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The Farmers Equity Union : need for, what it is, what it stands for, what it does : a brief explanation of its four great functions : organization, education, cooperation, legislation. [1939?]

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The
**Farmers Equity
Union** Need For . . .
 What It Is . . .
 What It Stands For . .
 What It Does . . .

**A Brief Explanation Of Its
Four Great Functions:**

ORGANIZATION

EDUCATION

COOPERATION

LEGISLATION

The Standard of Living, the Education, and the Security that Agriculture Will Enjoy Depends On You as to Whether or Not You Want Equality—and There Is Only One Way To Secure It, and That Is Through Your Organization and Cooperation.

AS A FARMER you work from daylight to dark in the operation of your farm. Your time is occupied completely. You are helpless as an individual in the many important problems that face you. Many things must be done which you cannot do as an individual. Therefore, it is necessary that YOU belong to an organization to do these things as an organized body!

The solution of our problems and the building program require much research and analyzation. No individual farmer can spare the time or total finance to do it. Our problem must be analyzed and our programs built by US FARMERS if they are to meet our specific need.

This must be done through an organization which you own and control—one which you finance to do the job for you!

The Farmers Equity Union **... What It Is!**

The Farmers Equity Union is a farm organization, made up exclusively of farmers banded together in their union to do for themselves collectively what is impossible for them to do as individuals.

It means to the farmer and to Agriculture the same as the unions of the bankers, the lawyers, doctors, railroads, labor, merchants, manufacturers, and all other groups of society.

Its purposes and aims are to improve economic and social conditions on the farm so Agriculture can have a program of security and equality with all other types of industry.

There is not one thing that can be mentioned that is connected with the farm, or farm home, but what your Organization has done, or is attempting to do.

What It Stands For!

The work of the organization is divided into four phases, or Departments—

ORGANIZATION

EDUCATION

**COOPERATIVES and
COOPERATION**

LEGISLATION

Under these Departments, we are able to cover the social and economic problems of Agriculture.

Many of our farmers who are not acquainted with the Organization, and what we **ORGANIZED FARMERS ARE DOING**, want to know not only our program, but what we have done.

So we are briefly going to outline our work under the different phases.

Organization

"In Union There Is Strength"

We are a state member of the **National Farmers Union**, composed of 33 state unions, which gives us our national strength in Washington and directly strengthens our position in state affairs.

We have organizations in 33 counties, and 23 **County Unions**, which brings about our **collective bargaining power**. Our aim is to have an active local in every township in the state.

We must first be organized before we can take any steps forward.

Fourteen Good Reasons Why the Farmer Must Organize!

1. Organize for equality with all other organized society.
2. Organize to study and analyze his problems with his neighbors.
3. Organize to formulate programs for his own benefit.
4. Organize for **POWER** to put his programs across.
5. Organize to let his political representatives know his needs.
6. Organize to build and expand the cooperative consumer and producer movement.
7. Organize to build a cooperative banking system so that he will not be the victim of excessive interest on needed credit.
8. Organize to promote a better educational system.
9. Organize because an individual's voice becomes lost amongst the millions.
10. Organize because farm and home ownership is the foundation and the stable insurance of a democracy.
11. Organize to build a Cooperative Health Program.
12. Organize to bring Agriculture its fair share of the National income!
13. Organize because if we don't we will always be the underprivileged industry.
14. Organize because agricultural conditions will steadily but slowly become worse until we see the need of the **FARMERS EQUITY UNION**.

Education

Our main objective is to educate ourselves to the need of cooperation and how to successfully bring it about. Once achieved, we must learn to work together so petty differences will not split us, or break up our program.

In accomplishing an educational program, we put on the statute books the compulsory law to teach cooperation in the public schools so our children would have a definite picture of the cooperative movement.

It is imperative that we reorganize our **educational system**, both as to methods of financing from more state funds, and to **lower local taxes** so as to give our farm boys and girls better educational facilities and equal opportunities with city children at lower costs per child. Better transportation facilities are needed. We should have Junior Colleges throughout the state, with adequate transportation, so our boys and girls can receive a University education by only having to spend two years at Madison. This would permit them to remain at home and travel to and from the Junior Colleges.

Our relationship with city labor is vital to us from a purchasing power standpoint, and we can only understand this through education of each other's problems.

