CHAPTER 7

OTHER FOREIGN COOPERATIVES

Cooperatives World-Wide. The past few chapters have been briefly describing the achievements of a few foreign countries who have succeeded in pulling themselves up by their boot-straps from economic poverty, and all that goes with it, by means of cooperative activities in functioning their various economic structures. To cite these countries as the only ones that have achieved economic greatness by cooperation would be wrong. There are examples of economic freedom gained by many other countries than those listed herein, but space does not permit account of all such accomplishments. The Scandinavian and other countries whose cooperatives have achieved such remarkable results have been described here more for the purpose of acquainting the reader with the methods used and the gains made, rather than inferring that they were the only idealistic cooperative examples. Fleeting glimpses will next be made of several other countries that deal with cooperatives in the present chapter, more to give a general idea of its universal adoption, rather than to describe details of operation.

Switzerland Cooperatives. Another country which has distinguished itself in the cooperative movement is Switzerland. While this country did not start its cooperative activities as soon as some of the other countries already mentioned, it has come rapidly to the front in the last thirty years, and is now regarded as one of the leading cooperative countries. Most of its cooperatives are concerned with the marketing of dairy products, especially cheese. One feature of the Swiss cooperatives that is distinctly of Swiss origin, is the inclusion of dealers, or middlemen, as a part of some of their cooperatives.

Cooperatives Versus Dictators. Every European country is dotted with cooperatives of one kind or another, with the exception of three which are ruled by dictators. Even Russia, Italy and Germany were following the cooperative idea in their marketing and consumer transactions until the advent of the dictators. Before the Russian revolution, the Russians were engaged in building up a very effective system of cooperatives. However, after Russia fell into the hands of the dictator, these cooperatives were forced to accept outside management from the State, which soon ruined the efficiency of
their associations, so that now Russian cooperatives are but shadows of their former selves. Also, there are still a few remnants of the cooperative system in Germany, but the control of these cooperatives has been taken away from the membership and passed on to the Government, which has just about nullified the efficiency of these associations. In Italy, any cooperatives that were active politically were completely wiped out, and only those which had not engaged in any form of political activity were allowed to remain in operation. Thus it can be seen that economic freedom is very essential to the efficient operation of the Cooperative Movement.

Other Cooperative Countries. But the cooperative movement, born on European soil, soon migrated to other shores. For example, Iceland, a small country to the north, does over half its business through consumer and marketing cooperatives. Iceland, incidentally, has the smallest percentage of illiteracy of any country in the world today. Cooperatives are also prominent in such countries as Argentine, China, South Africa, Australia, Canada, Armenia, Turkey, Egypt, Ireland, India, Mexico, France, and New Zealand. In fact, one can hardly name a single country in the entire world that is not engaged in some form of cooperative enterprise.

Kagawa And Japan. Probably one of the most outstanding personalities in the Cooperative Movement in the entire world today is Toyohiko Kagawa of Japan. Born and reared in the slums, self-educated, and constantly harassed by disease, Kagawa has devoted his life to cooperative Christianity. Although he did not originate the Cooperative Movement in Japan, he has popularized it tremendously. The Japanese government looks with favor upon the Cooperative Movement, and has granted Kagawa many privileges in his efforts to bring about cooperation in Japan. Nearly one-third of the Japanese people are members of some cooperative activity. Kagawa publishes a cooperative magazine which has a circulation of nearly 1,000,000 copies, and is considered the largest circularized cooperative magazine in the world. Consumer, marketing, and credit cooperatives are all flourishing in Japan, with the credit cooperatives taking first place in popularity. Kagawa is given a free hand by the Japanese government in the moulding of public sentiment in favor of the Cooperative Movement. He has fashioned the rural schools of Japan after the Danish folk schools; he recruits leaders for the work from the graduates of the five big universities of Tokyo; he has induced many preachers and doctors to join the Cooperative Movement; he has succeeded in starting about 150 cooperative hospitals. He is active in instructing the social workers
of his country on the Cooperative Movement and writes books and other articles on cooperative activities that are widely read by the people of Japan. There are now over 15,000 cooperative societies in Japan, most of which are affiliated with the national Central Cooperative Union. The government is a shareholder in the Japanese cooperatives in order that none but sound principles creep into the associations. Kagawa has contributed to the Cooperative Movement the idea that practical Christianity must go hand-in-hand with economic cooperation. Perhaps if there is one thing that is still needed in the cooperative development of the countries already studied in this book, it is the incorporation of Kagawa's particular version of the Cooperative Movement, Christianity in a practical form.

A Challenge. In concluding our bird's-eye view of other lands in regard to the Cooperative Movement, should we not ask ourselves if such freedom from economic slavery is possible for these people, whose natural resources are far below those of our own country, why can not we, here in America, achieve similar freedom? We can, if we will. Of the many cooperatives that are already functioning here in America, there is plenty of evidence that cooperatives can succeed here as well as they have for Europe or any other part of the world. Cooperation knows no geographical boundaries. Our farmers in this country, by marketing cooperatively, can gain much more of the consumer's dollar than they now receive. Also, both farmers and those who live in the cities can obtain their goods at lower costs by means of consumer cooperatives. Such cooperative practices will provide for a more equitable distribution of the wealth of this country. But before cooperative activity becomes widely accepted in this country, cooperative education must be made available to the people of America.

GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER 7

1. Are the Scandinavian countries the only ones in which cooperative activities are of major importance?
2. Name one special feature of the Switzerland cooperatives that is not found in any other of the cooperative countries.
3. What has been the usual fate of cooperatives in lands other than the democracies?
4. Name six other countries in which cooperatives are of growing importance.
5. Give a brief account of the more important accomplishments of Kagawa in the Japanese cooperatives.
6. Have cooperatives progressed more or less rapidly in countries that have limited natural resources?