

CO-OPERATIVE ORGANISATION OF AGRICULTURE.

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The past twenty-five years or more have seen important changes in the economic structure and activity of the world. The changes which have occurred have applied to all phases of life, and to agriculture as well as to industry or commerce. Great interest has been shown in agricultural organization in regard to marketing activities; this interest has extended to South Africa and for the past four or five years, in particular, has occasioned much discussion and led to the formation of many producers' associations. Some of the organizations have been successful, others have been complete failures. Co-operation as applied to agriculture has been hailed as the saviour of farmers; it has likewise been condemned as a delusion of idealists, a form of organization against economic principles. There have been organizations formed in various countries that have been outstandingly successful; a few have without question been the media through which certain agricultural industries have been saved from complete ruin. On the other hand, one must recognise the fact that there have been disastrous failures and it is possibly true that the failures outnumber the successes.

Because of the general interest in South Africa at the present time in regard to the formation and activities of farmers' co-operative organizations it is advisable that the fundamental principles underlying such organization be outlined. Organizations formed without regard to the definite principles upon which success must be based are fore-doomed to collapse. The leaders of any industry may be fully aware of the urgency for organization and of the correct lines on which such development should proceed but they will be under an unsurmountable handi-

cap unless the producers themselves understand and appreciate their efforts. No matter how worthy an effort or an idea may be in itself it cannot be truly great or effective unless those to whom it is presented are capable of a full comprehension and realization of its nature and possibilities.

That co-operative organization of producers in this country is most urgent is not questioned by those who understand the present condition of agriculture. Before taking up the existing status of agriculture in South Africa it is well to consider the position of the general agriculture of the world, as a comprehensive view of the whole will aid in the consideration of any part of the whole.

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN ENGLAND.

In the Middle Ages people were practically self-sufficing; each family or group of families produced enough food for its own use and bartered any surplus with neighbours. There was no production of food for the primary object of sale. The people lived on the land or in small villages. Communication between different parts of the country was very difficult and primitive, hence each small community lived for itself alone. Each village had a mill for grinding wheat; the crude implements of the time were hand-made by the farmers and their sons; the women spun rough clothes; and in general it can be said that the people continued life from year to year in the same manner, coming very infrequently in contact with neighbouring communities. Thus, the marketing problem as such did not exist to any great degree.