To widen our educational facilities, we initiated the **Rural Workers Educational program**, under WPA, for rural study club classes so we might collectively study our mutual problems and seek ways of bettering our conditions. **Rural Recreation, under WPA**, is also part of our movement to afford an opportunity for our adults and youths to join together in a period of folk games and dances. We must first learn to play together if we expect to work together. We believe our Youth need a program of this type to attract their attention from the less desirable places of entertainment.

The Farmers Equity Union News

The Farmers Equity Union is purely an educational organization. If the farmer is to understand his problem, he must be **informed**, and the information he gets must be **reliable**. It must come from sources that are acquainted with conditions in the farming industry. and our own monthly newspaper carries our complete program, month by month, and deals with all phases of our work. It is **solely** financed by our dues and support from our affiliated cooperatives. Its news and editorial policy owes allegiance to **NO ONE** but the farmer.

We keep our members informed as to what is happening at Washington, D. C., and Madison. The paper carries one full page on **Consumer Cooperation** and devotes a page to our **Youth Movement**.

Our Junior Department

Our important work lies in the education of our young people on the farm to the need of a farm organization. They are our future members, and must carry on the battle for Agriculture and democracy. No agricultural program that is worthwhile will come from an unorganized, uneducated group of farmers. Our educational system today does not provide them with the fundamental understanding of their economic and social problems.

On the Youth of today must fall the responsibilities of the leadership of tomorrow. Whether that leadership is sound, tolerant, and understanding depends upon our efficiency today. On our shoulders as Senior members rests the task of helping, encouraging, and planning, with our local Junior Leader, to promote the Folk Study Clubs, of both young and old in our own community.

THE JUNIORS (16 to 21 years of age)

They become members of the local in good standing when their parents are paid-up members in the Union. Juniors may hold office, vote, attend conventions, and in fact do any and all of the things that a Senior member may do in the organization. Specific topics are designated for each year's study and awards are given by the State Organization.

JUNIORS RESERVES (13 to 15 years of age)

Membership cards are issued to Junior Reserves who are children of members and to the children of non-members alike. These young folks do not vote or share any duties, or responsibilities of the local—but they have definite units for each year's work. Completion awards are given for satisfactory work.

JUVENILES (8 to 12 years inclusive)

Membership cards are issued to Juveniles who are children of members and to the children of non-members alike. Specific courses of study are recommended for the five years of Juvenile work. Completion awards are given for satisfactory work.

SUMMER CAMPS

Summer camps are held for the Juniors and Junior Reserves. Special training is given in Cooperative Development, Social Problems, Public Speaking, Parliamentary Procedure, Visual Education and Community Recreation and Craft work. Hundreds of Wisconsin Youth have attended these camps.

WINTER INSTITUTES

Winter Institutes are held for the more advanced training to develop leadership and promote self-help organizations in

all phases of the Cooperative Movement. Courses are similar to those of camps only much more advanced. The University of Wisconsin and the College of Agriculture have cooperated with the Farmers Equity Union to develop this type of sponsored education.

THE SET-UP

The Local Leader cooperates with her County Leader; both cooperate with the State Junior Director, who in turn works closely with the National Junior Director of Education. Within a few short years, the Junior Work has grown to mammoth proportions—14 states now having Junior Work on a state-wide basis. Each state contributes a monthly program for publication by the National Junior Department. A National Committee is elected by the state leaders who plan the work to submit to the state leaders.

EDUCATION IS THE KEYNOTE

In successful organization and cooperative development, education is the keynote. Today we look about us at Cooperatives organized for one specific purpose, that of saving the over-charges on one commodity, and see them decaying slowly but surely because they had not carried on the educational work within their own groups. Unless a group understands the principles and methods thoroughly and have caught the philosophy and vision of the objectives of the Cooperative Movement, they are not true cooperators in any sense of the word. These things we are teaching to our Youth today, slowly but SURELY.

