

THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF EQUITY

by

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PREFACE

The history of the American Society of Equity is the story of an agricultural organization. When Professor Hicks recommended that I attempt to investigate the activities of the organization, I little appreciated the rich field in store for me. Today, as a result of his encouragement and inspiration, I find the field of recent agricultural organizations one of the most lucrative sources for historical research. Unfortunately, little has been accomplished in this respect, consequently, one must be prepared to spend endless hours in the excavation of sources and facts that are found in relatively few libraries. In Madison, the Wisconsin Historical Society, the Wisconsin Legislative Reference Library and the library of the College of Agriculture, are exceedingly fruitful.

I find myself greatly indebted to a number of people for information and suggestions. To Professor Hibbard, I am especially thankful, for advice that gave me a sane balance. His course in Farmer Movements was exceptionally instructive. To Mr. William Kirsch of the Division of Markets in the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, I am indebted for invaluable information and direction with reference to the influence of the progressive movement.

Mr. Kenneth Hones, president of the Farmers' Equity Union, gave me much insight into the practical problems of agricultural organizations.

Likewise, I am thankful to Judge D. O. Mahoney, who served as president of both the national and state unions; to Mrs. Mae Cobban, who was employed in the offices of the Wisconsin Society of Equity for some twenty-five years; to Mr. George F. Comings, an old Equity leader; to J. F. Shaw, a former secretary of the Wisconsin union; to Mr. A. C. Schmidt; to F. G. Swoboda; to Tom Nimlos; to Congressman B. J. Gehrman, the last president of the Wisconsin Equity Society; to J. J. Handley, the secretary of the Wisconsin Federation of Labor; to Mr. C. F. Claflin, manager of the Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales Association of Milwaukee and a host of others.

Having completed this phase of the investigation, I am next to proceed into an exploration of the activities of Equity in the Northwest, the rise and development of successor organizations such as the Nonpartisan League, the American Farm Bureau Federation and the Farmers' Union, and consider their influences on American agriculture in general.

CHAPTER ONE

Agricultural organizations are of a comparatively recent origin. Organizations were in existence in the years prior to the Civil War; but they were mainly in the form of fairs, horticultural societies and the like. They were local in character; their activities centered mainly about business operations; and their programs countenanced no serious thoughts for political and economic reform. In essence, their objectives were of an "all-inclusive" character; and revolved around such intangible ends as the "general welfare" of the community.¹

Subsequent to the Civil War, American agricultural organizations developed more radical dimensions. Unlike their pre-war heritage, these farmer bodies assumed national characteristics; they were more specific in their objectives; and their platforms embodied ringing declarations for social, political and economic reform. Consequently, the post-war decades that saw the rise of the Grange and the Farmers' Alliance, witnessed the first major attempts at agrarian reform.²

¹ B. H. Hibbard, Marketing of Agricultural Products, 187-188. New York, 1921.

² Farmers' Alliance is used in the sense of including the northern and southern alliances as one.

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The twentieth century displayed a continued interest in farmer organizations. The collapse of the Farmers' Alliance in the early nineties left the middle-west farmers without organized representation. This was, nevertheless, of temporary duration; for early in 1902, the re-organization of the southern agricultural producers began with the founding of the Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union of America---commonly known as the Farmers' Union. Shortly following the incorporation of the Farmers' Union, the sponsors of the American Society of Equity introduced their plan to the farmers of the upper Mississippi valley. Consequently, by the close of 1902, plans had been formulated for the organization of the middle-western agricultural elements; the Farmers' Union operating in the South and the American Society of Equity in the North.³

The American Society of Equity, the organization the writer is primarily interested in, unlike the Grange and the Farmers' Alliance came into being in a period of generally improving agricultural conditions. Such items as farmers purchasing power, the production, acreage and value of farm goods, show that agriculture was on an upward climb.

According to a Congressional committee report, the purchasing power of American farmers in the early years of the twen-

³ E. A. Weist, Agricultural Organizations in the United States, 525. Lexington, Kentucky 1923.

tieth century was substantially ahead of that, which prevailed in the closing decade of the nineteenth century. In 1890, the index figure stood at 83; in 1895 it rose to 85; in 1900 to 86; and in 1902, the year of the founding of the American Society of Equity, the index level had climbed to 95.⁴ In the decade from 1900 to 1910, the value of farm lands and buildings rose from 16 billions to 34 billions.⁵ The percentage of farm tenancy though increasing was not particularly alarming. In 1880, 25.6 percent of the American farms were operated by tenants; in 1890, 28.4; in 1900, 35.3; and in 1910, 37.0.⁶

The condition of the four major crops: cotton, corn, tobacco and wheat---show with the possible exception of tobacco and wheat ---that American agriculture was slowly on the upgrade. In 1890, American farmers harvested 21 million acres of cotton, totaling 8.7 million bales; and sold their crop at an average of 8.6 cents per pound. By 1900, the acreage harvested increased to 25 millions; the total number of bales to 10 millions; and the selling price to 9.2 cents per pound. By 1902, the acreage and number of bales increased to 28 and 10 millions respectively; while the price suffered a slight decline, dropping to 7.6 cents. Beginning with 1903 and continuing for a number of years, the acreage, production and

⁴ Report of the Joint Committee of Agricultural Inquiry 1921, Congressional Report 408, Part I:31.

⁵ Recent Social Trends in the United States, I:499. New York, 1933.

⁶ Bureau of the Census, Department of Commerce, Farm Tenancy in the United States, 23. Washington, 1924.

price level of cotton remained on a comparatively favorable
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plane.

Corn was, likewise, in a favorable condition. In 1890, the American farmers harvested 75 million acres, totaling 1.7 billion bushels and sold at an average of 49.6 cents per bushel. By 1900, the acreage harvested increased to 95 millions; the total number of bushels to 2.6 billions; but the average selling price declined to 35 cents per bushel. By 1902, the acreage harvested rose to 97 millions; the number of bushels to 2.7 billions and the average price to 40.1 cents. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, corn prices were relatively
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higher than during the nineties.

The condition of tobacco, however, was somewhat uncertain. Production and the aggregate value of the crop increased; but farmer prices, to the contrary, remained comparatively low. In 1890, American farmers harvested 851 thousand acres; amounting to 648 million pounds; and sold for an average of 8 cents per pound. By 1900, the acreage increased to 1.1 millions; the total poundage to 852 millions; but the price declined to 6.7 cents. By 1902, the acreage rose to 1.2 millions; the total poundage to 960 millions; and the farmer price to 6.9 cents. Tobacco, though experiencing a low market price, was soon to undergo a substantial
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increase.

7 U. S. D. A., Agricultural Statistics 1937, 88.

8 Ibid, 39.

9 Ibid, 121.

Wheat was another crop in a position of uncertainty. In 1890, the wheat farmers harvested 37 million acres; amounting to 677 million bushels; and sold for an average of 83.7 cents per bushel. By 1900, the harvested acreage rose to 49 millions; but the total number of bushels and price declined to 599 million bushels and 62.1 cents respectively. By 1902, the harvested acreage decreased to 46 millions; but the total number of bushels and price rose to 687 millions and 63.0 respectively.¹⁰ The wheat and tobacco regions, incidentally, were the two large fields of operation for the American Society of Equity.

From the afore-going evidence one might well surmise, that with respect to the increasing purchasing power of the farmers, and the increased production and valuation of the various crops ---that American agriculture was slowly on the march forward.

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Despite improving conditions, the sponsors of the Equity program introduced one of the most radical and ambitious farmer platforms ever conceived. The purposes of the society as outlined in the articles of incorporation in 1903 were as follows:¹¹

- 1 To obtain profitable prices for all products of the farm, garden and orchard.
- 2 To build and maintain elevators, warehouses and cold

¹⁰ Ibid, 9.

¹¹ J. A. Everitt, The Third Power, 246-247. Indianapolis, Indiana, 1903 (First Edition).

storage houses in principal market cities or in all localities where necessary, so that farm produce may be held for an advantageous price, instead of passing into the hands of middlemen or trusts.

- 3 To secure equitable rates of transportation.
 - 4 To secure legislation in the interests of agriculture.
 - 5 To open up new markets and enlarge old ones.
 - 6 To secure new seeds, grain, fruit, vegetables, etc., from foreign countries, with the view of improving the present crops and giving a greater diversity.
 - 7 To report crops in this and foreign countries, so that farmers may operate intelligently in planting and marketing.
 - 8 To establish institutions of learning, so that farmers and their sons and daughters may be educated in scientific and intensive farming and for the general advancement of agriculture.
 - 9 To improve our highways.
 - 10 To irrigate our land.
 - 11 To prevent adulteration of food and marketing the same.
 - 12 To own real estate, build, maintain and operate elevators, storage houses, stock yards, railroads, ship lines, etc., as may be deemed wise and expedient.
-

- 13 To promote social intercourse..
- 14 To settle disputes without recourse to law.
- 15 To borrow and loan money and do a banking business.
- 16 To do an insurance business, both life and fire.
- 17 To establish similar societies in foreign countries.

Obviously enough, the original purpose of the society was to build a new social order; rather than to organize the farmers. Membership was not restricted to farmers, but also to "friends of the farmers."¹² The wives, sons and daughters of members between the ages of 14 and 21 were also acceptable. Upon establishing the American Society of Equity, the intention was to introduce the society program into foreign countries; to establish a French Society of Equity, a German Society of Equity, a Russian Society of Equity, etc.¹³ It is obvious, however, that the society did not realize the bright future its incorporators anticipated. A Canadian Equity Society was temporarily in existence; but was soon merged with the United Farmers of Alberta.¹⁴ In the United States the society confined its operations largely to the North-¹⁵west; and made the greatest progress in Wisconsin.

¹² Ibid, 259.

¹³ Ibid, 77, 177-178.

¹⁴ H. S. Patton, Grain-Growers Cooperation in Western Canada, 115-116. Cambridge, Mass. 1928.

¹⁵ B. H. Hibbard, Marketing of Agricultural Products, 236-240.

The origin of the society, like that of other agricultural organizations, is attended with confusion. James A. Everitt, an Indianapolis publisher and seed salesman, is generally accredited as being the founder. According to James Linn Nash in World Today, the movement "had its inception in the brain of a single man James A. Everitt." Everitt, it is alleged, devoted two years to the formulation of plans to improve farm prices by controlling marketing, then presented his ideas to a group of intimates who advised him to put the plan in operation. According to this version, the first local union of the American Society of Equity was organized in Plainfield, Indiana, fourteen miles from Indianapolis.¹⁶

Equity members, especially members of the Wisconsin union, disputed this contention. Garret Walrod, the first editor of the Wisconsin Equity News, asserted that Everitt was "no more the founder of Equity than that he wrote and published the first Bible."¹⁷ According to M. Wes Tubbs, a former national secretary of the society: "Mr. W. L. Hearn, of Carlinville, Illinois, a farmer of little wealth, influence or education seems to have first conceived the idea of forming an organization of farmers

¹⁶ World Today, 13:717.

¹⁷ Wisconsin Equity News, June 1, 1908.

to 'control marketing.'" In the immediate vicinity of his community, it is charged some thirty or forty local unions had sprung into existence between 1898 and 1901. These local organizations operated on the theory of: "Controlled Marketing To
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Compel Profitable Prices For All Farm Products."

According to this version, the idea of controlled marketing was gaining momentum; and the feeling developed, that if the plan were to succeed it would have to operate on a national scale. Hearron is alleged to have heard of James A. Everitt and his publication Up-To-Date Farming. Sensing a lack of influence and finances, Hearron proceeded to write Everitt a letter outlining the idea of "controlled marketing;" and spoke of the accomplishments in southern Illinois. This according to Tubbs, undoubtedly set Everitt's mind to work; caused him to investigate the subject and publish articles dealing with: "Marketing Conditions," "Supply and Demand," "Visible Supply," "Controlled Marketing," "Organization of Farmers," "Manipulation," "Boards of Trade," etc. On December 24, 1902, the American Society of Equity was incorporated in Indianapolis; Mr. Hearron's name did not appear among the incorporators; nor did Everitt give the former credit for the
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idea he is accused of appropriating as his own.

18 Ibid, June 10, 1912.

19 Idem. W. L. Hearron's name appears as one of the charter members of the Farmers' Equity Union that was founded by C. O. Drayton, a former president of the American Society of Equity. See C. O. Drayton, Farmers Must Be Cooperators, 182. Greenville, Illinois 1914.

Whether Everitt originated the Equity plan for "controlled marketing" or not; the fact remains that his emotional work The Third Power, gave impetus to the society program. This text has been referred to as "an inspiring revelation;" and quite appropriately, for the work in many instances resembles the product of an evangelist. In the preface Everitt wrote: "We may safely claim that farming exists by Divine Right."²⁰ On another occasion he wrote: "the two greatest and best movements the world ever knew have their anniversary on consecutive days, December 24th and 25th. An there can be no doubt but that the birth of the American Society of Equity will in future years be celebrated in joy and thanksgiving, like unto the celebration of the day that commemorates the birth of Christianity."²¹ The following lines bearing the caption The Birth of Equity reveal the religious atmosphere around which the leaders attempted to garb the society:²²

Four years ago this very Christmas eve
 A mighty movement glorious and grand,
 Within this very city did achieve
 Birth unto Righteousness and Equity;
 A pure nativity, to bless our land.

²⁰ J. A. Everitt, The Third Power, 1.

²¹ A pamphlet entitled: The Crop Rich But Money Poor Farmer, 2; published by the American Society of Equity.

²² Ibid, 1.

The general theme of The Third Power was, that farmers through proper organization could wield a power comparable to that of organized capital and labor.

"The entrance of the American Society of Equity into the economic problems of the world, through which the third power will rise, marks an epoch. The awakening of the agricultural classes, the organization of them into national and international cooperative bodies, which is now being accomplished, will remove agriculture from the list of uncertain industries and place it on a basis of certainty for prices equal to that enjoyed by the best regulated manufacturing commercial enterprises."²³

Everitt maintained farm prices were determined by "the captains of industry, the promoter, the underwriter, the labor leader, and the grain gambler;" who in substance were responsible for the low prices the farmers received. "And unless the American farmer rouses himself, he will have to always be content to have his business controlled by others, to be called a 'jay' a 'rube' or 'hayseed,' and see himself caricatured on the stage as the ridiculous victim of the goldbrick swindler and the hay-fork note peddler, and indeed no gold-brick swindle was ever so palpable as that which is inherent in our present industrial organization. The third power can end it when it becomes a real power."²⁴

23 Ibid, 35.

24 Ibid, 35.

The structural arrangement of the society differed radically from that of modern cooperative associations. Leaders sought to improve prices by securing control of the surplus. Everitt maintained that a million farmers operating through a central agency could place equitable prices on all farm products.²⁵

According to the constitution of 1903, the only organized unit outside the national union was the local branch; but according to the early theory, membership in the local union was not necessary. This arrangement, it was alleged, rendered the farmers "the full benefits of national cooperation without belonging to a local union or lodge, and without attending the meetings."²⁶ According to Everitt: "The plan of the American Society of Equity is so flexible, however, that a member, no matter where situated, can cooperate for all general benefits, with other members, without belonging to a local union. An official paper containing all advice, is the key to cooperation and goes direct to the farm."²⁷

The affairs of the national organization were entrusted to a board of seven directors who were alleged "experts" in the marketing of the various agricultural commodities. The society offered instructions to the members through the medium of

25 Ibid, 35.

26 Ibid, 74-75.

27 Ibid; 239.

Up-To-Date Farming, the official organ, which, incidentally remained under the private control and management of Everitt. In short, the national union under the "one-man rule" of Everitt was to function as the "clearing house" for the agricultural business.²⁸

A unique portion of the society program was the crop reporting service. Members were instructed to forward to local or national headquarters their reports for the year. Upon assimilating these statistics, the board of directors would study the consumptive needs of the nation, and then placed what they termed an "equitable price" on each of the commodities. "Equitable prices" were designated as "minimum prices;" and members were instructed not to sell for less. "There need be no fear," wrote Everitt, "that buyers will be out of the market long, because the world must have your goods all the time."²⁹

As suspected, the plan proved a complete failure; nevertheless, the leaders attempted to put the marketing program in operation time and time again. The 1903 constitution provided only for a national and local unions; but by 1907, provisions were included for county, state, department, section and district unions.³⁰

28 Ibid, 239-240.

29 Ibid, 240.

30 E. A. Weist, Agricultural Organizations in the United States, 526-527; J. A. Everitt, The Third Power, 227-228 (Fourth Edition).

According to the constitution of 1907, ten persons could organize a local union; three local unions were sufficient to organize a county union; and five county unions to organize a state union. The federation of state unions comprised the national organization. Section unions concerned themselves primarily with business affairs; they attempted to assimilate crop reports, to anticipate the future demand and assist in marketing.³¹

The department union served as a "subsidiary" to the section union; and concerned itself with the marketing of a particular crop. There was a Grain Growers Department, a Tobacco Growers Department, a Cotton Growers Department, etc. The district union was part of the department union, specializing in the marketing of a particular variety of a given crop. In the case of the Kentucky Tobacco Department, there was a Burley Growers District Union, a Dark Tobacco District Union, a Green River District Union, etc.³²

This "renovated" plan worked something to this effect: the individual reported his crop estimates to the local union, the local notified the state, and the state the national. At the annual convention, the estimates were referred to their respective committees; and as previously, these committees determined the

³¹ Ibid, 527.

³² Ibid, 527; The Crop Rich and Money Poor Farmer, 8-9.

"equitable price."³³

To assist the marketing program, the society stationed representatives at strategic points to solicit orders. Upon the receipt of orders the representatives communicated their demands to the state unions; the state unions notified the county unions and the county unions in turn apportioned the orders among the local units. The products were then shipped direct to the purchaser who transmitted payment to the local producer.³⁴

Needless to say, the original Equity program ended in disaster; likewise, the "renovated" structure that sought to put the theory in operation. The society, in all probabilities, encountered difficulties in getting the farmers to forward their estimates; the membership of the organization was small and indefinite; dissatisfaction prevailed over the alleged "equitable prices;" and internal dissension and the complete inexperience of Equity leaders on agricultural and marketing problems caused the society to assume ridiculous proportions. In attempting to put the plan in operation, the society was seeking to perform the function of the middleman; however, rather than decreasing the number of middlemen as modern cooperatives attempt to do, the society actually increased them. This enhanced the price paid by the consumers, depressed the price received by the producers and consequently, caused dissatisfaction among all

³³ E. A. Weist, Agricultural Organizations in the United States, 530.

³⁴ Ibid, 530.

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concerned.

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Equity was not only handicapped for the want of knowledge relative to the marketing function; but, likewise, in the absence of capable leadership to guide the destinies of organization. Everitt, it was charged did not belong to any organization prior to his affiliation with Equity; consequently, his knowledge of organization needs was greatly limited.³⁶

Membership charges were in all probabilities too low to defray the expenditures of operation. From the evidence gathered membership virtually consisted in obtaining a years subscription to Up-To-Date Farming; or putting it shortly, any subscriber to the paper was a member of the society. The fee, which included a years subscription to the paper, was one dollar per annum. Leaders charged that fee payments were to continue until a million members were obtained; until profitable prices were obtained and until marketing was controlled. Such an indefinite program aroused the animosity of the agricultural press, educational institutions and numerous other organizations; who readily interpreted this as a grandiose scheme to increase the circulation of Up-To-Date Farming.³⁷

The growth of the society was very disappointing. Everitt

35 Ibid, 530.

36 Wisconsin Equity News, June 10, 1912.

37 Ibid, June 10, 1912.

expected to enroll several hundred thousand members in the first few months of existence; but instead obtained only about 20 or 30 thousand. In hopes of stimulating growth, membership fees were lowered to 50 cents per annum, including of course a years subscription to the paper. Membership did not materially increase, and on October 1, 1903, Up-To-Date Farming announced membership fees were again lowered to 25 cents a year, the subscription to the paper included. Of this sum the organizers retained 15 cents, forwarding the remaining 10 cents to national headquarters to defray the expenses of publication.³⁸ Everitt undoubtedly lowered the fees to stifle the current notion that he was augmenting his personal fortunes at the expense of the society.

Regardless of the intent, the society was plunged into debt. In hopes of regaining lost ground, membership fees were again increased to the previous figure of one dollar; the fifty cents commission, however, allotted the organizers proved inadequate to attract capable men. Once organizers were obtained, they were very difficult to retain; causing many failures in other lines of endeavor to assume the task of organization. Not only did they fail; but they, likewise, prejudiced many against the society.³⁹

In the course of this excitement, opposition had developed

38 Ibid, June 10, 1912.

39 Ibid, June 10, 1912.

against Everitt, reaching a climax at the annual session of 1907. A certain group proposed the society purchase the official paper and pay the president a nominal salary. The convention split on the issue; and after some deliberation, Everitt announced he was willing to accept \$75,000 for the paper, and \$5,000 as an annual salary. These demands appeared exorbitant to the majority present, with the result, that the anti-Everitt faction seized the convention floor and ousted Everitt from the presidency.⁴⁰

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Everitt immediately following his deposal formulated plans for the creation of a new organization and shortly thereafter, launched a rival association known as the Farmers' Society of Equity. The purpose of this society, apparently was to declare war on the American Society of Equity, which it succeeded in doing. For three or four years following, the leaders of both groups fought each other bitterly. Everitt desperately fought for, and appealed to Equity's membership for support, claiming the cooperative movement would realize benefits only by rallying to the "Farmers' Society of Equity and Up-To-Date Farming."⁴¹

The tussle which eventually culminated in a series of legal entanglements found, James Everitt preferring charges of criminal

⁴⁰ Marketing and Farm Credits 1915, 36-37; Equity News, January 15, 1922; Wisconsin Equity News, May 1, 1908.

⁴¹ Pamphlet entitled You Have Been Deceived and Betrayed By Your Trusted Representatives, 32; issued by Farmers Society of Equity.

libel against national president C. M. Barnett, national secretary O. D. Pauley and Garret M. Walrod, who was shortly to become editor of the Wisconsin Equity News.⁴² On January 10, 1908, the Indianapolis Star reported that national president Cicero M. Barnett had resigned.⁴³ The contention of Everitt all the while was, that a deeply-laid conspiracy had been planted to deprive him of Up-To-Date Farming and the organization he claimed to be the founder of.⁴⁴

The Wisconsin Equity News, which came to life on May 1, 1908, became the Equity mouthpiece in this farcical episode of confusion. Editor Walrod questioned the integrity of ~~Walrod~~^{Everitt} and denounced him as a "promoter" and a seed salesman of "unsavory reputation." The accusation was frequently made that Everitt was in no sense interested in building up a permanent farmers organization; but rather in increasing the circulation of Up-To-Date Farming.⁴⁵ Such a bewildering state of affairs naturally operated to the detriment of Equity; for many of the confused farmers either paid their dues to the Everitt organization, or else terminated their membership in Equity and refused to deal with either society.⁴⁶

42 Ibid, 23-24, quoting the Indianapolis Star of January 10, 1908.

43 Ibid, 27.

44 The pamphlet You Have Been Deceived and Betrayed By Your Trusted Representatives is the only source available on the Everitt version of the controversy. The Farmers Society of Equity gained very little headway as an organization.

45 Wisconsin Equity News, December 1, 1908.

46 Ibid, December 1, 1908.

In 1909, the new president C. O. Drayton, who succeeded the recently retired head C. M. Barnett, likewise, severed his connections with Equity; later becoming affiliated with a new organization known as the Farmers' Equity Union.⁴⁷ Meanwhile legal proceedings calling for approximately \$79,000 were lodged against the various officers of the national and Wisconsin unions.⁴⁸ So hopeless had the state of affairs become, that the Wisconsin Equity News asked the members to consider the advisability of joining forces with the Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union of America.⁴⁹ The suggestion, however, met with little enthusiasm; and the society continued in the same precarious condition.

In the course of the struggle with the Farmers' Society of Equity, the Wisconsin Equity News published scarcely anything relative to the affairs of the national organization. The society had all it could manage in warding off the attacks of Everitt, let alone the thought of waging an offensive in behalf of the cooperative movement. The national convention held in Chicago in 1911 was a pitiful sight, being attended by a handful of delegates and an equal representation of creditors.⁵⁰ The condition of the national treasury was almost impossible, and rumors have it, that few members were willing to accept positions of responsibility. One story is,

47 Organized Farmer, February 1, 1917; E. A. Weist, Agricultural Organizations in the United States, 532-533.

48 Organized Farmer, February 1, 1917.

49 Wisconsin Equity News, June 25, 1910.

50 Ibid, February 1, 1917.

that a delegate elected to the post of vice-president, became so fearful of having to assume responsibility for the society debts, that he boarded a return train home and was never heard of again.⁵¹

Despite the impossible conditions, a determined effort was made to rid the society of indebtedness; until finally two of the pending law suits were dismissed and the other settled with the payment of a \$250 lawyers fee.⁵²

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The American Society of Equity suffered irreparable damage from the very beginning. Membership figures are very uncertain. On October 1, 1903, Up-To-Date Farming claimed the society had a paid up membership of 46,000.⁵³ At the very height of power, the organization in all probabilities never exceeded a membership of more than a hundred thousand.⁵⁴

At the outset, the possibilities of success were handicapped largely because of incompetent leadership. It was built around a loosely-framed national body, that was manned by individuals who neither understood the technique of marketing nor the principles of organization. Included in the society platform were provisions that were practically impossible; and the spontaneous mass movement the leaders sought to make of the organization is good evidence

51 Ibid, February 1, 1917.

52 Ibid, February 1, 1917.

53 Up-To-Date Farming, October 1, 1903.

54 From a communication from a former president of the national organization.

they knew little about the technique of organization.

Second, innumerable rifts made a harmonious operation of the organization impossible; consequently rendering everything the organization attempted less probable. At the end of the first year, it is charged, the president was the only one of the incorporators to remain active. Equity was virtually a "one-man" organization. Third, the society lacked adequate finances, largely because of incapable management; and fourth, it failed to attract the most desireable agricultural elements.

With the departure of Everitt, the organization assumed a diametrically opposite character; becoming extremely localized and seldom if ever sufficiently centralized to operate on a workable basis. From 1912 and on, the society might well be classified under the caption of the Wisconsin Society of Equity; for the administrative policies of the national organization were influenced by men active in the Wisconsin union; national headquarters were, likewise, located in the state; and unquestionably, had not the Wisconsin union rendered financial and moral assistance to the parent organization, it is doubtful whether the national body would have survived.

⁵⁵ Wisconsin Equity News, June 10, 1912.

⁵⁶ Ibid, June 10, 1912.

⁵⁷ According to the January, 1917 issue of the Cooperative Manager and Farmer, Everitt was sentenced to serve an eighteen months term for using the mails to defraud.

CHAPTER TWO

- Part 1 -

Despite the ridiculous proportions assumed by the national organization, the society, nevertheless, managed to conduct two campaigns to better agricultural prices: first, in the Northwest wheat fields; and second, in the tobacco areas of Kentucky and Tennessee. In the Northwest Equity encountered a psychologically prepared group of farmers. For almost a decade prior to 1903, wheat prices had floundered around the comparatively low figure of 70 cents per bushel; the Northwest had witnessed innumerable pitched battles between the farmers and the grain merchants in the eighties and nineties; and in consequence, this region was highly susceptible to the propoganda that Equity offered.¹

At the outset the Equity program to better farm prices, in theory, consisted of two parts: first, in organizing the farmers to place a price on their products; and second, to eliminate a

¹ B. H. Hibbard, Marketing Agricultural Products, 231; N. H. Comish, Cooperative Marketing of Agricultural Products, 391, (New York, 1929); U. S. D. A., Agricultural Statistics 1937, 9; H. Larson, The Wheat Market and the Farmer in Minnesota, 166-256, (New York, 1926).

portion of the crop if necessary to influence prices.² On May 25, 1903, the society dispatched the first of a series of "dollar wheat" bulletins urging the farmers to withhold their wheat until the price of one dollar was reached.³ A number of farmers adhered to the advice and withheld their crop. Warehouses and granaries were established; and much to their joy the farmers noticed the price rise to the figure named by the society.⁴ Attributing the price rise to the Equity "hold-your-wheat" movement, the society leaders instructed the farmers to make preparations for future campaigns.

In 1904, a similar campaign was made; but did not achieve the success attributed to the 1903 movement. The most notable attempt was made in 1907, when it was alleged some 30 million bushels were pledged to the Equity pool. The campaign, however, was destined to fail because of inexperienced management, the dissension that prevailed at national headquarters and the inability to finance the pooling members.⁵

² World Today:13:720. The theory Equity abided by was essentially this: "It is not the big crops that made money for the farmers. The largest crops we have raised have brought the smallest returns, while our short crops have been money makers."

³ J. A. Everitt, The Third Power, 269-270. (Fourth Edition).

⁴ Ibid, 270. One Equity enthusiast wrote: "Shipments began to slacken, the visible was reduced, shorts commenced to cover, the price began to climb, and the dollar was reached before the crop of 1904 was ready for market."

⁵ H. Steen, Cooperative Marketing, 212, (New York, 1923); C. C. Sherlock, The Modern Farm Cooperative, 14-15. The Grangers conducted a wheat holding campaign in Illinois during the summer of 1873. This was a local campaign, however, and was soon abandoned.

Whether the Equity holding movements influenced prices is a matter for speculation. In the first place, crops cannot be withheld from market "without cost." Such items as handling and storage insurance, interest, deterioration and market fluctuations are very important elements for consideration. Jesse Pope, who observed marketing conditions and storage charges etc, over a ten-year period, intimated farmers are not apt to profit by withholding crops from market.⁶ Such factors as world supply and demand are perhaps the more important conditions that effect prices, rather^{than} the suggestions that Equity attempted to put in operation.

Despite the questionable procedure used by Equity, the society, nevertheless, must be accredited with exerting some influence on prices at harvest time; for stimulating the cooperative elevator movement that got under way early in the twentieth century; and in forming the nucleus for what was to be the first farmers grain exchange in the country---the Equity Cooperative Exchange.⁷ The membership of the society increased materially, it being claimed ~~some~~ 12,000 members were obtained in North Dakota alone because of the popularity of "dollar wheat."⁸

⁶ Quarterly Journal of Economics, 30:806-807. Pope states that as a rule farmers can market products the cheapest at harvest time because that minimizes handling and storage costs. He also found that storage items were a very important element of expense in holding movements in the Dakotas and Minnesota.

⁷ B. H. Hibbard, Marketing of Agricultural Products, 233; H. Steen, Cooperative Marketing, 212; Nonpartisan Leader, May 16, 1921; Montana Equity News, May 29, 1919.

⁸ C. C. Sherlock, The Modern Farm Cooperative Movement, 14-15.

- Part 2 -

Of a more spectacular character was the Equity campaign in the tobacco fields of Kentucky and Tennessee. As in the Northwest, the society was to encounter an enthusiastic lot of farmers; but unlike the Northwest, the probabilities for success were more encouraging. The causes of unrest were of a tangible character; public sentiment rendered moral support to the needs of organization; the territorial field of operation was decidedly smaller; financial assistance was forthcoming; and local leaders were willing to assume the role of leadership. In short, these decidedly favorable conditions were to deliver to Equity one of the most triumphant successes the organization realized.

1

Because of the unique and spectacular conditions attending the tobacco campaign, it perhaps would be pertinent to especially consider the influences attending the raising and selling of tobacco in these areas.

Tobacco has played a prominent role in Kentucky's agricultural prosperity. As a result of a number of environmental and economic factors, tobacco-raising forms an exceedingly important part for a considerable proportion of the farmers of Kentucky and Tennessee. For a large percentage it is still a matter of economic necessity.⁹

⁹ Encyclopaedia Britannica, 13:13, (13th Edition); Commissioner of Agriculture, Labor, and Statistics, Kentucky; Bulletin No. 33, 15; World Almanac 1937, 546.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the tobacco industry was stimulated by the happening of two important events: first, the discovery of the white Burley leaf and second by, the rise of the capitalist system. The introduction of white Burley in 1864 proved a powerful incentive for it met with instant public favor; whereas, the rise of capitalism with its industrial and financial accompaniments demonstrated itself a still greater stimulative agency in expanding the crops market. Under such favorable conditions, tobacco consumption displayed tremendous increases, with both producer and manufacturer exerting his productive capacities to advantage.

Contemporaneous with tobaccos rise to popularity, there developed a prominent feature of the capitalist system---the corporate combination; an institution rapidly interweaving itself into the economic fabric of the producer. Being an outgrowth of the early trust-forming period, the combination afforded a vivid illustration of the trusts effect on the marketing of agricultural products. So integral a part to the tobacco producer's existence did it become, that one must briefly trace the organization's development to gain a fair estimate of its influence on the planter's social and economic behaviour.

The tobacco trust took form with the organization of the American Tobacco Company in 1890. This comprised an amalgamation

¹⁰ United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry, Bulletin No. 244, '71.

of the nation's five leading cigarette manufacturers, controlling¹¹
 at the time approximately 95% of the country's cigarette business.
 After seeking to expand and maintain this early monopoly on
 cigarettes, the trust next entered the plug tobacco industry by
 affecting a union of the leading plug producers---under the head-¹²
 ing of the Continental Tobacco Company. In the meanwhile, the
 Continental acquired a number of smoking tobacco concerns, the
 result being the combined productive capacities of the American¹³
 and Continental Companies outstripped all others in the field.

Following the Continental Company's organization, the next
 step was to concentrate the nation's snuff business; and soon
 thereafter a merging of the leading snuff units brought the¹⁴
 American Snuff Company into existence. An interchange of stocks
 and business, gave the American and Continental a goodly portion
 of the American Snuff Company's stock; while, the latter re-
 ceived practically all of the American Tobacco and Continental¹⁵
 Companies' snuff business. Identically the same procedure was¹⁶
 utilized in establishing the American Cigar Company in 1901.

The next phase in the combination's development was the
 formation of the Consolidated Company as a holding company unit.

¹¹ Commissioner of Corporations, Prices of Tobacco, 14; E. Jones,
The Trust Problem in the United States, 123-4. (New York 1926).

¹² Ibid, 14; Ibid, 126-9.

¹³ E. Jones, The Trust Problem in the United States, 126-9.

¹⁴ Ibid, 130-1.

¹⁵ Ibid, 133.

¹⁶ Commissioner of Corporations, Prices of Tobacco, 14.

In essence this was a fusion of the leading principles of the tobacco combination, the American Tobacco Company and the Continental. This new superstructure absorbed practically all the common stock of both companies; giving in exchange bonds, valued at \$200 for every share of American and \$100 for every share of Continental.¹⁷ In 1904, however, the American and Continental Companies were officially merged into one---the American Tobacco Company.¹⁸ Innumerable other subsidiaries controlled or having intimate working relations with the trust, gave the combination¹⁹ one of the most perfect monopolies in the world.

The American Tobacco Company's organization was as intricately complex as it was powerful. Its manufactures consisted primarily of little cigars, plug, smoking and fine cut tobaccos. The Commissioner of Corporations announced that in 1906, eighty-six corporations throughout the United States, its dependencies, Cuba and the foreign countries in which the British-American operated,²⁰ came under the combination's dominance. Consequently American Tobacco, which commenced business operations with an initial investment of \$25,000,000; underwent a period of rapid expansion and consolidation till it amassed a capitalization in excess of 235 million in 1906. In 1890, the combined income

17 Ibid; E. Jones, The Trust Problem in the United States, 133.

18 E. Jones, The Trust Problem in the United States, 136.

19 For greater details on the tobacco combination see the three volumes on the Tobacco Industry put out by the Commissioner of Corporations.

