

# How They Saved The Raisin Industry

By Charles Edward Russell

Cooperation has been in so many ways an inestimable boon to the producers of California that I should find it hard to count them all.

I can no more than give you here a few examples and try to suggest what would be the situation of thousands of California farmers without the vast help and protection of Cooperation.

Take raisins as our next specimen—raisins, the enormous crop that brings to the state every year so many million dollars. In Tulare and King counties you ride all day through an endless vineyard, in all devoted to the grapes of which raisins are made.

It is not too much to say that without the very efficient cooperative organization that now protects the raisin growers that industry this year would have been practically ruined and an almost inconceivable business disaster would have fallen upon all those thriving towns in the San Joaquin valley that depend upon the raisin grower almost as completely as the average North Dakota town depends upon the wheat grower.

#### Present Crop Profitable.

The crop this year was beyond all records.

If it had been marketed in the old way, that most of your wheat crop is marketed, with the growers at the mercy of the buyers, the prices se-

cured would have been so small that hardly a grower in the region would have covered his expenses and most would have ended the season with a crushing loss.

The buyers of raisins would have combined as the buyers of your wheat always combine to manipulate prices and reap for themselves all the benefits of the great crop. The farmer would have planted and toiled. God would have given the increase, and the broker and commission houses would have taken every cent of the profit, leaving the farmer penniless and facing his mortgage interest.

#### Scientific Marketing System.

We know absolutely that this would have happened in the raisin industry in California, because this was what did happen again and again when the raisin growers marketed their raisins in the manner that most North Dakota farmers market their wheat.

But the California Raisin Association, the great central cooperative body that represents the grower and controls the market for him, prevented anything of that kind. By its superior, scientific and complete marketing system it held the prices steady, eliminated the monstrous waste of the commission house, cut out the crime of speculation in a food product, and brought back to

the producer the full value of his product.

The producer got twice as much for his raisins as he used to get under the old competitive system of every-man-for-himself. Yet the consumer paid no more.

#### Would Lower Living Cost

Suppose this result were to be achieved in all lines of production, what would be left of our old friend the Cost of Living Problem?

The California Raisin Association, like most of the other Cooperative organizations of the State, was a thing forced upon the producers after years of futile efforts to get something like a square deal and still preserve the old competitive idea in marketing the raisin industry, in the meantime, being largely ruined while they fiddled with this and that in the way of remedies that would not work. They had "pools" that always went to pieces and growers protective associations that protected nothing, until they learned wisdom and launched the present association on April 1, 1913.

Three thousand, six hundred raisin growers subscribed the capital stock, which is now \$1,046,400. The conditions of the business were such that a working capital was absolutely essential, and this is the way it was secured.

The system of business differs somewhat from the systems employed by other cooperative organizations, but this is necessary. The grower makes the raisins, bringing them in large flat boxes to the local warehouse and getting a weight receipt that is good for about 60 per cent of the ultimate value of the raisins. The rest he gets when the marketing is complete. The association returns dividends to its stockholders instead of dividing the final residue among the producers. Last year it paid 5 per cent and this year it earned 11 per cent.

Last year it handled \$8,000,000 worth of product and this year it will handle more than \$10,000,000 worth—that is to say about 90,000 tons of raisins.

#### Brilliantly Successful.

The stockholders elect twenty-five trustees, who in turn choose seven directors in whose hands rests the active management of the business. It has been so brilliantly successful that it has been enlarged to take in wine grapes and is likely to be still further extended.

Scientific business methods, the standardization of product and wise management have enormously enhanced the market for California raisins, and the grower is getting this benefit with the rest.

#### A BUSY WOMAN

Chicago, Dec. 7.—The busiest woman in the world has come to the busiest city in the world to seek rest. She is Mrs. Meta Erickson, president of the Amador Central railroad, which is located in California. It is the only railroad in the world run by a woman.

The Amador Central is only 12

miles long, has five locomotives, owns 75 freight cars and runs two trains a day. The road is valued at \$750,000.

"I've been president more than two years now and I believe that I need a rest," Mrs. Erickson declared.

"We have a board of directors—seven men—and they decided that I could run the road to suit them. I am a suffragist and I believe that a woman should not shirk her duties.

"I certainly have duties enough now," she continued. "I sing when I have time, and play the piano, and I cook—just love to cook."

"And I'm taking a course in agriculture at the University of California. And then, too, I have children to take care of—three sons and a daughter."

It was Mrs. Erickson's late husband who built the railroad. He was president of it until he died.

Even Up.—"Aw, Aw," said Snobleigh—"it must be—aw,—very unpleasant for you Americans to be—aw—governed by people whom you—aw—wouldn't awsk to dinner."

"O, I don't know," said the American girl; "no more so than for you to be governed by people who would not ask you to dinner."—Ladies' Home Journal.

The Leader fights for the farmers.

## To the Grain Growers of North Dakota:

In 1911, there was formed, by farmers, a corporation, for the handling of grain on terminal markets, known as the Equity Co-operative Exchange. It began business in Minneapolis, Minn. and Superior, Wis. August 1st, 1912—a little more than three years ago. It began in opposition to the most strongly entrenched combine in our land—The Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce. By that institution we have been maligned and slandered from the public platform and in the subsidized public press; and have been persecuted in the courts.

But through it all we have won. We are handling now over 500,000 bushels of grain each week; and prospects are that this will soon be increased to a million.

We are building a terminal elevator in the city of St. Paul, wherein grain may be dried, clipped, and cleaned for the benefit of the farmers. We need your co-operation. Buy a share of stock which sells at par for \$50.00. Consign your grain to us at St. Paul and Superior, Wis. Help us grow, grow with us and become a part of our great purpose.

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