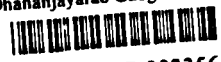


# ORGANIZATION OF AGRICULTURE



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**THE ORGANIZATION OF AGRICULTURE**

**FIRST EDITION** . . . *May, 1904*  
**Reprinted** . . . *June, 1904*  
**SECOND EDITION** . . . *January, 1905*  
**Reprinted** . . . *January, 1905*  
**THIRD EDITION** . . . *May, 1908*

# THE ORGANIZATION OF AGRICULTURE

BY EDWIN A. PRATT

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"THE TRANSITION IN AGRICULTURE"  
ETC.

LONDON  
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET  
1908

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## NOTE TO THIRD EDITION

**D**URING the four years which have elapsed since the First Edition of the present work was published, great advance has been made in the development of that system of organization in agriculture of which I there sought to give some account, and the general subject has attracted what may well be described as a world-wide interest. Not only from various countries of Europe, but also from Australasia, South Africa, Canada, the United States, India, Japan, and elsewhere, I have received flattering references to the earlier editions; while requests, to which I have gladly acceded, have reached me for permission to translate the work into Japanese and Urdu—the latter, one of the native languages of India.

A Third Edition being now called for, I should have preferred to make some attempt to

bring up to date, as far as possible, the references to all the countries dealt with; but this being, for various reasons, impracticable for the moment, I propose to adopt the alternative of indicating in a Prefatory Note a few of the further developments which have taken place, the body of the work giving, as before, the matter contained in the First Edition, with the Appendices added in the Second Edition.

Dealing first with the position at home, as it is to-day, I am glad to be able to report great progress on the part of that English Agricultural Organization Society whose earlier history I have recorded in Chapter XXIII. The A.O.S. (to give it the title by which it is generally known) is now a federation of 205 agricultural co-operative societies in England and Wales, with a membership of over 10,500 farmers, and these societies had, in 1907, a turn-over of £500,000.

The business done by most of the English agricultural co-operative societies relates to the combined purchase, for groups of members, of fertilizers, feeding stuffs, seeds, implements, and



other agricultural necessities, the advantages secured being lower prices, through dealing direct with the manufacturer or the importer; and a greater guarantee of quality through insistence on guarantees or the making of analyses. At the end of 1905 the A.O.S. carried this principle still further by creating an Agricultural Co-operative Federation, which groups the orders of about sixty of the different societies in the same way that those societies group the orders of their own members. Wholesale firms find it well worth their while to quote specially favourable terms for the large orders which can thus be given.

What co-operative purchase may mean in the case even of a single society can be illustrated by the Eastern Counties Farmers' Co-operative Association. Established early in 1904, by the end of 1907 it had 686 members, who farm a total of 212,580 acres, an average of 309 acres per member. Several of the members farm over 2000 acres each, and one has 4000 acres, so that the Eastern Counties Association is quoted as proving the utility of combination even for

“large” farmers. The members have a trading committee, an office and a warehouse at Ipswich, and officials who attend the principal markets in the district; and they purchase on such a scale that their orders in 1907 amounted to £177,000, while the management expenses represented only 0·7 per cent of the turn-over.

An example of what “small” farmers may do is afforded by the Carmarthen Farmers’ Co-operative Society, which had, in 1907, a membership of 596, and a turn-over of £27,000. The society claims to have obtained for its members reductions of from 10 to 15 per cent in the price of feeding stuffs; of 20 to 30 per cent in the price of seeds; and 30 to 40 per cent in the price of artificial manure.

Advance along the more difficult lines of co-operative sale of members’ produce has been less conspicuous; but several of the societies have established co-operative auction markets; the Eastern Counties Association has worked up so big a business in disposing of its members’ pigs (with the help of an expert who is in touch with all the markets throughout the country) that the

total value of the pigs sold in 1907 was over £64,000; the Hereford Fruit-Grading Society is doing good work in collecting fruit (especially apples) from members, and sending it out properly graded; and the Framlingham and District Agricultural Co-operative Society, which started operations in 1903, disposed, in 1907, of no fewer than 1,592,831 eggs, securing for the members over £1000 more than they would probably have got had they been left to find purchasers for themselves.

