

CHAPTER X

WORKING TOGETHER

Co-operation should be the key-note of the farm village, co-operation in production, in buying and selling; in the ownership of machinery and of much of the work as well. Possibly the community should organize a corporation for these purposes as has been done by the United States Government in ship-building, in its housing communities, in the buying and selling of grain and other activities which could more readily be performed in this way without the delays or bureaucratic procedure of regular official agencies.

The corporation, however, should be open to everybody. There should be no possibility of control by large stockholders or of its purpose being diverted to the making of profits for any one other than all the members of the community.

The corporation or the community could own tractors, motor-trucks, heavy machinery,

a retail store, warehouses, dairies, slaughterhouses, and even blooded stallions and bulls for breeding purposes.

Economics.

By such co-operation the colony would eliminate much waste. There is waste in individual ploughing, harrowing, and harvesting, and far greater waste in each farmer being compelled to find his own market.

Farm-tractors for ploughing, harrowing, and cultivating the soil, which go from farm to farm in rotation, have been recently purchased by the States of Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania. They are distributed throughout the State and operated by experienced engineers for bringing the land of individual farms under cultivation. The cost of wholesale preparation is from one-third to one-half that involved in individual labor.

There should be community-owned warehouses and cold-storage plants in which the farmer can store and through which he can sell his produce without the intervention of middlemen. In this way the man with three or four acres of land is assured of as good a

market as the man with a great estate. Under these conditions produce need not rot in the fields for lack of labor, cars, or distributing agencies. An agent of the community can establish a market in the near-by centres; and being in a position to guarantee a uniform product, he can build up a better price than that which the individual farmer receives. This is the method employed by the successful co-operative societies of California, which sell oranges, lemons, and other perishable fruit all over America at a negligible cost. They have eliminated the middlemen; they have no bad debts, and they realize the full value of their produce. Co-operation in selling is universal in Denmark. In the Australian States it is performed by the state through officials who receive, grade, and assemble all kinds of farm-produce, who bring it to sea-ports and store it, and ultimately find transportation for it to the English markets. The States of Australia also own the slaughter-houses and cold-storage plants. This is one of the reasons for the success of agriculture in these countries.

Dairies and Slaughter-Houses.

There should be a community dairy. It would be operated at cost. The owner of a single cow would then be in as good a position as the owner of a large herd. The dairy would also standardize the product and by premiums and fines bring the individual farmer up to a higher standard of excellence.

There are 1,300 co-operative dairies in little Denmark. They built up the dairying industry in that country. They are largely responsible for the high standard of quality of Danish butter and the high price which it brings in the European markets.

Slaughtering should also be done co-operatively, or in a community slaughtering-house. There are forty-four community slaughtering-houses in Denmark, in which country the farmers themselves broke the power of the private packers by owning the abattoirs themselves. As a result, the raising of hogs and the production of bacon and hams became one of the primary industries of the country.

The Danish farmers also have their own selling agencies with headquarters in London.

They have eliminated the middleman, and save all his profits for themselves. Bacon, eggs, and butter are distributed in this way. There is, in fact, very little that is not performed by the Danish farmer through his own co-operative agencies.

Co-operation serves yet another function. It standardizes and improves the product. A community reputation may be made by private individuals, in the production of bacon, sausage, or preserves.

Community-owned cold-storage plants and warehouses will enable the producer to hold his perishable produce for a favorable market. It makes it possible to assemble in quantities so as to market economically. It also shields the producer from the middlemen and speculators who control the distribution of food in the country through their control of the terminals, cold-storage plants, and warehouses.

Under such a system, and with colonies located near the seaboard or market centres, transportation could be by motor-truck. The parcel-post could be developed as a medium of distribution as it is all over Europe. This is a relatively easy matter once the farmer is

organized and in possession of the machinery for marketing.

The Experience of Other Countries.

There is nothing new or untried in this suggestion of co-operation. In Denmark the farmers have organized 4,000 societies covering almost every activity of the farm. These societies contain 200,000 members, and transact tens of millions of dollars of business every year. They control not only dairying, slaughtering, the sale of eggs and bacon, they provide insurance of all kinds, loans, credit, and do their own buying at wholesale.

