

consuming public. Elimination of middlemen would in no way remove the necessity for fulfilment of these steps. If middlemen were eliminated from the field of marketing, the producer or the consumer would have to carry out these definite steps and in so doing would become a middleman.

Opponents and critics of the present system of marketing farm products would do well to consider all sides of the question. Destructive criticism must give way to constructive advice and assistance. If the following enumeration of weaknesses in the marketing system is carefully studied it will be seen that not only middlemen but producers and consumers must bear the responsibility for the wide spread between the producer and the consumer. Obviously, there is no one link in the marketing process that is wholly corrupt or responsible for all of the evils that exist; the weaknesses are well scattered and any drastic change in a single unit of the process will fail to remedy the majority of defects.

FACTORS OPERATING AGAINST FARMERS.

As far as the producer is concerned we find that he gives insufficient attention to questions of suitable varieties, sorting and grading, standard containers, careful handling, maturity of the products; in most cases he has very little market knowledge as to demand and available supply. Country transportation (both road and rail) is frequently poor. In many sections where produce is sold on the farm there is only one buyer; sometimes several exist but they combine to keep prices down.

The transportation system is not perfect by any means. Delays in transit occur; refrigeration in transit is unsatisfactory and very limited; there is a lack of cold storage space at both shipping and receiving points; careless handling occurs in transit and in loading and off-loading; claims

of small shippers are frequently neglected. The existence of these points naturally reacts unfavourably on producers and consumers, but chiefly on the former.

In the wholesale trade we find opportunities for fraud, such as falsification of returns or condition of arrival on the market; poor location of wholesale markets; lack of adequate market-news or price quotation system; lack of information regarding crop conditions, market conditions and crop movements; lack of uniformity in grades, methods of operations, containers, in different markets and in the same market; commission firms buying on their own account; producers heavily in debt to brokers and dealers, etc.

A WEAK RETAIL SYSTEM.

The retailing system is the weakest step in the entire marketing process and in consequence is the most expensive. Retail margins of 50 per cent, 75 per cent and 100 per cent are the rule and not the exception. Recently the wholesale price of butter in Pretoria was 1/6 per pound for first grade butter; the retail price for the same article was 2/3. A 50 per cent margin on such a staple article, one which is in such uniform demand, is not justified in any way. Some of the more prominent failings or weaknesses of the retail class as a group are dishonesty regarding quality and weights; entire disregard, in most cases, of proper sanitation; over-stocking and consequent deterioration of perishable goods; excessive credit carelessly given; delay in paying wholesalers' bills; too much duplication of delivery and other services; lack of experience and training and consequent poor management of many retail stores; stocking of low grade articles in place of those of first grade, etc.

The consuming public is to blame in so far as it disregards certain of the points mentioned above in regard to