For co-operative dairying there is less scope in England than in Denmark, because in England it is, generally speaking, more profitable to sell the milk than to turn it into butter. But co-operation even in milk selling may be of advantage, as shown by the Eastern Counties Dairy Farmers' Co-operative Society, which in 1907 made contracts for its members amounting in value to £37,750.

As regards the question I ask in Chapter XXV, "Do the Railways Help the Farmers?" it is interesting to learn that the Agricultural Organization Society has established very friendly

relations with the railway companies, who have for so long been endeavouring to impress on British farmers the value of combination, especially in order that they can secure the lower rates already available for the transport of consignments in bulk. In the case of the Carmarthen Society, which has depôts in connection with two stations on the Great Western Railway, negotiations between the A.O.S. and the railway company led to certain arrangements in regard to the unloading of trucks, which save the Society £40 a year. At Newport (Salop) the London and North Western Railway Company erected on the station premises there a depôt for the local Agricultural Trading Society, and the Great Western Railway Company have built a depôt for the same society at Crudgington Station. In Yorkshire the North-Eastern Railway Company run a motor goods service between Brandsby and Easingwold in connection with the depôts of the Brandsby Agricultural Trading Association, and have helped to develop so good a business that the motor service is now inadequate, and the building of

a light railway, instead, is under consideration. In the Teme Valley, Worcestershire, a similar motor service has been established by the Great Western Railway Company, at the request of the A.O.S., a co-operative association being formed to organize the traffic. Here, again, it is reported that "the traffic has been much larger than was at first anticipated, and the service has proved satisfactory to the railway company and highly beneficial to the farmers of the district."

As regards the suggestion made on page 380, that the Co-operative Banks Association should amalgamate with the Agricultural Organization Society, this course has since been adopted, and there are now affiliated to the A.O.S. fourteen agricultural credit societies, formed on the Raiffeisen system, and mostly operating—and doing much practical good—in districts occupied by small farmers.

Finally, the Agricultural Organization Society is taking a very practical interest in promoting the co-operative tenure of small holdings and allotments. Altogether, therefore, the Society is

carrying on a most useful work, and one well deserving of sympathy and practical encouragement. Those who may wish to show either, or to obtain more details concerning any particular phase of this many-sided activity than there is space here to give, should communicate direct with the secretary, Mr. J. Nugent Harris, at Dacre House, Dacre Street, Westminster, London, S.W.

The present position in Ireland to-day is somewhat remarkable, and far from satisfactory. The Irish Agricultural Organization Society was started in 1894 by Sir Horace Plunkett, who, in a little work he has just issued, under the title of *Noblesse Oblige; An Irish Rendering*, says:—

To-day there are 345 co-operative creameries, producing between them annually butter to the value of one million and three-quarters sterling, or more than half the butter exported from all Ireland; having a membership of 40,000, a paid-up share capital of £250,000 and a loan capital of £150,000. The agricultural societies, whose object is to purchase their farm requirements and sell farm produce, number 166, with a membership of 15,000 and a turn-over approaching £100,000. There are 261 credit societies, mostly in the poorest districts, whose loans

to their members in 1906 reached £50,000—a figure which will be considerably increased when the returns are in for 1907. These credit societies have a membership of 15,000, a capital of £40,000 and a reserve fund of £3000. There remain the societies of flax-growers, pig-feeders, poultry-keepers, bee-keepers, lace and crochet makers, and others of a miscellaneous description. Their membership in round figures is 20,000. Thus you have a total of 925 societies, with a membership of 90,000, a capital of between £500,000 and £600,000, and an annual turn-over of £2,000,000. I may just add that the aggregate turn-over of the movement, from the commencement, totals twelve and a half million sterling.