In Australia nearly all of these services are performed by the government. Mr. Frank S. Digby, referred to in an earlier chapter, describes the methods pursued in the farm colonies of New South Wales. He says:

“In addition to the butter-factory we have quite a number of other undertakings. We have cheese-factories, we have canning-factories, and we run a large nursery—we have three of them, supplying settlers with trees suitable for the climatic conditions and true to type. Some of these undertakings are a success; others are being run at slight loss.

However, we feel that it is justified, in order to help along the development of the area, not to be too hard in connection with these undertakings; we do not want to insist upon their being run at a profit, and the annual losses which are being sustained on some of them are looked upon as justified expense.

"We have a very fine bacon-factory, erected about two years ago. In connection with this, we afford additional special assistance. If a man wants to have pigs and has no money to buy them, the government allows him to have them. We go into the market and buy at the right time, and a man comes along and says he wants a few pigs; he signs an agreement the same as for his horses or cattle, and pays a small deposit and takes the pigs away with the understanding that they have to be supplied to the bacon-factory. He is required to make a deposit of 25 per cent. and nothing more until the pigs are sold. The remaining 75 per cent. is deducted from the sale of pigs to the bacon-factory.

"We go further and import stud stock of all kinds for the use of the settler in order to insure that the right kinds of stock are being developed on the area.

"Public abattoirs have been erected and the commission has issued regulations that all cattle shall be killed in these. A settler may drive any stock to these abattoirs and have it killed. The charge is \$2.50 a head for cattle, 35 cents for sheep, and 85 cents for pigs. These

slaughter-houses are erected on the latest principles of sanitation and equipped with refrigerators. The use of the refrigerators for a certain length of time is included in the slaughter charge to the settler. The result of this system is that this area has a meat supply equal to any of the big cities. The sheep and cattle are examined as soon as slaughtered and if diseased, or not up to a fixed standard, are condemned. By this means the people are insured a fine meat supply. Situated as we are in the midst of sheep sections and stock-raising districts, generally we have the very finest meat that one could wish for.

"The system of public abattoirs in Australia has received a great deal of attention during recent years. In Sydney and in different parts of the country the government has erected public abattoirs in which it insists that all meat killed for consumption has to be killed under government supervision, and that has a double effect. It insures the consumer a reliable food-supply and it also insures the growers of stock against any risk of combines of purchasers of cattle for killing. In each of these towns there are regular carcass-buyers, men who come into the markets and buy from the farmers thousands of sheep, hundreds of cattle, and take them to the government slaughter-house and kill them. Part of this meat is then distributed among the retailers and part of it kept in cold storage, and later shipped to England. So far there has

been sufficient competition to insure the grower of good prices for the meat, and of course since the war the grower of stock has reaped a great harvest through the very high prices. The establishment of public abattoirs is one of the very best means of preventing any trust or amalgamation of corporations joining together holding and controlling the distribution of meat to the detriment of the grower. Every grower of stock in New South Wales knows that he can run his stock down to the public abattoir and have it killed. He can then make arrangements for shipping it to London. He is not at the mercy of any combine or trust, and I am glad to say that up to the present time the atmosphere of Australia does not seem at all congenial to the trust or combination of merchants or speculators who prey upon the grower or the farmer.

“The investment of the government in the project at the end of 1916 was approximately \$19,000,000. I suppose now it is about \$20,000,000. The ultimate total expenditures will amount to between \$25,000,000 and \$30,000,000. The duty of every one connected with it is to see that as soon as possible the government will receive in turn from these growers sufficient interest charges and the cost of these improvements. The best policy is to assist a man as much as possible, but at the same time not to bear too hard on the settlers to get as much as possible from them—to get the last pound of flesh from them—be-

cause the whole success of the scheme depends upon the individual success, and that can be brought about only by sympathetic treatment of the men subject to the law of the country and the honest carrying out of their side of the contract."