20 Commissioner of Corporations, Prices of Tobacco, 14. The British-American conducted the combination's foreign business.

of the companies comprising the combination were 2.5 millions, in 1895 they reached 3.8 millions, in 1900 they totalled 11 millions, in 1905 they jumped to 33.5 millions and by 1908 were approaching the staggering sum of 40 millions. By this time the combination had perfected its grip over the world's tobacco manufacturing and marketing processes.²¹

2

The combination's effect on the tobacco planter can scarcely be appreciated without an analysis of the conditions attending his surroundings. The tobacco countries of Kentucky and Tennessee were divided into four principle^{al} districts; with each because of soil, climatic and other conditions, specializing in the production of one type. There was central Kentucky devoted primarily to the cultivation of white Burley; west of it was the Green River country specializing in a heavy dark export brand; west and south of the Green River district lay the Henderson Stemming region likewise specializing in a dark export type; and to the west of Henderson was located the "black patch" or "dark-fired" country, embracing counties in Both Kentucky and Tennessee.²²

Tobacco-raising is still considered one of the most difficult of agricultural operations. Before planting, the beds must be

²¹ E. Jones, The Trust Problem in the United States, 137; Commissioner of Corporations, Prices of Tobacco, 14.

²² Charities and the Commons, 20:193.

burned and cleared of all traces of weed and grass seeds. While growing, the plant must be protected from pests and insects and their leaves "topped" and "thinned out" to concentrate their growth in the remaining portions. Some 5,000 young plants raised per acre must be tended in this fashion. Thus from early March, when the tobacco-seed is sown until time of harvest, the tobacco-planter must perform these innumerable delicate operations.²³

These tedious labor operations rendered it impossible for one man to cultivate more than three or four acres per year. Often the meagerness of its returns made it impossible for the planter to hire labor, forcing him to depend on his family for help. A large family, with the constant assistance of wife and children, could cultivate approximately ten acres per annum. In both the Burley and "black-patch" countries, many of the planters owned the farms they cultivated; while, in the Burley areas especially, much of the land was held in large landed-estates, frequently referred to as the "famous Blue Grass farms."²⁴

For some twenty or thirty years prior to the tobacco-difficulties, an army of "ignorant, illiterate, tenant-farmers" came pouring into the tobacco areas and commenced to raise tobacco on share-leases. The tenant would usually be assigned thirty or forty acres and a house, barn, and sheds. The houses

²³ Ibid, 193. For greater details with reference to the raising, harvesting and sale of tobacco; see Yearbook of Agriculture 1922, 395-468.

²⁴ Charities and the Commons, 20:193.

were merely shacks that constantly needed repairs. Upon receiving his land allotment, the tenant proceeded to raise tobacco on about ten acres; and devoted the remainder to corn, vegetables, pasture and possibly wheat. The landlord, likewise, advanced the necessary money to cultivate the crop and maintain the tenant's family. At the end of the year, the tenant shared the crop with the landlord; the former selling the remaining half and paying the latter, his obligations, and then supposedly pocket profits that seldom accrued. To improve his economic status, the tenant sought to increase his acreage and frequently added a new member to the family in hopes of receiving an additional wageless worker. Investigations, nevertheless, reveal that a lifetime of such conditions left the tenant-farmer worse off than when he began.²⁵

3

While the producer sought to accelerate his productive powers to cash in on what appeared to be a growing market, the combination had already commenced its program for purchase control. The manufacturing and marketing processes of the industry were already under control---next tobacco prices paid the producer were to come under the trust's dictatorial rule. Middlemen and independent purchasers who previously purchased their tobacco directly from the producer and then turned around and sold to the combination, were eliminated or cut to a minimum. Usually

²⁵ Ibid, 193.

one and occasionally two agents, who in no sense competed with each other, travelled the tobacco country to purchase the company's needs.²⁶ Thus commenced a policy of re-organization that took its toll in hardship and violence, to the detriment of the producer, the manufacturer and the tobacco country in general.

The planter being a close marginal producer soon felt the bitter effects of the combination's new policy. The first signs of depression were low tobacco prices in a period of generally high living costs. In the early 1900's, wholesale prices of Hopkinsville leaf, a dark type, ranged between four and five cents; Louisville leaf, a Burley tobacco, fluctuated between four and six; as did Clarksville leaf, another dark variety.²⁷ In the Burley districts "poverty and distress" prevailed and conditions became so deplorable that "many producers were compelled to sell tobacco at prices which returned them thirty cents a day."²⁸

While the producer was speedily heading in the direction of financial adversity, the combination was experiencing the most fruitful years of its existence. The prices of its principal brands to the consumer remained relatively constant, whereas, the prices exacted from its jobbers were increased, to add to its enormous profits. It is an unfortunate commentary to note that the combination's most profitable years 1903-1908 were the most trying for the producer.²⁹ Thus, while the trust enjoyed lower tax rates, moderate leaf costs, decreased advertising expenditures

²⁶ Wisconsin Equity News, June 1, 1908.

²⁷ Agricultural Yearbook 1913, 431.

²⁸ H. C. Filley, Cooperation in Agriculture, 246-247.

²⁹ Commissioner of Corporations, The Tobacco Industry, III:7-8.

and perfect monopolistic control; the producer scarcely earned
³⁰
 a decent livelihood.

The dark tobacco areas of Kentucky and Tennessee were of international importance, for the world's largest supply of dark tobacco came from the western counties of these two states. A limited amount of this tobacco was manufactured into cigarettes in the United States but the greater percentage of it was ex-
³¹
 ported to be manufactured into fine-cut and chewing tobaccos. Demands for this strong, smoky-flavored type were large in Great
³²
 Britain, Italy, Germany, France, Spain, Austria and Belgium. In Italy, Spain, France, and Austria, tobacco was a government monopoly coming under the direct supervision of the government authorities and entrusted to the "regie," the government purchas-
³³
 ing agency.

Rumors of collusive arrangements between the "regie" and the trust representatives were frequently heard; and, though no specific evidence to substantiate these charges has been uncovered, circumstances indicated there was much behind the accusations. Congressman John W. Gaines in testifying before a Senate committee charged: "Why, sir, these tobacco buyers, agents for this combination, composed of Mr. Duke's concern and foreigners, don't exactly ride on the same horse at the same time around the country

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Journal of Political Economy, 18:36.

³² U. S. D. A., B. P. I., Bulletin No. 244, 33.

³³ Senate Document 372:42; Journal of Political Economy, 18:36.

to buy this tobacco, but I am told that they do ride in the same vehicle and bid the same price, for the same tobacco at the same time, or don't bid at all, or one of them will only bid. They divide up the tobacco sections into districts and certain agents are assigned to certain districts limited by lines or county roads and those agents refuse to even cross the highway or the dividing line in case a farmer has one barn of tobacco on one side and another barn on the other side of the road. It is not disputed, but that is one of their lines of procedure."³⁴

Not only were tobacco prices declining but tobacco-raising itself was threatened for the want of certain conditions favorable to its well-being. Many capable planters cultivating tobacco at a cost of six cents per pound and forced to sell at the ruinous level of three and four, left the tobacco country and migrated to other more profitable farming sections of the country. Estimates have it that a good farm hand demanded a dollar and fifty cents in the dark patch regions and two and three dollars per day in the Burley areas.³⁵ The low tobacco prices, however, made the payment of a decent wage impossible; consequently, the more able farm hands left the tobacco fields to seek employment in mining, railroading, or in urban communities.³⁶

³⁴ Senate Document 372:42; Journal of Political Economy, 18:35.

³⁵ Wisconsin Equity News, June 1, 1908; H. C. Filley, Cooperation in Agriculture, 246.

³⁶ Wisconsin Equity News, June 1, 1908.

In view of such unfavorable conditions as increased living costs, rising wage scales, inefficient marketing processes, the want of competitive influences and declining tobacco prices, the planter became fearful of his economic existence. Rumbblings of unrest were no of infrequent occurrence but little by way of alleviating conditions was successfully undertaken. Many planters considered themselves the unfortunate victims of the economic cycle with but little hope for relief. The farmer being a victim of isolation scarcely realized that his economic existence depended upon the financial welfare of others. In the main, the planter plodded along complaining vociferously but accomplishing nothing.

Despite the deeply implanted isolationist attitude of the farmers, the possibilities of combined action were beginning to be sensed by many. As early as 1901 agitation to restrict acreage and the possible benefits of tobacco pooling became frequent topics of discussion.³⁷ Numerous local associations were formed but their existence was shortlived.³⁸ An attempt to pool the 1904 crop was made but failed because of the want of adequate financial resources to tide the farmers through the waiting period.³⁹

³⁷ U. S. D. A., B. P. I., Bulletin No. 268:47.

³⁸ Wisconsin Equity News, June 1, 1908; U. S. D. A., B. P. I., 244,79.

³⁹ Ibid. This attempt was again made in 1905 by the Kentucky and Ohio Burley Tobacco Growers' Association but this too failed.

Equity, in the meantime, had commenced to penetrate the tobacco areas of Kentucky and Tennessee and once again some of the most influential of planters talked of the possibilities of cooperative action.⁴⁰ With the price drop of 1904, renewed emphasis was given to cooperative sentiment and crop restriction and tobacco pooling propdgan⁴¹ increased in momentum.

In the face of these ruinous conditions, Mr. Felix G. Ewing, a wealthy planter, called some sixty or seventy of the more influential planters to his home for a conference early in the spring of 1904.⁴² Mr. Ewing being a man of influence and leisure in the community, presented an elaborate analysis of the planters' difficulties, convincing them their only hope was organization. The farmers took to the suggestion and immediately became "apostles of the new idea."⁴³ On September 24, 1904, a meeting was called to convene at Guthrie, Todd County, on the Kentucky-Tennessee line, where some 6,000 planters assembled. Congressmen John Wesley Gaines and Augustus O. Stanley of Tennessee and Kentucky addressed the gathering. Meanwhile, the American Society

40 The exact date of Equity's arrival in the tobacco country is unknown, but circumstances would indicate 1903.

41 U. S. D. A., B. P. I., Bulletin No. 268:47.

42 Journal of Political Economy, 18:47. Mr. Ewing when asked why he helped organize the association stated: "because we have sold tobacco at a loss for the past four years and because they are putting us out of business. While I have 31 tobacco barns on my plantation, 15 of them are empty today, and it is simply a question of getting a better price or quit planting tobacco." At the same committee meeting, Ewing testified that it cost him six cents to raise tobacco that he sold in lots of three cents a pound.

43 Wisconsin Equity News, June 1, 1908.

of Equity had carried on a preliminary campaign on the benefits of Cooperation and before the day ended, the Planters' Protective Association came into being.⁴⁴

The association was originally incorporated for \$1,000; divided in shares of one dollar a piece.⁴⁵ Members pledging their tobacco had it delivered to authorized warehouses where it was sampled and pressed by the prizer.⁴⁶ Samples were sent to headquarters at Guthrie where grades and prices were placed on the pledged tobacco.⁴⁷ The planters were strongly advised not to contract individual sales nor ever to attempt selling below the price set by the association.

At the time of its inception in 1904, the association pooled 24,000 of the 80,000 hogsheads produced that year. In 1905, a Louisville firm and some of the "regie" agents purchased at an average of nine cents per pound.⁴⁸ The American Tobacco Company made no purchases that year, but in 1906, when more than one-half the crop was pooled, the company and other purchasers bought at an average of seven and a quarter cents. Association figures

⁴⁴ Journal of Political Economy, 18:41; Wisconsin Equity News, June 1, 1908; H. C. Filley, Cooperation in Agriculture, 246-247. The original name of the organization was the Dark Tobacco District Planters' Protective Association of Kentucky and Tennessee. This was changed to Planters' Protective Association of Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia. Fourteen Virginia counties had joined the association but were dropped because of the distance separating the two areas. Virginia started an independent association of it's own but never gained what little influence the Planters' Protective Association did.

⁴⁵ Journal of Political Economy, 18:41.

⁴⁶ Senate Document 372:120.

⁴⁷ U. S. D. A., B. P. I., Bulletin No. 244:48.

⁴⁸ Wisconsin Equity News, June 1, 1908.

reveal that in 1906, 40,000 hogheads or approximately 64,000,000 pounds were handled at an average of nine and a quarter cents; whereas, in 1908, of the 65,000 hogheads produced, the association handled about 50,000 at an average sale price of ten and a half cents.⁴⁹

Although Equity was greatly responsible for much of the cooperative sentiment spread in the tobacco areas, its activities were not as great as the Planters' Protective Association that it helped organize.

50

Planters' Protective Association Price List for the 1908 Tobacco Crop.

Grades	Price per 100 lbs.	Grades	Price per 100 lbs.	Grades	Price per 100 lbs.
Pledged wrsp- pers.		Spinning Leaf.		French & Belgian	
Fancy	\$18.00	Fancy	\$16.00	A'S	\$12.00
Fine	17.00	Fine	15.00	B'S	9.50
Good	16.00	Good	13.50	B-C's	9.00
Medium	14.00	Medium	12.00	C'S	8.50
Common	12.00	Common	10.50	C2'S	8.00
Austrian		African		Spanish	
A'S	\$17.00	Fancy	\$12.00	A'S	\$10.00
B'S	15.00	Fine	11.00		
B2'S	12.50	Good	10.00	B'S	9.00
C'S	12.00	Medium	9.50	C'S	8.50
C2'S	11.00	Common	9.00		
Italian		Snuffers		Lugs	
A'S	\$15.00	Fine	\$12.00	Fine	\$9.00
B'S	14.00	Good	11.00	Good	8.00
B2'S	13.00	Medium	10.00	Medium	7.00
C'S	11.00	Common	9.00	Common	6.50
C2'S	9.50			Low	6.00
				Trash	4.00-5.00

⁴⁹ Ibid, June 1, 1908. See also Senate Document 372:120, for a copy of a contract issued by the Planters' Protective Association.

⁵⁰ U. S. D. A., B. P. I., Bulletin No. 244:48. This represents prices of grades of the Clarkville, Hopkinville and Paducah type.

The society continued its work of propaganda but as in other instances, the direct extent of its activities and accomplishments are difficult to trace. Equity, however, had a stemmery at Owensboro, Kentucky, embracing five counties and pooling nearly 30,000,000 pounds of tobacco.⁵¹ Another organization known as the Green River Association likewise with headquarters at Owensboro,⁵² claimed a pool of 25,000,000 pounds.

5

While the dark tobacco growers were busy organizing their respective groups, the Burley planters, this time largely under the direct supervision of the Equity society commenced another campaign of organization; this being, more or less, the results of the earlier accomplishments of the dark tobacco association. Among the early converts to the needs of cooperative action was a youthful Henry County farmer, H. E. McSwain, who persuaded by the merits of the "Equity idea," traversed the Burley areas with mortgage in one hand and arguments in the other to stir the planters into action. The results were that eight local Equity unions were established and the prospects for still more were exceedingly encouraging.⁵³ Delegates from these eight locals met

⁵¹ Journal of Political Economy, 18:41. See also Senate Document 372:111. W. F. Axton of Owensboro and later of Louisville, a tobacco manufacturer, asserted he was at the time, the first to purchase from the Equity pool at Owensboro. Axton also tells of Equity's tobacco acreage restrictions in Davies County, where planters were allowed 10,000 tobacco hills per each acre hand.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Wisconsin Equity News, Junell, 1908.

met at Newcastle on October 1, 1906. The gathering, however, accomplished nothing because of the "packed" representation of trust emissaries and the plea of the numerous delegates to adjourn and call another meeting. The assembly adjourned to reconvene at Winchester on October 10. The planters, more sensitive to existing conditions and problems, succeeded in carrying their fight to the floor of the State Development Association, an organization of business men, where they gained sympathy and recruits for their cause. Inspired by this and other encouraging developments, the planters decided to embark on a still greater campaign of education.⁵⁴

Equity, in the meanwhile, increased its activities, by delivering a greater number of organizers and cooperative literature to the scene of operations. Dr. George W. McMillan of Pendleton County was named manager of the "forty-day whirlwind campaign," the purpose of which was to pledge farmers not to dispose of their 1905 crop at the prices offered by the trust. "Two-score speaking and proselyting parties were at once organized, eloquent speakers were found, brass bands were hired, calls and notices were printed and they started out to meet on January 2, 1907."⁵⁵

On January 2, fifty-eight percent of the estimated 92,000 acres planted for the year were reported pledged to the new organization. Under the leadership of J. Campbell Cantrill,

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

president of the Kentucky union of Equity and later Congressman from his⁵ district; the Burley Tobacco Society was organized with Clarence LeBus, a wealthy Cynthiana planter as president, and Lucian Beckner a young Winchester lawyer as secretary.⁵⁶

The American Society of Equity was very active in the formulative stages of the Burley Tobacco Society and directed much of its early organizational structure.⁵⁷ The State Board of Control⁵⁸ at Winchester was established as the society's central body. The tobacco country was districted and each district was instructed to establish a local union which appointed a representative to the county union; the county union in turn selected a delegate to represent the county at the State Board of Control. The organizers, in the meanwhile, were busy in canvassing the tobacco areas. A sample room was opened at Burley, and shortly thereafter, an announcement was made that Burley Tobacco might be purchased at an average of fifteen cents per pound. This marked a radical departure from the previous levels of seven and eight cents.⁵⁹

The enthusiasm of the members increased tremendously and things in general appeared very promising. Members pledged to deliver their unsold 1906 and their entire 1907 crop to the society warehouses to be held until a satisfactory price was

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Atlantic Monthly, 102:486.

⁵⁸ Journal of Political Economy, 18:43.

⁵⁹ Wisconsin Equity News, June 1, 1908.

to be had. Sixty-five thousand acres were pledged to the 1906 pool and in 1907, 108,000 of the 160,000 acres planted, were promised the society. So determined did the Burley members become, that soon rumors circulated the tobacco country, that unless the Burley growers demands were met, the entire 1908 crop would be eliminated.⁶⁰

In the course of these deliberations, the society engaged in a series of negotiations with the trust. In 1908, Mr. Smith of the American Tobacco Company offered to purchase 10,000 hogheads at twelve cents, but the Burley growers refused; informing Smith the company might purchase first, the 1906 crop,⁶¹ then the 1907 and finally the 1908 at fifteen cents per pound. The trust, likewise, rejected the proposal.

While organizers campaigned the tobacco country for membership and the society representatives sought to mediate their differences, Equity took to political action. Kentucky's constitution at the time made it mandatory upon the state legislature, to enact legislation declaring illegal the combining or pooling articles for the purpose of enhancing prices. The legislature influenced by the size of its agricultural population and the seriousness of the crisis, enacted into law a measure declaring that persons engaged in agriculture might combine or pool for the purpose of securing better prices. The law further provided that it was an offense for any third person to persuade

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

a member to withdraw from the pool or to dispose of his tobacco otherwise than through the channels prescribed by the organization.⁶²

6

Organizing the farmer was no easy task and difficulties of the most trying character were experienced; the unfavorable land tenure system, the slow, lethargic and indifferent planter, financial inability and trust opposition, all served as impediments to the organization's progress. The land tenure system was obviously very discouraging.⁶³ Estimates placed anywhere from one-third to one-half the tobacco farms as being operated by tenants; the farm owner fared but little better and consequently the tobacco planters were anxious to make an immediate sale. Financial assistance was an indispensable factor in

⁶² Nourse, The Legal Status of Agricultural Cooperation, 541-43; quoting the Kentucky Pooling Law of 1906 and 1908, Chapter 117. The original act enacted in 1906 contained the following emergency provision: "Whereas, many persons of this Commonwealth now desire to combine their respective crops of tobacco, wheat, corn and other farm products an emergency is now declared." See Nourse, 543, in the footnotes.

Section 1 of Chapter 117 reads: "It is hereby declared lawful for any number of persons to combine, unite, or pool any or all of the crops of wheat, tobacco, corn, oats, hay, or other farm products raised by them, for the purpose of classifying, grading, storing, holding, selling, or disposing of the same, either in parcels or as a whole, in order or for the purpose of obtaining a greater or better price therefore than they might or could obtain or receive by selling said crops separately or individually." See Laws of Kentucky, 1906, Chapter 117 as quoted by Nourse on page 541.

The law made no provisions for the erection of cooperative associations; it merely defined what was legal.

⁶³ Journal of Political Economy, 18:40-41; Atlantic Monthly:102:484.

the progress of the society and unless such was had, the success of a pool would be an impossibility. Fortunately, however, both the Planters' Protective Association and the Burley Tobacco Society obtained a considerable amount of assistance from some of their wealthier planter members. Sympathetic warehousemen in Louisville and Cincinnati who saw their business menaced by the trust's new policy rendered an assisting hand to make the success of the pool a reality.⁶⁴ The planter upon delivering his tobacco to the warehouse would receive a certificate that could be discounted at the bank. Such an arrangement contributed in a large measure to the maintenance of the planter's family, while his representatives sought to arrive at a satisfactory agreement with the trust.⁶⁵

Another obstacle was the stern opposition of the combination. As expected the trust stopped at nothing to break the pooling movement. The press was utilized in every conceivable form. Words of "friendly warning" were made to the neighboring banks and many frightened at the trust's power, insisted on payment when the paper matured.⁶⁶ On one occasion a "fake" cooperative was launched by the trust that succeeded in attracting a number of planters who later learned it was a company device to break the planters program.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Wisconsin Equity News, June 1, 1908.

⁶⁵ Journal of Political Economy, 18:43.

⁶⁶ Wisconsin Equity News, June 1, 1908.

⁶⁷ Organized Farmer, April 5, 1917. This organization charged only one dollar for membership while charged four.

One of the most powerful weapons employed by the combination was the old Standard Oil method of over-bidding the competitor. Trust agents travelled from farm to farm seeking to convince the planters of the benefits of selling direct to the company. One such purchaser remarked: "What is the use of going into the association? We will give you as good and better prices than they can get for you and there will be no commissions or expenses. Sell to us direct, here is the cash for you now!" Many of the planters attracted by the lucrative offer succumbed and sold out, with little thought as to the effect their action would have.

One of the most discouraging obstacles was the independent farmer who pronounced his independence and unconcern by openly refusing to join the association. Such a planter deemed it inadvisable to join the association because of one or a variety of factors. Some were convinced the organization could not possibly increase the value of their crop. Others believed and many actually succeeded in obtaining a better price by refusing to join the association, consequently the talk of cooperative action to these people was a futile gesture. Many refused membership because of the failure of previous attempts while still other suspected organizers of utilizing a perfectly good ideal to enhance their personal ambitions.

68 Wisconsin Equity News, June 1, 1908.

Association members viewed the independent planter with alarm from the very beginning, since all the while the member pledged not to sell, the non-member or "hill-billy" cashed in at a remunerative figure. This not only provoked the pool members but likewise caused many to withhold further membership. The disgusted member could see no possible advantage in joining the organization and suffering, while the independent planter remained outside the fold and enjoyed all the possible benefits an organization could bring---a higher price.

At the outset, association membership was voluntary but soon it became apparent a more aggressive policy would have to be employed. Members were advised not to extend "neighborly courtesies" or deal with non-association planters, while the commercial and professional classes were urged not to render the "hill-billies" services; both attempts, however, proving futile. The use of violence to relieve some wrong was not without precedent in Kentucky. Its prototype appeared in the reconstruction period following the Civil War. A few years prior to the tobacco difficulties the "toll-gate" system in Kentucky appeared oppressive and much agitation to eliminate the practise was waged. Convinced of the improbabilities of legislative relief, a group of Kentuckians undertook a campaign of night-riding that eventually culminated in the "toll-gate" systems complete elimination.

Aware of the accomplishments of these early uprisings and convinced of the futility of the tobacco planters' peaceful attempts

at cooperation, the suggestion of violent action commenced to take a foothold in the minds of some of the more prominent pool leaders. "There existed, therefore, a deep-seated sense of grievance and injury," commented the World's Work. "The farmers led to regard themselves as the victims of organized and legalized plunder grew reckless in speech and bitter in spirit. Protests were futile, the courts no longer offered hope of redress. Organized opposition was the last resource."⁷⁰ Consequently more radical measures were in the process of formation. "His neighbors proceeded to organize secret bands, first to threaten him, next to destroy his property, finally to whip him, and if need were, to kill him."⁷¹ Night-riding became a stark reality.

In the fall of 1905 a number of tobacco warehouses and a small tobacco factory were destroyed by fire. In the following year increased violence took its toll. Tobacco beds and fields were destroyed; independent planters who had already harvested their crop were instructed not to market their tobacco; and if the "hill-billy" could not be persuaded to withhold his supply, means were devised to prevent the crop from reaching market. Anything, regardless of the consequences, was worth the trying.⁷²

The first serious outbreak of organized violence took place in November 1906, when an army of 200 men moved on Princeton, the county seat of Caldwell County, Kentucky. Masked riders guarded the highways leading to and from the city to prevent anyone's

⁷⁰ World's Work, 17:214.

⁷¹ Wisconsin Equity News, June 1, 1908; Journal of Political Economy, 18:45.

⁷² H. C. Filley, Cooperation in Agriculture, 248-249.

arrival of departure. Night-riders, likewise, succeeded in commanding² telephone and telegraph offices, the police and fire departments. Freight cars belonging to the American Tobacco Company and independent concerns were completely demolished. "They destroyed barns containing 200 thousand pounds of tobacco, entailing a loss for barns and tobacco of \$100,000."⁷³

The destructive antics of the night-riders succeeded to an indeterminable extent in driving into membership many planters who otherwise would not have joined. Hopkins County, Kentucky was the scene of such excitement. The association campaigned for membership but many of the non-committal planters withheld until the closing hours of the drive. On October 10, 1907, the deadline for membership, the association books disclosed approximately 229 new members⁷⁴ pledging 13,000 acres of tobacco on the organization's roster.

In Hopkinsville, Kentucky, the heart of the dark tobacco trade and likewise one of the centers of night-riding, public sentiment was divided regarding the methods to be used in fighting off an anticipated invasion. Many thought it expedient not to antagonize the night-riders by condemning them or their methods, while others were vehement in denunciation of their activities. The city officials of Hopkinsville, representative of this latter attitude, took a determined stand against lawlessness. A military contingent was kept in readiness and the police force increased to sixteen men. This, nevertheless, proved insufficient and little was done by

⁷³ Ibid, 249.

⁷⁴ Meachom, A History of Christian County, Kentucky, 350.

way of furnishing a successful defense against the ravaging effects of the masked riders.⁷⁵

In December 1907 the much anticipated invasion took place. A band of 500 night-riders coming from four directions marched into Hopkinsville and seized all the instrumentalities of government and communication. Three tobacco factories and a warehouse were destroyed and citizens refusing to abide by the instructions of the masked riders were severely beaten. Much property along the Ohio River was left in ruins and "at one time the north bank of the Ohio River was patrolled by armed guards for a distance of eighty miles."⁷⁶

Night-riding alone did not account for the belligerent status of the tobacco country but similarly furnished a convenient cloak for commission of crimes totally separate from the tobacco difficulties. Thugs and bandits joined in the lawless festivities and executed crimes for which the tobacco producers were accused. Though the night-riders boasted a membership of 30,000, it is extremely doubtful that they numbered more than 8,000 or 9,000.⁷⁷ Their numerical strength, though exaggerated, apparently had a strong influence in shaping the destinies of many a politician. It was a popular contention on the part of many, that neither of the governors of Kentucky or Tennessee was willing to impair his political fences by organizing opposition against the night-riders.⁷⁸ One author comments to the effect that the majority of night-riders"

⁷⁵ Ibid, 346.

⁷⁶ H. C. Filley, Cooperation in Agriculture, 249-250.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 250.

⁷⁸ Atlantic Monthly, 102:485.

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"were probably men who had strong passions and little education, and fell a ready prey to selfish politicians who denounced the Tobacco Trust." ⁷⁹ At a political gathering where candidates for office took the floor, one candidate is credited with the following melodramatic passage: "I want to say that before I would hire out to the Tobacco Trust and aid them in robbing the poor man, the poor widow, and the little children who labored in the hot sun of July and August and who, on account of such robbery were forced into the icy grasp of winter, ill-fed and half-clad, my nature would have to be so changed that I would rather smell sulphurous smoke of a seething hell than the sweet perfume of the rose that bloomed in an eternal Eden. I would rather gaze on the contorted face of suffering as it writhes on the burning mark of hell than walk by still waters amid green pastures and feast my eyes on the radiant faces of the saints in their eternal home." ⁸⁰

Not only did the tobacco troubles afford a convenient topic for the aspiring politician, but likewise, the conviction of people accused of night-riding was difficult of attainment. Emissaries and sympathizers of the masked riders were prepared to present convenient alibis at the most opportune moments and these were secured with the greatest of ease. The difficulty in law enforcement was attested in the case of a Montgomery County, Tennessee, citizen, who had been burned "as an example." Suspects were

⁷⁹ H. C. Filley, Cooperation in Agriculture, 249-250.
⁸⁰ World's Work, 17:11216.

rounded up and three indictments secured, but confederates of the accused circulated notices throughout the adjoining country, and when the trial proceedings took place, a mass of sympathizers filled the court rooms. Following a vigorous prosecution by the attorney-general, the jury nevertheless returned a verdict of "Not-Guilty," and the sympathizers of the accused who had audibly participated in the course of the trial were commended by the judge for their excellent behavior. Shortly afterward, the following advertisement appeared in the Clarksville, Tennessee papers: ⁸¹

Hickory Point, Tenn., R. R. No. 2.

We take the present opportunity of offering our most sincere and grateful thanks to the multitude of noble friends who so heroically stood by us at Clarksville in our trial, where was won the completest and most overwhelming victory since the battle of Waterloo. Friends if you ever need us, command us.

In the course of these violent outbursts, public sentiment which previously stood firmly behind the planters in their fight against the trust, assumed a decidedly hostile attitude to the planters' organizations. The press denounced Equity members as rioters and outlaws and condemned others for their association affiliations. The Louisville-Courier Journal wrote the farmers had a just cause in fighting the trust but that outlawry was no solution to the difficulties. "Masquerading is cowardice. Cowardice

81 Ibid.

is cruelty. Through these agencies not only is Kentucky brought to blush, but farmers are put in for consequences which in the long run prove ruinous." ⁸² The Tribune-Democrat of Benton, Kentucky in in defending the society stated: "Possibly some of the night-riders are members of the American Society of Equity and the Dark Tobacco Association, just as different churches have bad people become members of the church, but that does not make the churches bad; neither does the night-rider make the association bad. ⁸³ Equity leaders disclaimed responsibility for the violence and published announcements in condemnation of such practises; but it was highly apparent some Equity members were rather active in the affairs of the masked order.

With night-riding falling into disrepute and negotiations failing to materialize in a satisfactory agreement; pool leaders became more desperate and discussed the possibilities of making another determined effort to control production. Having the 1906 crop unsold, the 1907 crop coming in and the trust refusing to accept the tobacco pool's demands; Equity and Burley leaders proposed to eliminate the entire crop for 1908. Soon thereafter, the Peaceful Riders by Day, an organization commanded by some of the most influential planters of the tobacco country, solicited the community and obtained the support of farmers willing to eliminate the 1908 crop. Many signed fearing a re-occurrence of night-riding, while others considered the proposal as feasible, believing that the

⁸² Louisville-Courier Journal quoted in Wisconsin Equity News, May 15, 1908.

⁸³ Tribune-Democrat (Benton, Kentucky) quoted in Wisconsin Equity News, May 15, 1908.

pool might dispose of its surplus crop.

Among the most enthusiastic espousers of the crop elimination ideology was J. Campbell Cantrill, the president of the Kentucky union of the American Society of Equity, who appealed to a gathering of New Castle, Henry County share-tenants in the following words: ⁸⁵ "You who are in this pool I tell you to sit idle this year. You will get rich doing nothing. You have two crops of Burley in the pool. If you sell them for fifteen cents each, there will be twenty-five cents coming back to you, and if you are idle there will be three years to divide it over. That will be eight cents a pound per year. But if you grow tobacco this year the pool will be thrown on the market, and you will get only four or maybe six cents a pound for each year. Three years at six cents a pound is eighteen cents. Two years at fifteen, less cost of the pool is twenty-five. You will have more profit if you sit idle than if you work. But you who are not in the pool. Let me say that if you grow tobacco enough to threaten our market, when your crop is almost ready we will dump 175 million pounds of pooled tobacco on the market for what we can get. The market will drop to two cents or less and you will not get enough for yours to pay to haul it to market. Now take your choice. Stand idle and help us or we will ruin you."

The atmosphere in the tobacco areas was gloomy. Planters were divided, some maintaining a 1908 crop would be financially expedient,

84 H. C. Filley, Cooperation in Agriculture, 250.

85 Atlantic Monthly, 102:488.

while others accepted Cantrill's theory of crop elimination. The early months of 1908 were of intense excitement rivalling conditions prior to the outbreak of the Civil War. Business was at a standstill.⁸⁶ Not only did the pool leaders experience difficulty in soliciting planters' support, but similarly trying hardships were encountered in keeping up the morale of those pledged to the pool's leadership. Quite characteristic of this latter difficulty was the attitude of many Equity planters, and in 1908 E. L. Davenport, president of the Tobacco Department of Equity, addressed the following circular to the Kentucky planters:⁸⁷

"I regret to think that during this sixty days that tried men to the very bottom, that some of our members were tempted beyond endurance and fell down and worshipped at the feet of the Trust for eight and ten cents. They could not withstand the temptation the Saviour did while on the mountain, when the devil said to him, 'I will give you all this if you will worship me.' The Saviour answered and said, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.' Our erring brothers should have answered the Trust agent in like manner-'Get thee behind me, Trust.' But instead they threw open wide their arms, like the dumper, and embraced the golden sheckels."

Despite the innumerable obstacles that threatened to make the elimination of the 1908 crop an impossibility, indications were

86 Ibid.

87 Organized Farmer, January 20, 1916.

that a very large percentage of the crop was to be eliminated. The estimated acreage in the Burley country fell to 18% of normal and similarly sharp reductions in the tobacco country were effected; causing the business receipts of the Louisville and Cincinnati mar-
⁸⁸
 kets to drop to the low figures of previous years. Western market receipts, which in 1889 were placed at 300 thousand hogheads,
⁸⁹
 dwindled to approximately 110 thousand in 1909.

Negotiations, in the meanwhile continued, but as usual all attempts at conciliations ended in failure. The independent purchasers continued their pool purchases at an average of \$17 per hundred pounds. The trust, however, repeatedly refused to accept the planters demands---which insisted that tobacco from a later year would not be sold unless the supply of the previous year was first
⁹⁰
 exhausted. On one occasion the trust virtually offered to purchase the entire 1907 crop but the planters again refused; once more demanding that the earlier supply be purchased first and that some of the tobacco be saved for the independents who were rendering financial assistance by continuing their pool purchases in the course
⁹¹
 of the crisis.

On November 19, 1908 another attempt at conciliation was made when representatives of the respective groups once more assembled at the Louisville Hotel. After engaging in another prolonged discussion, an announcement declaring the difficulties between the

⁸⁸ U. S. D. A., B. P. I., Bulletin No. 268, 47-48; H. C. Filley, Cooperation in Agriculture, 250-251.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ From correspondence received from an authority on the text of the controversy who does not wish his name revealed.

⁹¹ Wisconsin Equity News, December 15, 1908.

producers and the trust had ended was made in the following
⁹²
 language:

The American Tobacco Company has bought seventy-five percent of the 1906 pooled tobacco at scheduled prices and seventy-five percent of the 1907 pooled tobacco at graded prices to average seventeen cents.