It was admitted, however, at the annual general meeting of the Organization Society in December, 1907, that many of the local societies included in the list are “inactive,” judging from the business they do; while both the enthusiasm and the liberal support, moral and financial, originally extended to the movement, have steadily declined. They were so given to the Organization Society in the days when it relied on the principle of self-help. But in 1895 the Recess Committee made world-wide inquiries into economic conditions bearing on the situa-

tion in Ireland; and, in the result, there was created, in 1899, a Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction which was designed, as Sir Horace further says in his booklet, "to build a system of State aid upon a foundation of voluntary effort."

When, however, many of the earlier supporters assumed, as they did, that the State was preparing to do the work they had themselves previously done, they began to leave the new Department alike to provide the funds and to make the propaganda efforts, withdrawing their own subscriptions and showing no longer a vigorous activity in the prosecution of the work. Thus, although the trade turn-over of the movement in 1906 was £2,000,000, the societies subscribed only £456 towards the central organization expenses, which amounted to £6385, leaving the Department to find the remainder. The combined effect of the decrease in funds and the withdrawal of active assistance has been what one of the leaders of the movement describes as "a condition of paralysis."

There have, again, been other influences at



work. Speaking at the general meeting already mentioned, Sir Horace Plunkett said :—

Our movement is social and economic, and not political. At the same time our opponents, not without reason, fear that our success would exercise a profound political influence. Our movement stimulates thought and strengthens character in a way which is of inestimable value to the statesman who understands it, but extremely inconvenient to the exponent of any political programme which claims a larger influence and control over the thought and action of the community than is consistent with social and economic advancement.

In view of the lack of available funds, it was agreed at the meeting in question to accept an offer from the Department of Agriculture of £3000 in 1908, £2000 in 1909, and a final £1000 in 1910, by which time, it is hoped, the Society will once more attain to independence. But the whole story of these experiences is significant of what may happen when a people learn to rely on State aid, instead of being content to do the best they can for themselves.

Concerning Denmark, I take the following from a report on the trade and commerce of that

country, for 1906, by Mr. Lionel C. Liddell, His Majesty's Consul at Copenhagen :—

Co-operation in Denmark was started by the smaller farmers, and proved so successful that now even the largest estate owners combine as co-operative societies. The gigantic co-operative dairy, Trifolium, started by five of the largest estate owners, has now 60 associates, who deliver over 55,000,000 lbs. of milk annually. Projected extensions will increase the number of associates to about 100, able to deliver 110,000,000 lbs. of milk annually from about 12,000 cows. The original capital invested in the erection and installation of the dairy was £44,000. The present capital is £83,000. The number of persons employed is 400. Besides doing a considerable export trade, the society has a wholesale entrepôt at Copenhagen for the sale of butter and cheese, 700 retail dealers being supplied therefrom. The milk is brought bottled to Copenhagen every day in 40 railway vans. In Aarhus there is a similar entrepôt, and in the country the dairy has about 1800 customers. In the dairy from 50,000 to 70,000 cheeses of 52 different kinds, and averaging 12 lbs. in weight, are kept in stock. The shelves used have an aggregate length of about 22 English miles.

The co-operative societies now themselves combine in Denmark for the purpose of doing a wholesale trade and exporting to the United Kingdom without merchants as middlemen. The Danish Dairies Association exports butter from 79 dairies, the average quantity per week being 2000 casks, equal to 104,000 cwts. per year.

The leading co-operative institution in Denmark for the export of eggs is the Co-operative Egg Export Association, which collects eggs from 500 districts, and has 33,000 members. Good quality is rigidly enforced by a system of fines, with such good effect on the selling price that members now get 5½d. per lb. of eggs, whereas when the Association was started, eleven years ago, they got only 4d. per lb.

The value of the eggs exported from Denmark has increased in ten years from £400,000 to £1,400,000. The exports of the Association mentioned are alone valued at £225,000 a year.

A recent development in agricultural associations in Denmark is the Tuberculine Association, which aims at increasing the interest in the acquisition and maintenance of herds of cattle and swine free of tuberculosis. Associations for controlling the yield of milk are increasing considerably in number and size.

As agriculture progresses in Denmark it is found necessary to employ foreign labourers temporarily to supplement the local supply, especially in the sugar-beet districts. In 1905 the number so imported from Russian Poland and Galicia was 5000.

