

EVERY MAN'S CONCERN

On the evening of December 21, 1864, twenty-eight members of the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers in Rochdale, England, gathered in the dim light of an oil lamp to witness the formal opening of their own store. The total capital of the group at the time of inception amounted to \$140.00. Notwithstanding many handicaps, obstacles and reverses, it weathered every austerity, until today "Co-ops" are national in scope, international in influence, and regarded by many as the method whereby a more rational economic structure can be achieved, and by others as not only a new economy, but also a better democracy, and a more concrete philosophy of life.

The Rochdale Pioneers were humble weavers, but they drafted a code of rules for the government of their newly organized society, which proved to be so perfect, and so flawless that the experience of over a hundred years has not suggested any material change. Briefly they are open membership, democratic control, elimination of profit by dividend on purchases, and limited interest on capital. In addition to the principles which they set down on paper, the Rochdale Pioneers possessed another unwritten, simple, principle which was the keystone to their success, and to the success of those who have followed in their footsteps. It was the principle of "action over words."

From this obscure and unassuming start the Co-operative Movement has spread over Great Britain, until today it has reached the proportion of big business. The English Co-operative Wholesale is now England's largest single business concern in the domestic side of commerce. Under the two wholesales of England and Scotland is a network of over 2,000 retail societies. From retailing, the societies have moved forward to organize and control through their wholesale societies more than 150 factories and mills. The Joint Co-operative Wholesale of Great Britain (organization by the two big wholesales to act as a buying agency), operates its own tea plantation in Ceylon and is the largest single purchaser of Canadian wheat. The banking business of the Co-operative Wholesale Society has a turnover of \$12,000,000 a day. C.W.S. has gone into the insurance business and operates one of the largest companies in Great Britain. With a membership of over 7,000,000 the Co-operative Movement embraces more than half the families in England and Scotland.

From Britain Consumer Co-operation spread to

Denmark, a country which then in the depths, both culturally and economically was rescuscitated by co-operation. It brought the Danes an understanding of democracy and the intelligence to put it into practice.

Finland, while under the throes of Tsarist Russia adopted Consumer Co-operation more as a patriotic measure than an economic one, to preserve her national economy.

In Sweden, Consumer Co-operation was hailed as the answer to economic democracy. Sweden already possessed political democracy. Today she has both. Consumer Co-operation dominates the economic life of Sweden. It controls the price level and sets the standards of quality for most commodities.

The Canadian Co-operative Movement had its inception at a meeting held on March 6, 1909 at Hamilton, Ontario. At this meeting a resolution was passed to form all then existing co-operative organizations into the Co-operative Union of Canada. This Union became the missionary, organizer, and adviser of the Cooperative Movement in Canada. Its objects include the cultivation in the people of Canada of co-operative habits of mind, and the propagation generally of cooperative philosophy, without which, permanency and steady growth cannot be expected in co-operative economic activities. It is concerned with organizing co-operative work in all its branches, including the promotion of education, publicity and propaganda, having in view the ultimate establishment of a Co-operative Commonwealth, international as well as national in scope. It is not necessary for this writer to quote facts and figures in appraisal of the growth of the Co-operative Movement in Canada. Its success speaks for itself in our everyday life. It is interesting to note, however, that Canada has deviated from the policy of other countries, particularly U.S.A. in admitting producer and marketing co-operatives to the Co-operative Union. Co-operation is fundamentally a consumer's movement, because it is the consumers who provide compensation for the producers and the merchandising concerns. However producer and marketing co-operatives among farmers and fishermen have developed on a much greater scale in Canada than have consumer co-operatives due to this policy. The Co-operative Union of Canada takes the view that genuine producers and marketing co-operatives are organized to eliminate the element

of profit on price, and instead to substitute reward for actual service, and that it is desirable that both types should, as far as they can, work together for their mutual advantage as against economic interests which operated to their common injury.

Co-operation, it cannot be too greatly urged, is a philosophy of economic life, which exercises a beneficial influence on the character of mankind, and disposes people to work together for mutual benefit. Co-operation offers a sound basis for national and international reconstruction. It offers a more satisfying economic system because it is more moral, and because it solves most of the present day problems of industry and commerce. But it has higher aims than economic ones. Co-operative methods reach to all purposes of social life, and enlists and develops the common man's highest qualities, with a resulting improvement in the quality of the entire human race. The philosophy of co-operation is most clearly portrayed and is probably being given its greatest boost through the Extension Department of St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Realizing the ethical, social as well as the economic value of co-operative philosophy and principles this Department has rendered, since its inauguration, invaluable services in this respect to the people of its area, irrespective of their religious convictions or associations.

Many people are adverse to the Co-operative Movement because they see it as an institution for the overthrow of Capitalism. Co-operation is not opposed to Capitalism. It is an aid to Capitalism. In a sense it is Capitalism. It is a system that maintains all the advantages of free Capitalism with the evils left out. It is Capitalism in that it retains private ownership, scientific progress, and allows for the accumulation of money and property to carry on production. But it is Capitalism, minus depressions, maldistribution, and the violent contrasts between riches and poverty. It is Capitalism with an economical, political and ethical philosophy.

Co-operation is a means by which we may combat the 'isms' and other evils of our day. It is a system which presents a challenge to all free thinking peoples. But we, ordinary people, what part can we play in so great a challenge? The Rochdale Pioneers and their followers were only ordinary people. So was the paperhanger who rose

from the dregs of society, by a perverted use of his free will, and a consciousness of destiny, to become the commander of a nation. But if this man's zeal and ingenuity could be used to destroy the happiness of most of the world, why cannot we muster enough courage and determination to restore the world and undo the ruin he and others have created? It is a challenge and a challenge that each and everyone of us, especially on the North American continent should and must accept if we are to build the fortress of a new economy, and a true democracy in the path of false ideologies.

—ALBERT LANNAN '51.

Something Old

THE DISTRIBUTIST'S ANSWER

I wonder how many of us are aware that we are living under a system which is slowly destroying our very nature; that we are living a way of life which is opposed to the normal way in which we should live. If we were conscious of these facts, I'm sure we'd be willing and enthusiastic about doing something about it. We might not be able to do very much, but at least we could do a little to better our situation. "Do anything," says G. K. Chesterton, "however small, that will prevent the completion of the work of capitalist combination."

It is more than twenty years ago since Mr. Chesterton outlined a sane means of combatting the two great evils, Big Business and State Socialism. The methods he proposed were directed to the situation as it existed in his own country (England), but they could be used to the same advantage in our own country at the present time. The situation is almost identical.

"The natural thing to do with a wrong operation," says Mr. Chesterton, "is to reverse it. The natural thing, when property has fallen into fewer hands, is to restore it to more numerous hands", this is what is known as Distributism in its simplest form—the restoring of property into more numerous hands. It may not be an easy task. It's going to require a great deal of sacrifice—"vows and volunteers". Nevertheless it has to be done before it is too late. We cannot afford to become victims of Communism or chaos. We mustn't let the principle of property vanish.

Mr. Chesterton's program of Distributism is not the dream of some extreme fanatic; for he was neither ex-