R. K. Smith.

Clarence LeBus.

Immediately thereafter the passage of some 60 million pounds of tobacco totalling approximately 12 million dollars was ^e affected by the terms of these agreements thus ending the hours of endless waiting on the part of the planters. ⁹³ Shortly afterwards the dark ⁹⁴ tobacco pool was sold for about eight cents a pound.

7

With the unprecedented rise in prices, the natural consequence would have been to establish the organization on a sound and permanent basis, but unhappily such was not the case. The planter commenced a display of total indifference that immediately stifled the possibility of further organization. In the course of the pooling period, a number of distasteful experiences led to the disintegration of the society and ultimately ^{to} its extinction. First,

⁹² Ibid. The members of the executive board of the Burley society and the American Tobacco Company were as follows: Burley Society-- Claude Williams, C. C. Patrick, J. E. Brown, J. A. LaRue, S. A. Sharklin, L. J. Evans, G. W. McNillen and R. B. Thomas; American Tobacco--R. K. Smith, J. Middleton and A. V. Carroll.

⁹³ Of the 60 millions sold, 10 were from the 1906 crop and the 50 million from the 1907 crop.

⁹⁴ H. C. Filley, Cooperation in Agriculture, 251.

there was a feeling of distrust on the part of some, that prices could not be regulated unless controlled production was affected; with many maintaining such control was impossible except by the re-occurrence of violence that scarcely compensated the planter for the long hours of agony and terror. Others insisted restricted production in one locality was not an assurance of price increases, since the deficit in one area might well be offset by increased productivity in another.⁹⁵ Second, a feeling of suspicion and distrust prevailed among the Burley Society's membership. A considerable share of the small and financially-pressed planters were of necessity forced to dispose of their warehouse receipt. To make an immediate sale they were in many instances forced to sell at sharply discounted prices and frequently the purchasers were the wealthier members of the society. Though this speculative after-math proved exceedingly profitable to the few; the financially-pressed planter could scarcely be expected to approve of seeing his many months of tiresome waiting go to naught.⁹⁶ Third, there existed a deep-rooted suspicion against the administrative policies of both the Burley Society and the Planters' Protective Association.⁹⁷ The integrity of the officers was frequently questioned. In 1906, a complaint was made against the Planters' Protective Association, charging that the organization had become a closed corporation; with the control and profits of the organization in the hands of a few.

⁹⁵ B. H. Hibbard, Marketing of Agricultural Products, 235.

⁹⁶ Journal of Political Economy, 18:41, 44.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 41.

Fourth, friction and hostility arising out of personal and administrative differences among the officers, became a disintegrating factor.⁹⁸ Fifth, some of the planters actually were of the opinion their bargaining difficulties ended with the settlement of the Burley dispute, and consequently could see no further need for organization. This element believed tobacco prices were up to stay.⁹⁹ Sixth, adverse court decisions, likewise, had a demoralizing influence. In the spring of 1910, a group of Equity farmers were convicted and fined for violating the Sherman-Anti-Trust law, by asking planters to withhold tobacco sales until a better price was obtainable. The decision in the Danbury Hatter's case was also accepted as an ill-omen, which also hastened the organization's disintegration.¹⁰⁰

In 1909, following the low crop year of 1908, the Burley output skyrocketed to new heights; it being invariably the practice of farmers to stimulate production immediately following a good price year. The planters resumed their old practice of raising as much tobacco as possible, naturally assuming the combination would continue at the recent high level. Though the crop and acreage¹⁰¹

98 Ibid. The Burley Society was virtually a foster-child of the Equity group. The inability of Equity and its affiliated or subsidiary organizations to carry on harmoniously, characterized the society's history from beginning to end. This incessant internal warfare was in large measure responsible for innumerable failures in many of the projects undertaken by the society and in large measure contributed to the organization's failure in most instances.

99 Ibid.; B. H. Hibbard, Marketing Agricultural Products, 236.

100 Wisconsin Equity News, June 10, 1910; B. H. Hibbard, Marketing of Agricultural Products, 236.

101 B. H. Hibbard, Marketing of Agricultural Products, 235.

production took a decided turn upward, prices did not drop to former low levels; the reform in marketing methods, the rise of the export market, the dissolution of the American Tobacco Company by the United States Supreme Court and generally rising price conditions; all served as contributing factors.

Despite the planters' difficulties in combatting the trust, they succeeded in realizing certain benefits that contributed to the betterment of the tobacco market. The planters displayed an ability to work collectively under proper conditions and convinced the tobacco industry they were a problem to contend with when properly organized. Funds were collected to be utilized in establishing warehouses and some seventeen were built. A tobacco factory was likewise started and as Professor Hibbard remarked, though the society failed to exert permanent control over production, the farmers undoubtedly gained a much stronger position as bargainers than they would have had without the pooling episode."

102 H. C. Filley, Cooperation in Agriculture, 252-253. Professor Filley remarks that "This rise in prices did not help the producer of tobacco. While he received a little more for his crop, the things which he purchased cost more, so that his real purchasing power remained at a low level. The average income of the tenant-farmer in the tobacco belt for the five years preceding 1916 was only \$310 per year. This meant hard times. Too often it meant no shoes for the children and a diet of 'corn pone' and 'lasses.'"

103 B. H. Hibbard, Marketing of Agricultural Products, 238; H. C. Filley, Cooperation in Agriculture, 251-252. Youngman writing in the Journal of Political Economy, 18:42 stated: "Before the organization of the farmers, they would sell tobacco from the barn to the speculator without knowing what it would be used for or to whom it was best suited. Consequently a large percentage of them had no fixed idea except to grow a pound of tobacco thinking all kinds should be worth the same money per pound. Now the farmer has been educated to know that tobacco has different values, and to learn the methods of growing these different grades."

CHAPTER THREE

Thus far we have been considering the activities of Equity in the Northwest and in the tobacco areas of Kentucky and Tennessee. The accomplishments of the society in the latter region though temporary, were of a more prominent character. In the south the grievances of the farmers were of a more tangible nature and assistance was forthcoming; consequently, the activities of Equity realized success.

The wheat and tobacco campaigns were the two most prominent and the last the organization conducted under the leadership of Everitt. Following the departure of the deposed leader the organization agitated for the establishment of cooperative associations; and not until this time, did Equity approach the character possessed by modern cooperative educational organizations.

1

The society achieved its greatest success in Wisconsin, despite the fact that the state was one of the most prosperous agricultural states in the United States. Wisconsin farmers

were not undergoing the hardships the wheat farmers in the Northwest were; nor were they by any means the victims of monopoly as were the tobacco farmers in Kentucky and Tennessee. Nevertheless, Equity came into the state almost immediately following its incorporation in Indianapolis.

The causes making for the progress of the society in the state are almost inexplicable. The prosperous condition of Wisconsin agriculture becomes obvious upon the examination of several items pertinent to the welfare of farming, namely: the status of farm tenancy, land, crop and implement values, the general character of Wisconsin agriculture, etc..

With reference to farm tenancy, Wisconsin commanded an enviable position among farming states. For the years 1900, 1920 and 1930, the tenancy figures for the East North Central Division---that is the combined averages for the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin---were 26, 28 and 27 per cent respectively; the figures for the West North Central Division---including the states of Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North and South Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas---were 30, 34 and 40 per cent respectively; and the figures for the United States as a whole were 35, 38 and 42 per cent respectively. To the contrary, the tenancy figures for Wisconsin were at a remarkably low level, namely: 14, 14 and 18 per cent ---being in each instance substantially lower than in either of the geogra-

phic divisions mentioned, and lower than for the United States as a whole.¹

In the matter of per acre earnings, Wisconsin farmers, likewise, enjoyed a comparably favorable position. A statistician that computed the earning power of Wisconsin and American farms found that, the per acre earnings of Wisconsin farmers were in as favorable, if not in a position superior to that of the farmers in the country. This survey covered a ten-year period, ranging from 1896 to 1905 inclusively, the latter years during which period, the Equity society commenced organization operations in Wisconsin. The statistician found that the per acre earnings for corn in Wisconsin were \$12.03, in the United States \$9.15; the per acre earnings for oats in Wisconsin were \$9.15, in the United States \$8.34; for barley in Wisconsin \$11.91, in the United States \$10.35; for rye in Wisconsin \$7.93, in the United States \$8.10; for buckwheat in Wisconsin \$8.17, in the United States \$8.58; for flax in Wisconsin \$11.83, in the United States \$9.45; for hay in Wisconsin \$11.55, in the United States \$11.54. Only in the case of potatoes was there a wide difference in favor of the American farmer---the difference in the per acre earning power there being \$39.09 for Wisconsin and \$43.31 for the United States.²

¹ U. S. D. A., Agricultural Statistics 1937, 392-393.

² M. M. Quaife, Wisconsin: Its History and Its People, II:45; Chicago, Illinois, 1924).

In the matter of land, farm, crop, wage and implement values the same favorable economic conditions persisted. Over a period of fifty years ranging from 1870 to 1920, these items displayed an astounding growth. The use of improved land increased from 6 million acres in 1870 to 10 million by 1920; the per acre value of land over the same period rose from 27 to 121 dollars; the percentage of land in farms increased from 33 to 63 per cent; the cash valuation of farms rose from 300 million to 2.5 billion dollars; implement values sprang from 11 to 167 million dollars; the amount of wages paid including room and board increased from 8 to 48 millions; livestock values increased from 45 to 322 millions; and the gross valuation of agricultural products leaped from 78³ to 780 millions.

In scientific farming Wisconsin, likewise, displayed remarkable progress. As early as 1890, the Wisconsin farmers had given up the one crop system as unprofitable. Dairying commenced to show increasing popularity, which in itself is an indication of progressive farming. Between the years 1870 and 1890, the dairying industry was in a "primary educational period." During the years from 1890 to 1900, it made added increases, and from 1900 to 1905 these increases assumed increased proportions. Beginning with 1905 and up through and beyond the World War period, the progress in dairying was phenomenal; and on June 30, 1922---

3 M. M. Quaife, Wisconsin: Its History and Its People, II:42.

Wisconsin ranked first as a dairy state; first in the volume of milk produced; first in the total cheese produced, ranking second in the production of Limburger cheese and first in the production of American; first in the production of "condensary products:"⁴ and eighth in the production of ice cream. On January 1, 1924, estimates have it that 81 per cent of the Wisconsin farmers income came from livestock, and of this 50 per cent came from milk alone.⁵

Though these facts are not the ultimate test of the economic condition of Wisconsin agriculture, nevertheless, they serve as an important index in portraying the rapid strides made by Wisconsin farmers; and especially in revealing the relatively fortunate position of the Wisconsin farmer in contrast to that of the average American agricultural producer.

2

Since farmer movements generally take place in agriculturally depressed areas, and since Wisconsin then as today was a comparatively prosperous state, the society, nevertheless, made remarkable progress; consequently, the causes making for such a development are matters for increased speculation. One may justifiably ask---what factors were instrumental in granting Equity admission into Wisconsin? What factors were instrumental

⁴ Ibid, II:49.

⁵ Ibid, II:49.

in hastening the farmers to unite and protest against political and economic conditions? In short---what factors were instrumental in enabling Equity to attract membership like no other organization has since done; and in temporarily making the society a force in directing the political and economic aspects of Wisconsin agriculture?

We may approach the problem from four variable aspects of the agricultural situation: first, with respect to the response that the agricultural population of Wisconsin gave to progressive political leadership; second, with respect to the political and economic background of the Northwest---its influence on the river wheat counties---and the effects of the Equity "hold-your-wheat" movements; third, with respect to the attempt of Equity to organize the potato growers of central Wisconsin; and fourth, with respect to the marketing difficulties of the Wisconsin tobacco producers and the role assumed by Equity in organizing them. In essence, these were the originating and the conditioning factors of the Equity program in Wisconsin.

Our study of Equity would be incomplete without a searching analysis into the effects of the progressive movement. La Follette in his Autobiography quite appropriately asserted that: "The progressive movement expressed itself in the rise to power of the Patrons of Husbandry."⁶ The Patrons of Husbandry or the Grange

⁶ R. M. La Follette, Autobiography, 18;(Madison, Wisconsin 1913).

as it is more popularly known, was revolting against "the rise of monopolies".... and "the arrogance of the railroads and the waste and robbery of the public lands." Thus in drawing out the close and intimate relations between the progressive and Equity movements, a brief and systematic arrangement of the events leading up to the period will be necessary.

The Grange was organized in the period following the Civil War and gained its greatest impetus largely because of the agricultural depression of the early seventies. The popularity of the Grange was attributed to the attacks made against the railroads who were accused of corrupting the government, of selling fraudulent stock, of rebating and discriminating and of extracting exorbitant prices for the transport of agricultural products. Consequently, storms of protest broke out in the middle-western states, with the result that regulatory agencies were established to control railroad practices.

In Wisconsin the Granger period was "brief but unique." In 1874 it succeeded in staging a major political catastrophe by electing W. R. Taylor a Democrat as a Granger governor. The most revolutionary aspect of the Taylor administration marked the passage of the famous "Potter Law" which called for the establishment of a state railroad commission. The Grangers were also ac-

⁷ R. M. La Follette, Autobiography, 18-20.

⁸ M. M. Quaife, Wisconsin: Its History and Its People, II:7; R. G. Thwaites, Wisconsin, 383; (Boston, Mass., 1908); A. O. Barton, La Follette's Winning of Wisconsin, 36-37, (Madison, Wis., 1922). The Potter Law was repealed in 1876 largely because of the arbitrary powers imposed on the commission.

credited with establishing the first cooperative enterprises among the Wisconsin farmers, by establishing cooperative purchasing agencies to combat the practices of the middleman.⁹

The Granger period though not particularly successful, nevertheless, succeeded in awakening the farmers to the possibilities of economic cooperation; moreover, made them sensitive to the abuses operating behind the American political and economic scene. Likewise, it furnished an inspirational start for the man who was to eventually bring the movement to a more successful head. "I heard and felt this Granger movement swirling about me," said La Follette, "and I suppose I have never fully lost the effects of that early impression."¹⁰

In the middle eighties a new movement swept the middle-west in the form of the Farmers' Alliance. The Alliance and the Grange had many things in common; but the Alliance unlike the Grange failed to make any progress in Wisconsin. Wisconsin came to possess less in common with the grain states in which the Al-

⁹ Wisconsin State Board of Public Affairs, Report Upon Cooperation and Marketing, I:28; International Review of Agricultural Economics, February 1914, 11-12. The purchasing agent system consisted in getting the farmers to pool and assign their needs to an agent who made wholesale purchases at substantial reductions.

Statistics on the operations of the Wisconsin agency.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>Value of Purchases</u>
1875	18,673	\$ 38,194
1876	18,427	115,882
1877	17,640	164,445
1878	7,093	86,391
1879	5,526	61,334
1880	4,651	55,560

¹⁰ R. M. La Follette, Autobiography, 19.

liance flourished; furthermore, W. A. Hoard, a dairy farmer, was elected governor in 1888 which appears to have temporarily placated the demands of the farmer groups.¹¹

The nineties, however, were to witness a marked increase in agrarian disaffection. The Hoard administration resulted in few tangible benefits for the Wisconsin farmers; consequently, the Grange anemic as it was, continued to voice protest against the existing political and economic order. In essence, the Wisconsin Grange platform which had been influenced by the Farmers' Alliance advocated many of the principles that La Follette was to incorporate into his reform program. The Grange complained of the evils of combinations and monopoly; it denounced the inequitable tax laws, the corrupt caucus and convention methods; and asked for the enactment of income tax legislation.¹²

Historians have little appreciated the effects of the La Follette movement on Wisconsin agricultural groups. Following his defeat for re-election to Congress in 1890, La Follette decided to confine his immediate political future to the state. Once decided to wage war on the "boss" system, La Follette began to chart his strategy for attack. When asked on one occasion, how he intended to mould a progressive state out of a heterogeneous "foreign-born, foreign-bred, slow-moving population,"

¹¹ A. S. Harvey, The Background of the Progressive Movement in Wisconsin, 55; Masters Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1933.

¹² Ibid., 61. Harvey states the Grange membership fell from about 18,000 in 1875 to approximately 2,000 in 1890.

La Follette replied the problem was simplified "owing to the pre-
dominance of the agricultural population and the absence of great
congested centres, which are always the stronghold of machine
control through a corrupt combination of big business with muni-
cipal graft."¹³

Having decided the farmers were to form the base around
which the reform program was to be built, La Follette began to
strengthen his agricultural affiliations. Among the very first
things to be accomplished, was to effect alliances with prominent
farmer politicians. One of the earliest of such alliances was
that perfected with A. R. Hall, the reputed "progressive statesmen
of the hour preceeding the La Follette movement."¹⁴

Hall had migrated to Wisconsin from Minnesota where he had
served as speaker of the Minnesota assembly; and where he had
witnessed and participated in the struggles between the farmers
and the grain interests. In Wisconsin, Hall was essentially a
livestock farmer, being elected assemblyman from Dunn county in
1891. Hall attracted considerable attention because of the
agitation for anti-pass legislation, which was placed on the
statute books in 1899.¹⁵

¹³ R. M. La Follette, Autobiography, 223. Fifteenth Census of the United States, Population Bulletin, Second Series for Wisconsin, 1930, -3. The urban and rural populations of Wisconsin from 1890 to 1930 in ten-year periods were:

	1930	1920	1910	1900	1890
Percent Urban	52.9	47.3	43.0	38.2	33.2
Percent Rural	47.1	52.7	57.0	61.8	66.8

¹⁴ Ibid, 212; A. O. Barton, La Follette's Winning of Wisconsin, 100.

¹⁵ R. M. La Follette, Autobiography, 221; Nils P. Haugen, Pioneer and Political Remeniscences, 96-97. Haugen states that he thought that he brought the attention of La Follette to Hall.

Another shrewd political manuever was the one effected with Nils Haugen, a popular Norwegian political leader, and the only Republican congressman to survive the "debacle" of 1890. La Follete urged and worked for the gubernatorial candidacy of Haugen in 1894, and although, Haugen was defeated; this gesture marked the beginning of a warm political friendship with the Norwegians who had been offended by the Republicans in 1890 because of the passage of the "infamous Bennett Law."¹⁶

La Follette in explaining his desire that Haugen run, remarked: "Many of the counties of the western half of the state were well settled by sturdy Scandinavian pioneers---an independent liberty-loving people. I knew they felt a certain pride in Congressman Haugen's prominence and success, and I counted on their giving him very strong support."¹⁷ Despite the defeat of Haugen, the fact remains that as a result of this manuever, La Follette effected a growing political friendship with the Scandinavian elements.

¹⁶ In 1890, Republicans throughout the state and nation went down in wholesale defeat. In Wisconsin the Bennett Law created much bitter feeling on the part of the Germans, the Scandinavians, the Irish, and Poles who were conducting parochial schools. The law which sought a more stringent enforcement of the compulsory education laws of the state. The foreign elements, however, interpreted the measure as being "designedly" aimed against their excellent and far-reaching institution." Though the Bennett Law was a factor in the defeat of Wisconsin Republicans; it probably was not the only reason. The McKinley tariff of 1890 was perhaps as great if not a greater force in the Republican defeat.

¹⁷ R. M. La Follette, Autobiography, 177-178.

The significance of this move is attested in the fact that next to the Germans, the Scandinavians constituted the largest agricultural group in the state.¹⁸

While La Follette was strengthening his political ties, the Grange continued its protests against existing political and economic conditions. In 1892, the Master Grange of Wisconsin remarked "what we need and must have is reform in our legislation."¹⁹ In 1894, the Grangers complained that farm property was "paying unjust and extortionate" taxes in contrast to other forms of property.²⁰ In 1895, the Master Grange complained that: "Unjust legislation has been and still is, a most prolific source of discontent and dissatisfaction among the people, and we believe is responsible for a large share of the evils and abuses of which we complain."²¹ "Our battle cry is equal rights to all, and special privileges and class legislation for none."²²

In 1896, La Follette made his first personal bid for the Republican gubernatorial nomination. Though defeated, the increasing farmer sentiment in his behalf became apparent. On

¹⁸ Thirteenth Census of the United States, III:1082. In 1910, the population among the foreign-born groups of Wisconsin were: Germans 233,000, Norwegians 57,000, Austrians 39,000, Russians 30,000, Swedes 26,000.

The population of native born whites whose parents were born abroad according to the country in which both parents were born was: Germany 297,000, Norway 72,000, Ireland 41,000, Austria 31,000 and Sweden 23,000.

¹⁹ A. S. Harvey, The Background of the Progressive Movement in Wisconsin, 76.

²⁰ Proceedings of the Twenty-Third Annual Convention of the Wisconsin State Grange, 11-12.

²¹ Ibid, Twenty-Fourth Annual Convention, 8.

²² Ibid, 9.

July 10, 1896, the Wisconsin Farmer remarked that "marketing the crop is no less important than making it, and the office of the farm paper is to render all the aid it can to secure fair conditions...." The paper encouraged the farmers to press on the forthcoming Republican state convention demands for railroad regulation---stating that: "It is an economic question that can be settled in no other way than by legislation."²³ The paper also demanded "just and reasonable rates," equal treatment for shippers and the abolition of railroad passes.²⁴

On July 24, the Wisconsin Farmer, which was considered the largest farm paper in the state, asked the Republicans to nominate a "man in close sympathy with Wisconsin agriculture....Such a chief executive is greatly needed in Wisconsin at present. He should be a man, too, with brains and courage, a defender of the 'plain people' and the tool of the corporate interests nor choice of the corporation lobbyists....we believe that Honorable R. M. La Follette is such a man." The Wisconsin Farmer praised La Follette's stand on the oleomargarine bill, while he was a member of Congress by remarking "the farmers of Wisconsin should love him for the enemies he then made."²⁵ Another agricultural leader to

²³ Wisconsin Farmer, July 10, 1896.

²⁴ Ibid, July 10, 1896.

²⁵ Ibid, July 24, 1896; Ellen Torelle, The Political Philosophy of Robert M. La Follette, 283, Madison, Wisconsin, 1920. The point that the Wisconsin Farmer was most enthused about in La Follette's speech was this: "From the standpoint of economics purely and upon strictest business principles the interests of agriculture are the interests of the government. No other pursuit so universally and profoundly concerns every other citizen of the Republic---no other calling known to civilized man, where so entirely and completely the interests of one is the interests of all."

to support La Follette at the state Republican convention of 1896
 was ex-governor W. D. Hoard.²⁶

With farmer support lining up in his behalf, La Follette and a group of his political intimates purchased the Old Dane, a country newspaper published in Madison; subsequently, changing the name of the sheet to the State.²⁷ In the position of editor was placed a former farm youth and "tow-headed Norwegian," who was later elected to Congress---John M. Nelson. The paper served a useful purpose in conveying to the farmers the reform measures expounded by the progressive group. Among the provisions incorporated into the platform of The State were measures providing for "protection for the products of the factory and the farm," sound money, reciprocity, adequate revenues for the state and nation, "equal and just taxation of all property," abolition of caucuses and conventions, the punishment of bribery, prohibition of passes, enactment and enforcement of a corrupt practices act and an "economical administration of public affairs."²⁸

Thus, by 1898, La Follette had the following agricultural forces behind him: Assemblyman A. R. Hall the "pioneer progressive" and prominent political leader from Dunn county; Nils P. Haugen the

²⁶ La Follette's Autobiography, 190-191.

²⁷ Ibid, 207.

²⁸ Ibid, 209-210. La Follette charges that the opposition sought to have the post-office authorities deny "second-class mail privileges" to the State because of the effect it was having on the farm readers.

virtual political spokesman for the Norwegians; the State under the editorship of John M. Nelson another rising progressive political leader; the Wisconsin Farmer reputed to have been the largest farm paper in the state; and former governor W. A. Hoard, one of the foremost dairy farmers in the world.

Although defeated in the gubernatorial campaigns of '94 and '96, La Follette made another bid for the gubernatorial nomination in 1898. Again his campaign centered around issues popular in the minds of the farmers, advocating such measures as the enactment of a direct primary law, the abolition of passes, the defeat of the lobbying system and the taxation of railroads at full value.

Despite the defeat of La Follette, the Republicans were forced through public pressure to accept the La Follette platform.

Following his defeat the State remarked: La Follette was backed by the "farmers and the poor man," while the "machine of Wisconsin" was supported by the "huge corporations."

Despite the reform pledges by the Republicans in 1898, La Follette charged the Republicans failed to enact into legislation an appreciable extent of the progressive measures promised in the

²⁹ National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, 12:78-79. Hoard had a long and prominent career as a dairy farmer. He organized the Jefferson County Dairymen's Association, also was the founder of the Northwest Dairymen's Association. In March 1885, he established "Hoard's Dairyman" which probably had the largest circulation of any dairy newspaper in the world. Later he was elected president of the National Farmers Congress and the National Dairy Union.

³⁰ F. C. Howe, Wisconsin An Experiment in Democracy, 13-14, (New York, 1912): Wisconsin Blue Book 1899, 711-712.

³¹ The State, August 19, 1898.

last gubernatorial campaign. The anti-pass bill was passed in 1899, but the measure calling for railroad taxation was defeated, there being substituted a bill calling for the creation of a commission to study the matter.

In 1900 La Follette made his first successful bid for the gubernatorial nomination, winning by an unprecedented plurality of 100,000. In the course of the campaign, La Follette scored another triumph among the Scandinavians by securing the support of two prominent papers: the Scandinavian, published in Chicago and widely read in the Northwest; and the Tidende published in Minneapolis and, likewise, widely read in the same area.

During his administrations as governor, measures providing for a primary law, the taxation of railroads and rate regulation ---all matters of extreme importance to the farmers were enacted into law.

Now what influence did the La Follette movement exert on the coming of the society of Equity? As evidenced La Follette marshalled his earliest support in the agricultural areas. This was expedited by the acquisition of a number of favorable political, and later the accomplishments of his administrations endeared him

32 R. M. La Follette, Autobiography, 221.

33 F. C. Howe, Wisconsin An Experiment in Democracy, 13-14; Wisconsin Blue Book 1901, 690-691.

34 A. O. Barton, La Follette's Winning of Wisconsin, 57. La Follette was greatly assisted in his political success with the Norwegian because of his knowledge of the language and also the knowledge of the temperament of the people which he learned while leaving in their midst. He was born in a Norwegian community.

35 F. C. Howe, Wisconsin An Experiment in Democracy, 15-16.

to his farmer supporters. In mobilizing farmer sentiment La Follette capitalized on the railroad problem, the chief agrarian issue since Granger days.

The Grangers and the Farmers' Alliance both advocated programs for "direct" political and economic action. In a political sense, they sought the enactment of railroad regulation, the creation of an equitable system of taxation, the abolition of free passes and the like; in an economic sense, their prime concern centered about the establishment of cooperative marketing agencies. In effect these constituted the "direct" political and economic demands of the organized farmer groups.

La Follette, likewise, was interested in economic reform; but in a relative sense, his interests were of an "indirect" or subsequent character. To him, what reforms accrued would accrue, by seizing the instrumentalities of government and legislating accordingly. La Follette in seizing upon the political demands of the farmers virtually severed the earlier agrarian programs in two. Consequently, in large measure, La Follette began politically where the Grange and the Alliance left off; but in the economic sense he did not. That field remained open for some future farmers organization to seize upon; and that organization was the American Society of Equity.

Historical investigation reveals that the Equity and La Follette movements had two things in common: first, they attracted their first substantial support in the west and northwestern

counties; and second, they were anti-monopolistic in nature. To La Follette monopoly and graft were the corrupting influence in government; to Equity these identical forces in the form of ^mmiddlemen, boards of trade, banking and railroad interests were responsible for low farm prices. In theory they had a common enemy but a different avenue of approach.

When the Wisconsin union of the American Society of Equity was organized, La Follette had virtually ended his tenure as governor. The farmers assisted in the attack against the railroads, and were among the leaders in the political revolution. Thus, when Equity entered the state fighting essentially the same enemy---monopoly, the society encountered a responsive and appreciative audience. The La Follette program, in essence, had paved the way for the agricultural program that was to follow.

As intimated the relations between the society and the progressive movement were to be of an intimate character; and in effect progressives were responsible for the survival of Equity, when indications were the society was ready to collapse. The more the organization is studied, the more does it appear to have served as the agricultural ^{counterpart} ~~adjunct~~ of progressivism. And this was of natural sequence, for both groups were combatting essentially the same enemy; and in numerous instances both groups were manned by individuals active in both organizations.

It is a matter of undisputed evidence that throughout the history of the society, Equity leaders displayed an unswerving allegiance to the ideals of progressivism. Many of these leaders were active in progressive politics. Men like George Nelson, Merlin Hull, Benjamin Gehrman, Jim Hanson, Henry Krumery, George F. Comings and others were closely identified with both movements at one time or another; and to a certain extent were successful in delivering influence to the affairs of both groups. Unquestionably, the ability of Robert M. La Follette to cultivate the political friendship of farm leaders and organized agricultural groups, in a measure serves to explain the survival of Equity in Wisconsin, as well as the prolonged adherence of Wisconsin agricultural groups to progressive political leadership.

3

As mentioned Equity gained the first substantial support in the west and northwestern counties of the state. In substantiation of this statement, the Equity News reveals that in 1907, St. Croix, Pierce, Trempeleau, Dunn, Eau Claire, Chippewa, Barron, Jackson, Buffalo, Wood, Portage, Waushara, Door, Dane, Vernon, and Rock, were the most prominent Equity counties. Of these St. Croix, Pierce, Buffalo, Trempeleau and Door were the most prominent.

³⁶
 36 Equity News, December 1, 1915. See also the maps in Appendix

Perhaps the next most important factor in attracting membership in Wisconsin were the Equity "hold-your-wheat" movements that were conducted in the Northwest. The upper Mississippi valley has been a prominent wheat raising section for a number of decades; consequently, in discussing this factor, we must of necessity disregard the arbitrary border separating Wisconsin and Minnesota and treat this area as a unit. This region has had a tremendous influence on the northwestern part of the state.

The influence of wheat raising has been tremendous. As early as 1879, Minnesota ranked fifth among the wheat producing states³⁷ of the nation; but by 1899, it had climbed into first place. By the same time the Red River valley bordering the Dakotas and Minnesota, had become the foremost spring wheat section in the United States.³⁸ The story of the wheat farmer has invariably been one of the most tragic episodes in American agriculture. Consequently, the Northwest was not only a prominent wheat country; but likewise one of the most discontented agricultural areas in America.³⁹

In the eighties and nineties, Minnesota was the scene of innumerable agrarian uprisings, largely because of the difficulties

³⁷ Iowa Journal of Politics and History, 18:408.

³⁸ U. S. D. A., Yearbook 1921, 90-91 and 94-95; Ibid 1933, 139-141.

³⁹ The chief causes for the unprofitableness of wheat raising were: the rise of foreign competition, the impoverishment of soil due to unscientific methods of farming, the purchase of land at inflated values and the payment of high interest rates, and the inefficient marketing system that had developed.

of the wheat farmers. Shortly before, the wheat industry which was one of the most popular agricultural pursuits in Wisconsin, suffered a tremendous decline in popularity. The first serious setback came in the decade from 1870 to 1880, when the productive⁴⁰ output of the state declined 62 per cent. By 1879 wheat raising was concentrated along the eastern and western parts of the state. At this time, the river counties St. Croix, Buffalo, Pierce, Trempeleau, Polk and Pepin ranked first, second, third, fifth,⁴¹ eighth and eleventh respectively.

In 1889, every wheat county suffered because of depressed⁴² prices and a chinch bug epidemic. In 1899, however, the river counties maintained their lead in production with Buffalo, St. Croix and Polk ranking first, second and third; and Trempeleau and Pepin ranking tenth and eleventh respectively.⁴³ Buffalo at the time had a per capita production of 27.1 bushels, this being higher than the per capita output for Wisconsin when wheat raising was at its⁴⁴ height. St. Croix, Calumet, Pierce, and Polk counties followed with per capita productions of 21.4, 16.7 and 16.3 respectively. Polk, Pierce, and St. Croix showed a "mild reaction" in favor of⁴⁵ wheat raising, this being most noticeable in Polk county.

The wheat depression, however, continued to leave its impressions on the state. By 1904, the Wisconsin wheat industry

40 J. G. Thompson, The Rise and Decline of the Wheat Industry in Wisconsin, 82. Madison, Wisconsin, 1909, University of Wisconsin Studies.

41 Ibid, 73-74.

42 Ibid, 84.

43 Ibid, 92.

44 Ibid, 92.

45 Ibid, 92.

reached a "new low." The remains of the wheat industry remained in the upper Mississippi valley, with slight stretches in Door county and the northeast shores of Lake Winnebago. Since 1899, the wheat acreage in Wisconsin had fallen 62 per cent; the total production had dropped 70 per cent; and the per capita yield to 72 per cent.⁴⁶ The same counties that led in production in 1899⁴⁷ led in 1904.

In protest the Minnesota farmers inaugurated a revived interest in cooperative marketing in the middle nineties. The farmers complained bitterly over prices. In Wisconsin the depressed condition of wheat farming was evidenced not only in the declining productivity, but in the low prices received by the farmers, as well. Wisconsin farmers in 1899 received 61 cents per bushels; in 1900, 1901, 1902, 1903 and 1904, the prices were 64, 65, 64, 72 and 98 cents respectively.⁴⁸ Consequently, when Equity organizers approached Wisconsin and informed the farmers wheat raising was unprofitable unless a selling price of one dollar was obtained;⁴⁹ the farmers listened attentively.

The wheat farmer difficulties were not without their political consequences. In the nineties, the Farmers Alliance in Minnesota under the fiery leadership of Ignatius Donnelly, carried the brunt of the farmers grievances against the traditional marketing agencies. In 1898, three acts were passed for the benefit

46 Ibid, 99.

47 Ibid, 99.

48 U. S. D. A. and Wisconsin Department of Agriculture Crop Reporting Service, Bulletin 90, 31.

49 World Today, 13:719.

of the farmers: the first providing for the "licensing of commission merchants;" the second calling for the popular election of members to the Railroad and Warehouse Commission; and the third providing for the establishment of a board of appeals to refer complaints on inspection.⁵⁰ In essence, the farmers in the west and northwestern counties were not only witnessing the political revolution conducted by La Follette; but, likewise, came face to face with the agrarian uprisings in the wheat country.

The ties of the river counties and the wheat country were not only political and economic, but racial as well.⁵¹ Northwestern Wisconsin, Minnesota and the Dakotas were populated chiefly by the Scandinavian elements. Andre Siegfried in his America Comes of Age comments: "We no longer find the robust conservatism of the Anglo-Saxon, nor yet the erratic vivacity of the Celt, which is kept in check by the priests. The Norwegian or Scandinavian farmer of the Northwest is a solitary introspective individual, proud and violent, like the obstinate idealists of Ibsen."⁵² Thus, the Wisconsin wheat farmers having a common political, economic and racial background with the farmers of Minnesota and the Dakotas, were in effect influenced by happenings in that region.

The "dollar wheat" campaign, to be sure, had its effects in increasing the membership of Equity. In the beginning, Equity membership in Wisconsin was largest in this section. Cooperative

⁵⁰ H. A. Larson, The Wheat Market and The Farmer in Minnesota, 249-251. New York, Columbia University, 1926.

⁵¹ M. M. Quaife, Wisconsin: Its History and Its People, II:135-141-142.

