ganized. The State Grange appointed a State agent in 1871, and in 1876 established a central business agency at Milwaukee. Although these early business enterprises of the Grange declined rapidly in the late 80's, they created a lasting influence because of the valuable experience gained by the farmers in carrying on business cooperatively.

Wisconsin Grangers were greatly interested in the political questions of the day, particularly in those relating to railroads. A bitter fight was waged in connection with the passage of State legislation for the control of the railroads, and later its repeal.

Senator Bob La Follette, Sr., in his Autobiography wrote:

As a boy on the farm in Primrose Township, I heard and felt this movement of the Grangers swirling about me; and I felt the indignation which it expressed in such a way that I suppose I have never fully lost the effect of that early impression. It was a time, indeed, of a good deal of intellectual activity and awakening.

**Wisconsin Society of Equity Initiated Broad Program**

In the early years of the twentieth century a general farm organization was formed which made an important contribution to the development of cooperation in the North Central States. This was the American Society of Equity. A Wisconsin State Union of the Society was organized in 1903. The major objective of both the national and State organizations was to improve farm prices.

The Wisconsin Society of Equity worked along several different lines. It fostered legislation to provide for the incorporation of cooperative busine

ness enterprises. It initiated a program of voluntary control of production. It stimulated the organization and development of local marketing and purchasing cooperative associations. The Society built or leased cooperative warehouses for storing farm products so that they might move to market in an orderly manner at times when they could be sold at prices that would mean a fair return to the farmer. "$1 wheat" and "50-cent potatoes" became popular slogans. Some large-scale cooperative business enterprises were attempted.

In 1911 the Society demanded the enactment of "fundamental cooperative laws so that cooperative enterprises may be organized and incorporated on the basis of 'one-man one-vote.'" As a result, the State legislature passed the Wisconsin cooperative statute which provides for democratic control of cooperative business associations.

Efforts to regulate the production of certain crops did not succeed. Some large-scale marketing activities likewise failed. In assisting farmers to form local cooperative marketing associations, however, Equity played an important part. It helped farmers to establish cooperative livestock shipping associations and grain elevators. It built or leased warehouses for the storing of wool, potatoes, and tobacco. Many of the marketing associations established under Equity auspices later discontinued their marketing services and developed the cooperative purchasing of supplies exclusively.

In 1920 there were 400 marketing and purchasing associations which bore the name "Equity." Although the name might be used by any group of farmers, it doubtless is true that a
large majority of these associations were formed by Equity members. Although the State Society did not have control over these associations, it was active in aiding farmer members to establish and develop them.

The period of greatest activity of the Wisconsin Society of Equity was in the second decade of the century, when its paid-up membership reached 40,000. In 1934, it consolidated with the Farmers' Union under the name, "The Farmers Educational and Cooperative Equity Union of America, Inc., Wisconsin Division."

The Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation has made substantial contributions to cooperative supply purchasing in the State. In 1921 it organized a wholesale distributing agency for the purpose of lowering the cost of distribution by centralizing the purchasing power of the farmers who patronized the local warehouse and distribution points used by the county Farm Bureau organizations. The operations of its successor, the Wisconsin Co-operative Farm Supply Co., are discussed on page 42. An auto insurance service, which the Federation considers offers very favorable coverage and rates, was initiated in 1935 for Farm Bureau members in Wisconsin.

State Aids Cooperatives

The State government has aided in the development of cooperative enterprises. The legislature has enacted noteworthy cooperative legislation—in 1887 one of the early cooperative laws, in 1911 a cooperative statute that was used as a model by a number of the other States, and in 1935 an educational act which requires that instruction in cooperative marketing and consumers' cooperatives be given in every high school and vocational school, as well as in the university, State teachers colleges, and county normal schools. The State department of agriculture renders a variety of services: such as assisting with the organization of new cooperatives, and with consolidations of existing associations in order to effect economies; furnishing legal advice, and accounting and auditing services; developing programs in educational activities; and helping to build up co-op membership. In 1939 a "Wis-