There need be no tenant farmers. There need be no underprivileged majority. There need be no suffering for want of proper medical care. There need be no insecurity for our people. We have everything we need to work with, as expressed in the following poem by Edwin Markham:

EARTH IS ENOUGH

We men of earth here have the stuff of Heaven,
We have enough.
We need no other stones to build
The stairs into the unfulfilled.
We need no other marble for the floors;
We need no other ivory for the doors;
We need no other cedar for the beam
And dome, of man's immortal dream.
Here on the paths of every day
Here on the common human way,
Is all the busy Gods would take
To Build a Heaven, to mould and make
New Edens. Ours is a task sublime
To build eternity in time.

Committee Work

We maintain Committees to work on the most important long time programs. There is a standing committee on Taxation for revision of the farm tax situation.

The Dairy Committee has been working on a National Program to bring a benefit payment to dairy farmers the same as wheat, cotton, corn, etc.

A permanent committee has been set up to work with a like committee from the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor on policies that concern Agriculture and Labor. We believe that cooperation gets further than clubs and harsh words.

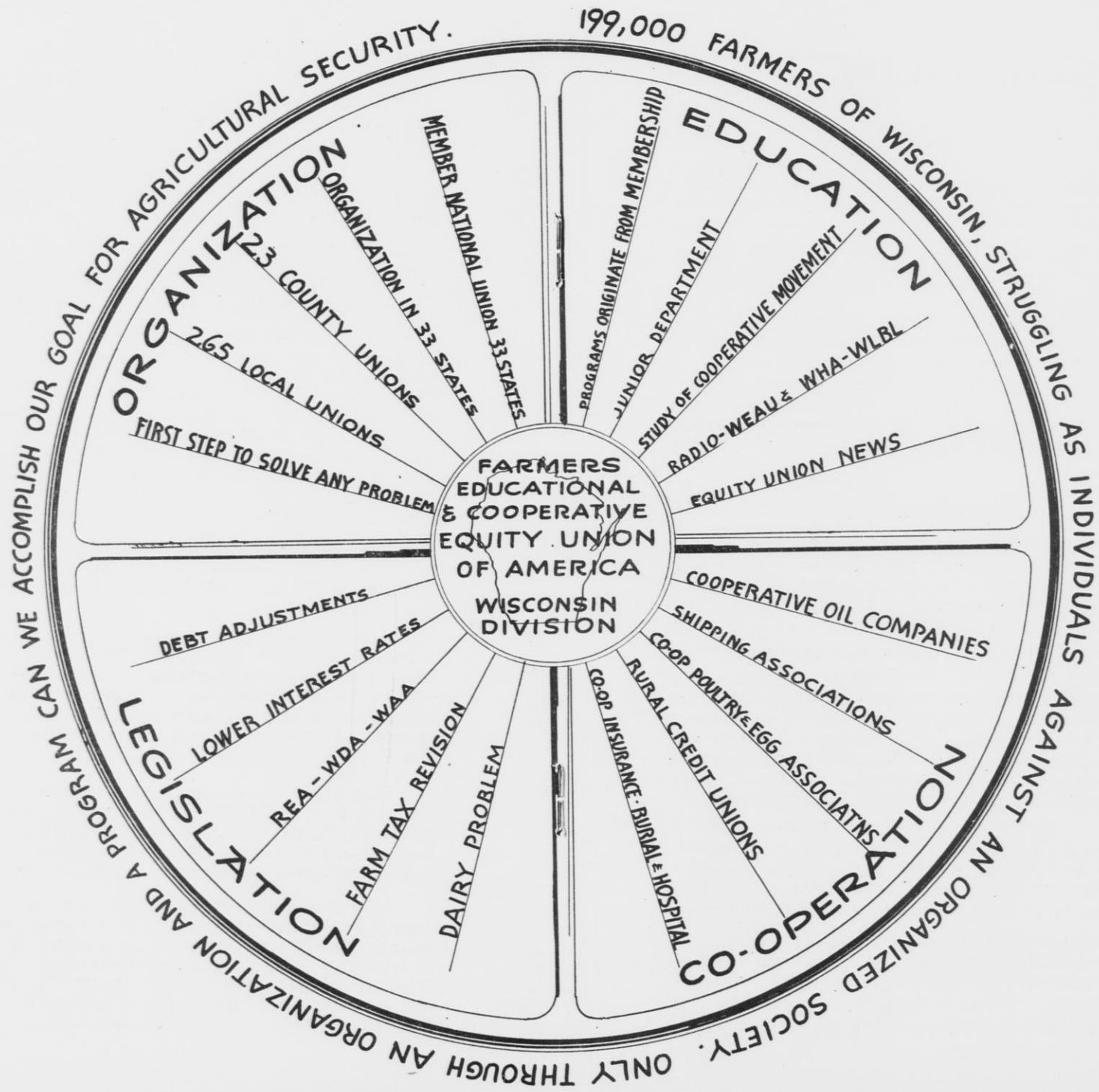
While we are firm supporters of the Cooperative Movement, as to the solution of our economic and social problems, we believe it is necessary and essential to maintain Legislative Committees at Madison and Washington during the Legislative sessions to guard what little beneficial legislation we have and constantly strengthen it, and to sponsor new legislation which will work in favor of the farmer. Legislation can be termed as clearing the brush to prepare the way for more cooperation. The extent of activity of these committees depends upon the size of the membership.