⁵² Andre Siegfried, America Comes of Age, 287-288; New York, 1927.

elevators and warehouses were established by Equity members; and in 1909, a number of such establishments were reported in operation in the St. Croix area.⁵³ Upon good authority, Equity took over many of the old Grange warehouses in this area. To the east in Door county, another wheat section, the effects of the Equity movement were ~~were~~ more discernible; there being warehouses and elevators established at Egg Harbor, Sister Bay, Ellison Bay, Bailey Harbor, Maplewood, Forestville and Sawyer.⁵⁴

Shortly following the "dollar wheat" campaigns, the farmers in these counties began marketing their wool cooperatively. A number of "wool pools" were organized; and statistics have it that some 200,000 pounds of wool were cooperatively marketed in 1909 at a flat price of 29 cents per pound.⁵⁵ In 1910, Equity wool warehouses were located at Ellsworth, River Falls, Cylon, Hixton, Baldwin, Menominee, Kendall, Norwalk, Gameron Junction, Colfax, Westby, Gay Mills, Elmwood, Hustler, Blair and Galesville.⁵⁶

Another factor less responsible for the coming of Equity in Wisconsin were the unsuccessful potato campaigns. At the time the national organization was conducting the "dollar wheat" cam-

⁵³ Equity News, March 15, 1915.

⁵⁴ Wisconsin Equity News, September 10, 1909. According to Professor Hibbard, Door county has always been a strong Grange county which accounts for the progress of the Equity movement in that region.

⁵⁵ Wisconsin Equity News, February 15, 1909.

⁵⁶ Ibid, November 10, 1909.

⁵⁷ Ibid, August 25, 1909.

paigns, the society was, likewise, attempting to organize the potato growers of the nation. The scenes of activity, were the states of Michigan, New York and Wisconsin; the strategy again being to fix the price and if necessary to eliminate a portion of the crop. In 1906 especially, Equity inaugurated what the society hoped would eventually result in a nation wide farm strike; but needless to say the attempt collapsed.

Despite the general failure of the potato strike, membership was gained in the prominent potato counties of Wisconsin: Waupaca, Waushara and Portage. In 1909, the Wisconsin union set out in determined fashion to organize the potato growers; and succeeded in organizing the Wisconsin Potato Growers Association. In 1909, state Equity leaders announced that an appreciable membership had been enrolled, and that with a little more effort, a sufficient number would be had to control production. In hopes of attaining this end, national organizer J. Weller Long and H. E. Holmes of the Wisconsin Tobacco Department travelled the "potato patch" for the needed membership. Evidence reveals that a substantial increase was obtained; but the extent of that increase is unknown; but, ~~however~~, again, the plan for controlled production failed. A number of warehouses were built but the Equity

58 Up-To-Date Farming, March 15, 1906.

59 Equity News, December 1, 1915.

60 Wisconsin Equity News, June 10, 1909. In 1909, Waupaca, Waushara, Portage, Sauk, Adams, Juneau and Marquette counties produced about one-third the potato crop of Wisconsin. See Bulletin 256, 3, University of Wisconsin Experiment Station.

potato program failed to make any noticeable progress. The society lacked financing and was unable to make the proper trade connections. ⁶¹ Shortly, thereafter, the membership in the potato counties ⁶² declined about as rapidly as it was enrolled.

Another factor contributing to the introduction of the society in Wisconsin were the tobacco difficulties in the southern counties. The Wisconsin farmers like their neighbors in Kentucky and Tennessee were suffering from the effects of an "antiquated" and "unscientific" market. Information relative to prices and grades ~~were~~ ^{was} entirely lacking. The charge was often repeated that, it was not an uncommon practice for purchasers to single out one or two large producers, and conspire with them to purchase their crop at a low contract figure. The planter thus contracting would receive a substantial bonus to more than offset the depressed price level; the purchaser in the meanwhile, using the depressed ⁶³ contract figure to advantage in dealing with prospective sellers.

Aside of the deliberate attempts made to depress prices, fault was, likewise, found in the methods of contracting. In many instances the alleged contracts were nothing more than "options" to buy. A small sum usually never in excess of fifty dollars was advanced to "bind the option;" and frequently in unfavorable

⁶¹ Wisconsin Equity News, May 10, 1910.

⁶² Equity News, December 1, 1915.

⁶³ Bulletin of the Wisconsin State Department of Markets, Cooperative Tobacco Marketing in Wisconsin, Volume IV, No. 4, 8-9.

years, it was not uncommon for those that were essentially speculators, to forfeit the advance payment and not enter into a contract.

On other occasions contracts were carefully drawn to protect the purchaser, but seldom the seller. Such expressions as "no damaged tobacco" and "going price" were frequently parts of the agreement; but their meaning was generally left to the discretion of the purchaser. Aside of this, the dockage system whereby the farmer was deducted for foreign materials or spoiled tobacco, was another source of discontent.⁶⁴

The principal purchaser of Wisconsin tobacco was the "tobacco trust." In 1904, the trust paid an average of five cents per pound; but the following year a group of independents came into the field and purchased practically the whole supply, and then turned around and sold to the trust at a handsome figure. In 1906, the independents started out the season in the same fashion, buying and storing large quantities. At the close of the purchasing season, the company buyers refused to buy from the independents, preferring instead to make use of some old southern tobacco purchased the year before.⁶⁵ As a result, many of the independent buyers were completely ruined; while others considered the competition too precarious to remain in the field. Consequently, in the follow-

⁶⁴ Ibid, 8-9.

⁶⁵ Nonpartisan Leader, December 10, 1917.

lowing year, the trust again had complete access to the tobacco of Wisconsin farmers.

Meanwhile, Equity had penetrated the tobacco counties. In 1907, the Milwaukee Journal reported that the American Society of Equity controlled the tobacco raised in the Edgerton area; and announced the society threatened to eliminate the 1908 crop, unless a higher price level was restored.⁶⁶ Equity in the meanwhile proceeded with the erection or rental of warehouses to store the supplies of the association. In 1908, largely through Equity's guidance, tobacco warehouses were established at Viroqua, Westby, Taylor, Independence, Blair, Bowen, Whitehall, Chippewa Falls, Gay Mills, Madison, Stoughton, McFarland, Edgerton, London, Stockdale, Janesville and Cottage Grove.⁶⁷

These warehouse associations were joint stock companies and upon accepting the farmer's tobacco, they issued a warehouse receipt that constituted high-grade collateral.⁶⁸ Like the southern planter, the Wisconsin farmer gave the association complete disposal over the sale of his tobacco, once he contracted with the association. This gave Equity an important position in the marketing of Wisconsin tobacco. The average cost of holding and selling tobacco through Equity averaged three cents per pound.

⁶⁶ Milwaukee Journal, October 26, 1907. Many of the planters had abandoned tobacco-raising in favor of sugar beets which were paying a more remunerative figure.

⁶⁷ Cooperative Tobacco Marketing in Wisconsin, Volume IV, No. 4, 8-9.

⁶⁸ Nonpartisan Leader, December 10, 1908.

In May 1908, the district board announced that a minimum of \$1.25 per hundred would be assessed for redrying purposes, that \$2.00 per hogshead would be exacted for inspection and another \$1.32 per hundred for insurance.⁶⁹

In 1908, Wisconsin Equity leaders sought to emulate the accomplishments of the Kentucky and Tennessee farmers and eliminate the entire crop for the year. An attempt was made but without avail.⁷⁰ The following year another attempt to curtail production was made but failed again. H. E. Holmes, the manager and salesman of the Tobacco Growers Association pleaded with the planters: "Why not cut it out? Let the demand catch up with the supply. Let the market get over the glut, and get a little hungry. Certainly there is no surplus of corn in the country, and should we have a bumper crop this year, the thirty-five or forty thousand acres of tobacco ground that would be planted to corn would not increase the amount to cause any inconvenience."⁷¹

In 1909, between eight and ten thousand cases of "grades" were handled and packed; but in 1910, administrative and factional disputes caused a severance of relations between Equity and the local associations. In consequence, the tobacco department withdrew from the society and established an independent organization known as the Farmers' Tobacco Association.⁷² The

⁶⁹ Wisconsin Equity News, May 1, 1908.

⁷⁰ Ibid, May 1, 1908.

⁷¹ Ibid, May 10, 1909.

⁷² Wisconsin State Department of Markets, Cooperative Tobacco Marketing in Wisconsin, Volume IV, No. 4, 6; M. M. Quaife, Wisconsin: Its History and Its People, II:537.

new organization added new warehouses at Sun Prairie, Windsor, Deerfield and De Forest; but unfortunately the association's business began to decline, handling but three thousand cases in 1910 and lesser quantities in 1911 and 1912.⁷³

4

In summary we may justifiably state that: the progressive movement, the Equity "dollar wheat" campaigns, the unsuccessful attempts to control the production and marketing of the potato crop, and the establishment of cooperative tobacco warehouses, were the principle factors contributing to the coming of the society into Wisconsin. In short the Equity society was the first major farmers organization to enter the state since the Granger period of the seventies.

⁷³ Cooperative Tobacco Marketing in Wisconsin, Volume IV, No. 4, 6.

CHAPTER FOUR

In the preceeding chapter we considered the ^{genetic} originating and conditioning factors of the society in the state. It perhaps would be expedient to further consider the activities of Equity, that we may have a better understanding of the political and economic effects of the organization on Wisconsin agriculture.

The earliest attempt to introduce the "Equity idea" in Wisconsin appears to have been made through the journalistic efforts of Joe Sevenich, who asserted that his publication Der Landmann, was the first to comment favorably on the organization in the state.¹ That was in January 1903, or scarcely a month, subsequent to the incorporation of the American Society of Equity in Indianapolis. The membership on October 1, 1903, was 459; but it increased rapidly.² In 1906 the Wisconsin union was organized by delegates from eighteen counties that assembled in Eau Claire, in January of that year.³ The following year the society claimed a paid up membership of 10,000; and on May 1, 1908, the first issue of the Wisconsin Equity News came off the press.⁴

¹ Equity News, November 15, 1930.

² Up-To-Date Farming, October 1, 1903.

³ Daily Telegram, January 11, 1906; Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

⁴ Equity News, December 1, 1915; Wisconsin Equity News, May 1, 1908.

- part 1 -

Perhaps one of the most novel features of Equity was the attack waged on the Wisconsin College of Agriculture. According to ~~society~~ ^{the} ~~leaders~~ ^{of the organization} the college was in the same category as the middleman, the grain gambler and the corporation. One author commented that on previous occasions, the university to the "average farmer" was a "cold storage institution of dead languages and useless learning which cost several million bushels of wheat each year."⁵

The college was attacked for a number of reasons, the foremost being that the college was too "productive-minded." The traditional practice to improve the economic position of the farmer was to increase his capacities of production. This practice was encouraged on the theory of making as efficient use of one's productive capacities as possible, a practice to be sure, that was operative in industry as well as agriculture.⁶ This policy Equity leaders asserted, not only failed to better the financial status of the farmer, but actually flooded the market with surpluses that debased price levels.⁷ One Equity leader stated, the society had no desire to "cross swords" with the college; but maintained that "peach growers this year were not so much interested in Bordeaux mixture when seeing piles of peaches

⁵ Frederic C. Howe, Wisconsin An Experiment in Democracy, 164.

⁶ Interview.

⁷ Marketing and Farm Credits, 1915, 41-42.

rotting in the orchards," as they were in delivering their products to the consumer⁸ at profitable prices.

Besides being charged with teaching courses that were far-removed from the economic needs of the farmers, the college authorities were accused of conducting their courses in such a manner as to make city life more attractive; consequently, lessening the desire of the farm youth to return to the farm upon the completion of their education. The professors were also charged with indifference to farm difficulties because of their alleged lack of practical farm experience. Furthermore, the fact that college remained aloof of farmer programs similar to that of Equity, was seized upon as an indication the college was the bidding servant of the corporation.⁹

With the forthcoming of the Wisconsin Equity News, the society began to attack the university in most embittered fashion. Innumerable demands were made asking for an investigation of university expenditures and the conduct of college courses. In 1909 when the Madison press informed the public the university baseball team was contemplating a trip to the Orient to meet a Japanese institution, Garret Walrod, the editor of the Wisconsin Equity News protestingly remarked: "It is time for an investigation

⁸ Ibid, 41-42; Wisconsin Equity News, May 1, 1908.

⁹ The earlier issues of the Equity paper especially are filled with numerous protests relative to the university. The concensus of opinion among Equity leaders was that the university was not as helpful as it might have been in solving the marketing problems. University authorities to the contrary are apt to charge these accusations were often made without a complete presentation of the facts.

Also for the passage of laws that will protect the public by placing officials who will authorize and permit such useless waste of peoples' money in institutions at Waupun or Mendota.¹⁰ Upon being informed the Wisconsin Alumni Association and The Japanese institution were responsible for the financial end of the affair, Walrod: "Good, glad, indeed to know that our own people are not responsible for such foolishness and surprised at Japan. We thought better of them.¹¹ A few weeks later when students preparing for the consular service petitioned the university authorities for courses in Chinese and Japanese, the Wisconsin Equity News advised, these were "special and purely personal professions from which the general public derived no benefit whatever," and demanded that they be refused.

In 1914, the State Board of Public Affairs, a product of the legislative session of the 1911, much to the pleasure of Equity, conducted a Survey of the University of Wisconsin, in which the College of Agriculture was one of the departments placed under investigation. The board reported that Wisconsin like other colleges was slow in penetrating the field of agricultural economics, but that subjects of such character were slow in finding a place in the curriculum of American agricultural colleges in general.¹²

¹⁰ Wisconsin Equity News, August 10, 1909.

¹¹ Ibid, August 25, 1909.

¹² Wisconsin State Board of Public Affairs, A Survey of the University of Wisconsin, 944-945. Much has been said relative to the ability and inability of the committee appointed to conduct this survey, nevertheless, despite these criticisms the report offers much interesting information.

According to this survey the university offered a course in agricultural economics in 1903. In 1911, Professor C. J. Galpin began a study of the social problems of rural life; and in 1913, Professor B. H. Hibbard offered the first course in cooperation and marketing. The board further reports that Wisconsin Experiment Station Bulletin No. 209, prepared by Professor H. C. Taylor and published in May 1911, dealing with "The Prices of Farm Products," and Bulletin No. 231 prepared by Professors Taylor, Schoenfield and Wehrwein on the "Marketing of Wisconsin Cheese," were the first studies on Wisconsin farm marketing problems to be made by the college authorities. The Wisconsin College of Agriculture was "more than forty years old before it began to teach the distribution and marketing of farm wealth in general, and to study Wisconsin market problems in particular." That such a predicament existed in the Wisconsin College of Agriculture is undisputed, yet the fact remains, the college was one of the very few in the nation offering courses in agricultural economics.

In dealing with problems complained of by farmer organizations, the board found that in many instances the college authorities had their own views on certain problems; while on the contrary, they were faced with the "definite" and "positive" demands of certain groups. The college staff which appeared "slow, judicial" and "conservative" was accused of being "unsympathetic or hostile"

¹² Wisconsin State Board of Public Affairs, Survey of the University of Wisconsin, 945.

to many of the farmer organization proposals, which consequently led to "an unfortunate breach between the college and the farmers." The investigating body found the college authorities in many cases "opposed" or "held aloof" from many farmer proposals because they "violated some social or economic law."¹³ The farmers were said to have been correct in many instances as to the wrongs complained of, "but also are apt to be crude, unwise, and ineffective in the proposed principles and methods of action." Continuing the board advised that "the college cannot be expected to head an agrarian revolution for distributive justice. If it were proper to do so, it is beyond reason to expect it. It is not recorded in history that fat men, lawyers and college professors ever headed a riot. Teachers are conservative by nature, with courage very much like that of Burn's field mouse."¹⁴ The college, however, "cannot be allied with farm organizations or devote itself to class propagandism; but it can put freely at the service of students, farmers, farm leaders and their organizations the knowledge that is needed for wise action."¹⁵

¹³ Ibid, 947. The distributive features of marketing did not stand on an equal footing with production in the majority of colleges. At Cornell, a course in cooperation was offered as late as 1914 and was to be followed the following year by a course in Markets and Prices. With the single exception of the Minnesota Agricultural College, the University of Wisconsin led the agricultural institutions of the country in the matter of marketing "home-raised farm products."

¹⁴ Ibid, 948.

¹⁵ Ibid, 948-949.

- part 2 -

One of the most interesting aspects of the society is the one connected with the political phase of its activities. The official policy of the organization was that, it was primarily an educational institution seeking to instruct the farmers in the benefits of cooperative action. Perhaps an expedient means of studying the society program is not by hurrying to the by-laws and the declaration of purpose; but rather by investigating the conduct of its official paper and the behavior of its officers.

The Wisconsin Equity News early commented the society should under no conditions dabble in politics, but that members as individuals, should not hesitate to express their political views and preferences. Garret Walrod then wrote: "we already have persons who have considered the three dollar membership fee merely as an investment against the time when they declare themselves for some office and ask for our support on the grounds of fraternal fellowship. Such men should be spotted and turned down." ¹⁶ Nevertheless, at approximately the same time and somewhat inconsistently, the Wisconsin Equity News paid specific attention to the farmers political indifference and on July 15, 1908 commented: "We have not only been letting political sharks skin us out of our crops, but we have been letting political

¹⁶ Wisconsin Equity News, August 1, 1908.

sharks skin us with a lot of suede ability. We want our man on the ticket, and if we cannot get our man on, for God's sake let us put up a man of our own and paddle our own little boat."¹⁷

The Wisconsin paper made an early debut in local and national politics, by asking for the downfall of our "millionaire Senate;" and maintained that such men as "Boss" Cannon, Congressman J. J. Jenkins of Wisconsin and the members of our senatorial plutocracy have made conditions, so that the average person has about as much voice in governmental affairs as the "Boers of South Africa."¹⁸ The political impotence of the farmers became a frequent topic of discussion, while the governmental reign of plutocracy was a constant source of discontent. In characteristic farmer attitude¹⁹ the Wisconsin Equity News wrote:

God help this the farmer's holy cause,
Against a giant trust;
An enemy who breaks the laws,
And growers treat unjust.

The society went after the political scalp of two Wisconsin men in particular: Congressman J. J. Jenkins and U. S. Senator Isaac Stephenson, both Republican candidates for re-election.

¹⁷ Equity News, April 21, 1920; Wisconsin Equity News, September 1, 1908. Equity leaders in personal interviews intimated the society had difficulty in harnessing the political utterances of the editors.

¹⁸ Wisconsin Equity News, September 1, 1908.

¹⁹ Ibid, June 15, 1908 quoting the News-Democrat, Georgetown, Ohio.

Jenkins, who crowded his campaign literature with incessant pride particularly over his appointment to the chairmanship of the House Judiciary committee, remarked: "Today the Judiciary committee is the custodian of more matters of public interest than was ever confided to the care of another committee in the history of the House."²⁰ Immediately thereafter, the biting pen of Garret Walrod replied: "Ponder over the word 'custodian.' The committee on Judiciary was known as Mr. Cannon's morgue, and Mr. Jenkins was the keeper of it."²¹ Jenkins was assailed as being "no good" for a "rural constituency;" and when on another occasion he remarked that if he were turned down at the primaries---Wisconsin would be removed from the "political map," Equity pinned on him the appellation of "muttonhead."²²

The millionaire and politically ambitious U. S. Senator Isaac Stephenson was another political aspirant riddled with the bitter scorn of Walrod. Stephenson was designated as a "good man to stay home and tend to clipping his coupons;" but upon winning the nomination the Wisconsin Equity News remarked that: "As between Millionaire Stephenson and Millionaire Cook and Millionaire Hatton we prefer the old man. God may not let him live long and possibly by the time he dies the people will be so sick of this Millionaire Senate business they will be ready to tack back to old conditions."²³

20 Wisconsin Equity News, August 1, 1908.

21 Ibid, August 1, 1908.

22 Ibid, August 15, 1908.

23 Ibid, September 15, 1908.

The political policy of the Wisconsin Equity News was expressed, when the state paper asked for the defeat of Kopp, a Republican candidate in third Congressional district, by stating: "It is not a question of party, it is a question of the man." The Wisconsin Equity News asked for the election of Irvine Lenroot²⁴ stating that "there is a principle in it that demands it." Favorable comment was also made in behalf of the congressional candidates of Atley Peterson and D. O. Mahoney, the latter who was to serve as president of the Wisconsin union for seven years and president of the national organization for three. Frequent supporting statements were, likewise, made in support of U. S. Senator Robert M. La Follette and William Jennings Bryan; but outside of these casual remarks little by way of political accomplishments were undertaken.²⁵

The political efforts of Equity were little appreciated until after the legislative session of 1909.²⁶ These attempts at legislative action were few and of little avail. In February 1909, a bill was introduced asking for an annual appropriation of \$5,000 to be granted Equity, for the purpose of spreading the teachings of cooperative marketing. Though the bill was never passed, the occasion marks an early attempt on the part of Equity for political recognition.²⁷ At the same session, another bill

²⁴ Ibid, October 1, 1908.

²⁵ Equity News, April 21, 1920.

²⁶ Wisconsin Equity News, March 15, 1909.

²⁷ Wisconsin State Journal, February 18, 1909. Wisconsin Assembly Journal 1907. 269, 487, 624, 649.

favorable to the society was introduced by Merlin Hull; which if passed would have made the going of centralized creamery companies into certain localities and overbidding the local companies, illegal.²⁸ The society also appeared before the Interstate Commerce, Commission and fought the proposed increased freight rate increases, charging the proposal was part and parcel of the centralized creamery companies plan to fasten their monopolistic grip on the cream trade. Equity, likewise, favored another measure contemplated by Merlin Hull, seeking the payment of a small fee for the incorporation of companies engaged in the purchasing and holding of agricultural products.²⁹

The first major legislative measure to occupy the wholehearted support of Equity, was an appropriation measure asking for additional funds for the completion and maintenance of the proposed state-owned bindery plant. This, likewise, came up during the 1909 session. The state-owned project besides manufacturing binder twine for the farmers at a lower price³⁰ was intended to operate on a self-supporting basis and net the state a small annual profit. The 1907 legislature by a vote of 51 to 2 in the Assembly and 22 to 6 in the Senate, appropriated \$125,000³¹ for the building of the plant, but the sum proved insufficient.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Wisconsin Equity News, March 15, 1909. Milwaukee Daily News, February 17, 1909. Hull contemplated a bill legalizing pools for agricultural products but no record of action appears to have been taken;

³⁰ Eleventh Biennial Report of the State Board of Control, Wisconsin, 1911-1912, 10; Ibid, 1913-1914, 16.

³¹ Wisconsin Equity News, July 25, 1909.

In the 1909 session, another bill calling for the additional sum was introduced. While the farmers of the state, mostly under the leadership of Equity, were making a mild campaign for the measures passage; the opposition had meanwhile found its greatest expression through the medium of the Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association of Milwaukee. Representatives of the Association were quoted as saying: "The legitimate demands of the state are already heavy, and bound to become even more burdensome, in view of the fact that the new state capitol, the new university buildings and other necessary improvements are in progress."³² The American Thresherman advised the state to build a new penitentiary and turn the convicts of Wisconsin loose to build new roads and thus "enhance the value of every farmer's land a thousand fold more than all the prison twine-mills in the world could ever do, and benefit every man, woman and child in the state."³³ The president of the Implement Dealers' Association advised the state to forget the binder-twine proposal and "Go into the shoe industry" and "make shoes at Waupun."³⁴ While eminent physicians wrote letters to legislators condemning the proposal as unhealthy, hundreds of letters flooded the legislative chamber the evening before the

³² Ibid, August 10, 1909.

³³ American Thresherman quoted in Wisconsin Equity News, September 10, 1909.

³⁴ Wisconsin Equity News, July 25, 1909.

measure was voted upon. Much to the disgust of Equity, the appropriation measure was defeated.³⁵

The defeat of the binder-twine bill was utilized as a means of fomenting political dissatisfaction among the farmers. The Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association was denounced as the "Third House." The Appleton Weekly Post assailed the Association because of its insistence that the farmers be kept between the "claws and jaws of that merciless cormorant---the binder twine trust."³⁶ The same publication characterized the trust as an "octopus having more tentacles than a shod has bones."³⁷ Equity leaders pointed out that while the legislators defeated the appropriation measure on the grounds of economy, they did not for a moment hesitate to increase their own salaries.³⁸ The Merrillian Leader commented that when indications were such, that "the university was to be shortchanged on their allowance for the next year, every two-by-four educator....was talking of the injustice of trying to save money by skimping the university, and all the university was organized into a lobby to get all they wanted." Continuing the Merrillian Leader said "still these educators wonder why it is the people in the rural districts did not have a more friendly feeling for the university."³⁹ The Wisconsin Equity News admitted the Merchants' and Manufacturers' were better

35 Wisconsin Equity News, June 10 and July 25, 1909.

36 Appleton Weekly Post quoted in Wisconsin Equity News, August 10,

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid., June 10, 1909.

39 Merrillian Leader quoted in Wisconsin Equity News, June 25, 1909.

organized than the farmers; Unafraid, a Mt. Vernon, Indiana publication, charged that the "legislators belong to the trust;" while the Edgerton Eagle predicted that the farmers "will have something to say later."⁴⁰

The defeat of the binder-twine measure decidedly increased the political complexion of the organization. The necessity of political agitation became an increasingly important topic of discussion, and with Roosevelt's dictum that "Farmers Must Organize" as their slogan, Equity leaders prepared for the coming election. A thorough analysis was made of the society's strength; and similarly, a chart showing the possible effects that organization had on state legislative measures was prepared. In summarizing the findings, society leaders concluded that the Assemblymen in and adjoining the organized Equity territory voted for the binder-twine appropriation, while those in and around the non-organized territory voted against it.⁴¹

At the state convention of 1909, considerable emphasis was placed upon the political education of Equity members. A resolu-

40 See the Wisconsin Equity News for the months of June, July, August and September 1909, for greater details on the binder-twine measure.

41 Wisconsin Equity News, June 10, 1909. The figures relative to the Equity investigation on the repeal of the binder-twine bill was as follows:

Ayes----	15 votes in organized territory.
	21 votes in unorganized territory.
	12 votes in Milwaukee.
	<u>48</u> votes total.
Noes----	31 votes in organized territory.
	9 votes in unorganized territory.
	3 votes in Milwaukee.
	<u>43</u> votes total.

tion calling for an extensive educational campaign, asked that every local union be "required" to discuss subjects like the Direct Election of U. S. Senators, the Parcel Post System, Postal Savings, Woman Suffrage, Proportional Representation, the Initiative, Referendum and Recall, Guarantee of Bank Deposits, the Tariff, Currency Problems, Farmers' Institutes and the marketing of farm products.⁴² Equity members were asked to array their local merchants against the Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association of Milwaukee and to boycott anyone that continued dealing with it. Attention was also called to the farmers lack of representation at the hearings of the binder-twine bill; and re-emphasized the fact, that while the farmers were neglecting their duties, the chamber rooms⁴³ were filled with the "hired emissaries of the trust."

Despite the apparent favor of the state union for political action, this policy was not endorsed by all. Among the leading opponents to the Equity trend for political action was National President C. O. Drayton, who recommended that the society operate on a purely non-partisan basis and refrain from partaking in political discussions in the meetings.⁴⁴ To the contrary M. Wes. Tubbs, the new editor of the Wisconsin Equity News, declared the society had already commenced to wage war on those "whose sins have been found out" and a number had thus far been "elected to stay home."

⁴² Wisconsin Equity News, December 25, 1909.

⁴³ Ibid, December 25, 1909.

⁴⁴ Equity News, April 21 1920.

Editor Tubbs in commenting on the Wisconsin union "good man" policy wrote: "we have but two parties....honest people and the other kind" and appealed to all "honest people" to unite on the "minority candidate, be he Democrat, Republican, Socialist or Prohibitionist."⁴⁵

2

In the state elections of 1910, the Wisconsin union declared itself in favor of more stringent education laws, the completion of the binder-twine plant, for the conservation of our natural resources, the enactment of employers liability and industrial insurance, the establishment of a state commission to study economic conditions such as living costs, the spread in prices paid the farmers and the consumers etc., the encouragement of cooperative buying and selling, an extension of the scope and authority of the Dairy and Food Commission, an improvement in the registration, primary and general election laws, the passage of a corrupt practices act and Initiative, Referendum and Recall laws, and the sale of the remnants of the public lands to actual settlers on long term contracts.⁴⁶

In the course of the 1910 state campaign, the progressive Republican platform was endorsed in full; and the gubernatorial

⁴⁵ Wisconsin Equity News, September 25, 1910.

⁴⁶ Ibid, September 25, 1910.

candidacy of Francis E. Mc Govern was, likewise, granted full support. Long excerpts from the speeches of Senator La Follette were published in the Wisconsin Equity News, and as expected, the fight to complete the binder-twine plant was carried with full force. The names of all legislators favoring and opposing the bill during the 1909 session were published; and especially bitter opposition was waged against the candidacy of Levi Bancroft, the conservative Republican candidate for attorney-general. The opposition to Bancroft arose primarily because of his activities as speaker of the Assembly in 1909, when he was accused with telling the legislators "Don't be frightened at the farmers noise in demanding this legislation....and that they will defeat you at the next election if you don't vote for these bills. You can easily explain to them why it is a poor policy for the state to embark on this enterprise."⁴⁷

The candidacy of Bancroft proved amusing to the Equity sympathizers largely because of the happening of an unusual incident. In the 1910 campaign, a close factional fight was being waged by the Republican stalwarts and the progressives. After the printing of the primary ballots, Frank T. Tucker, the progressive candidate for attorney-general, came to his death by drowning. Supporters of Tucker, however, set letters and telegrams to all prominent progressives asking them for his nomination, despite his death;

⁴⁷ Wisconsin Equity News, June 10, 1909.

⁴⁸ Ibid, June 10, 1909.

this being done with the view, that if Tucker were nominated, the Republican state central committee dominated by the progressives, would meet and appoint his successor.⁴⁹ In the primaries the counting of the ballots showed Tucker winning the nomination with 63,000 votes, Bancroft running second with 58,000 and Gunderson third with 47,000.⁵⁰

As a result of the vote, Bancroft decided to seek assistance in the law, and filed suit to have his name placed on the ballot as the legitimate Republican candidate for attorney-general. A number of state papers had, meanwhile, commended a short wave of ridicule over the incident. The Milwaukee Journal remarked the "nomination of a dead man for an important state office is said to be without precedent in the political history of the country. Friends of Mr. Bancroft are greatly chagrined over his defeat in this manner."⁵¹ The Cassville Record, a small rural publication jokingly commented: "Being defeated so decisively by a dead man what may he expect when he runs up against a good live one. Politically he is just as dead as the man who beat him."⁵² One author commented that Wisconsin nominated a "dead progressive above a living rival;"⁵³ while the Equity convention that year passed a resolution of "protest against the candidacy of Levi H.

49 Bancroft vs Frear, Wisconsin Reports 144:79.

50 Ibid, 144:82.

51 Milwaukee Journal quoted in Wisconsin Equity News, September 10, 1910.

52 Cassville Record quoted in Wisconsin Equity News, October 25, 1910.

53 A. O. Barton, La Follette's Winning of Wisconsin, 56.

Bancroft" and called upon the members "to use every honorable method and means to defeat him."⁵⁴

The Wisconsin Supreme Court, meanwhile, was called upon to decide the issue raised by Bancroft; and in a four to three decision held that "a dead man is not a person" and that "votes which are in form cast for a deceased person by voters who know of the fact of his decease cannot be considered as votes for or against any person, but must be regarded as so much blank paper."⁵⁵ The Wisconsin Equity News thoroughly disgusted with the court decision remarked: "In plain English that means rule by one man, law by injunction, the will of the people ignored and the Secretary of the State enjoined from carrying out the will of the people and forced by a single vote to place on the official ballot a man so unpopular as to be defeated at the primary elections by a dead man."⁵⁶

In the summer of 1910, M. Wes. Tubbs, the Equity editor and secretary of the Wisconsin union made a public speech in which he specifically mentioned the names of the legislative candidates and advised the farmers how to vote. The slogan used was "Let the farmers elect farmers to represent them."⁵⁷ Shortly after, the Wisconsin Equity News sent out questionnaires to the various candidates asking them their positions on certain measures per-

⁵⁴ Wisconsin Equity News, October 25, 1910.

⁵⁵ Ibid, October 25, 1910; Wisconsin Reports, 144: 79-80.

⁵⁶ Wisconsin Equity News, October 25, 1910.

⁵⁷ Equity News, April 21, 1920.

taining to agriculture. This was to be used as a guide for Equity farmers in the elections. On October 25, the Equity publication carried a full list of the candidates for political office with special notations attached to those favorable to the farming interests.⁵⁸

In the elections that year, the binder-twine plank was incorporated into the platform of the Republican party, while the Democrats ignored it completely.⁵⁹ The elections witnessed a wholesale sweeping into office of progressive candidates, among them being 14 Equity members.⁶⁰ In the course of the 1911 legislative session Equity members were editorially advised that: "Our representatives have a right to be influenced somewhat by the demands of their constituents."⁶¹ M. Wes. Tubbs in a communication to the legislature wrote: "It is time to make the man the factor in Wisconsin instead of the Almighty Dollar." He re-asserted the society's demand for a cooperative investigation, "and the return to our statute books fundamental cooperative laws so that cooperative enterprises may be organized on the basis of one man one vote!"⁶²

The legislative session of 1911 has been recorded as one of the most remarkable in the history of the state. "Probably never before in the history of the state was as powerful a legislature convened in Madison as in 1911" writes M. M. Quaife, and in

⁵⁸ Wisconsin Equity News, October 25, 1910.

⁵⁹ Wisconsin Equity News, April 21, 1920.

⁶⁰ Proceedings of the 19th Annual Convention of the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor, 1911, 37.

⁶¹ Wisconsin Equity News, January 10, 1911.

⁶² Ibid, January 10, 1911.

"progressive legislation its record exceeds any other single legislature in the history of Wisconsin." ⁶³ Governor Francis E. Mc Govern, considered by Equity leaders as one of the staunchest political supporters of the organization advised the Wisconsin legislature that: "A thorough study of cooperative methods should be made and expert assistance should be given to associations, towns and cities concerning the best methods of organization of markets." The governor also asked for the establishment of a ⁶⁴ commission to give "scientific direction and assistance."

Among the enactments of the 1911 legislative sessions were appropriations of \$50,000 for the completion of the binder-twine plant and \$400,000 to be placed in a revolving fund for its operation; the passage of a cooperative marketing law and the creation of a State Board of Public Affairs---all three proposals being strongly ~~urged~~ ^{urged} and worked for by the society. ⁶⁵ E. G. Nourse in his Legal Status of Agricultural Cooperation, and the Wisconsin State Board of Public Affairs, credit the society of Equity and the Right Relationship League for the passage of the cooperative ⁶⁶ marketing law.

⁶³ M. M. Quaife, Wisconsin: Its History and Its People, II:36.

⁶⁴ Wisconsin Journal of the Assembly, 1911, 56.

⁶⁵ Wisconsin Equity News, June 25, 1911; Eleventh Biennial Report of the State Board of Control, 10; Marketing and Farm Credits, 1915, 39-40; E. G. Nourse, Legal Status of Agricultural Cooperation, 46.

⁶⁶ Nourse states that this law was copied "verbatim, or with slight changes in Michigan, Minnesota, South Dakota, New York, Kansas, Washington, and Massachusetts in 1913; Virginia in 1914; Iowa, Wyoming, North Carolina, South Carolina and Oregon in 1915; Rhode Island in 1916; Kentucky in 1918 and Oklahoma in 1919."

