

Marketing and Co-operation. I.

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AGRICULTURAL CO-OPERATION IN SOUTH WALES.

An Economic and Financial Analysis.

BY

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Preface.

The farmers of Wales have long been familiar with the co-operative movement in a number of forms designed for different purposes. Interest varies by localities and somewhat according to agricultural conditions, but there is scarcely any part in which farmers as a whole have no personal or financial interest in societies. The best known and most successful form is that for supplying farm requirements, yet in spite of local failures in marketing efforts there is much deliberation on the possibilities of reform of the marketing systems and some consideration of the place of co-operation in such reform.

The need for reinforcing the existing co-operative societies and of furthering developments in the marketing of produce has led to the inauguration of a scheme for economic advisory service in co-operation and marketing. This scheme, given below, was arranged between the University College of Wales and the Welsh Agricultural Organisation Society in 1926, and is designed to supply service through the Agricultural Economics Department of the College in as many as possible of the following ways:—

(a) The advising of all Agricultural Co-operative Societies in Wales which contribute to the fund on co-operative work in general, and on credit, accounts, costings, etc.

(b) The arranging of conferences in Wales of farmers and representatives of the Agricultural Co-operative Societies, the N.F.U., the Agricultural Committees of the County Councils and their staffs, and other parties interested, to discuss agricultural co-operative problems.

(c) The distribution to societies, through the press or other medium, of information concerning co-operative activities, and of reports, statistics, etc., relating to the movement in Wales.

(d) The organisation of courses for the training of managers and other officers of the A.C. Societies.

(e) The provision of expert practical advice on grading, packing, transport, and the marketing of produce.

(f) The provision of Welsh and English lecturers to address meetings of farmers, branches of the N.F.U., etc., on various aspects of agricultural co-operation.

(g) The general furtherance by the provision of the above services of the Agricultural Co-operative Movement in Wales.

The work is done under the immediate supervision of a Joint-Committee of the Councils of the College and the W.A.O.S.

Work was started under the scheme in January of this year, and Mr. J. Morgan Jones was later appointed Marketing Assistant. It was evident that investigation and research would be necessary before advisory work would be possible on any comprehensive scale; and also that it would be advisable to try to remedy any weaknesses in existing institutions before others were suggested. A considerable amount of advisory work in several forms has been carried on, but the chief subject of research has been the condition of the co-operative societies and the causes of stagnation and development, or of success and failure. The following pages represent the first result of the scheme in publication of extended studies.

Co-operative organisation and trading present manifold problems with economic, political or societal, and even human characteristics. On many of the aspects of these problems no person could claim to have knowledge which would justify dogmatic statement and careful observation and measurement, where these are possible, often bring clearer realisation of their variety and complexity. Yet certain general influences on the condition of societies can be detected and some of these have been analysed and described by Mr. Morgan Jones.

Acknowledgment of the ready assistance of managers, officers and members of societies in the study of their methods of organisation and trading is due and gratefully tendered by the author and the Department.

Special recognition must be made of the skilled and considerate assistance of Mr. Hugh Jones throughout the investigation.

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Contents.

MEMBERSHIP AND GENERAL TRADE.

TYPES OF BUSINESSES.

COMPARISON, 1923 AND 1926.

TRUCK LOAD SOCIETIES.

STORAGE SOCIETIES.

Supply of Capital.

Profit and Loss.

Operating Costs.

Credit.

Finance and Success.

Financial Earnings and Expenses.

RELATIONS WITH MEMBERS.

Delivery of Goods.

Salesmanship or Canvassing.

RELATIONS BETWEEN SOCIETIES.

SALE OF PRODUCE.

CONCLUSION.