they will see to it that on their individual farms they will not plant too much wheat, nor too much corn; that they do not take on the raising of too many cattle nor too many hogs.

We Must Stop Putting Our Reliance Upon Cure-alls and Place Our Faith

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Another Pen of Omaha's Good Backyard Poultry



Top group: This pen of pullets averaged over 26 eggs each for the month of March. They are not show stock either. Bottom: This pullet began her record at 8 months and 6 days of age; she has laid an egg each day for 40 days.

It is upon any schemes of co-operative marketing. If we will put ourselves to the task of getting this same sort of knowledge into the hands of the farmers, they, too, acting upon their individual judgment, will be able to make use of it. They too will know that when there is a year of high wheat prices and high corn prices, or high prices for hogs and beef cattle, that there is a reason for it. They will know that that reason has its explanation in the operation of the law of supply and demand. They will know that with a shortened supply there will come a higher price and they will see to it that on their individual farms they will not plant too much wheat, nor too much corn; that they do not take on the raising of too many cattle nor too many hogs.

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thing better than the rest of the world has been revived on the Paxton poultry farm, 4123 North Thirty-sixth avenue. Mr. and Mrs. W. T. Corbourn are doing it. The husband is a rail way mail clerk, and works at his position while the wife is building, for a future, of which we all dream. Edna Corbourn, the wife, operates a backyard poultry farm. She has developed a small flock of Barred Plymouth Rock chickens which will be heard from here the years go by. There is nothing experimental about the work Mrs. Corbourn is doing. She says, "If I get my flock established to the point at which I am aiming, in five years I will be satisfied."

40 Eggs in 40 Days.

Number five in the Paxton poultry flock started her egg-laying career at the age of eight months and six days. Since that time she has maintained a perfect record. In March she laid 30 eggs; the 10 days since March she has laid 40 eggs. That makes a record of 40 days with an egg each day.

In the pen with No. five are four other pullets that have made records which would place them in any national egg-laying contest.

In March these four pullets laid 101 eggs. No. 9 laid 6 eggs; No. 12, 24; No. 13, 26; No. 26, 25. Eighteen pullets under trap nest conditions averaged over 29 eggs for March.

Prize Pullet Ideal.

"We are striving for conformation and feather characteristics to be sure, but we do not intend to lose sight of production," said Mrs. Corbourn. The aim of the backyard farmers, in other words, is to take plenty of time and lay a foundation for one of America's good-producing show flocks. The start they have is right, the best back of the work is sound and success is sure to result.

The Corbourns use a prepared laying mash. They have tried several kinds and have decided that a good scientific preparation is more effective than a home-made mash. Mrs. Corbourn said, "I know our records are largely due to the feed we use. I feed a regular commercial laying mash and supplement it with sprouted oats."

The hens are permitted the run of the yards at all times. "Five pullets to a pen are enough to insure best results," declared Mrs. Corbourn. They practice line breeding and are building their present flock largely upon one record hen which they produced last year.

Paint will go a long way in making buildings last longer and give better service. Well painted buildings also add to the attractiveness of the farm as a home.

The old story about mouse traps and beaten paths into the wilderness to find the fellow who does some

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