- Among the more important measures passed by the Wisconsin legislature were the following: laws providing for the establishment of an industrial commission, for the payment of workmens compensation, state life insurance, an income tax law and provisions restricting the working days of women and children.⁶⁷

Aside of enacting into law measures favorable to the farmers, two Equity members were appointed to important state commission posts: Ira M. J. Chryst, the president of the state and national unions and George F. Comings, were both appointed members of the Wisconsin State Board of Agriculture, with Chryst also serving as vice-president of the board.⁶⁸ Chryst was also appointed to the Livestock Sanitary Board.⁶⁹ Highly gratified over the accomplishments of the 1911 session, the Wisconsin Equity News commented the legislature fulfilled "its platform pledge to the farmers."⁷⁰ In 1912, the executive board of the Wisconsin union announced that during the past two years, the society received more political recognition than ever before.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Quaife, Wisconsin: Its History and Its People, II:36-37.

⁶⁸ Wisconsin Blue Book, 1913, 531.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 536.

⁷⁰ Wisconsin Equity News, June 25, 1911.

⁷¹ Ibid, October 25, 1912.

CHAPTER FIVE

In the political field, we have seen that Equity played an important role in securing legislation for the operation of a state-owned binder-twine plant, for the enactment of a cooperative marketing law and the establishment of a State Board of Public Affairs. The society stressed the need for political action by farmers; and in recognition of rising political influence, government authorities appointed Equity members to important state commissions.

The complexion of Equity, however, soon changed from politics to the organization of business associations. In theory, the prime purpose of the society was to improve the marketing conditions of agricultural commodities. Since the society was incorporated as an educational organization, it could not officially operate business organizations; nor could it assume financial responsibility for the associations sponsored.¹ Nevertheless, Equity organized or helped organize, local associations that remained independent; whereas, others in no way identified with the society assumed the title Equity.²

¹ University of Wisconsin Experiment Station, Bulletin 282,6.
The society was incorporated as non-profit, non-stock company.

² After organizing a local association, the society encouraged the new unit to obtain membership in Equity. This was the only means of estimating the number of associations the society sponsored, though it is by no means accurate.

In discussing the cooperative phase, we are confronted with an extremely difficult task. On the one hand, accurate information is impossible to obtain; whereas, on the other, the launching of several ill-advised and somewhat dishonest business enterprises has obscured the accomplishments of the society. The Wisconsin State Board of Public Affairs in its Report Upon Cooperation and Marketing, however, commented: the society "directly or indirectly ... is responsible for much of the cooperative spirit and activity in Wisconsin, and warehouse, elevators, creameries, stores and shipping and buying associations of farmers are the result of its propoganda."³

Aside of the accomplishments of the society, credit for the progress of cooperation in Wisconsin must, likewise, be granted to men like Henry Krumery and Charles McCarthy, who as individuals apart from their affiliations with Equity, did much for cooperation. Sir Horace Plunkett, the famed Irish cooperator, who frequently visited Wisconsin and addressed college groups, legislative bodies and Equity conventions, also gave encouragement to the movement; so did the Wisconsin State Board of Public Affairs. Beginning in 1913, the College of Agriculture, likewise, rendered the cooperative movement much assistance.⁴

³ Wisconsin State Board of Public Affairs, Report Upon Cooperation and Marketing, I:31.

⁴ Review of Reviews, 47:467-470.

According to a Wisconsin union report in January 1913, there were 46 warehouses, elevators, etc. etc., and 38 shipping associations affiliated with Equity. During 1912, it was estimated, that a business of approximately 4 million dollars was transacted, Pierce county alone transacting about 1.6 million dollars worth.⁵

3

Equity appears to have played an important role in the organization activities of the Sheboygan County Cheese Producers Federation. The man, however, mostly responsible for the growth of the federation was Henry Krumery, a Plymouth farmer. In the summers of 1911 and 1912, the Wisconsin cheese market was in an alarming condition, especially in the summer of 1912 when cheese prices took an "unwarranted drop of three cents per pound."⁶ In view of the growing unrest, Krumery who was active in Progressive politics and later was to be prominent in the affairs of Equity, assumed leadership.⁷

Krumery wrote articles and delivered inspiring speeches stressing the need for organization. According to D. O. Mahoney, president of the state Equity society, Krumery experienced difficulty in getting the farmers organized. Mahoney asserted, that he met Krumery one day after finishing an Equity lecture, whereupon Krumery confided his difficulties in mobilizing the farmers

⁵ Constitution and By-Laws of the Wisconsin Union of the American Society of Equity, 14 (adopted by the Marshfield convention on November 21, 1912).

⁶ Wisconsin Department of Markets, Bulletin VI, No. 5, 6.

⁷ Equity News, September 1, 1915.

for action. Mahoney referred him to the society of Equity and the work it was doing in the state, and after some deliberation Mahoney suggested that if Krumery obtained the support of some of the influential farmers that Equity would send in its best organizers to organize the county.⁸

That an Equity "campaign of education" was conducted prior to the organization of the federation is certain, for in 1911, there were only three Equity locals in Sheboygan county, while in 1912, there were 13.⁹ On June 22, 1912, Krumery called a meeting at the fairgrounds of Plymouth. The needs of organization were discussed and on February 7, 1913, another meeting was called, that was attended by 1500 farmers. The farmers were addressed by John Lee Coulter of the Agricultural Division of the United States Census, by Professors Hibbard and Taylor of the University of Wisconsin, by Charles Lyman of the American Society of Equity and representatives of the State Board of Public Affairs.¹⁰

Having decided upon the necessity of organization, the College of Agriculture studied the various stages that cheese took in going from the producer to the consumer. Meanwhile, the State Board of Public Affairs formulated more favorable marketing plans. Equity, likewise, conducted campaigns for membership; it being alleged that approximately 400 or 500 members were obtained in the county. The society is also accredited with sub-

⁸ Ibid, January 1, 1929.

⁹ Ibid, December 1, 1915.

¹⁰ Henry Krumery, A Blow at the Cheese Trust, 8 (pamphlet); Plymouth Reporter, February 15, 1913; Review of Reviews, 47:470.

scribing \$30,000 to erect a cheese warehouse.

The federation once established received the support of Equity, the Farm Bureau, the Grange, the county agents and the Farmers' Institutes. The Wisconsin Department of Markets writes: "In the early days of the federation the representatives of Equity were of great assistance to the leaders and have never since been found wanting when their aid and counsel was sought."¹²

4

Perhaps the most noteworthy achievement of Equity was in the organization of cooperative livestock associations. The earliest associations traceable to the society were in Pottsville, Iowa in 1904, and Durand, Wisconsin in 1906. In 1908, an independent association was organized at Litchfield, Minnesota; but during the same year Equity sponsored a rival association. Thereafter, Equity associations made their appearances in Iowa, Minnesota¹³ and Wisconsin. The period from 1904 to 1912 marked the beginning

¹¹ Equity News, January 1, 1929.

¹² Wisconsin Division of Markets, Bulletin VI, No 5, 13. The name of the Sheboygan Cheese Producers Federation was changed two or three times after the activities of the organization became all-embracing. At the present it is known as the Wisconsin Cheese Producers Federation. According to F. G. Swoboda who was manager of the federation, Equity campaigns were of great assistance in organizing branches in Wausau, Shawano, and Stanley. See Equity News, January 1, 1929. On April 21, 1923, the Wisconsin Agriculturalist commented that Equity and the county agent were working to establish a federation in the Marshfield area.

¹³ Nourse and Knapp, 12-13; H. Steen, Cooperative Marketing, 93.

of the modern phase of livestock associations; the years from 1912 to 1916 being the most notable in Wisconsin.¹⁴

The principle^{al} cause for the growth of the cooperative association was the decline of competition that made for unsatisfactory prices.¹⁵ In Wisconsin, according to Professors Hibbard and Hobson the associations commenced business with approximately 30 members; while in well-organized areas like Pierce county, association membership reached 300 and 400. In April 1917, the Ellsworth Herald claimed the Ellsworth Equity Cooperative Association with 520 members was the largest in the state.¹⁶

Had the activities of Equity stopped with the organization of cooperative associations, the history of the society might not have been so scandalous. But in Equity, as well as other organizations, there were a number of officials and outsiders that were anxious to exploit the accomplishments of the society. This small coterie maintained the local cooperative association was not enough, and that livestock difficulties would not cease unless the farmers organized to cooperatively slaughter and pack their meat. Such a feeling commenced early in the affairs of the society, and reached a peak at the convention of 1913.

The state Equity convention was deliberately called to convene in La Crosse in 1913 to promote the cooperative packing

¹⁴ Nourse and Knapp, 15-16; C. C. Sherlock, The Modern Farm Cooperative, 13-14.

¹⁵ University of Wisconsin Experiment Station, Bulletin 282, 17.

¹⁶ Ellsworth Herald quoted in Equity News, May 1, 1917.

plant idea. An Equity committee had been appointed to investigate a La Crosse concern to report its findings and make its recommendations to the convention. The members of the committee were totally unversed in the intricacies of meat packing; nevertheless, they reported the plant was in favorable condition, and recommended that the society endorse the establishment of a cooperative meat packing company.¹⁷

Arguments against the "unscrupulous" meat packers were not difficult to find. A number of the "leading citizens" of La Crosse appeared on the convention program, among them being the manager of the defunct plant the society was about to recommend purchasing. The La Crosse Tribune heralded him as an "Expert Packer," despite the fact he was unsuccessful in managing the plant he had a financial interest in. This alleged "expert" denounced the "Beef Barons" and told the farmers: "The biggest question before the American people is meat." Continuing, the "expert" remarked: "I have been a member of this society only five or six months. Before that I knew very little of it because I was not brought in touch with it.¹⁸ Numerous other "alleged" advocates of cooperation, people to be sure who were in no sense interested in the advance of cooperative enterprises, took a sudden and pronounced interest in cooperative meat. As a result

¹⁷ Wisconsin Equity News, December 25, 1913; Marketing and Farm Credits 1916, 289.

¹⁸ La Crosse Tribune, December 4, 1913.

of these demonstration, the farmers were thrown into a frenzy over the swindling meat packers; and the convention recommended that steps be taken to purchase the plant and operate it on a cooperative basis.¹⁹

On January 22, 1914, the La Crosse Tribune carried a highly denunciatory attack against the meat packers; and spoke with utmost confidence on the prospects of cooperative meat. The paper informed the readers that the producers and consumers would be the continual losers unless the farmers embarked on such a proposal.²⁰ The chairman of the Equity packing plant committee advised the members: "Don't continue building up mammoth packing plants for the beef trust but help build you own..."²¹ On April 24, members of the American Society of Equity helped file the articles of incorporation for the Farmers' Cooperative Packing Plant Company of La Crosse, reputed to be the first plant of its kind in the United States.²²

The plant the committee recommended purchasing was practically worthless save for a few machines and some railroad frontage. The building was hopelessly out of date and the walls and timbers were virtually in a state of deterioration. A large La Crosse bank held a \$55,000 note on the company; which in all probabilities

¹⁹ Marketing and Farm Credits 1916, 289-291.

²⁰ La Crosse Tribune quoted in Equity News, February 10, 1914.

²¹ Equity News, February 25, 1914.

²² Ibid, May 15, 1914.

accounts for the sudden interest many of the town citizens took²³ in establishing the cooperative plant. Despite these conditions, a contract was entered into selling the plant to the farmers for \$123,000.

To expedite the sale of stock the services of a "professional promoter" were obtained. The terms offered him are unknown; but in all probabilities commissions ranging from 20 to 25 % were paid him for the sale of stock. To give impetus to stock sales the names of "leading town citizens" were placed at the head of the subscription list. Upon seeing the names of such distinguished people, the farmers and others purchased little suspecting what²⁴ was happening.

On the board of directors were placed: the president of the Equity society, the manager and part owner of the defunct plant, and the stock promoter. Of the \$265,000 collected from stock sales, \$123,000 was paid the owners of the plant who in turn paid the creditors (the La Crosse bank and the preferred stock holders); \$38,000 were paid in commissions to the promoter; and \$11,000 to place the plant in operation. Within a year, the management permitted 288,000 pounds of meat to spoil causing a²⁵ loss of \$72,000.

²³ Rumors were that it probably would have been impossible for the bank to collect the \$55,000 outstanding had not something been done about the defunct condition of the concern.

²⁴ Ibid, 292-293.

²⁵ Ibid, 292-293.

Needless to say, a company operating under such unhealthy financial conditions and incompetent management was bound to fail. Aside of these conditions, the company was forced to handle live-stock supplies in periods of fluctuating prices and cattle epidemics. Members in hope of evading such conditions unloaded their stock on the plant; and the plant according to the arrangement²⁶ was bound to accept the cattle. As a result, some 2,000 stockholders residing in Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin were victimized.²⁷ The farmers upon learning the facts became rebellious; but the manager and farmer part owner had in the meantime absconded to some western state.²⁸

Unhappily this group of promoters did not stop in Wisconsin. In the fall of 1914, officials of the national union were reported in conference with St. Paul business interests in regard to a contemplated packing plant to be located in the city.²⁹ On November 13, 1915, the St. Paul Dispatch carried an item stating that four farmers had instituted suits to recover money paid for stock. The farmers claimed the packing company was paying the promoters 25 instead of 15% in commissions; and the company rather than making arrangements to handle the farmers livestock was instead

²⁶ University of Wisconsin Experiment Station, Bulletin 282, 20.

²⁷ Marketing and Farm Credits 1916, 294.

²⁸ Ibid, 293. The stockholders of the La Crosse plant filed suit against the officers of the old company charging the plant was sold to them at an inflated value; but it is doubtful if any substantial recovery was made. See Equity News, July 7, 1920.

²⁹ Organized Farmer, January 25, 1915.

using the money for promotional purposes.

The cooperative packing plant phase was the most tragic episode in the history of the society. The Equity News voiced disapproval of the Madison and New Richmond plants; and, likewise, against the use of the name Equity without the consent of the organization.³¹ Unhappily, Equity like other organizations had within its ranks members that were insincere in motive and dishonest in principle. These men were quite willing to exploit the accomplishments of the society to their own enrichment; and as a result of their activities, not only was Equity severly criticized; but, likewise, the cooperative movement in general was dealt a severe blow.

4

Shortly following the collapse of the La Crosse plant, another business enterprise which was the product of one of the officers of the Wisconsin union came into existence. According to him--- the local cooperative associations were a tremendous success, and the time had come for them to organize and do a cooperative business in a "big way."³² The immediate object was to establish a "cooperative business organization modeled after the cooperative trading movements of European countries..." which, in substance,

³⁰ St. Paul Dispatch quoted in Equity News, November 15, 1915.

³¹ Equity News, May 1, 1915.

³² Industrial Cooperative Union, 2-4 (pamphlet).

would compare with the Cooperative Wholesale Society of England. The ultimate end was to erect a cooperative institution whereby the farmers and workers could produce, manufacture and sell their own products in factories and stores owned by themselves.³²

The sponsor of this idea solicited the support of the Wisconsin Federation of Labor. On a number of occasions he appeared before the labor body and stressed the need of closer cooperation between farmers and laborers; and maintained that such an agency would save the "enormous wastes incident to advertising, commercial travelers, boards of trade, etc...."³³ In 1915, the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor voted that each local union give the idea a thorough hearing; outside of that little else was accomplished.³⁴

Subsequently, the Industrial Cooperative Union was incorporated with a capital stock of \$500,000 divided into 10,000 shares selling at \$50 per share. The first \$100,000 sold at \$52.50 per share, \$2.50 being set aside for the general expense fund. Stock commissions amounted to 15% leaving the remaining 85% for working capital.³⁵ "It is impossible to tell in advance just what the profits would be," said the founder, "but that they will be large enough cannot be doubted by anyone who knows conditions

³² Equity News, October 15, 1915; Ibid, July 22, 1915; Proceedings of the Twenty-Third Annual Convention of the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor, 92-93.

³³ Equity News, October 15, 1915.

³⁴ Ibid, August 15, 1915.

³⁵ Industrial Cooperative Union, 5.

and is familiar with the wide margin of profit what the producer gets and what the consumer pays or, the difference between the manufacturing cost of any article and the retail price that is charged for the same article or, the profits now being made by similar business enterprises---all of which seem to accumulate fortunes running into the hundreds of thousands of dollars in a few years."³⁶

In December 1917, the Industrial Cooperative Union had over 3,000 shareholders, with more than \$200,000 subscribed and approximately \$120,000 paid in. The union operated a cold storage plant and four grocery stores in Milwaukee, a farmers warehouse at Grand Marsh, a complete bindery plant in Madison, and a cold storage cheese warehouse and produce market in Monroe.³⁷

It is interesting to note that while the Industrial Cooperative Union was in operation, the American Cooperative operated by leaders in the national union was in existence. The Wisconsin and national unions were not on the friendliest of terms but both these organizations, nevertheless, sought the patronage of Equity membership. These two organizations well display the ambitions of two Equity leaders in particular; likewise, the

³⁶ Ibid, 7.

³⁷ Organized Farmer, April 19, 1917. It should be borne in mind this organization received very little support from the Wisconsin union. The sponsor of this idea was consistently reprimanded for utilizing the Equity News while serving in his official capacity to promulgate this idea, by the officers of the state society.

personal jealousies and animosities among the various leaders.

The Industrial Cooperative Union, like its rival the American Cooperative Association, was a stock promotional scheme. Unhealthy financial conditions, incompetent management and internal dissension placed the union on an early deathbed. Many unfavorable comments relative to the integrity of the officers were circulated; and according to one account, enemies of the organization purchased stock and began to bore from within. An injunction was obtained preventing the further sale of stock; and little by little members began to withhold their patronage. Though there is something to this version;³⁹ the generally acknowledged causes of failure were in all probabilities the underlying factors for the collapse of the organization.

5

The American Cooperative Association came into being as a result of the activities of the national convention of 1911. Despite the discouraging conditions of the parent organization, there nevertheless appeared a possibility that the national union would regain strength. Anticipating the forthcoming of such conditions, a business department was organized; however, cognizant of the fact that conditions did not warrant the immediate operation of a business agency, the charter of the American

³⁸ Interview.

³⁹ Ibid.

Cooperative Association was laid aside for future reference.

At the national convention held in St. Paul in 1914, the national organization appeared on the way to a new life. Numerous resolutions were passed among them one calling for the establishment of an official paper. Shortly thereafter the Organized Farmer was brought into existence. With the outbreak of war, business conditions appeared encouraging; and from evidence gathered the national union appeared to be operating a business agency.⁴¹

Early in 1915, a meeting called for St. Paul; and was attended by members of the national board, the officers of the North Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin unions. There the Wisconsin delegation accused the national body of violating the charter of the American Society of Equity---charging that Equity was incorporated as an educational organization and not as a business institution. Admitting the correctness of the allegation, the officers of the national union promised to remedy the situation; and in consequence, the charter of the American Cooperative Association was brought into use.⁴²

The American Cooperative Association commenced business operations in Wausau in February 1915; but later moved its headquarters to Milwaukee.⁴³

40 Organized Farmer, December 27, 1917.

41 Ibid, December 27, 1917. This meeting was convened in St. Paul in commemoration of the removal of the Equity Cooperative Exchange from Minneapolis to St. Paul.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid, November 13, 1919.

The organization was divided into three districts---a Southern district with offices at Owensboro, Kentucky; a Western district with offices at Crawford, Nebraska; and a Northern district with offices in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The association maintained a produce department in Chicago that sold potatoes, eggs, and poultry; a coal and traffic department likewise, located in Chicago that made coal purchases, supervised the field work and made direct factory shipments; a lumber department in Everett, Washington; and a wholesale grocery and farm machinery department located in Milwaukee. Besides supplying the branch stores of the association with supplies, other stores not affiliated with the organization were, likewise, furnished with goods.

As indicated the organization handled farm products and supplies. The association did not make an outright purchase of the farmers products; but, rather marketed their goods at available prices minus a deduction for handling. Farm supplies were purchased and sold to the members and others. All purchasing and marketing transactions were made through the central offices or the special departments. New York apples were marketed; and there were numerous commodities such as Equity sugar, soap, cigars, whiskey, oil, flour, etc., sold to all purchasers.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid. Reports of the Proceedings of the First Cooperative Association, 181. Springfield, Illinois. In the Southern district association stores were located in Owensboro, Reed, McQuady, Fordsville, Whitesville, Island, Livermore, Hartford, Calhoun and Henderson, Kentucky; in Boonesville, Huntingburg, Dale and Richland, Indiana. In the Western district stores were located in Crawford and Marshland, Nebraska; in Edgemont,

With the European War sending food prices skyrocketing to new heights, the American Cooperative Association displayed an increasing amount of business. Friction, however, was to sever the association and the American Society of Equity. J. Weller Long, national secretary of the society informed readers of the Organized Farmer: "If you are for the American Society of Equity, now is the time to prove it. We repeat 'You cannot serve two masters.' You are either for the American Society of Equity or against it. And no man should be elected to any office whose loyalty is divided."⁴⁶

According to a contractual agreement---the Organized Farmer and the American Cooperative Association were respectively the official paper and the business agency of the national union. This arrangement, however, gave the American Society of Equity no voice whatever in the conduct of the affairs of the business organization. Accordingly, Equity leaders insisted that since the American Cooperative Association used the society for business

45 (cont). South Dakota; and in Van Tassel and Torrington, Wyoming. In the Northern district there were stores in Ridgeway, Decorah and Calmar, Iowa. In this district the association stores were most numerous. They were located in Milwaukee, Arpin, Almond, Arnott, Bancroft, Baraboo, Berlin, Black River Falls, Birnamwood, Butternut, Cable, Catawba, Crandon, Custer, Cumberland, Dundas, Granton, Hancock, Junction City, Loyal, Lone Rock, Mosinee, Minoqua, Nekoosa, North Crandon, Ogena, Plover, Phillips, Park Falls, Prentice, Plainfield, Rudolph, Reedsville, Red Granite, Rhineland, Richland Center, Rusholt, Withee, Viola and Vesper.

46 Organized Farmer, February 5, 1920.

purposes; the association should turn over a portion of the profits for propoganda purposes. This issue, in the main, caused the rift between the two units.⁴⁷

As time elapsed, the bitterness between the organizations increased; the national union in the meantime having moved to Madison, and the American Cooperative Association to Milwaukee. The National Equity News advised members not to purchase stock in the American Cooperative Association for the local units had no voice in the management of their affairs.⁴⁸ The paper also lamented the fact that the national organization had to go through the difficulty of building a new business agency simply because of the "rule or ruin" policy of one man; and contrasted the association to the "ungrateful child" that tricked the parent to sign away the household deed and then ejected him from the house.⁴⁹

As time progressed other accusations began to pour forth. The national union remarked the American Cooperative Association was incorporated under the cooperative law of Wisconsin; but that in 1917, the law was ammended specifying that no cooperative association could enter into a contract permitting the payment of more than 5% in commissions for the sale of stock. Before the passage of the amendment, the association had contracted for the

⁴⁷ Interview.

⁴⁸ National Equity News, May 30, 1918.

⁴⁹ Ibid, May 30, 1918.

sale of stock at 15% commissions; and the contract was binding until 1918. This, plus other items approximating 20% according to the National Equity News, aggregated in a total of 35% being paid in commissions.⁵⁰

The extent to which these accusations were true is difficult to determine; nevertheless, there appears to be some truth to them. With the passage of the amendment stating that a cooperative association could not pay more than 5% for promotional purposes, the Organized Farmer remarked: this amendment "we believe, is decidedly a bad one, as it will prevent the development of any cooperative institution of any size unless of course men can be found who are willing to work for nothing, drink water and eat crackers to live."⁵¹ Strangely enough, no accusations pertaining to commission payments were made prior to the rift between the two factions.

In August 1919, the Organized Farmer announced suit had been filed against the secretary of the national union for the issuance of an untrue statement relative to the financial condition of the American Cooperative Association.⁵² Meanwhile, rumors relative to the conditions of the association circulated with increasing effect; until finally the Organized Farmer began offering rewards for the source of such statements.⁵³ With the

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Organized Farmer, August 2, 1917.

⁵² National Equity News, August 28, 1919.

⁵³ Organized Farmer, January 29, 1920.

^{ion}ejection of J. Weller Long from the post of national secretary and the coming of the Tittmore forces to power in the national union; the relations between the warring bodies once more assumed harmonious proportions. As evidence of the re-occurring friendship, an announcement was made in January 1920 that the potato departments of the two organizations would be united for the remainder of the year.

Despite the attempts of the association officials to conceal the financial status of the organization, conditions came to a headway; and in the fall of 1920, the management applied to the courts for an operating receivership. The lack of sufficient working capital was the principle^{al} cause for this condition; which, in effect, was caused largely by the high commission charges paid for organization and other purposes. The management, likewise, encountered heavy obligations during the period of high prices; consequently, with the decline in prices the association was incapable of meeting these obligations. The tightening up of the credit resources aggravated the unsound financial conditions under which the organization operated.

54 Tittmore and Long were bitter enemies of one another and the influence of the former resulted in ejecting the latter from secretarys position.
 55 National Equity News, January 1, 1920.
 56 Organized Farmer, May 6 and October 15, 1920.
 57 The following figures are the only ones available relative to the business and financial relations of the American Cooperative Association. See Organized Farmer, November 13, 1919.

Growth of sales		Capital
1915--\$	197,000	\$ 4,180.00
1916--\$	391,000	\$ 11,000.00
1917--\$	1,475,000	\$171,000.00
1918--\$	3,627,000	\$600,000.00
1919--\$	4,862,000	\$972,000.00

The assets of the organization were placed at \$1,200,000 and the liabilities at \$400,000. Some 15,000 stockholders scattered over eight states had interest in the association at the time. Needless to say the association failed to negotiate a loan; the Organized Farmer changed from a weekly to a bi-monthly sheet; and soon announcements were made that the property of the association was for sale, first to members and then to outsiders. 58

This in short marked the close of another chapter of promotional activity on the part of people who were not all interested in advancing the cooperative movement; and whose activities multiplied the prejudices against the cooperative idea.

6

The Wisconsin union operated a business department, while the Industrial Cooperative Union and the American Cooperative Association were functioning, but it is doubtful whether it transacted much business. The two rival associations sought the patronage of Equity members and even went to the extent of claiming they were the authorized agents of the society. In September 1917, H. E. Holmes, the manager of the business department of the Wisconsin union warned the members: "There have been and still are, several concerns operating in Wisconsin that claim to be authorized business agents or branches of the American Society of Equity. Usually they are operating as cooperative buying and

58 Ibid, May 6, 1920, October 15, 1920; Equity News, November 3, 1920. Milwaukee Sentinel, October 20, 1920.

selling concerns and usually they want you to buy stock representing that wonderful profits or savings can be made by doing business with them. Quite a number of our Equity members have been induced to purchase stock in these concerns, believing they are really connected with or were part of the American Society of Equity. We want to advise you that the Wisconsin state union of the American Society of Equity is not connected with or back of any stock selling proposition and has absolutely nothing to do with them and is in no way responsible for them."⁵⁹

In November 1917, the Equity News announced that an Equity Home Market had been established in Gimbel Brothers Department Store of Milwaukee.⁶⁰ This agency was developed in hopes of enabling the farmers to sell their produce direct to the consumer and effect profits and savings that otherwise might have gone to the middleman. The accomplishments of this project are unknown, and the possibilities are that it was temporary in duration and used merely to meet war time needs.

During the war the business department of the Wisconsin union admittedly transacted a comparatively small business.⁶¹ Subsequent to the war, business improved somewhat, but the extent of its transactions are unknown. The agency handled such items as coal, flour, twine, feeds, apples, potatoes, grains, etc.

⁵⁹ Equity News, September 15, 1917.

⁶⁰ Equity News, November 1, 1917.

⁶¹ Equity News, July 15, 1917. See the later issues of the Equity News for periodical comments made by the agency relative to the inability of the department to get goods and the proper means of transportation for their commodities.

According to this arrangement, the shipper of the commodities forwarded the bill for payment to a local bank,---the farmer upon the receipt of a notice that his goods had arrived, proceeded to the bank, paid his bill and hauled his goods away at his own expense. In this manner the farmer realized a substantial saving. It was estimated that in 1920, the Wisconsin agency did a purchasing business amounting to \$2,500,000.⁶²

In 1920, the society devised a plan whereby the various business units affiliated or organized by the society, could come into more harmonious relations with one another. This so-called Equity Business Plan called for the establishment of a central business cooperative organization known as the Wisconsin Equity Farmers' Exchange. The various local Equity associations whether dealing in wool or livestock joined the central body, and have their marketing problems attended by departments concerned with the marketing of certain commodities.⁶³

This plan was effected with the intention of ending previous bitter experiences with associations sponsored by the society--- that in effect withdrew from the organization because its members or officers were not concerned with the more "general work" conducted by Equity.⁶⁴ Such to be sure, was the case with the Tobacco Department that withdrew in 1910, because of differences with

⁶² B. H. Hibbard, Marketing Agricultural Products, 238.

⁶³ The Equity Business Organization, 1-2, a pamphlet.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 1-2. This plan, nevertheless, failed to make much progress.

Equity officers; and to a certain extent, such was also the case with the American Cooperative Association and the national union.

7

Despite the fact the accomplishments of the society are difficult to trace, and despite the fact the conduct of certain members was quite scandalous---the fact remains that the society of Equity exerted a tremendous influence in the establishment of cooperative associations. The 400 Equity purchasing and selling associations in Wisconsin in 1920, is really a tribute to the prominence the organization achieved.

35

CHAPTER SIX

As we have seen, the years from 1913 to 1916 witnessed the appearance of three major business enterprises that directly or indirectly were the product of the Equity movement. Fortunately, however, the membership in the Wisconsin union did not suffer any serious losses; for almost immediately following the discovery of the facts, the Equity News attacked the enterprises severely. This, however, did not terminate the exploitation of the society for personal reasons; and consequently, we find the complexion of Equity changing from business to politics. This change may be attributed to three conditions: first, the emergence of war conditions; second, the spread of the Nonpartisan League into Wisconsin; and third, the rise to power of the politically ambitious James N. Tittmore.

1

The World War gave rise to a number of new political issues, the one of principle^{al} interest to the farmers being the curbing of war profiteering. On numerous occasions the Equity News

published lists of the war profiteers and asked for legislation making such conditions impossible.¹ As a patriotic gesture the East Troy branch sold produce directly to the wives of soldiers. The Organized Farmer stated: "We are true and loyal Americans and as such pledge our full support to the government in the prosecution of the war to a victorious conclusion," but declared "that war profits must be seized for governmental purposes and equitable prices established for both producers and consumers."²

In the spring of 1917, several of the leading farm organizations including the Grange, the Farmers' Union and Equity, met in Kansas City, Missouri, to discuss the economic issues and the effect of war conditions on farmers. Resolutions declaring an "unalterable support" to the government, the creation of a commission representing producers and consumers, the fixing of prices, the prohibition of speculation, the closing of boards of trade, stock exchanges and chambers of commerce were passed. The enactment of a graduated income tax on all incomes over \$2,000 and the conscription of all incomes over \$25,000 was demanded; as was the government operation of packing houses, storage plants, warehouses and terminal facilities, and all "those utilities that would make impossible speculation and profiteering in the war for 'Democracy and Humanity.'³"

¹ Equity News, September 15, 1917.

² Organized Farmer, September 20, 1917.

³ Equity News, May 15, 1917.

The coming of the Nonpartisan League was undoubtedly a greater political influence on Equity than the former. Early in 1917, the accomplishments of the League in North Dakota attracted the attention of some of the politically-minded farmers in Wisconsin. At the annual stockholders meeting of the Farmers Cooperative Packing Company of Wausau, a resolution was passed calling for a farmers convention to assemble in Marshfield on March 22nd "for the purpose of organizing the farmers into a nonpartisan league...."⁴

On March 22nd about 200 farmers representing 18 counties met at Marshfield and organized the Wisconsin branch of the Nonpartisan League. Differences of opinion relative to the best means of organization were expressed, some preferring independent action, and others immediate affiliation with the league; but finally the latter group won out. Resolutions were passed demanding state ownership of public utilities, the exemption of farm improvements from taxation, the enactment of legislation punishing option buying and selling, the outlawing of futures and gambling in farm products, strengthening income tax laws by publishing the assets and incomes of tax-payers,⁵ and an increased representation of farmers in politics. Another meeting was called for Wausau in

⁴ Ibid, March 1, 1917.

⁵ Organized Farmer, March 29, 1917; Equity News, March 1, 1917.

April to lay the groundwork for the organization; and expectations for a well-groomed political machine by 1918 were expressed by many.⁶

3

At the December 1917 convention of the state Equity society the aspiring James Nelson Tittmore was elected to the office of president. This marked the beginning of the stormiest period in the history of the organization and one from which the society never recovered. Immediately following his election, Tittmore expressed the desire of a membership of 50,000.⁷

The activities of Tittmore in Equity prior to his election are rather obscure. My only evidence is that he campaigned for Congress in 1916 and received the endorsement of the Equity News; following that he carried an "uncertain" campaign for government ownership of railroads.⁸ As to his history, the Equity News stated he was born in an "old log house;" that he was a telegraph operator and finally worked his way up to become general traffic manager of the Pere Marquette Railroad.⁹

Immediately on assuming the presidency the Equity News was virtually flooded with Tittmore writings which in substance asked for increased farmer representation in politics. The work of Tittmore was prolific in contrast to that of former Equity

⁶ Organized Farmer, April 26, 1917; Equity News, March 1, 1917.

⁷ Equity News, January 1, 1918.

⁸ Equity News, August 1, 1916.

⁹ Ibid, January 1, 1918.

presidents; but upon examination it was discovered that Tittmore was the first president in the history of the state society to receive a salary.¹⁰

Late in January Tittmore arrived in Washington for some undetermined reason; presumably for a conference with Samuel Gompers the president of the American Federation of Labor. He informed Equity readers that: "Unless we move on Washington, unless we dominate politics in Madison in our favor we will lose the bigger things, and our enemies will continue to reap where we have sown." In the same issue of the Equity News he advised: "Let us put in a governor this fall and a Senator who will go to the firing line and stay there until 'Old Wisconsin is redeemed.'" "To the younger members of our union in Wisconsin I say you have a wonderful opportunity to redeem the past,---in the name of God (I say it reverently) Do it!"¹¹

Much was made of the contemplated visit with Gompers to effect a closer working arrangement between farmers and laborers; but that in effect amounted to nothing.¹² In April 1918, the Organized Farmer remarked that Tittmore had delivered 92 speeches since Christmas; and stated that his efforts were something unparalleled in the history of Equity.¹³

¹⁰ Interview.

¹¹ Equity News, February 1, 1918.

¹² Ibid, February 1, 1918.

¹³ Organized Farmer, April 4, 1918.

4

Scarcely had Tittlemore been elevated to the post of president, that the national union fresh from its quarrel with the American Cooperative Association moved to Madison. ¹⁴ This was marked as a forward step by many because of the popularity of Madison as an Equity center; but which in effect was to commence a period of renewed warfare between the state and national organizations that took its toll in membership and finances.

At the outset, however, the national and state unions sought the establishment of more harmonious relations. Among the first of the ~~amnesty~~ ^{peace} suggestions was, that the national organization undertake the issuance of Equity News as the publication of the national organization; and include therein pages devoted exclusively to the affairs of the state organization. This agreement was finally culminated, and on February 7, 1918 the first issue of ¹⁵ the National Equity News appeared.

In the position of editor was placed the "colorful" J. Weller Long; who has been appropriately designated as the "last of the Populists." Like many others he favored increased political activity by the farmers; but unlike these political enthusiasts, Long constantly spoke of the farmers problem as being basically ¹⁶ that of solving the money question.