In the list of Danish exports (mainly to the United Kingdom) in 1907, three items alone account for £17,352,180, namely: bacon, £5,385,275; butter, £10,192,587; eggs, £1,774,318.

The story of the rise and development of agricultural organization in the Transvaal, with which I have not hitherto dealt, is one that is well worth the telling.

The movement was started at a meeting of the Committee of the Pretoria Agricultural Society, in 1896, when the formation of a Union linking together all the various agricultural societies in the Transvaal, and establishing there a system of co-operation among agriculturists in general, was discussed and approved, the Transvaal Agricultural Union being duly created later in the year. But for a sitting of the Volksraad, President Kruger would have been present at the first meeting of the Union. Among those who did attend were Commandant General Joubert, Mr. S. W. Burger (Vice-President of the Republic), and Mr. P. J. Cronje, who all gave assurances of hearty support on behalf of the Transvaal Government. The various successes gained by the organization in those early days included the acceptance by the Government of a proposal for the establishment of an Agricultural Department for the Trans-

vaal, and the securing of a grant of £1000 per annum towards the cost of a Transvaal Agricultural Journal, which the Government also undertook to print at the State Printing Works.

With the war came interruptions; but it was afterwards found that throughout this time of storm and stress the secretary of the Union had been quietly preparing reports upon matters of interest to farmers for consideration when the campaign was over. The new Government entered cordially into the movement, and the Department of Agriculture which it formed was based mainly on the reports and recommendations of the Union. Subsequent developments included the establishment of an Inter-Colonial Agricultural Union, which first met, in 1905, at Maritzburg, and discussed, among other subjects, "the advantages of co-operation among farmers," while the Transvaal delegates at this Conference afterwards met by themselves to consider the formation of farmers' associations; the establishment of co-operative societies, and other questions. One very practical proof of the advantages of organization was afforded

when the military authorities agreed to take at least 25 per cent of their requirements direct from the farmers without the acceptance of formal tenders, this arrangement answering so well that it was found necessary to erect store-houses for the collection and distribution of such produce. Among the further successes were the opening of a 'Transvaal Land and Agricultural Bank; the formation of the Transvaal Stockbreeders' Association; the establishment by the Government of experimental and stud farms; the putting forward of a scheme for the insurance of stock and crops (the latter against hail and locusts); and the securing of reductions in railway rates. Such was the activity developed by the Union that the agenda paper for the annual conference in August, 1907, contained nineteen groups of subjects, with 125 separate items!

Meanwhile agricultural organization was so much in the air that, when addressing the members of the Union at the 1907 Conference, the Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture, General Botha, said: "It seems only a little

while ago that the word co-operation was quite new in this country; but to-day no deputation of the many which visit me fails to express its belief in the value of co-operation"; though in another speech, delivered in the following November, he had to explain that whereas, during the previous seven or eight months, he had received deputations from co-operative societies daily, "he regretted to say that not one co-operative society had said they wished to co-operate without pecuniary assistance from the Government."

The present aims of the Transvaal agriculturists and their supporters are to secure closer settlement of the land, to render unnecessary the substantial expenditure on imported produce, and to open up a considerable export trade for themselves. The two last-mentioned results can only, it is felt, be secured through perfection in organization; and, to accomplish this purpose, the Government appointed, at the end of 1907, as Superintendent of Co-operation; Mr. B. Stilling-Anderson, of Denmark, son of the founder of Danish co-operation; while

Mr. Robert Pape, a gentleman who has gained great experience in dairy methods in Holland and elsewhere, was, at about the same time, appointed dairy expert to the Transvaal Department of Agriculture.

