

VIII CO-OPERATION

Co-operation has found its highest expression within the Soviet Union. In capitalist countries co-operation is surrounded by hostile interests; in the U.S.S.R. it has become the means of achieving Socialism. Socialism through co-operation is a slogan one hears on all hands, and the workers and peasants of Russia have realised that Socialism cannot be imposed from above but must be built up by their individual and collective efforts through their numerous and varied co-operative organisations.

The great task confronting those who were charged with the enormous responsibility of rebuilding a mighty country, suffering as no other European country had suffered as a consequence of the world war, a country which was devastated by counter-revolution and famine, was to reconcile the interests of a class-conscious proletariat with a war-weary peasantry. Co-operation was the means employed of bringing about this great union, and town and country became partners in the Socialist plan which aimed at uniting the whole of the efforts of the workers and peasants of the U.S.S.R. in the task of building up Socialism. In the following paragraphs the Co-operative Delegates summarise their investigations and impressions of various types of Co-operative organisations.

Consumers' Co-operation

Consumers' co-operation, the economic achievement of Rochdale, is developing in the U.S.S.R. at such a rate that in ten years it will control practically all the retail trade of the country. We visited towns where 80 per cent. of the retail trade was in the hands of the co-operatives. Where science has been applied to store-keeping, as at Rostov, and where rationalisation has had an opportunity of eliminating the waste inevitable in an almost improvised system of consumers' co-operation, progress is simply phenomenal.

Seventy per cent. of the trade of the Co-operative Movement of the U.S.S.R. is done by Consumers' Co-operative Societies, and when we realise that the co-operative trade is 52 per cent. of the whole trade in the Soviet Union the enormous part that consumers' co-operation plays in the economy of Socialism can be fully realised.

If figures ever speak volumes they do in the Consumers' Movement in the U.S.S.R. The trade of the movement