14 National Equity News, February 14, 1918.

15 National Equity News, February 7 and 14, 1918.

16 Interviews.

Prior to his identity with the Farmers' Alliance and the Populist party, Long taught school for approximately twenty years. The year 1892 found him working for the Farmers Alliance in North Carolina; and in 1896, he campaigned for the Populists, being at the time candidate for Congress from the first Congressional district of Missouri. Displeased with the merging of the Populist and Bryan forces, Long deserted politics and enrolled in the American School of Osteopathy in Kirksville, Missouri. Upon graduating in 1899, Long practised his new profession for eight years; but in 1907, he moved to Equ Claire, Wisconsin where he¹⁷ affiliated with Equity and served as organizer for ten years.

A picture of the personalities high in the ranks of Equity would be incomplete without a consideration of Daniel O. Mahoney the leader of the conservative forces. Mahoney prior to his connections with Equity served respectively as school teacher, principal, county superintendent of schools and county judge of Vernon county. Later he was appointed as member of the board of regents of the University of Wisconsin; and served as state president of the Equity society for seven years prior to the¹⁸ election of Tittmore. Mahoney was a bitter opponent of both Long and Tittmore, and although having political connections; he saw no justifiable reason why the organization should be used for

¹⁷ C. C. Platt, What La Follette's State is Doing, 59-60. Batavia, N. Y., 1924.

¹⁸ Interviews.

reasons other than purely educational purposes. To him the radical utterances of Long and the political manuevers of Tittimore were anathema.

Thus by 1918, three personalities with decidedly different views as to the nature and ends the organization was to seek and holding high positions in the councils of Equity, were to embroil the state and national organizations in factional disputes that virtually annihilated the national organization and all but paralyzed the state union.

5

The first evidences of the political preferences of these three leaders was displayed in the special election called early in 1918 to appoint a successor to fill the unexpired term of the deceased U. S. Senator Paul Husting. In the course of the campaign Governor Emanuel Philipps asked the legislature to bestow upon him the right to select the successor of Husting. This was opposed strongly by the Wisconsin union.

With the announcement of the various candidacies namely those of Congressman I. L. Lenroot, Federal Trade Commissioner Joe Davies, Victor Berger, James Thompson and Charles Mc Carthy--- Mahoney supported Lenroot, Tittimore endorsed Davies and Long supported Victor Berger. The Wisconsin union meanwhile had com-

19 National Equity News, February 14, 1918.

20 Organized Farmer, March 28, 1918.

municated with the various candidates asking them their positions²¹ on various agricultural problems to which they all responded. No small amount of consternation, however, was expressed by the opposing elements that read the editorial of secretary Lond advocating the candidacy of Victor Berger. "The nomination of Victor Berger for United States Senator is a master stroke," wrote Long. "Every genuine patriot who stands for real patriotism as against²² spurious patriotism will rally to the support of Berger."

While the Equity leaders were dividing their support among the various candidates, the Organized Farmer the ex-national union publication remarked that since the political issue in Wisconsin appears to be that of "Loyalty vs Disloyalty" a suggestion is made that the voters be sure to select the person that is honestly²³ entitled to wave the flag. In the primaries, Lenroot defeated Thompson the La Follette candidate for the Republican nomination by a vote of 73,000 to 71,000; Joe Davies outdistanced Charles McCarthy for the Democratic nomination by a vote of 57,000 to 14,000; and Berger running unopposed on the Socialist ticket²⁴ garnered 39,000 votes. In the elections Lenroot ran ahead of the field, obtaining 164,000 votes as to 149,000 by Davies and 110,000

²¹ National Equity News, March 14, 1918.

²² Ibid, March 24, 1918.

²³ Organized Farmer, March 14, 1918.

²⁴ Ibid, March 28, 1918.

25
by Berger.

With the special election over, talk was to center mostly over the proposed farmer-labor political alliance for the fall elections. A preliminary meeting was held in Milwaukee on April 5, where the question of the Nonpartisan League and the fall elections were discussed. Following an announcement that the league would not enter the state elections until two years hence, agitation developed to call a mass meeting and create sentiment in favor of a farmer and workers program. As a result an organization temporarily known as the Wisconsin Farmers Progressive League was organized; and a meeting was called to meet in Madison on May 1, to decide on the platform, candidates and the party through which the new organization was to operate.²⁶

Enthused over the prospects of the new alignment, secretary Long commented the Milwaukee meeting planted the "little acorn from which a greater and nobler tree may grow." In anticipation of the disquieting effects the forthcoming political event was to have on the organization, attempts were made to belittle the disastrous consequences of previous organizations by stating that "conditions are different," and that the society and the national officers are better equipped to understand conditions and politicians than ever before.²⁷ Hopes were also expressed of

25 National Equity News, April 25, 1918.

26 Ibid, April 18, 1918.

27 Ibid, April 18, 1918.

uniting three way split in the farmer and labor vote that was divided among Lenroot, La Follette and Berger in the senatorial elections. An announcement in the National Equity News challenged the Equity members and asked them whether they preferred being "organized serfs" or "Lincolnized free men."

On May 1, approximately 500 farmers representing Equity the Nonpartisan League and a scattering supposedly representing the ranks of labor met in Madison. A suggestion that a Nonpartisan League slate be set up was again rejected on the grounds that the league was not sufficiently strong in the state. J. H. Carnahan acted as temporary chairman; and a committee consisting of Tittlemore, George F. Comings, H. E. Overson, W. Radke and H. E. Parson was appointed to confer with a committee alleged to be representative of the laboring element.

After dispensing with the preliminary proceedings, a slate consisting of J. N. Tittlemore for governor, H. L. Nickerson for lieutenant-governor, Merlin Hull for Secretary of State, J. Fred Larson for State Treasurer and John J. Blaine for Attorney-General. Resolutions were passed favoring the initiative, referendum and recall; allegiance to the United States was pledged; universal suffrage, the eight hour day and government ownership of public utilities, railroads and telegraph lines was endorsed; cooperative

28 Ibid, April 18, 1918.

29 Milwaukee Leader, May 2, 1918.

30 Ibid, May 1, 1918.

31 Organized Farmer, May 30, 1918; National Equity News, May 16, 1918.

buying and selling and the erection of terminal facilities for agricultural products were commended; reductions in personal property taxes, the adoption of the Torrens land title system and the extension of agricultural education opportunities to the farmers was recommended; and to the contrary, the meat packing trust and universal military training was denounced.

The Milwaukee Leader, the daily Socialist publication, suspicious of the Madison gathering dispatched a special representative to determine what motives prompted the May 1 meeting. On May 3 the Milwaukee Leader reported that the meeting was called because of the personal ambitions and desire of certain Equity members for political office. Tittmore was revealed as the "guiding spirit" of the meeting; and that the meeting was in essence a drive to plant him in the governors chair. "His ambition is to become governor of Wisconsin," wrote the Milwaukee Leader, "and he is willing to use any party to satisfy his ambitions." Not only was Tittmore accused of being responsible for the failure of the league to enter Wisconsin; but, likewise, for appropriating his program largely from the "immediate demands" of the Socialist party; and baited it "with a platform, luscious and appetizing."

Having decided to cast their lot with the Republican party, the Tittmore ~~ticket~~ ^{group} carried its ticket to the various parts of

32 National Equity News, May 2, 1918.

33 Milwaukee Leader, May 3, 1918.

the state. Campaign literature favorable to the candidacy of Tittmore filled the pages of Equity. He traversed the state and displayed an uncanny ability to acclimate³⁴ his speeches to the political prejudices of the community; and as a revival day speaker he was unexcelled.

Late in spring, Tittmore apparently had not completely alienated himself with the Nonpartisan League program; or else he was utilizing every possible effort to capitalize on what league sentiment existed. "We want terminal elevators and stock yards!" shouted Tittmore. "How will we get them if we do not go into politics? Ask North Dakota whether it pays to go into politics? Ask Pennsylvania? Ask Minnesota? Ask New Zealand?"...Politics is as "holy an obligation," for the farmers to engage in as "the Christian religion is for the Christian."³⁵

In the primaries Tittmore was defeated by the incumbent Emanuel Philipps for the Republican nomination; Philipps obtaining 72,000 votes as against 45,000 for Tittmore. The prospects of a political harvest appeared slim; and in the elections, only John J. Blaine was elected as attorney-general from the May 1³⁶ slate. Rumors circulated to the effect that Tittmore might run in the finals as an independent; but nothing came of it. With the election of Blaine, however, it was charged that forty legislators favorable to the Equity program were elected.³⁷ The results

34 Interviews with numerous people intimately acquainted with this phase of the organizations history.

35 National Equity News, June 5, 1918.

36 Ibid, September 12, 1918; Wisconsin Blue Book 1919, 93.

37 National Equity News, September 12, 1918.

of the 1918 campaign were not discouraging to the Tittimore supporters, and the possibilities of a successful campaign in 1920 were repeatedly voiced.

6

In the meantime, the bitter quarrels that were to eventually split the society into warring factions were rapidly taking shape. Nineteen-nineteen found the state and national organizations involved in controversies over post-war issues, political activities and finances. At the state convention among the first resolutions to be introduced was one asking the state organization to publish its own paper. This, in substance was an attack against the radical utterances of editor Long; and did not require much effort on the part of the anti-Long forces to unite and make an alienation from the national publication possible. These same groups demanded that "the paper be more conservative than heretofore" for the members of the Wisconsin union were "conservative men, true Americans who abhor radicalism and detest antagonism, and demand a truly American paper."³⁸

The introduction of the so-called "Red resolutions" by George F. Comings caused another stormy session to arise. Comings was a

³⁸ Wisconsin Equity News, November 27, 1919. Mahoney the leader of the conservatives was a La Follette supporter up till the time La Follette made his anti-war utterances. He fought the Tittimore and Long factions on the grounds that the society should not be used as a political organization or otherwise; but that instead it should utilize every possible effort to help America win the war and make the proper adjustment following the war period. Radicalism had no place for him.

prominent Equity member and a leader of the Long faction. At the time he was a lecturer in the Farmers Institute that was sponsored by the College of Agriculture; he had served four years as a member of the state board of agriculture; was a member of the committee of thirteen appointed by state superintendent of schools Cary to study rural schools and suggest ways and means for their improvement; and was, likewise, a recent appointee to the state board of vocational education.

The "Red resolutions," which were introduced in a period of war hysteria, asked for the repeal of the espionage act, the release of conscientious objectors and opposition to Congressional bills suppressing radical utterances. Passionate appeals for and against the measures were the result. One delegate remarked: "I have put 24 hours in jail because I said ~~the~~ ^{that} Bob La Follette's stand on the war was right." Another stated that he was one of the five in a company of 67 to return alive and pleaded "for God's sake men, remember the boys over there. We fought for personal liberty, let those men out of jail." An army officer replied: These conscientious objectors by refusing to don the uniform, by refusing to sacrifice for their country told those boys that sleep over there and we over here, to go to hell." ⁴⁰ But again, however, the ~~anti~~-Long forces faced defeat.

³⁹ Wisconsin Bluebook 1921, 238. Interview.

⁴⁰ Wisconsin Equity News, November 27, 1919; Wisconsin State Journal, November 22, 1919.

Besides the "Red resolutions" that were killed, other resolutions asking the society to fight bolshevism and communism, and the denial of society positions to members anxious for state or national political offices, were introduced.⁴¹ The resolution calling for allegiance to the government was passed; but the one calling for political abstinence by society officers was bitterly assailed by the Tittimore group. The latter resolution was pointedly aimed at Tittimore and was engineered by the Long faction whose leader had been denied a seat in the state convention. Tittimore waxing in fury over the resolution indignantly remarked: "You farmers have lawyers, you have professional men in your halls of legislation, but not a real farmer. And you would go further than that, you would make it that your capable farmers could not run for office. You are playing big business's own game."⁴²

In the presidential election the same bitterness prevailed. Aside of Tittimore who was up for re-election, there were D. O. Mahoney, Assemblyman C. M. Ballard and a member named Johns, who were nominated. On the first ballot, Tittimore gathered 1,180 votes, Mahoney 694, and Ballard and Johns 400 and 133 respectively. Johns in announcing his withdrawal from the race remarked that "Tittimore is too small a man for the place" and asked all who

⁴¹ Madison Democrat, November 20, 1919; Milwaukee Sentinel, November 20, 1919.

⁴² Wisconsin State Journal, November 21 and 22; Milwaukee Sentinel, November 22, 1919. The Wisconsin State Journal described Long as being of "tall, gaunt stature, scattering hair, standing collar and heavy watch fob." He was said to have recelled the old days of the "gentleman from Kentucky, the honorable from Mississippi."

could conscientiously do so, to vote for Mahoney. Opposition was lining up against Tittmore; but in the finals he managed to squeeze out a close victory from Mahoney by a vote of 1,222 to 1, 192.⁴⁴ In addressing the convention Tittmore remarked: "I owe this victory to the young men of the Equity."⁴⁵

The national convention held in Madison, likewise, witnessed a repetition of the bitterness that characterized the state meeting. This time the anti-Long forces gained control of the national executive board; and ousted Long from the post of secretary and editor and supplanted him with a non-entity, Herman Samson.⁴⁶ The resolutions passed called for a denunciation of the I. W. W., the red radicals and like factions and compulsory military training; the Nonpartisan League was neither endorsed nor attacked, the motion dealing with the matter being tabled; approval of the Kenyon-Anderson bill favoring government operation of the meat packing industry was voiced; seizing government war materials at unreasonably low prices and discriminatory methods, and the immediate return of the railroads to private interests were condemned; and another resolution asked that farmer groups affiliate with one another to prosecute the cooperative marketing program.⁴⁷ The excitement attending the national convention was evidenced in the closeness of the presidential vote in which J. N. Carnahan was

⁴³ Wisconsin State Journal, November 21, 1919.

⁴⁴ Madison Democrat, November 21, 1919.

⁴⁵ Wisconsin State Journal, November 21, 1919.

⁴⁶ Madison Democrat, December 13, 1919.

⁴⁷ Equity News, December 18, 1919.

elected by a fraction of a vote.

Subsequent to the state convention, the Oshkosh Daily Northwestern of December 2, published a telegram attributed to U. S. Senator Robert M. La Follette, in which the senator expressed gratification over the re-election of Tittmore as state president. The alleged La Follette telegram characterized Tittmore as a "man of sterling quality and he should have the assistance and cooperation of all farmers of Wisconsin and other states... The farmers are more in need of patriotic and intelligent leadership today than in any other period of the nations history. All sorts of nostrums are suggested for the cure of ills from which agriculture is suffering. Few of these have any merit. What we want is a permanent policy determined by men of brains who also have vision. Tittmore as far as the Wisconsin situation is concerned in my judgement fills the bill. I am glad he was re-elected and his administration endorsed. He is a good fighter and my heart always warms to a man who can put up a good scrap."⁴⁹

On December 9, La Follette telegraphed the Oshkosh Daily Northwestern that "The statement is absolutely untrue," and advised that "if you printed an alleged interview upon the matter I ask you to give publicity to this statement and I request you to inform me upon what authority the interview was printed. Answer."⁵⁰

48 Ibid, December 18, 1919.

49 Oshkosh Daily Northwestern quoted in Equity News, December 4, 1919.

50 Capital Times, January 6, 1920.

According to the Capital Times, the La Follette sheet and supporter of the deposed Long, a copy of the La Follette telegram had been forwarded to the National Equity News repudiating be the supposed Tittimore endorsement, and asked that this repudiation be inserted in the forthcoming issue.

According to J. Weller Long, a copy of this repudiation was inserted in the December 12th issue; the paper went to press that morning, but on the afternoon of the same day, his services were terminated and the paper ordered suppressed. That, according to Long accounts for the fact that no paper appeared that week.⁵¹

Soon thereafter, the financial conditions of the national treasure became a topic of aggravating concern. The Tittimore and Long factions accused each other of discrepancies; and pernicious statements of dishonesty and corruptness were hurled at one another by the warring groups.⁵² The national president soon called upon the state organizations for financial assistance; but the fading state societies were heavily implicated in their own sectional grievances to pay attention to the plight of the parent organization.

In the meantime, rival farmer organizations such as the American Farm Bureau Federation, the Nonpartisan League and the Farmers Union had either entered, or were about to enter the state, and

⁵¹ Ibid, January 6, 1920.

⁵² Equity News, January 15, 1920; Organized Farmer, January 15, 1920. See also January 21 issues of the same papers.

take into their ranks members that previously were active in Equity. Protests were especially made against the Farmers Union, which was accused of going into Equity territory and organizing rival associations to split the farmers strength.⁵³

7

In spite of the disruptive forces in operation, the aggressive Tittmore was making preparations for the fall campaign. In January, he addressed a meeting of farmers and laborers in Marinette and advised them to "go into politics up to your heads." A plea was made for closer cooperation between farmers and laborers; but, half the audience in attendance voiced disapproval over the eight hour day.⁵⁴ J. F. Shaw, the editor of Equity News informed the farmers that one of the purposes of the society was "to secure legislation in the interests of agriculture;" and added that an organization failing to accomplish this, was "losing a golden opportunity to be of service." The society, according to Shaw, had within its ranks the power to work out its own political and economic salvation; and instructed the farmers not to be frightened over the "bugaboo" of "keeping out politics."⁵⁵

Early in 1920, Tittmore made a hurried trip to Florida to confer with Samuel Gompers and the executive board of the American Federation of Labor; and upon his return to the state Tittmore

⁵³ Interviews.

⁵⁴ Equity News, January 14, 1920.

⁵⁵ Ibid, January 28, 1920.

announced that Gompers would enter the state and make three speeches in behalf of his candidacy. In May, Tittmore formally announced his candidacy for governor stating that, "the principles of equity, cooperation and coordination are essential to the welfare of the people."⁵⁶

While the Equity News and the Organized Farmer took the lead in advocating the candidacy of Tittmore, the Capital Times and the Wisconsin Leader manned the opposition. The Equity News sneeringly insinuated the Wisconsin Leader was the "cancerous" outgrowth of the Nonpartisan League of North Dakota, and the "stooge" of the Capital Times.

As expected, the Nonpartisan League took a prominent part in the elections of 1920. The Tittmore opposition lost no opportunity in charging that Tittmore was one of the first to ask for the coming of the league in Wisconsin. The letters written by the Equity president to the league were published in the Wisconsin Leader, the official organ of the Wisconsin branch. According to the letters, that Tittmore admitted he wrote, the possibilities of the organization in Wisconsin were spoken of most enthusiastically. On January 9, 1917, Tittmore wrote the National Nonpartisan League headquarters stating: "We are away behind N. D. You are a wonderful state! We are talking state but we stick to 'conservatism' which is synonymous with stultification."⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Organized Farmer, March 11, 1920; Equity News, August 4, 1920.
⁵⁷ Wisconsin Leader, May 8, 1920.
⁵⁸ Wisconsin Leader, August 7, 1920.

later communication Tittlemore wrote: "Sometime ago I received your letter but never the 'Leaders' (Nonpartisan Leader) you said you would send. When will you tackle this state? In the name of God start soon. You will find a very reactionary bunch of Equity leaders. They are a fine bunch of men but afraid of their shadows." On February 3, H. G. Teigan answered Tittlemore: "We cannot state when we shall be able to commence work in Wisconsin. It is quite certain, however, that it will not be for some time as we have considerable work in the four states where the organization is being developed. Still Wisconsin is on the list."⁵⁹

Tittlemore did not deny the authenticity of the letters, his only response being they were written when Equity was in a dying state and before he was an officer of the society.⁶⁰ What accounts for his change of attitude on the Nonpartisan League is difficult to determine. Tittlemore states that one of the ~~one~~ reasons was that the loyalty of the league was questioned during the war; but that will scarcely suffice as an explanation, for the loyalty of the Equity society was, likewise, thus placed under scrutiny. Tittlemore accused the league of not being a farmers organization; but that it consisted of "socialist importations" from the trades and professions. Not only was the constituency attacked, but, likewise, the principles the organization advocated. "It is headed

⁵⁹ Ibid, August 7, 1920.

⁶⁰ Tittlemore, in the main, did very little farming; and what farming he did was purely of an avocational character.

for state ownership just as much as this spring season is headed for summer and autumn." Now the league government in North Dakota to him was comparable to the revolutionary state in Russia. Tittlemore characterized himself as being sufficiently strong to attract the votes of the "urban population" and the "logical man to combat the advances of extreme radicalism in the state."⁶¹

Early in August, Tittlemore made known his political platform stating that he was "progressive, but not in any sense an extreme radical." His platform called for reduced living costs, cooperative buying and selling, the adoption of the Equity business plan by Wisconsin, government assistance to the farmers and workers in purchasing homes, financial assistance to returning soldiers, the coordination of public elevators, warehouses and cold storage plants, re-organization of state commissions for greater efficiency, the welcoming of women in politics both as voters and administrators, opposition to the Nonpartisan League, support of the initiative, referendum and recall, the development of water power sites for public and not private gain, and the right of labor to bargain collectively through representatives of its own choosing.⁶²

In the course of these developments, the deposed J. Weller Long was busy organizing a "secessionist" movement. A meeting was called in February to organize the dissatisfied elements in Equity. The new group was known as the United Farmers of America and

⁶¹ Equity News, August 18, 1920.

⁶² Equity News, August 4, 1920.

included in its ranks many who ^{at} one time or another held offices in Equity. Present at the February meeting were Long, M. V. Perry secretary of the Iowa union, C. Ballard of the Wisconsin union, H. O. Folkstad secretary of the remnants of the Montana union and H. A. Fuller of the Minnesota union. ⁶³

On May 27, Long dispatched a communication announcing a meeting of the discordant elements for the purpose of "transferring" their allegiance to the United Farmers. "Many are so thoroughly disgusted with the present condition in Equity," said Long, "that they are not paying their dues and something will have to be done to save the organization from utter ruin. Do not fail to be on hand with a proper delegation from your county. The crucial test has come at last. Come and hear from those who know to what depths some will stoop." ⁶⁴

The discordant groups met in Madison on scheduled time where protests against the management of the Equity society were endorsed. Long, who had been charged by Tittmore as being responsible for the depletion of the national treasury, denied such was the case; and, to the contrary, accused Tittmore of financial irresponsibility and with using the national and state treasuries for the conduct of his political campaigns. Following the airing of these grievances, the meeting voted to organize a Wisconsin branch of the United Farmers of America. ⁶⁵

⁶³ Ibid, June 16, 1920.

⁶⁴ Ibid, June 16, 1920.

⁶⁵ Ibid, June 16, 1920; Wisconsin Leader, June 12, 1920; Madison Democrat, June 5, 1920.

Thus, early in 1920, there were the Nonpartisan League, the American Farm Bureau Federation, the United Farmers of America which never gained much headway, and the Equity society representing the farmers of Wisconsin.

As mentioned the Nonpartisan League endorsed a slate in the fall elections. Heading the slate was John J. Blaine, who had been elected attorney-general on the Tittmore ticket of 1918 and George F. Comings, who were nominated governor and lieutenant governor on the Republican ticket. Though the ticket assumed the title of league candidates, they were essentially La Follette supporters banded together in a new organization.⁶⁶

The league platform embodied all the liberal and progressive measures of the time, obviously intended to attract the votes in the states. Included in the Nonpartisan platform were provisions for the initiative, referendum and recall; repeal of the espionage and sedition laws and the liberation of all political prisoners; repeal of the Esch-Cummins law; public ownership of railroads, stockyards, terminals, grain elevators, cold storage plants and other public utilities; increased taxation of larger incomes and inheritances; taxation of idle land to prevent it from being used for speculative purposes; state aid to home builders in the form

⁶⁶ Wisconsin Leader, November 6, 1920; Organized Farmer, September 15, 1920. For more accounts on the Tittmore and Nonpartisan League campaign see the May, June, July, August and September issues of the Equity News, Wisconsin Leader, and Organized Farmer.

of lower interest rates; stringent enforcement of the compulsory education laws; reduced living costs for university students making educational opportunities available to all at minimum costs; collective bargaining for employees through representatives of their own choosing; granting of sufficient funds to the Division of Markets and authority to ascertain production costs of agricultural products on the basis of the eight hour day; and the further extension⁶⁷ of agricultural organizations.

The platforms of the league and the politically ambitious "Equitarian" influenced the platforms of the two major political parties. The state Republican party pledged "adequate financial support to the Division of Markets and such additional power and authority as may be necessary to give the division ample power and authority to stimulate cooperation."⁶⁸ The creation of cooperative associations on a non-stock basis and a "revision of the cooperative law to protect existing and future cooperative associations," was endorsed. Opposition was voiced against the "leadership of the Nonpartisan League, the I. W. W. and the Communist party, and all other agencies seeking to undermine the principles of democracy and advocating a program of state socialism, bolshevism, or anarchy. We denounce the attempt of non-residents of Wisconsin through the leadership of the Nonpartisan League to control the Republican

⁶⁷ Wisconsin Leader, June 19, 1920.

⁶⁸ Wisconsin Bluebook 1921, 81.

party in Wisconsin."⁶⁹

The Democratic party condemned "socialistic, undemocratic and un-American principles," and invited all regardless of party affiliations to fight for good government. The party announced itself "to adopt any practical recommendation that the Division of Markets has to offer to strengthen and make more effective the operation of the Marketing Commission Law," and favored the "un-restricted an unhampered right of cooperative and collective bargaining for agricultural organizations."⁷⁰

In the primaries, Tittmore despite his ambitious campaigning made a disastorous showing receiving slightly more than half the votes obtained in 1918. Of the six candidates seeking the Republican nomination, Tittmore finished last: Blaine receiving 113,000 votes, Wilcox 102,000, Seaman 59,000, Hull 45,000, Dithmar 31,000 and Tittmore 27,000.⁷¹ In Milwaukee county, where he hoped to make a good showing, he received only 2,000 votes. His defeat was a bitter blow for the Tittmore followers for they had relied largely on the votes of Equity members and the votes of their immediate families. Of the Equity counties only one was carried---Florence.⁷²

In the elections for state president that year Tittmore did not run, claiming that he preferred to remain outside the fold

69 Ibid, 82.

70 Ibid, 78.

71 Ibid, 70.

72 Organized Farmer, September 15, 1920.

to bring harmony in the organization. Following his defeat, his activities in the society were slight; and he appears to have passed out of Equity as hurriedly as he came in.

With the defeat of Tittimore, the rise of innumerable rival organizations to divide the farmers strength and the beginning of the agricultural depression, the disintegration of Equity was now a matter of time. Late in 1920, a proposal was made that Equity and the American Farm Bureau unite; but the suggestion was defeated in a pre-convention conference by a vote of 8 to 5.⁷³ The radical and conservative elements in Equity were highly suspicious of the powers behind the bureau; which, in substance to them, was equivalent to a "company union seeking to keep the power of the farmers in check."⁷⁴

8

In the society's elections that year, E. C. Pommerening the first lieutenant of Tittimore was elected to the state presidency. Pommerening was the youngest man in the history of the society to be elected to the office.⁷⁵ This youthful would-be administrator supplanted the Tittimore mania for politics with the Pommerening mania for business; and as a result, his activities virtually sapped the society of what little strength remained after the Tittimore exodus.

⁷³ Equity News, November 17 and December 1, 1920.

⁷⁴ Interviews.

⁷⁵ Equity News, December 15 and 22, 1920.

The national organization which, likewise, met in Madison late that year, displayed signs of complete extinction. State organizations that were previously represented were conspicuously absent, while others refused to pay their dues, thus, impeding whatever progress the organization could achieve. As one readily suspects, the disruptive forces within the society had progressed to advanced stage; consequently, little was to be expected by way of re-newed life.⁷⁶

The Pommerening administration, which commenced its activities by purging the society of dissenters, can best be characterized by the innumerable business enterprises that sapped the organization of financial power.⁷⁷ In 1921, an Equity Dairymens Association was organized to conduct a cooperative dairy, a mercantile and manufacturing business.⁷⁸ Late in 1921, Pommerening virtually discharged H. E. Holmes as manager of the Equity business department.⁷⁹ About the same time, a Wisconsin Equity Automobile Association was incorporated, its purpose being: to encourage road improvements and legislation favorable to automobile owners, to investigate and report the prices of automobile accessories, to secure hotel and resort accommodations for members at reduced prices, and to offer full coverage automobile insurance at a mini-

⁷⁶ Equity News, December and December 22, 1920.

⁷⁷ Wisconsin Leader, January 29, 1921; Wisconsin State Journal, October 21 and November 29, 1921; Capital Times, November 4, 1921.

⁷⁸ Equity News, October 1 and 15, 1921.

⁷⁹ Ibid, October 15, 1921.

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 mum cost. An Equity Health and Hospital Association offering
 medical, surgical, hospital and dental care on a cooperative
 81
 basis was established in Milwaukee. Numerous other enterprises
 such as Equity oil and gas associations sprang up in rapid suc-
 cession. This ~~phlegmatic~~ ^{erratic} administration not only received the
 disapproval of various older leaders and members; but, likewise,
 served as excellent fodder for the opponents in their bombardment,
 who charged that the organization had reached the "racketeering"
 status. At any event these costly projects caused the society
 irreparable damage in membership and finances.

Perhaps the most notable and only achievement of the Pommer-
 ening administration, was the organization of the Equity Cooperative
 Livestock Sales Association of Milwaukee, that was not to remain
 under the auspices of Equity for long. In January 1921, a meet-
 ing was called at Oshkosh for the purpose of formulating plans
 82
 to create a terminal livestock agency in Milwaukee. In February
 a meeting assembled at the College of Agriculture, and in June,
 another one convened in Marshfield, where it was announced that
 29 local associations had subscribed stock in the new associa-
 83
 tion. At the same meeting a recommendation was made "that a
 permanent organization be formed under the direct supervision of

80 Ibid, October 15, 1921.

81 Ibid, April 15, 1921.

82 R. H. Steidl, A Brief History of the Equity Cooperative Live-
 stock Sales Association, 1 (a leaflet). The purpose in estab-
 lishing the agency was to enable the farmers to retain control
 of their cattle until it was actually sold.

83 Ibid, 1. A share of stock at the time sold for \$100.

the executive state board of the American Society of Equity."

The agency officially commenced business on March 22, 1922, and at the time records have it that, 44 local associations had subscribed \$4400 in stock. In August, however, the commission decided to sever its relations with Equity, and conduct its affairs as a separate institution.

At the end of the first year, the Equity Livestock Sales Association handled 1,399 cars; but by 1936, the number of cars had increased to 6,392. At the close of 1936 there were 184 member associations. Subsequent to the payment of interest on the capital stock, and the placement of a substantial sum in the reserve fund to keep the organization on a sound financial basis, at the end of the year the profits were pro-rated to the members. Over a period of approximately 14 years, some \$180,000 have been returned to the members in the form of patronage dividends; and today in 1937 the Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales Association under excellent management, stands as one of the most notable contributions the society has rendered to cooperative marketing.

84 Ibid, 1; University of Wisconsin Experiment Station, Bulletin 394, 4-5.

85 R. H. Steidl, A Brief History of the Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales Association, 1-2. See Appendix D. The commission charged by the association is the same as that of other firms on the Milwaukee market. In 1936, the association claims it handled livestock at a lower cost per car than did any other agency on the terminal market in the country. About 25% of these charges have been refunded to members in the form of patronage dividends.

In the meantime, the organization had dwindled in power. In 1921, the dues of the society were raised from \$2.50 to \$5.00.⁸⁶ Early that year the Equity News published excerpts from the Third Power,⁸⁷ in hopes of reviving the "Equity spirit." About the same time, M. Wes Tubbs, the "new-old" secretary succeeded the deposed J. B. Huston; but shortly thereafter, he resigned. In the business department,⁸⁸ W. T. McCaskey supplanted H. E. Holmes. The following year a special assessment was levied on all members on record at the time the society debt was incurred, which some paid⁸⁹ and some did not, to add all the more to the confusion in reign.

With the elevation of George Nelson to the post of president, the society made a determined effort to rid itself of debt; and in the course of the early years of his administrations, some \$32,000 in outstanding debts were squared.⁹⁰ The power of the society, in the meantime, continued to shrink; and in 1923, the report of the state convention showed that the paid-up membership had declined⁹¹ from 28,000 to less than 7,000 within a period of five years. With the funding of the debt a reality, the society made plans for incorporation; and in 1924, the society of Equity was incorporated⁹² under the laws of Wisconsin.

86 Equity News, November 15-December 1, 1921.

87 Ibid, February 9, 1921.

88 Ibid, November 1, 1921.

89 Ibid, December 15, 1921; Interviews.

90 Equity News, February 1, 1923; Milwaukee Journal, December 9 and 14, 1924.

91 Equity News, January 15, 1924.

92 Capital Times, September 30, 1924; Wisconsin State Journal, December 10, 1924.

From the exodus of Tittmore the society was always on the defensive: first, in retaining its membership and financial status; second, in warding off the attacks made against its leaders and their ulterior motives; and third, in protecting the progressive legislation the society fought to place on the statute books.⁹³ Although the administrations of Nelson made a determined effort to build the society anew, the organization failed to regain its former pre-eminence.

Following the departure of Tittmore the political complexion of the society waned considerably, and during the reigns of its last two presidents---George Nelson and Benjamin Gehrman, though the organization concerned itself mostly with the protection of progressive legislation, the society by no means developed the political complex it formerly possessed.⁹⁴

In 1928, the Equity committee on education recommended the teaching of cooperation in all schools and the better preparation of teachers in cooperative marketing.⁹⁵ In the annual convention that year, the federal policy of creating more agricultural land through the irrigation of swamps and the drainage of land was condemned, on the grounds that enough land was already under cultivation. Other recommendations consisted in the placing of heavier taxes on intangibles such as stocks and bonds, to alleviate

93 About the most obvious political activities conducted by the Equity News was the conduct of a legislative page informing the readers on the doings of the state legislature.

94 See the Equity News commencing the year 1923 and on.

95 Equity News, December 15, 1928.

the tax burden of the farmer; to re-valuate farm land on the basis of earning capacity rather than on the basis of inflated values; to conserve the natural water power sites of the federal government; demanded the direct election of highway commissioners; the extension of the oleomargarine tax to "cooking fats;" opposed armanent expenditures; favored the enactment of accident insurance for motorists by the state; the increase of tariff rates on agricultural products to give the farmers the same protection that other lines of industrial enterprise enjoy. A recommendation to keep all political writings out of the Equity News, however, was killed.

In the course of its declining years, the society kept a vigilant eye on all legislative measures pertaining to agriculture. In 1929, when a bill **was** introduced in the legislature to do away with the Division of Markets by asking for a consolidation of the various agencies on the grounds of economy, the society fought the proposal bitterly, Appearing in behalf of the proposal to consolidate these agencies, was Hugh Harper of the Farm Burearu; appearing against it, were George Nelson of the society of Equity, J. J. Lamb of the Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales Association, J. J. Handley of the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor, F. G. Swoboda of the National Cheese Producers' Federation, Assembly-

96 Equity News, December 15, 1928.

man J. C. Hanson of the Tobacco Pool and others.

With the strength and membership of the organization declining, rumors were frequently circulated to the effect that Equity and the Farmers' Union were to join forces. The opponents of the merger charged that certain leaders favored the amalgamation simply to enhance their political fortunes, while the proponents of the suggestion charged that the society could not accomplish much unless the organization operated on a national scale. Despite the merits and demerits of these criticisms, it is a matter of fact that some of the older Equity members refused to join in the new alignment and to the very day are fighting the results of this proposal. Late in 1933, the leaders of the Farmers' Union and the society of Equity met and formulated plans for the consolidation; and shortly thereafter the two organizations were united under the heading of the Farmers' Equity Union.