We believe in adequate old age pensions to provide retirement for those who are unable to serve their society. The American poorhouse has no place in our understanding of a democracy.

The activities of a legislative committee can not always be measured by new legislation. Their job is just as important to ward off dangerous legislation. Due to the lack of legislative representation in the past we farmers have had political administrations charter our course. No other group or industry permits anyone except themselves to write laws pertaining to the welfare of their business.

Organized labor's legislative program would have done them no good had they not written it themselves and had organized strength enough back of it to force politicians to pass it. Strength of organization is the important thing in getting a sound program through any legislative body.

The Farmers Equity Union and the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor maintain a standing committee on Education. This Committee keeps close watch of all school policies in the state, both Rural and Urban. Our school system in Wisconsin ranks as one of the poorest in the United States, and it is our job to reorganize it for better educational facilities for our boys and girls at minimum costs.



Cooperation

Past Cooperative Efforts

We have organized hundreds of creameries and cheese factories, mutual insurance companies, shipping associations, stores, and feed warehouses.

The many millions of dollars saved in purchasing farm supplies cooperatively is due to the efforts of organized farmers.

The Prison Twine plant was the result of the efforts of the Old Equity. Twine today would be excessive in price if it were not for this competition.

Through our 25 cooperative oil companies, we have lowered the price of petroleum products to nearly cost. We have forced counties to put their needs for road construction and maintenance out for bids, thus saving our tax payers thousands of dollars.

Our Present Program

Through our affiliation with National Cooperatives, we have revolutionized the tractor industry. We are now working on a program for a full line of Co-op machinery to break the strangle hold of the machinery trusts. Who can do this but **organized farmers!** Who else is interested?

We must expand all of our cooperatives and continue to build new ones where the service is needed.

Rural Credit Unions to build a cooperative banking system in every community are being established. Through these Credit Unions we aim to teach a thrift program amongst our adults and Juniors, provide a place where farmers can secure small short-time loans at reasonable interest rates, and where money deposited and money borrowed can be based upon co-operation.

We aim to build a cooperative insurance program, covering complete field of insurance, including cooperative hospitalization, burial insurance, health and accident, life, automobile, and such other insurance as is needed by our membership.

Cooperative Health Associations, including cooperative hospitals, where everyone regardless of financial circumstances can have adequate medical attention, are being sponsored.

Cooperative Burial Associations where this type of ser-

vice can be performed at nearly half less than it costs today, still preserving all of the rituals and dignity of present service, are also advocated.

At the present time we are soliciting membership for a cooperative poultry processing plant, to cooperatively handle our poultry and poultry products and bring the system of marketing these commodities up to date with our cooperative system of handling dairy products. The present system of marketing poultry is 40 years behind the time. Farmers do not receive prevailing premiums that consumers pay for our good quality products.

Legislation

Past Legislation

The Cooperative Law was the sole work of Organized farmers.

The oleomargarine law is the work of Organized farmers and the big interests would abolish it tomorrow if they could. Organized farmers must protect it.

In 1934, we were alone in the battle for a drought relief program for feed, herd and cattle buying. Organized farmers secured the work relief agreements and fought farm foreclosures.