In Cape Colony the movement was started later than in the Transvaal; but much progress has already been made. The pioneer was Dr. Jameson, at whose request, in 1904, a member of the Legislative Council undertook an investigation into various schemes of agricultural development in Europe, with special reference to co-operation in production, transport, and distribution. Dr. Jameson also made inquiries on his own account during a visit to England in the same year. In 1905 he introduced into the Cape Parliament a measure authorizing a loan of £150,000 for advances to co-operative associations of farmers, and this measure was unanimously adopted. Application was then made by the Government of Cape Colony to the Irish Department of Agriculture for the services of an expert in co-operation, and thereupon Mr. P. J. Hannon accepted the post



of Superintendent of Agricultural Organization to the Cape Government, and took up the work there. Some of the results already achieved were sketched by him in a paper he read to the members of the Colonial Institute, in London, in 1906.

To begin with, sixty-six public meetings and conferences of farmers were held, extending over a period of three months, and the net result of this mission was summed up by Mr. Hannon as being that "in almost every centre in the Colony, committees are now actively at work in the development of proposals calculated materially to assist the people who live upon the land." Among the schemes thus carried out or projected are: co-operative wineries to secure an improvement in the production of wine; co-operative creameries, co-operative cheese factories, and co-operative depôts for milk distribution; associations of wool and mohair growers; improved methods of fruit culture, storage, and sale; Government loans to groups of farmers for the improvement of stock, for water-boring on farms, for fencing (to protect

sheep against jackals), for co-operative granaries (where grain, etc. can be stored pending a rise in market prices), for irrigation schemes, and other purposes. Much practical experimental work is also being done. All these things are calculated directly to advance the interests of the agriculturists. "It should also be mentioned," Mr. Hannon thinks, "that the Railway Department is placing every facility at the disposal of the new associations for the cheaper and more efficient conveyance of agricultural output."

In Ceylon effective organization of agricultural interests was introduced in 1904 by Sir Henry Blake, then Governor of the island. He began by forming the Ceylon Agricultural Society, the object of which was "to bring all classes, down to the smallest cultivators, into closer touch with the Government, with each other, and with the scientific staff of the Botanic Department," his theory being that if any improvement was to be hoped for it must go hand in hand with labour. The Central Society was formed of all the members of the Legisla-

ture, some of the principal inhabitants, European and native, of each province, and all the members of the staff of the Botanic Department. Local societies were formed by voluntary action in every part of the island, and were affiliated to the Central Board of Agriculture. Thousands of leaflets, giving information in Sinhalese and Tamil, have been sent out to the local societies; instructors appointed by the Central Board attend meetings and give advice; and the staff of the Botanic Department afford valuable counsel and assistance.

In May, 1907, there were 1200 members of the Central Society, and there had been formed fifty-three local branches, with a membership of 4000. Cordial support has been given to the movement by native gentlemen, some contributing considerable sums towards the expenses, and others offering land for experimental stations at which much excellent work has been done, especially as regards the discovery of new methods, the introduction of new products, the effects of artificial manures, etc. Sericulture and apiculture are receiving attention; shows

are being organized by the local societies, with the co-operation of the Central Board ; and that body also arranges for the sale by auction, or in the market at Colombo, of consignments of cattle, fruit, etc., from local societies. As regards the question of loan societies, Sir Henry Blake says :—

In two or three districts loan societies have been formed with entirely satisfactory results. In this direction I have been urged from time to time to establish Government loan banks, but I have refused, for I am satisfied that any practical success in the agricultural movement must be secured by insisting upon the principle of self-help. If you want to ruin a man, body and spirit—to take the spring from his muscles and the stimulus of necessity from his mind—give him something for nothing. A co-operative loan bank is creative, a Government loan bank is an object for predatory attack. The one stimulates prevision, industry, and sense of responsibility, the other induces extravagance and carelessness ; for it may be broadly asserted that no Eastern peasantry, probably no peasantry, would regard a Government loan in the same light as an advance made by his neighbours and co-partners, who will have no non-sense in the matter of repayment.

Altogether, Sir Henry Blake regards the movement as “one of the most hopeful factors in the future progress of Ceylon.”

These additional examples may suffice to throw still further light alike on the substantial development which the whole subject of agricultural organization is undergoing, and on the material effect such development should eventually have both on agriculture itself and on the economic conditions of the world in general.

EDWIN A. PRATT

*May, 1908.*

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