10

The causes contributing to the collapse of the society may be summarized as follows: first, the politically ambitious and economically ridiculous administrations of Tittmore and Pommer-

97 Ibid, April 1, 1929. At the 1929 convention the society passed a resolution ordering the president and the secretary-treasurer not to deposit the funds of the organization in chain banks. See Capital Times, December 15, 1929.

98 Milwaukee Journal, November 9 and 10, 1933; Capital Times, November 10, 1933. Equity at the time claimed a membership of from 3 to 5,000; while the Farmers' Union claimed from 18 to 20,000. Innumerable interviews with old leaders will reveal the feeling toward the merger at the time.

ening that took their toll in membership and finances; second, the raising of the annual dues and the levying of a special assessment in a period of falling farm prices; third, the agricultural depression; and fourth, the rise of rival farmer organizations such as the Farmers' Union and the American Farm Bureau. From 1920 on and up to the merger with the Farmers' Union, the society of Equity was virtually on the defensive in everything it sought; in membership, in finances and in protecting the progressive legislation it aided in enacting into law.

CHAPTER SEVEN

In attempting to fully evaluate the contributions of the society of Equity, we are treading upon highly controversial territory. From a historical point of view, this conclusion is unmistakably sound because of a number of factors: first, because of the closeness of the events with respect to both space and time, thus, making it difficult for the analyst to gain the proper perspective; second, because of the inability of the writer to gain access to all the sources and because of the extremely partisan character of most of those examined; and third, because of the indirectness of the influence the organization exerted, consequently, making an exact tracing of its contributions exceedingly difficult. Thus, in attempting to evaluate the accomplishments of the organization the above conditions must be fully considered.

2

The organization came into being in a comparatively prosperous period. The most marked headway was made in the tobacco fields of Kentucky and Tennessee and the wheat areas of the Northwest.

In theory, the marketing program consisted of two parts: first, in getting the farmers to place a price on their commodity and second, to eliminate all or a portion of the crop to expedite the realization of the former. This policy was attempted on a number of occasions, but it proved a general failure; the most notable exception being in the southern tobacco fields, where as a result of force, this theory was put into practical operation and proved successful. The practice, however, was of temporary duration, for subsequent to the "housecleaning" of 1907, this policy was abandoned and the organization commenced a campaign for the establishment of local cooperative associations.

This early marketing program was somewhat similar to the early marketing theories of the Farmers' Union in their initial stages; and interestingly enough, these early price-fixing and "crop-elimination" practices appear to persist in the "crop-control" schemes of the New Deal.¹

Subsequent to 1907, the organization became extremely localized in character and gained its greatest impetus in the comparatively prosperous state of Wisconsin. The progress of the society was enhanced because of the progress of the La Follette movement; and to a considerable extent the organization became the agricultural counterpart of the progressive movement. This affiliation, in the main, was largely responsible for the survival

¹ Capital Times November 8, 1937.

of the organization when indications were the society was ready to collapse.

The most valuable ~~con~~tributions the organization rendered ~~are~~ ^{are} perhaps the most difficult to measure. To my mind, the society must be accredited with being directly or indirectly responsible for the comparatively early interest (that is early in contrast to other colleges in the country) that the College of Agriculture took in the distributive aspects of farming. Had the organization not conducted a vicious campaign of protest, it is unlikely, that the college would have instituted this phase of agricultural investigation into its curriculum as early as it did.²

In agitating for the establishment of local cooperative associations, the society performed an invaluable piece of work. This is unquestionably one of the most difficult pieces of work to measure, but that the organization played a prominent role in this respect is without question. As previously mentioned, in 1920 there were approximately 400 Equity local cooperative associations in the state.³ Certainly no other organization previously, or since, has equalled it.

In the field of legislation, the Wisconsin organization, likewise, played an important role. It was primarily responsible

² Prior to this date the college accomplished virtually nothing in this respect and the society of Equity may be said to have been the only organization, outside the Right Relationship League, to agitate for the teaching of cooperative marketing and the establishment of agencies to put these theories in operation.

³ Wisconsin Agriculturalist, May 22, 1920.

for the placement of a binder-twine plant in the state penitentiary in Waupun, thus, enabling the farmers to purchase their twine at substantial reductions.⁴ With the assistance of the Right Relationship League and a few other progressive leaders, the society of Equity was largely responsible for the passage of the cooperative marketing law of 1911, that was virtually copied "verbatim" by a number⁶ of other states. It also agitated for the establishment of a bureau to give scientific direction to the marketing aspects of Wisconsin agriculture, and this was put into effect in 1911 with the establishment of the Wisconsin State Board of Public Affairs.⁵

In 1919, the Wisconsin College of Agriculture, the society of Equity and numerous other agencies were largely responsible for the placement of a Division of Markets in the Department of Agriculture.⁶ In 1929, when indications were that the department was to be abolished in the proposed consolidation of government agencies,⁷ the society fought the proposal bitterly. Early in its history, Equity agitated for the teaching of cooperation in the schools of the state; and although it never succeeded in placing the proposal on the statute books ~~of the state~~, it, nevertheless, furnished the idea that was later to be taken up by others.⁸ In 1935, the state legislature enacted into legislation

5 Ibid, III.

6 M. M. Quaife, Wisconsin: Its History and Its People, II: 488 169-170.

7 See pages 169-170 of this study.

8 Ibid, 168; Wisconsin Senate Journal, 1935, 291, 332, 429, 760, 777, 609, 610, 660.

a measure calling for the offering of courses in cooperation in the state teachers colleges, in the state university and in the county normal schools.

In a political sense, the organization was largely responsible for the cordial relations established with organized labor; and recently, the Farmers' Equity Union, the product of the merger of Equity and the Farmers' Union, was one of a number of organizations that brought the Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation into existence.⁹

3

The experiences of Equity raise a number of issues pertinent to the welfare of agricultural organizations. Among the foremost is that of farm leadership. Old Equity leaders as well as the writer are of the opinion that, had the organization been blessed with more competent leadership the possibilities of a prolonged successful career would have been probable.¹⁰

Examples of flagrant, abusive, incompetent and questionable conduct was found in the practices of some of its leaders. Some of these vocal cooperators were no more interested in advancing the cause of cooperation than were its most vicious opponents. In one business enterprise in particular, fairly good evidence was found to the effect that, some of these proficient vocal

⁹ The Nation, 141:714; Milwaukee Leader, December 2, 3, 5, 1935; Capital Times, December 1, 2, 1935.

¹⁰ Interviews.

experts were engaged in what appeared to be a fairly remunerative
 11
 business of cooperative hi-jacking.

Experience, however, proves that neither Equity nor agricultural organizations in general, have an exclusive monopoly in the practice. These unfortunate conditions appear to be almost inevitable in the progress of many movements, and rare as well as fortunate, is the organization that grows and prospers without going through this painful process. Although these conditions are unfortunate, they frequently are the case.

In one instance, the political complexion of the organization was completely uncalled for. Placing a high-ranking officer on a political ticket and utilizing the organization for the advancement of his candidacy, was an incident of unfortunate occurrence. The opposition lost no opportunity in charging ^{that} the farmers were being farmed, and that the resources of the organization were being utilized for the political advancement of an individual, rather than for the cause of agriculture. As a result, the organization was torn with dissension, membership began to trickle away, and following his disastrous defeat coupled with a number of other factors, a wholesale exodus commenced. Later attempts to resuscitate the society proved of no avail.

Farmer lobbyists in the past have been criticized for not displaying any too keen a sense in discriminating between good.

11 Interviews.

and bad legislation. It is charged that they agitated for everything and anything that savored of benefits to agriculture without stopping to make a careful analysis of the measures under consideration. Many of these gestures were undoubtedly sincere, but sincerity is not the only attribute of sane judgment and effective leadership.

The extent to which farmer organizations should engage in politics has been a topic of frequent discussion. Some are of the opinion that agriculture has not had sufficient political representation; others claim that sufficient political representation was had, but, that it was improperly used; while still others claim that farmers have more political power than they are entitled to and are using it in an un-intelligent fashion.

Despite the above criticisms, the writer is not of the opinion that agricultural organizations should remain indifferent to political issues. A certain amount of political activity is necessary and should be encouraged, but when asked---to what extent, by whom and in what manner---those are exceedingly difficult questions to answer. At least the political considerations must have something to do with agriculture. In the past experience has shown that cooperative associations have frequently suffered at the expense of political intercourse. In some instances, an arrangement whereby the political and economic objectives of the organization program could have been realized, so that one would not have suffered at the expense of the other, was wanting.

The experiences of Equity revealed that membership drives conducted on a basis of mass movements are not apt to be of lasting quality. Once new members are obtained something must be done with them or for them, and not be herded into an organization and be expected to serve as members of a "_____ for Governor Club." New members must be sufficiently schooled and disciplined in the merits of cooperation, and it is indeed questionable, whether the proper training can be given when members are herded in such vast droves. In the years of the big membership drives---that is from 1918-1920, these essential qualities were entirely lacking, and in a measure served as a factor ^{had} contribution to the disintegration of the society.

The experiences of the organization also revealed ^{that} the relations between the parent and the business associations were not of the most cordial character. The society frequently solicited the business agencies for financial support, which the latter frequently refused and led to innumerable disputes which often caused the business agencies to sever their relations with the organization proper. An arrangement ^{where}by the parent organization could live in more harmonious relations with its offspring, was decidedly wanting.

The society also was confronted with a difficult problem in the collection of dues. Farmers like workers have displayed a lack of timeliness in their payments, which are so necessary for

the existence of the organization. Thus far, agricultural organizations have developed nothing similar to the "check-off" system, as applied by labor unions, to keep their members in good financial standing. The Farmers' Equity Union, however, had developed a scheme whereby no member of the local cooperative association is entitled to withdraw patronage dividends unless all obligations due to the parent organization are paid. The difficulty here is that all members are not patrons of the cooperative associations, with the result that only a certain percentage of the members are thus reached. If all the members patronized cooperative stores, the question of "dues-collecting" would be simplified immensely.

One of the most amusing spectacles in the history of the organization, was the manner in which some of the meetings were conducted. To be sure, they reminded one of the days of the medicine man and his "cancer-cure," as well as the revivalist before a religious gathering. It must be granted that some of the old leaders graced the speakers platform in a manner rivalling that of some of the most skilled revivalists. Bitter experiences, however, have proved that successful cooperatives are not conducted in the fashion of the revivalist technique. There is infinitely more to the conduct of the cooperative agencies than cursing the "princes of industry" and the "gamblers in the necessities of life" and then asking the farmers to lay prostrate before the

altar of cooperation, and expect a healthy cooperative association to thrive. The experiences of Equity showed that the moment a cooperative venture failed, the farmers reverted to their old ways in a manner more individualistic than ever. These early unhappy results have also prejudiced the farmers against future projects that agricultural organizations are apt to undertake.

4

Despite the above criticisms, the society of Equity must be accredited with making the farmers "group-conscious," thus, making them an "equalizing force" in their respective problems; it was directly or indirectly responsible for the marketing investigations that were commenced by the College of Agriculture; it was responsible for placing some much-needed legislation on the statute books of the state; and in establishing innumerable farmer-controlled marketing agencies, many of which to the present day, bear the name Equity. In general, the society of Equity may be said to have exerted more influence for the advancement of cooperation than has any other organization in the history of Wisconsin.

THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF ^{Equity of} N. A.

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION.

We, the undersigned citizens of the United States of America, hereby associate ourselves together as a society, hereinafter named, under and pursuant to the statutes of the state of Indiana, same being an act of the general assembly of the state of Indiana, approved March 6th, 1899, and being an act entitled "An Act for the Incorporation of Societies, not for pecuniary profit, etc.," by the following articles:

ARTICLE I. NAME.

The name of this society shall be "The American Society of Equity of North America."

ARTICLE II. STOCK.

This society has no capital stock and is not organized for pecuniary profit.

ARTICLE III. OBJECTS.

1. To obtain profitable prices for all products of the farm, garden and orchard.
2. To build and maintain elevators, warehouses and cold storage houses in principal market cities or in all localities where necessary, so that farm produce may be held for an advantageous price, instead of passing into the hands of middlemen or trusts.
3. To secure equitable rates of transportation.
4. To secure legislation in the interest of agriculture.
5. To open up new markets and enlarge old ones.
6. To secure new seeds, grain, fruit, vegetables, etc., from for-

- eign countries, with the view of improving the present crops and giving a greater diversity.
7. To report crops in this and foreign countries, so that farmers may operate intelligently in planting and marketing.
 8. To establish institutions of learning, so that farmers and their sons and daughters may be educated in scientific and intensive farming and for the general advancement of agriculture.
 9. To improve highways.
 10. To irrigate our land.
 11. To prevent adulteration of food and marketing the same.
 12. To own real estate, build, maintain and operate elevators, storage houses, stock yards, railroads, ship lines, etc., as may be deemed wise and expedient.
 13. To promote social intercourse.
 14. To settle disputes without recourse to law.
 15. To borrow and loan money and do a banking business.
 16. To do an insurance business, both life and fire.
 17. To establish similar societies in foreign countries.

ARTICLE IV. INCORPORATORS.

J. A. Everitt,
Mark P. Turner,
H. W. Miller,

Eli A. Hirshfield,
A. D. McKinney,
Sid Conger.

ARTICLE V. PLACE OF BUSINESS.

The principal offices of this society shall be located and maintained in Indianapolis, Marion county, Indiana, with such branch societies elsewhere as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of the society.

ARTICLE VI. TERM OF EXISTENCE.

This society shall have and is incorporated for a term of fifty (50) years' existence.

ARTICLE VII. SEAL.

The likeness and imprint of the official seal of this society is hereto attached. (See page 233.) The seal is the regular emblem of the society, with the word "Seal" added.

ARTICLE VIII. ELECTION.

The officers of this society shall be a President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, Organizer, General Counsel and Board of

Directors, and each and all shall be elected by popular vote of the members at the annual meeting of the society at Indianapolis, Marion county, Indiana, on the first Monday in October of each year. Members who can not be present can vote by proxy through their Secretary. (The date of the annual meeting for 1903 has been changed to the first Monday in December.)

ARTICLE IX. MANAGEMENT.

The business and prudential concerns of this society shall be managed by a Board of Directors, consisting of seven or more persons, including the President, Secretary and Treasurer; who shall be members of this society in good standing. The Board of Directors and officers for the first year, and until a Board of Directors and officers are elected at the annual meeting, are as follows:

OFFICERS.

- J. A. Everitt, President.
- Seldon R. Williams, Vice-President.
- Eli A. Hirshfield, Vice-President.
- A. D. McKinney, Secretary.
- H.W. Miller, Treasurer.
- Mark P. Turner, General Counsel.
- Sid Conger, General Organizer.
- Fremont Goodwine, Advisory Counsel.
-, Statistician.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| J. A. Everitt, | A. D. McKinney, |
| Hiram Miller, | Sid Conger, |
| Mark P. Turner, | Eli A. Hirshfield. |
| Fremont Goodwine, | |

State of Indiana, Marion County, ss:

Before me, Kathryn C. Tilly, a Notary Public, in and for said county and state, appeared J. A. Everitt, Eli A. Hirshfield, Mark P. Turner, A. D. McKinney, H. W. Miller and Sid Conger, the above named incorporators, and each for himself duly adknnowledged the execution of the above and foregoing articles of incorporation to be his voluntary act and deed for the purposes and uses therein set out.

Witness my hand and notarial seal this 17th day of December, 1902.

(Seal.)

KATHRYN C. TILLY,
Notary Public.

My commission expires August 21, 1906.

APPENDIX

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

GOVERNING LOCAL UNIONS OF THE AMERICAN
SOCIETY OF EQUITY OF N. A.

ARTICLE I. NAME.

This union shall be known as the Union of the American Society of Equity of (To save confusion all unions must bear the postoffice name, and not more than one union bear the same name, except where the territory is too large for one union others may be formed and must be designated by numbers, as Riverside Union No. 2 or No. 3, etc.)

ARTICLE II. MEMBERSHIP.

Any person, of good moral character, male or female, of the age of fourteen years or over, who is engaged in any branch of agricultural work; also all persons not engaged in agricultural work but a friend of agriculture may become members of the American Society of Equity by paying the required fees.

Proviso 1. A person may be a member of the National Union and enjoy all the general benefits of the society until there are a sufficient number of members to form a local union, but no person shall be a member of a local union without supporting the National Union. All members of the National Union are required to affiliate themselves with a local union as soon as one is organized in the neighborhood, and in this way carry out the complete plan of the society.

Proviso 2. Any young persons between the ages of 14 and 21, who are children of members of the society, and wives of members, also old men and women (75 years or older), whose life has mainly

been spent on a farm, may become complimentary members, without any membership fee or dues. The object being to encourage the youths to start aright and to smooth the pathways of the old people who have become aged in the service of agriculture. Such members must be indicated when reports are sent in.

Proviso 3. In the case of a woman who is actively engaged in agricultural pursuits on her own account, membership must be granted her on exactly the same terms as to men. In case of death of the husband, his membership will fall to his successor, be this widow or son, and such cases must be reported to the National Union by the secretary.

Proviso 4. No person can hold membership in more than one local union at the same time.

ARTICLE III. FORM OF APPLICATION.

Application for membership whould be made in the following form, to-wit:

"I, James M. Goodwill, whose postoffice is, in the county of, state of, desire to become a member of the American Society of Equity, and hereby make application for membership in the union of the A. S. of E.

"I fully appreciate the disadvantages of the old business system of farming, and I also appreciate the great advantages that must result to the agricultural class if they will in the future cooperate on the plan of the American Society of Equity. Now, therefore, I, being desirous of securing for myself, my family, and my brethren and sisters who are laboring in the same work, all the benefits that will result from cooperation, do hereby agree to follow the reasonable advice of the society regarding crops, prices, etc.

"Also recognizing the great benefits that have accrued to other lines of business through cooperation, and admitting that equal and greater benefits will result to farmers if they will cooperate, I hereby promise to, at every opportunity, induce others to join the society and cooperate.

"I hereby subscribe to the by-laws of the society."

(Signed)

(Date).....

ARTICLE IV. ADMISSION OF MEMBERS.

Members may be admitted at any regular meeting by a two-thirds vote of the members present, not less than seven members, including officers, to constitute a quorum.

ARTICLE V. FEES

The membership fee of the National Union shall be one dollar (which also covers the dues for the first year), and dues one dollar a year thereafter (or twenty-five cents a quarter); also, fifty cents additional for the official paper and bulletins. They must be paid through the local union, except if no local union, they may be forwarded direct to the National Union, Indianapolis, Ind.

Membership fees must accompany the application.

Dues to the local union will be fixed by that union in each case. It will depend on the business they undertake to do.

The dues to the National Union may be reduced or increased after the society is in working order, depending on the work undertaken, and as experience demonstrates.

The membership fee, including the official paper, has been placed at fifty cents until one million members are secured.

ARTICLE VI. OFFICERS' SALARIES AND BONDS.

The officers of a local union shall be a President-Treasurer (the two in one) and a Secretary. It shall be their duty to perform such duties as usually fall to such officers. The officers may be reasonably paid for their services, such a sum as will secure entirely competent men. The benefits to members, if they live up to the privileges, will be so great that no hardship need be imposed by the legitimate expenses. The rate of compensation shall be fixed at the annual session.

All officers holding responsible positions should execute a safe bond.

ARTICLE VII. ELECTION OF OFFICERS.

The officers shall be elected by vote of the members; first the President-Treasurer, then the Secretary. The majority electing. The election shall be held on the third Saturday in September of each year, or on such a date as the local union may select. Officers shall be elected for one year, and serve until their successors are elected.

ARTICLE VIII. VACANCIES.

In the case of a permanent vacancy of any officer for any reason, a successor must be chosen, temporarily, at the next meeting following the vacancy, and permanently at the following meeting. In case of a temporary vacancy, a temporary officer may be appointed by the remaining officer.

ARTICLE IX. ORGANIZATION OF LOCAL UNION.

Ten or more persons eligible to membership may organize a local union.

ARTICLE X. APPEALS.

Matters affecting the union, and that are not covered by the existing by-laws, may be appealed to the National Union. Such an appeal must be made in writing with the evidence.

ARTICLE XI. CHARTER.

The fee for a charter for a local union shall be one dollar, payable to the National Union.

ARTICLE XII. SEAL.

The seal of a local union shall be the name of the society, with the town, state and number and the word seal added. The cost will be charged to the local union.

ARTICLE XIII. AMENDMENTS.

These by-laws may be amended at any regular meeting, providing the amendment is voted favorably. It is expected that each local union will enact such additional laws and change these laws, as will best serve the condition existing in their district.

ARTICLE XIV. TIME OF MEETING.

The regular meeting of this union shall be held on theday of each (week or month), at o'clock. Seven members, shall constitute a quorum. (Where the union owns its meeting place it is recommended that the room be kept open constantly for the use of the members.)

ARTICLE XV. SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES.

Litigation is to be discourage, and in no case shall members of the American Society of Equity enter into litigation at law with each other, or a member against a non-member, until the matter is presented to the union and its good offices used to settle

the difference, except when delay will be detrimental.

Any member violating this provision shall be liable to expulsion.

ARTICLE XVI. WITHDRAWALS.

Any person may withdraw by making his desire known previous to calling to order of any meeting and being present at the meeting, when the demand will be considered in the regular order of business. Unless the applicant is persuaded to continue a member, permission to withdraw shall be given by the President. All dues are to be paid up to time of withdrawal.

ARTICLE XVII. PAYMENT OF MONEY.

All orders for warrants must be signed by both the President-Treasurer and the Secretary.

ARTICLE XVIII. RECORDS, REPORTS, NOTICES.

It shall be the duty of the Secretary to keep a record of all transactions. The minutes of any meeting must be approved at the next meeting and then become matter of permanent record. Also, to secure reports on crop conditions, acreage, yields, etc., and forward a copy to the National Union as frequently as twice a month, and more frequently when conditions out of the ordinary prevail; also to report all new members, withdrawals, delinquencies, deaths, etc., sending a report to the National Union (suitable blanks will be provided for these purposes), and to do all things as will tend to the building up of the society and the advancement of the interests of the members.

ARTICLE XIX. LOCAL CONDITIONS.

In each locality some conditions exist that are peculiar to that place alone; therefore, it is expected to amend these by-laws to meet the conditions of the particular sections.

While cooperative buying and the conduct of cooperative stores is not deemed necessary when the farmers get profitable prices by cooperative selling, yet cooperation in any line or in any direction that will benefit the agricultural classes is not prohibited. We simply ask each member to keep in mind the motto of his beloved society. "Equity."

APPENDIX

BY-LAWS

of the

WISCONSIN STATE UNION, AMERICAN
SOCIETY OF EQUITY, (CO-OPERATIVE)

ARTICLE I

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION

The provisions of the Articles of Incorporation of this association are hereby made part of these by-laws.

ARTICLE II

MEETINGS

The regular annual meeting of the association shall be held at such a place and at such a time as the directors shall determine. Notice of such annual meeting shall be given in the manner provided by law.

Delegates at large are forbidden.

At the Local meeting one delegate may be elected to the County Convention for every two members or fraction thereof present.

At the Local meeting one delegate may be elected to the State Convention for every twenty-five members or fraction thereof present.

At the County Convention one delegate may be elected to the State Convention for every fifty members or fraction thereof present or represented by actual vote.

At the State meeting each county delegate shall cast as many votes as the number of members he represents. If Local delegates are present at the State meeting the votes of the County delegate shall be cut down accordingly, as the Local delegates shall cast such votes.

In all cases, whether Local, County or State, delegates may (on roll call vote) cast only as many votes as they actually repre-

sent by direct vote.
No absentee voting is allowed.

LOCAL UNIONS

To organize a Local Union, at least seven persons qualified for membership, may assemble and proceed to organize themselves into a Local Union, by paying membership fees and one year's dues in advance, subscribing to this constitution, electing the officers it provides, and making report, with membership fees and proper dues, to the State Secretary, or if possible or convenient, a commissioned organizer may be called to organize, after which report shall be made to the State Secretary, as aforesaid. Five members only shall be required to hold charter after organization.

Whenever the members, in good standing in any Local Union, shall fall below five, it shall stand suspended until such disability is removed, provided that all members in good standing in such Local Union may transfer their membership to another Local Union or become members-at-large immediately upon notice of suspension of charter, without further action. The Secretary of any Local Union, receiving a member from a suspended Local Union, must include that fact in his next report to the State Union.

COUNTY UNIONS

Any county having not less than four chartered Local Unions or fifty members in good standing that will join therein, may organize a County Union. The meeting to organize each County Union shall be entitled to one representative for every ten members or fraction thereof. The representatives shall meet at a time and place previously fixed and organize by electing such officers as they shall provide.

All Local Unions in an organized county and all Local Unions that may be organized therein shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the County and State Unions.

The work of a County Union shall be such as it may determine if not in conflict with the State Union. Its special duty shall be to maintain the organization and its effectiveness within the county.

County Unions shall stand suspended whenever the number of active Local Unions within the county falls below four or if the number of members in good standing falls below fifty in counties having less than four Locals and county dues shall then be the same and handled the same as for unorganized counties. County Unions may be re-organized without extra cost whenever the above disability is removed.

Whenever a County Union stands suspended the County Union fund in the county treasury at that time shall be immediately returned back to the State Union, to be held in trust for that county and repaid to such county upon reorganization.

ARTICLE III

ELECTION AND ELIGIBILITY OF DIRECTORS

The directors shall be elected annually at the regular annual meeting of the association and shall hold their offices for one year or until their successors shall have been elected and qualified.

There shall be, on the board of directors, one representative from every county which is recognized by this association as an organized county, subject to the following proviso: In the event that the number of such counties is so small that one such representative from each county will not complete the total number of directors called for by the Articles of Incorporation, then, unless the articles be amended, the members shall elect the remaining directors from any counties, whether recognized as organized or not. In the event that the number of organized counties is so large that one representative for each county will more than complete the total number of directors called for by the Articles of Incorporation, then, unless the articles be amended, the members shall determine which of such counties shall not be entitled to be represented by directors.

Directors shall be nominated at County meeting and County shall pay the expense of director and County delegates.

Vacancies occurring on the board of directors may be filled by the remaining members thereof.

ARTICLE IV

DUTIES AND POWERS OF DIRECTORS

The directors shall hold their regular annual meeting within ten days after the regular annual meeting of the association. The president may call additional meetings of the board at any time and shall be obliged to call such a meeting upon demand of a majority of the directors. Notice of every directors' meeting shall be mailed by the secretary to each director at least five days in advance of such meeting or may be telegraphed two days in advance or the meeting may be held on waiver of notice.

A majority of the directors shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, but a less number may adjourn from day to day upon giving notice to the absent members of the board.

The directors, at their regular annual meeting, shall elect from their number a president and vice-president and shall elect a secretary and a treasurer or a secretary-treasurer, who may or may not be from their own number.

The directors shall fix the compensation of all officers and employes, and shall have authority to remove any officer for cause or any employe at any time, and may fill any vacancy caused by such removal.

The directors shall require any officer or employe, to whom funds of the association are entrusted, to furnish bond in such amount as the directors may determine, the expense of such bond to be paid by the association.

ARTICLE V

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The directors at their regular annual meeting shall appoint an executive committee consisting of the president, vice-president, and three other directors.

The directors may determine the tenure of office of this committee and prescribe its powers and duties. Such powers and duties may be all the powers and duties of the directors, subject to the general direction, approval and control of the directors.

The provision for notice of any meeting of the executive committee and for quorum at such a meeting and for additional meetings shall be the same as is prescribed in these by-laws for directors' meetings.

ARTICLE VI

DUES

Every member of this association shall pay annual dues of \$3.00, of which 50¢ shall be divided equally between the local and county unions, if any, with which the member is affiliated; provided, that, if there be no such county union, then thirty cents shall be paid to the local union and twenty cents held by the treasurer of this association in trust for the county union when organized, but in no case to be thus held for a longer period than five years, after which said sums thus accumulated during the preceding five year period shall become the property of this association.

Annual dues shall be payable in advance, beginning with the date when membership is acquired, except as may be otherwise provided in the Articles of Incorporation or By-Laws of this association.

ARTICLE VII

AUDITING COMMITTEE

The president shall appoint an auditing committee consisting of three members of this association whose duty is shall be to audit all accounts prior to the regular annual meeting of the association.

ARTICLE VIII

ENACTMENT, AMENDMENT AND REPEAL OF BY-LAWS

By-Laws may be enacted, amended or repealed at any meeting of the association, by a vote of the majority of the members present, unless otherwise provided by law.

PARLIAMENTARY RULES

1. On motion the regular order of business may be suspended by a two-thirds vote of the meeting, at any time, to dispose of urgent business.
2. All resolutions and resignations must be submitted in writing.
3. Any conversation by whispering or otherwise, which is calculated to disturb a member while speaking, or hinder the transaction of business shall be deemed a violation of order.
4. Partisan or sectarian discussion shall not be permitted in the meetings under any circumstances.
5. All questions of a parliamentary nature not provided for in these rules shall be decided by Robert's Rules of Order.

MOTIONS

6. Motions to be entertained by the presiding officer, must be seconded, and the mover as well as the seconder must rise and be recognized by the Chair.
7. In presenting a motion, a brief statement of its objects may be made, but no discussion of its merits shall be admitted until the motion is stated by the Chair.
8. Any member having made a motion can withdraw it by consent of his second, but a motion once debated cannot be withdrawn except by unanimous consent.
9. A motion to amend an amendment shall be in order, but no motion to amend an amendment to an amendment shall be permitted.
10. Any member may call for the division of a question where the sense will admit thereof.

DEBATE

11. A motion shall not be subject to debate until it has been stated by the Chair.
12. When a member wishes the floor he shall rise and respectfully address the Chair, and if recognized by the Chair he shall be entitled to the floor.
13. If two or more members rise to speak at the same time the Chair shall decide which is entitled to the floor.

14. Each member, when speaking, shall confine himself to the question under debate and avoid all personal, indecorous or sarcastic language.
15. No member shall interrupt another while speaking, except to raise a point of order, and he shall definitely state the point, and the Chair shall decide the same without debate.
16. If a member, while speaking, be called to order, he shall take his seat until the point of order is decided, when, if decided in order, he may proceed.
17. If any member shall feel himself personally aggrieved by the decision of the Chair, he may appeal of the Local Union from the decision.
18. When an appeal is made from the decision of the Chair, said appeal shall be stated by the Chairman to the meeting in these words: "Shall the decision of the Chair be sustained as the decision of this meeting?" The member will then have a right to state the grounds of his appeal, and the Chair will give the reasons for his decision; there-upon the Union will proceed to vote upon the appeal without further debate.
19. No member shall speak more than once on the same subject until all the members desiring the floor shall have spoken, nor more than twice without unanimous consent, nor more than five minutes at one time.
20. The presiding officer shall not speak on any subject except points of order and appeals from the decision of the Chair, nor can he vote, only in case of a tie, when he shall have the deciding vote.

PRIVILEGED QUESTIONS

21. When a question is before the meeting no motion shall be in order except:
 - (1) To adjourn.
 - (2) To lay on the table.
 - (3) For the previous question.
 - (4) To postpone to a given time.
 - (5) To refer or recommit.
 - (6) To amend; and these motions shall have precedence in the order herein arranged.
22. The following motions are not debatable:
 - (1) To adjourn.
 - (2) To lay on the table.
 - (3) To read a paper or document.
23. When the previous question is moved and seconded it shall be put in this form: "Shall the main question now be put?" If this is carried all further motions, amendments and debate shall be excluded, and the question put without delay.
24. If a question has been amended, the question on the amendment

shall be put first. If more than one amendment has been offered, the question shall then be put as follows:

- (1) Amendment to amendment.
 - (2) Amendment.
 - (3) Original proposition.
25. When a question is postponed indefinitely it shall not come up again except by unanimous consent.
26. A motion to adjourn shall always be in order, except:
- (1) When a motion is before the house.
 - (2) When a member has the floor.
 - (3) When members are voting.
 - (4) When it has been decided to take up the previous question.

TAKING THE VOTE

27. Before putting a question to vote, the presiding officer shall ask: "Is the Union ready for the question?" Then it shall be open for debate. If no member rises to speak, the presiding officer shall then put the question. And after the vote is taken he shall immediately announce the vote.
28. When the presiding officer has commenced taking a vote, no further debate or remarks shall be allowed unless a mistake has been made, in which case the mistake shall be rectified and the presiding officer shall recommence taking the vote.
29. Before the presiding officer declares a vote on a question, any member may ask for a division of the house; then the Chair is in duty bound to comply with the request and a standing vote shall be taken.
30. Every member present shall vote on all questions before the Union, unless personally interested or excused by the Union.
31. When a blank is to be filled the questions shall be taken up consecutively in the order appearing on the blank.
32. When a question has been decided, it can be reconsidered only at the same meeting or at the next regular meeting.
33. A motion be reconsider must be made and seconded by two members who voted with the majority.
34. When nothing to the contrary is stated, a majority vote is sufficient.

APPENDIX
MEMBERSHIP FIGURES

Attempting to gather membership figures was a difficult task. I have, however, succeeded in obtaining the following. On October 1, 1903, Up-To-Date Farming quoted the membership in the national union thus:

Alabama	247	Louisiana	192	Oklahoma	1168
Arizona	41	Maryland	354	Oregon	387
Arkansas	858	Montana	129	Ohio	5020
California	438	Massachusetts	277	Pennsylvania	2846
Canada	272	Maine	84	Rhode Island	33
Colorado	240	Michigan	2257	South Carolina	120
Connecticut	132	Mississippi	197	South Dakota	120
Delaware	47	Minnesota	469	Tennessee	1808
Florida	121	Nebraska	610	Texas	1830
Georgia	203	New Mexico	85	Utah	110
Idaho	218	Nevada	8	Vermont	104
Illinois	4731	New York	1107	Virginia	1101
Indiana	5321	New Jersey	195	W. Virginia	1813
Iowa	1492	New Hampshire	67	Wyoming	55
Kansas	1834	North Carolina	414	Wisconsin	459
Kentucky	2156	North Dakota	387	Misscel.	308
Total Membership					46,331

I A subscriber to the paper was virtually a member then.

In 1907, Everitt claimed the society had members in 2,700 of the 3,000 counties in the United States and in 35,000 post offices out of a total of 68,000.² At the same time the membership was estimated as being approximately 17,000.³

According to the report of the national secretary, at the end of 1912 the national union records stood as follows:⁴

<u>State</u>	<u>Members in good standing</u>	<u>Delinquent members</u>	<u>Total</u>
Wisconsin	5972	3134	9106
Kentucky	2260	1722	3982
Minnesota	1807	967	2774
Montana	62	--	62
Tennessee	52	3	55
Kansas	--	51	51
Indiana	--	42	42
North Dakota	--	60	60
Illinois	--	18	18
Washington, D.C.	--	2	2
	<u>10,153</u>	<u>5999</u>	<u>16,152</u>
Members in good standing in North and South Dakota	2,400		2,400
Delinquent		<u>1,600</u>	<u>1,600</u>
	12,553	7,599	20,152

² Independent, 62:1197.

³ You Have Been Deceived and Betrayed by Your Trusted Representatives, 14.

⁴ Equity News, January 10, 1913.

