

## ROLE OF CO-OPERATION IN BRITISH AGRICULTURE\*

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SINCE Independence and particularly after the All-India Rural Credit Survey, the co-operative mode of organization has been assigned a fairly important place in the development of agriculture in India. While the co-operative movement is not new in India, it is much older in Britain. It may be profitable, therefore, to examine the contribution of co-operation to agriculture in the United Kingdom.

In order to have a clear picture of agricultural co-operation in Britain and to understand its present position, it is necessary to know the historical circumstances through which it has developed and the important events which influenced it in the past. The first part of this article will, therefore, review briefly the history of agricultural co-operative movement in the U.K. and the second part will deal with its present structure and operational features.

### I

Agricultural co-operation in the U.K. dates back to 1867. The early co-operative institutions were formed with the object of buying farmers' requirements such as fertilizers and feeding stuffs followed by dairies making cheese or butter. Upto the formation of the Irish Agricultural Organization Society in 1894 with a view to promote and assist new societies, there was no central body to provide individual institutions with legal and business advice. This was followed by the Agricultural Organization Society (A.O.S.) of England in 1901 and the Scottish A.O.S. in 1905. These A.O.S.s for different countries in the U.K. served as a mouthpiece and information-centre for co-operatives in their respective areas. Till 1909 these central bodies were private bodies dependent on contributions from member-societies and individuals; in 1909, the English A.O.S. started receiving Government grants for its work relating to co-operative small holdings and allotments, as a result of which it was reorganized with addition of Government nominees on its board of governors.

Just before the War a Central Trading Board for wholesale pur-

\* This is a modified version of a section from the 'Study of British Agricultural Producers' Organizations' prepared by the author at the Agricultural Economics Research Institute, Oxford. The author is grateful to Mr. G. R. Allen of the Institute for his comments and suggestions in the course of the preparation of the study.