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# **Cooperation in New England, Urban and Rural**

**Ford James**

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**Title: Cooperation in New England, Urban and Rural**

**Author: Ford James**

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105 EAST 22d STREET, NEW YORK

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CO-OPERATION IN  
NEW ENGLAND

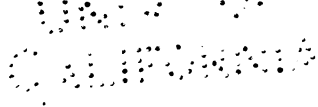
URBAN AND RURAL

BY  
JAMES FORD, PH.D.

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INTRODUCTION

By FRANCIS G. PEABODY, LL.D.



NEW YORK  
SURVEY ASSOCIATES, INC.

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PRESS OF WM. F. FELL CO.  
PHILADELPHIA

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## INTRODUCTION

**I**NDUSTRIAL co-operation is regarded just now by many people as an antiquated and abandoned scheme. Its advantages are moderate in their dimensions and slow in their arrival. It calls for much patience and economy. It takes the world as it is and makes the best of it, instead of condemning it as incapable of good. For all these reasons co-operation is unattractive to those who expect a wholesale and immediate transformation of the industrial order. To such minds revolution looks more promising than evolution; patience seems more like a vice than a virtue; and economy seems to tempt the worker to submission rather than to inflame him with discontent. "Beware of thrift," a revolutionist has said, "it is the workingman's enemy; let him spend what he gets and demand more."

The world of industry, as it might be organized under co-operation, would in its outward form seem not unlike the Co-operative Commonwealth proposed by socialists. Capitalism would be supplanted by common ownership; and the profits of production and distribution would accrue to the wage-earners themselves. Indeed, there are signs that this kinship of ideals is becoming recog-

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nized, and that co-operation may be accepted as a step to the socialist faith. Yet in their spirit the two schemes have hitherto had little in common. They have stood, as it were, near to each other, yet back to back, looking out on different worlds. One has seen in the existing industrial order signs of hope and peace; the other has seen increasing discontent, hopelessness, and war. One has welcomed a practical movement toward industrial justice even though it may not realize all its dreams; the other has found such partial measures obstructive of the comprehensive plan of revolution and tempting working people to an ignoble peace. "To put money in the savings-bank," the English socialist Hyndman has said, "is to accumulate orders on other people's labor and is no benefit to those who save"; and to the same effect Mr. Bax taught: "The socialists are radically at variance with thrift. A man who works at his trade more than his necessity compels him, or who accumulates more than he can enjoy, is not a hero but a fool from the socialist's point of view."

It must be admitted that the history of co-operation in the United States goes far to encourage either scepticism or hostility. With few exceptions it has been the history of failures. Many co-operative enterprises which were launched with the most buoyant hope soon found themselves on the rocks of financial or moral ruin. The lessons which this volume teaches are, in the main, lessons of warning. It is not surprising, therefore, that the movement to improve the con-

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dition of wage-earners has, for the present, swept past the co-operative plan toward more radical and aggressive schemes. And yet the student of this world-wide movement toward industrial freedom finds his attention arrested by the fact that in all the progressive countries of Europe the co-operative system has played a notable part both in advancing the welfare and in consolidating the organization of wage-earners. In England, Ireland, Belgium, France, Italy, and Denmark, distributive stores, agricultural production, banking, farming, building—all these types of co-operative industry, though they have different lessons to teach, present examples of mutual advantage, popular education, and social hope. The single instance of the British organization with its membership in 1911, of 2,640,091, in 1,407 distributive societies, and its wholesale business of £35,744,069 of sales, and £1,000,518 of profits, is enough to demonstrate the capacity of plain people to conduct great business affairs, and to justify the conclusion reached by the leading economist of England, Professor Marshall, that it must be regarded as “unique among all the achievements that have been wrought by the working classes in the history of the world.” “In the world’s history,” continued the same teacher, in his address at the Ipswich Congress, “there has been one waste-product, so much more important than all the others that it has a right to be called *the* waste product. It is the higher ability of the working classes, the latent and undeveloped, the