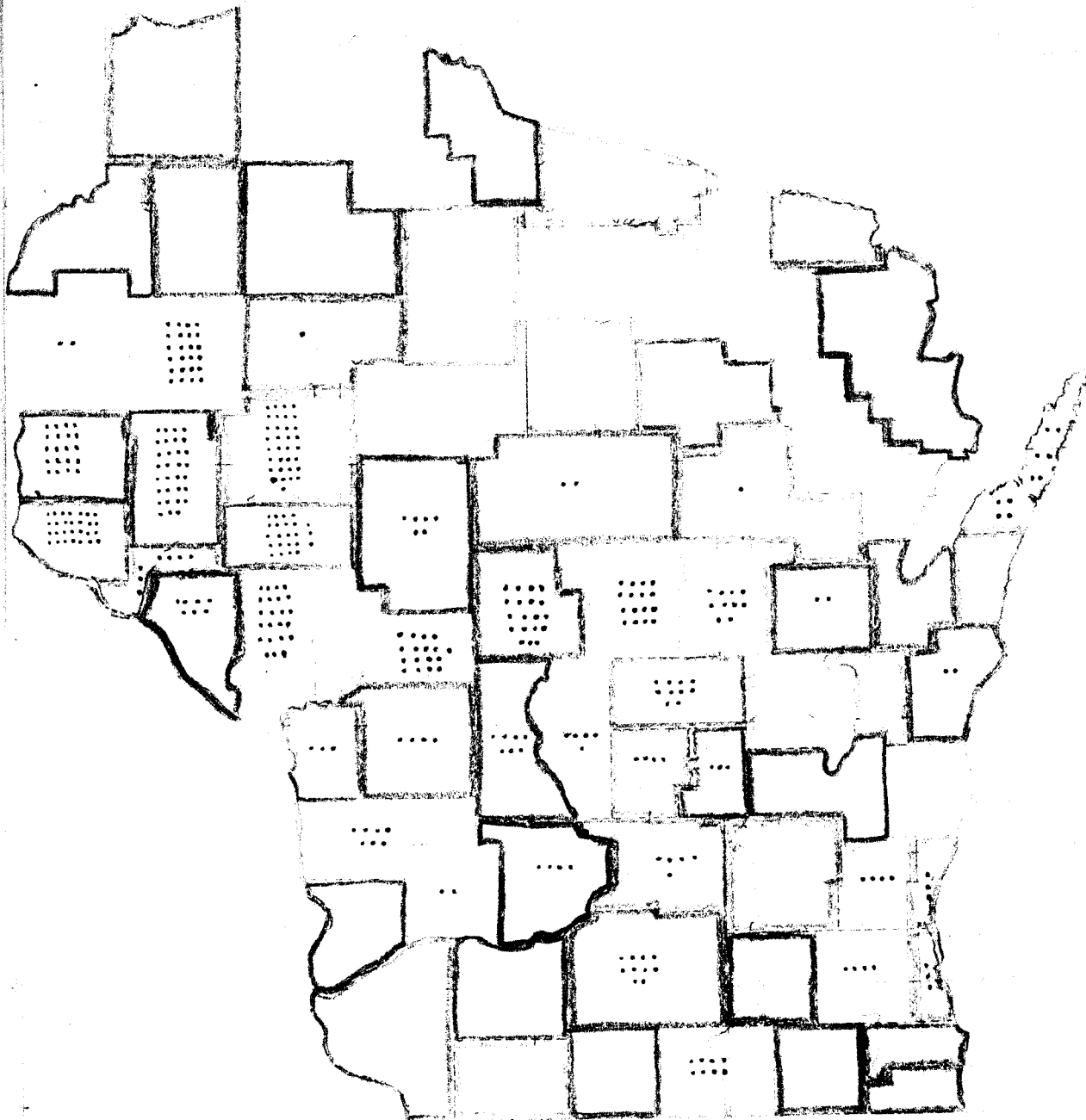
The most complete figures were found with reference to the Wisconsin state union, and they were as follows:

Comparative Statement Showing Total Members Paying Dues

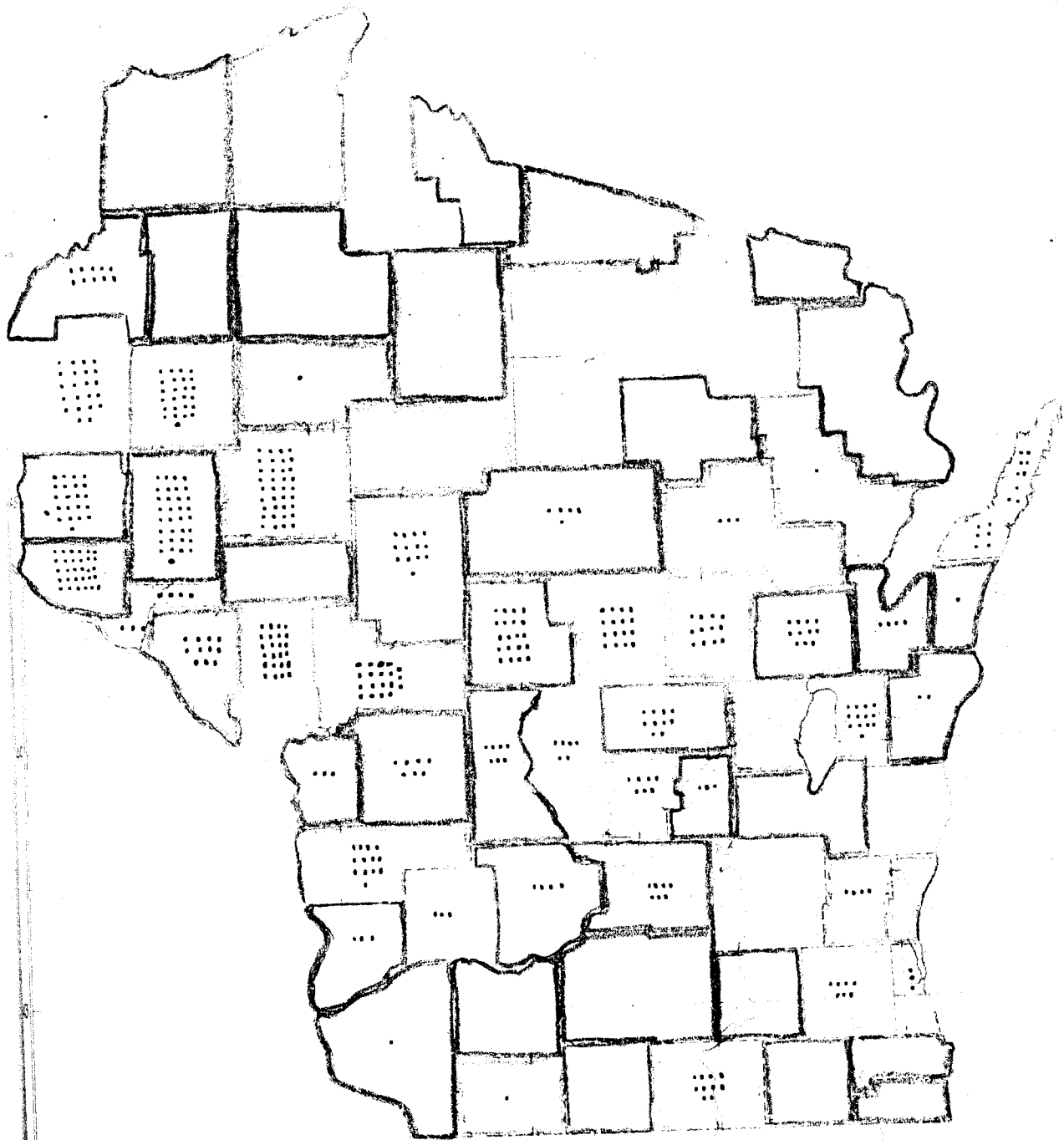
<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Paying</u>
1907	10,109
1908	8,335
1909	8,305
1910	8,193
1911	7,785
1912	6,488
1913	6,104
1914	7,355
1915	7,895
1916	9,507
1917	12,996
1918	22,768
1919	28,905
1920	28,358
1921	18,545
1922	8,945
1923	6,714
1924	4,844
1925	4,373
1926	4,201
1927	3,894

1928	3,495
1929	4,441
1930	3,593
1931	3,251
1932	2,221 ⁵
1933	1,668

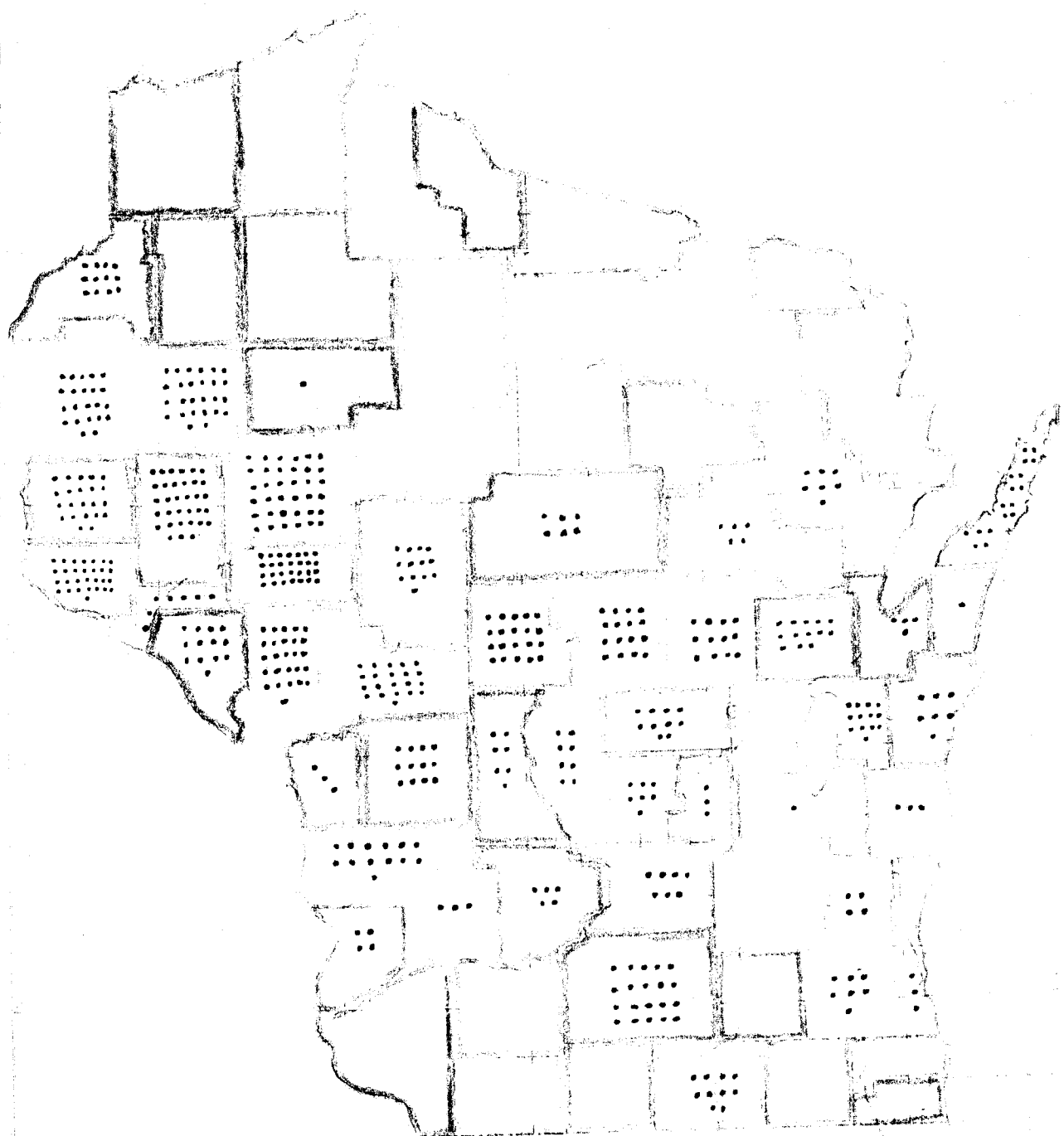
⁵ Equity News, December 1, 1920, 1926 and 1927; Wisconsin State Union of the American Society of Equity, Report for Year October 1, 1932 to September 30, 1933, Exhibit D.



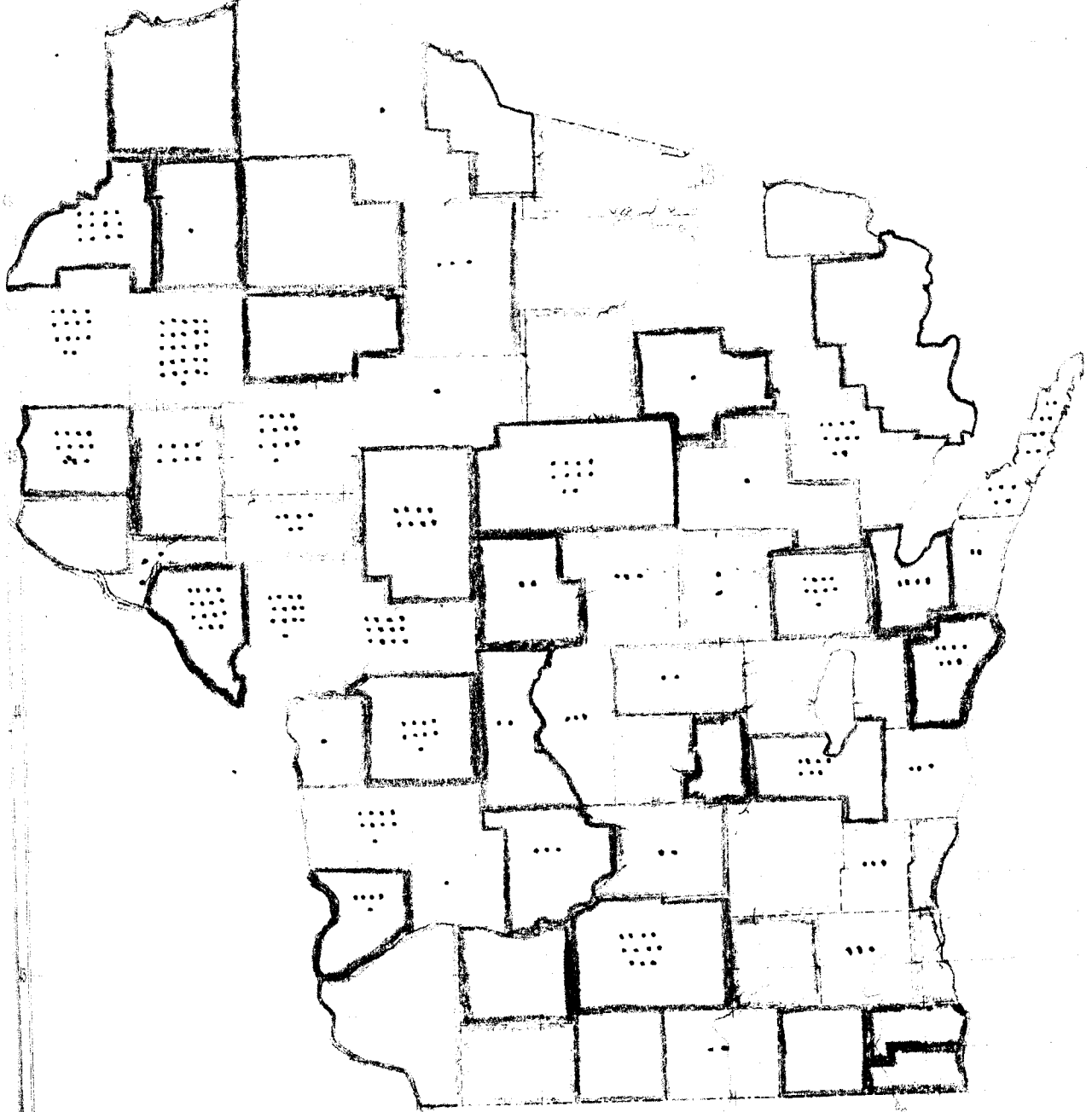
• = 1 local union
1907



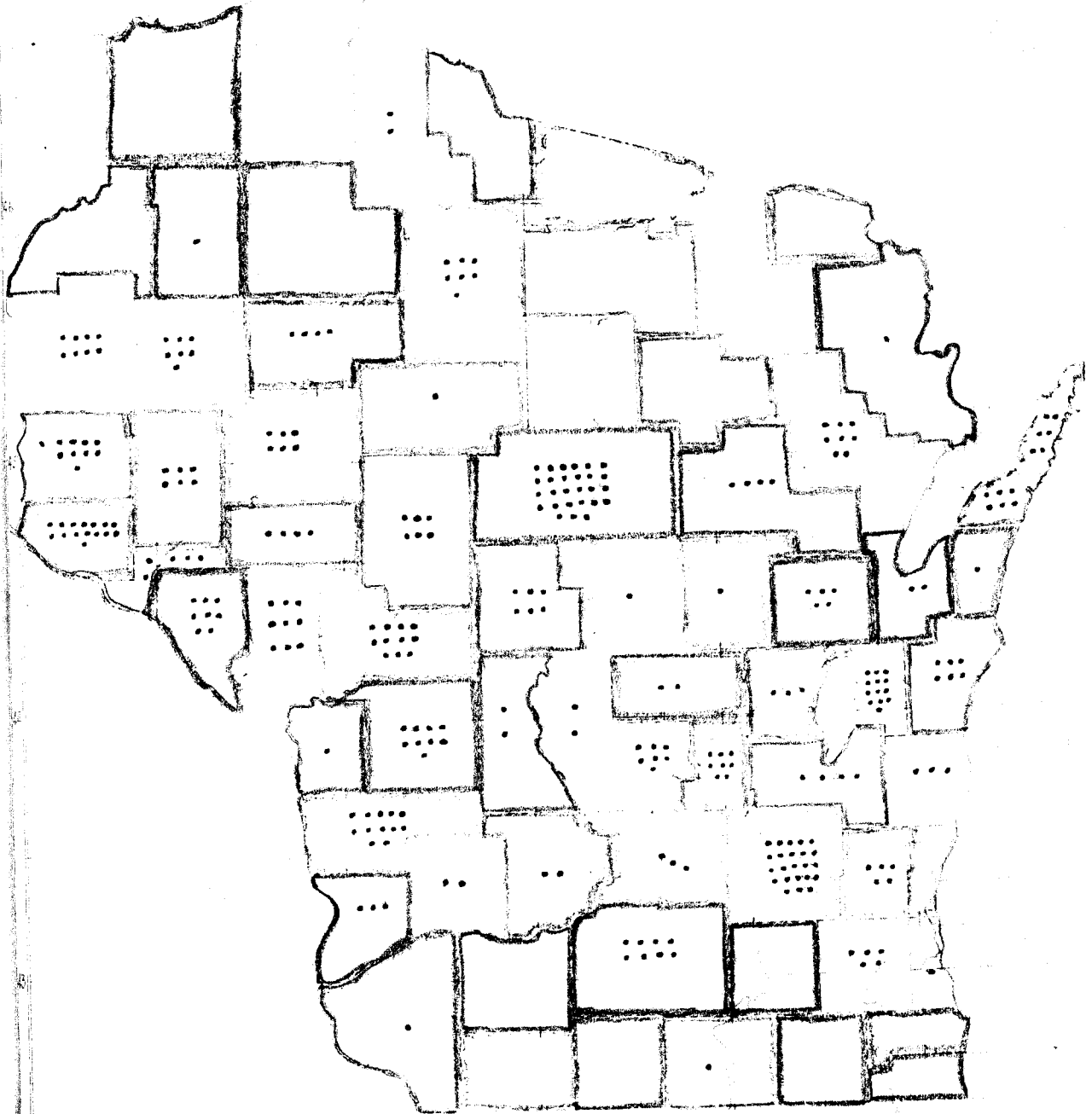
• = 1 local union
1908



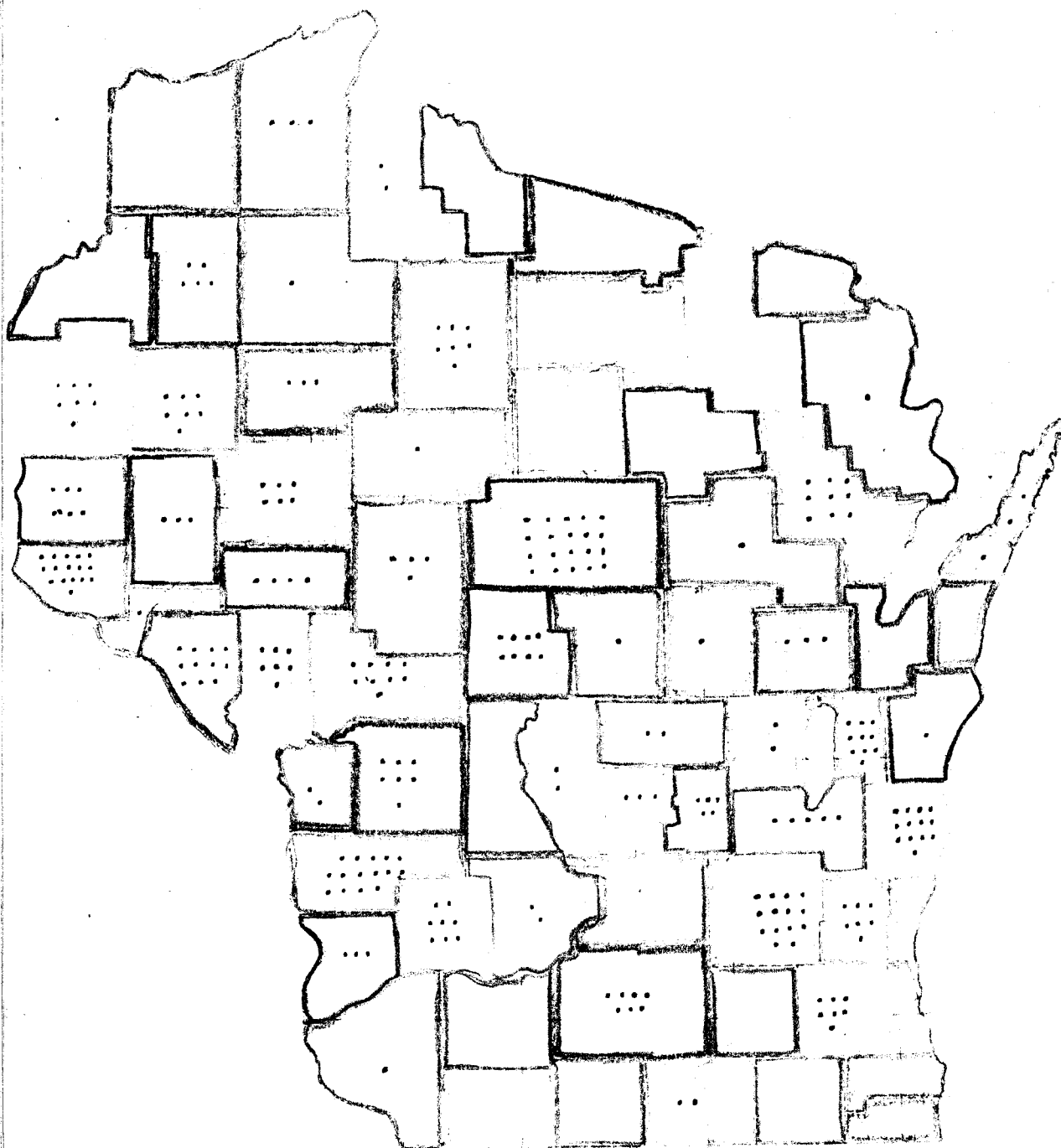
• = 1 local union
1909



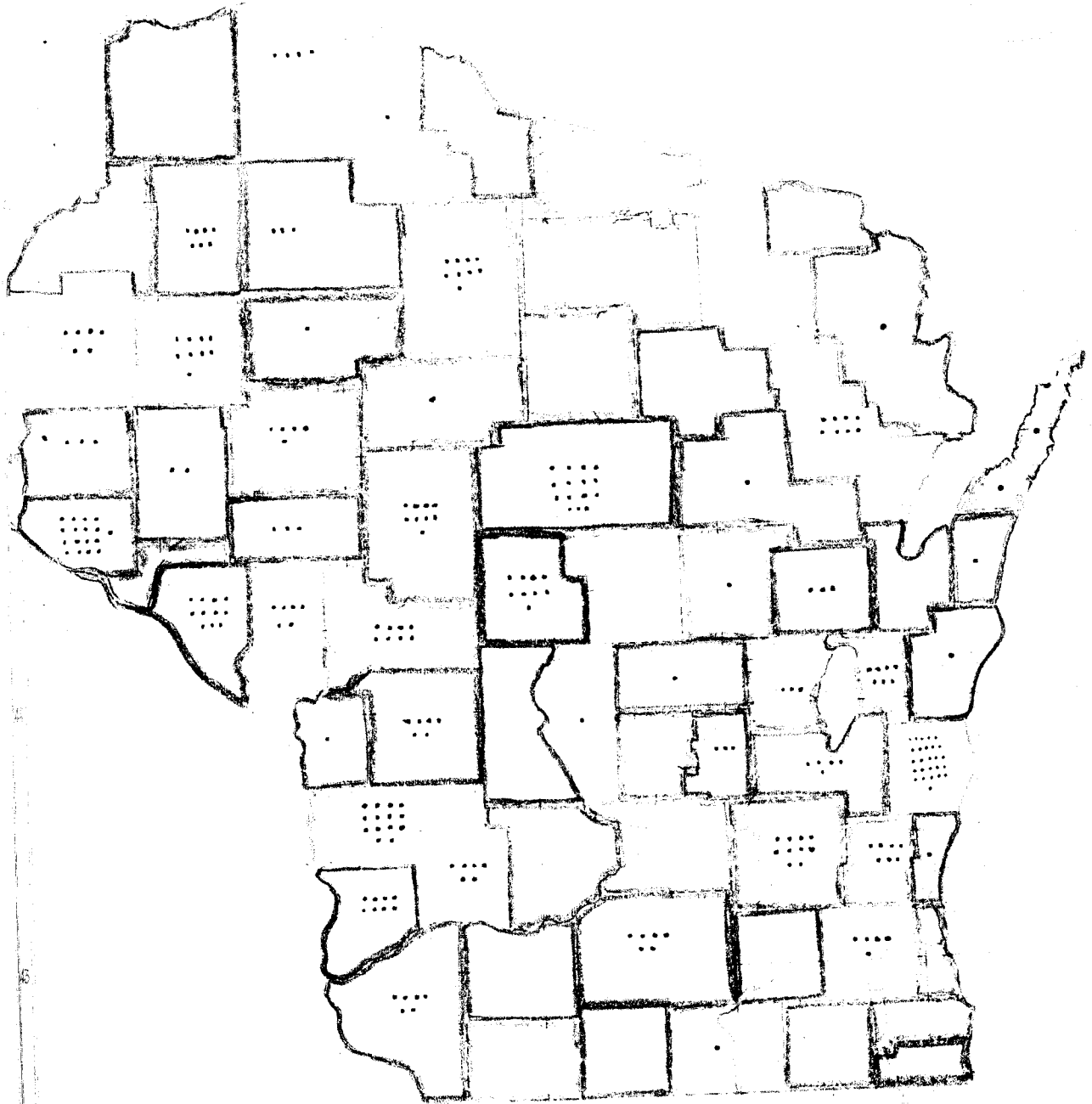
• = 1 local union
1910



• = 1 local union
1911



• = 1 local union
1912

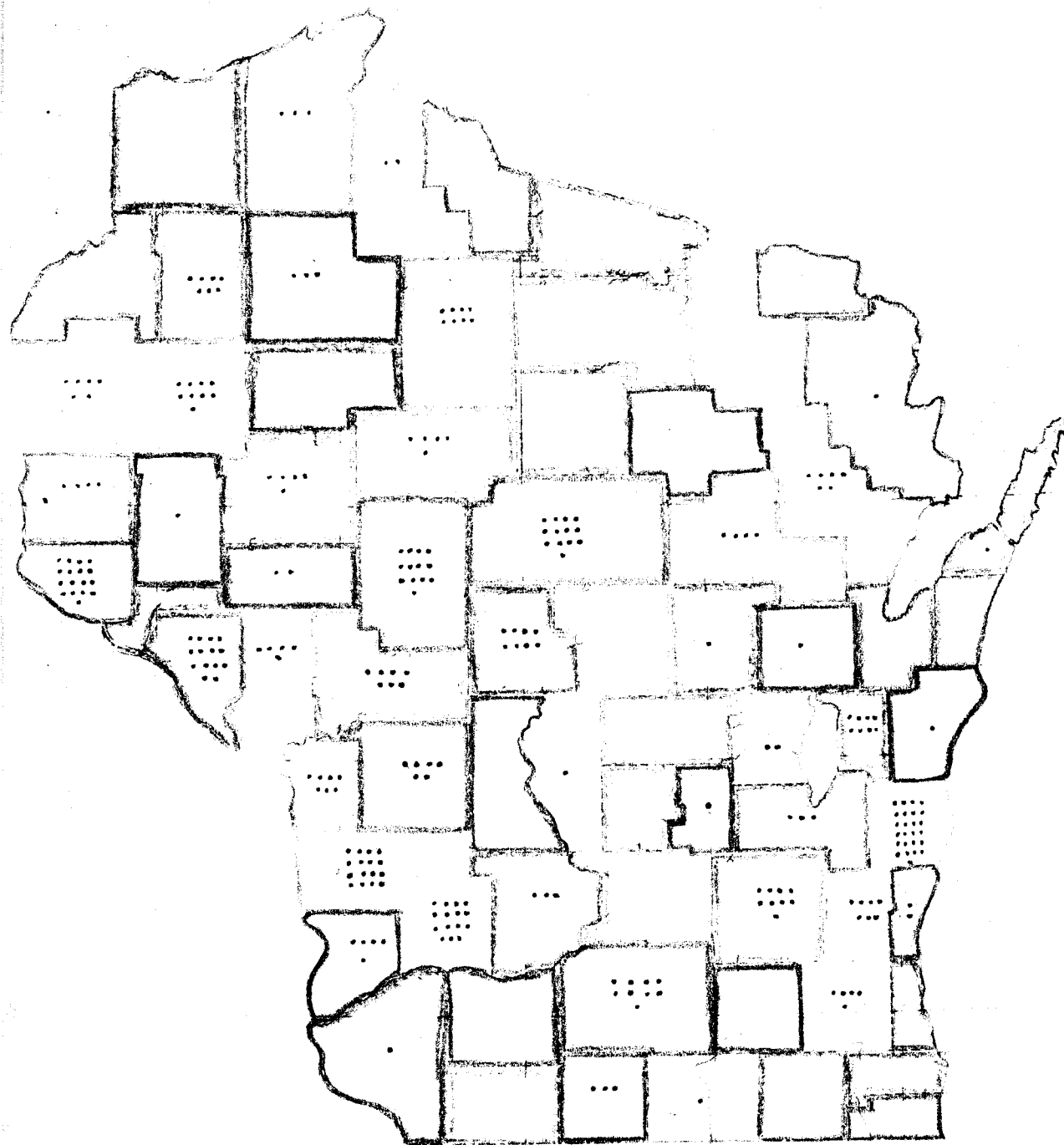


• = 1 local union
1913

5

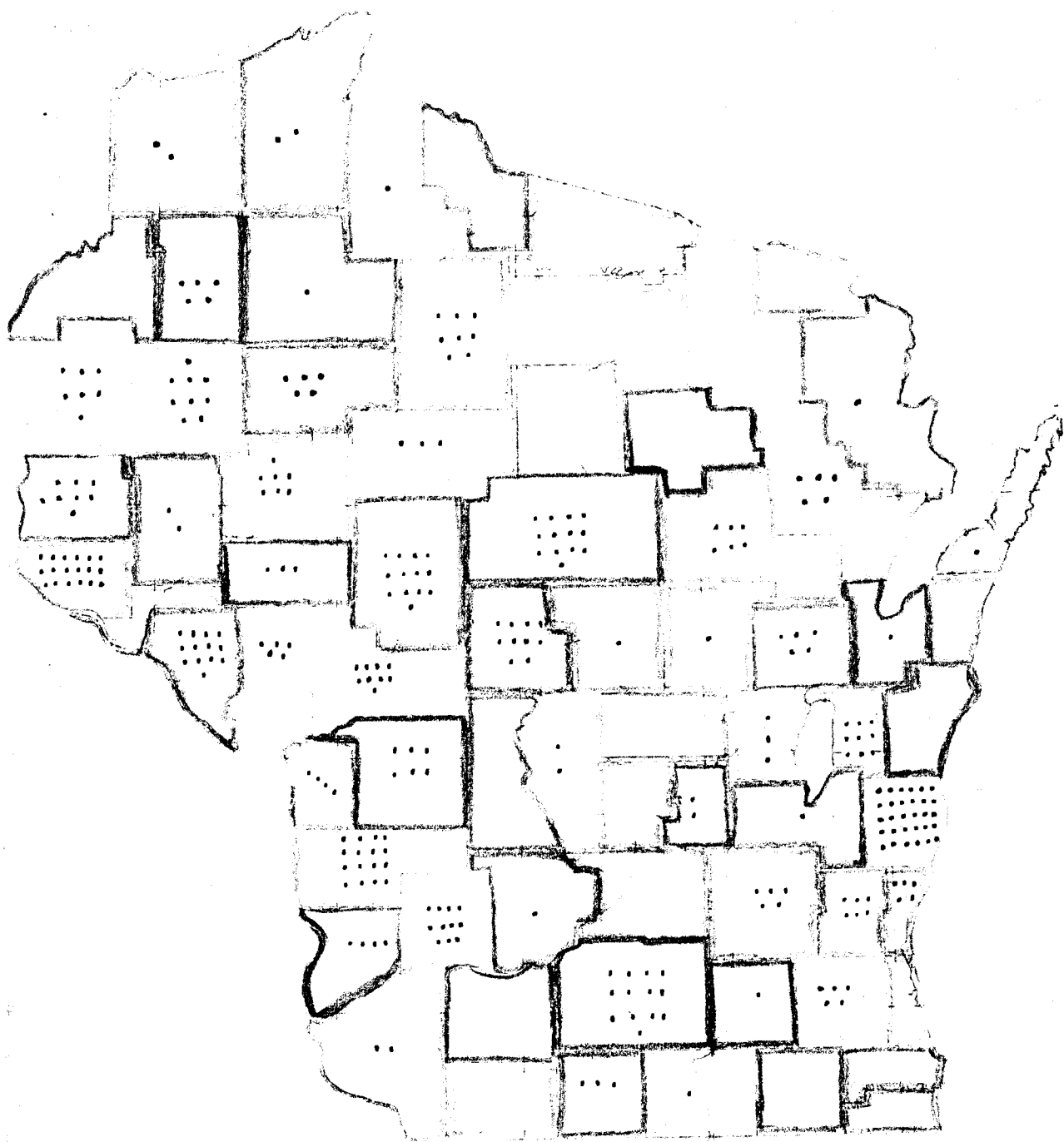
12

JOHNS



• = 1 local union

1914



• = 1 local union
1915

Figures showing the amount of business and the patronage dividends dispersed by the Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales Association of Milwaukee.
1

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of cars</u>	<u>Amount of Dividends</u>
1922	1399	\$ 2981.00
1923	2246	9915.00
1924	2465	10344.00
1925	2360	5000.34
1926	2654	6885.98
1927	2895	8446.07
1928	3012	8761.15
1929	2949	8424.81
1930	3742	13406.77
1931	4171	15614.59
1932	3823	11692.41
1933	4090	12649.37
1934	4757	17533.55
1935	5041	18834.10
1936	6392	31357.59 *

* total
profits

1 Steidl, A Brief History of Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales Association, 2.

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