No other farm organization in this nation came forward for lower interest rates for Agriculture. It was the Farmers Union that backed the Frazier-Lemke 3% interest bill, and as a compromise we secured the present 3½% interest rate as an emergency measure. It is important to have this made permanent. It is more important that the rate be lowered still further to be in line with other industries who finance themselves far below this present rate. **We must organize if we want this consideration.**

Wisconsin was the only state to participate in an extended Federal WPA Lime program. This was due entirely to the efforts of the Farmers Equity Union.

We played our part in securing Rural Electrification Administration—the Wisconsin Development Authority—the

Wisconsin Agricultural Authority—and the new Department of Agriculture and Markets with a seven-man farmer board. These can be protected and maintained only through organization.

Our Present Legislative Program

It is necessary that we immediately organize, if we wish to preserve the Rural Electrification program, Wisconsin Development Authority, Credit Union program, and the 7-man Board of the Department of Agriculture and Markets. This is the first opportunity that Wisconsin farmers have had to have a real governmental farm program in this state, and all indications are that its welfare is very much endangered by unfriendly politicians who are representatives of Big Business.

Farm debts must be readjusted and present owners permitted to have preference in repurchasing their farms at re-appraised values. For every \$200.00 of farm mortgage, the dues in your organization has been saved in lower interest rates.

We are working for a new Farm Program, including Dairy farmers, for a decent price for dairy products, and still to preserve the Agricultural Conservation program with adequate payments for the same, not to be derived from a processing tax.

Our Tax Committee is working on a revised tax program for Agriculture, based upon financial returns to the farm rather than the assessed valuation. The value of a farm is more or less guesswork. All taxes should be based on income and ability to pay. This would protect the farmer in times of crop failure and low prices. You can't do this as an individual.

It is of no minor importance that we organize to voice our sentiments with regard to War. It must be remembered that we have just matured another crop of boys and girls since the last World War, who now are ready to be good targets and gun fodder for the **munition makers and steel and copper trusts**, to say nothing about the great financiers who make their millions out of the blood of our children. Farm boys and girls are preferable.

Every day presents a new agricultural problem of greater or minor consequence at the State Office, of appointments to fill important posts in Agricultural Administrative positions. It is important that we have our **friends** in these key positions instead of someone who will cripple our program.

As Others See the Need For Organization

CONGRESSMAN HULL SAYS:

There are more than six million members of labor unions in our country, and more than an equal number of unorganized farmers. Labor unions combine their members and strength to constantly obtain better incomes and better living conditions for the laboring people in industry and commerce. Possibly there are more than a million organized farmers, represented in several farm groups, and because of sectional and other differences it is seldom possible to bring the power of these farm groups into united action. Consequently the farm movement has not made equal progress with the labor movement.

Could every farmer be brought to recognize how much could be accomplished by united action, and be ready to do his part, organizing farmers would be less difficult. Years are required to make any movement successful. The longer it takes to get farmer organizations underway, the longer it will take to put agriculture on a parity with industry, a parity about which much has been said and written, but toward which we are moving slowly if at all.

With all the great good which has been accomplished by the Farmers Equity Union in Wisconsin, its membership rolls embrace less than ten per cent of the farmers who could and should be enrolled. The economies effected and results attained by the Farmers Equity Union through their cooperatives and their influence upon state and national policies in dollars and cents amount to many times the expense that would be incident to an organization of 100,000 farmers. Were that number of members obtainable, farm income in Wisconsin could be and would be increased by millions. The premium cost of that form of farm policy would be far less than that



Congressman Hull

upon an ordinary insurance policy, which the average man pays as a matter of course for his own protection against losses.

Organization of farmers for their own advancement and their own protection is after all an insurance policy. The greater the Farmers Equity Union becomes, the stronger becomes the insurance and the less the cost. Because of lack of farm organization, the farmers continue to suffer losses running into millions.

It is time to join-up, time to insure, time to co-operate. No one should wait for an organizer to call on him. The matter is too important for waiting. No argument is needed. List up 100,000 farmers in the Farmers Equity Union, and the representatives from dairy districts will not be sitting on the side lines begging the federal government to buy a few million pounds of cheese to relieve a dull market while the same government is holding \$540,000,000 worth of cotton and paying the well-organized sugar interests \$60,000,000 in annual subsidies. Organization means the power to demand, the strength to obtain. Join the Farmers Equity Union now.



**RALPH AMMON, Director of the State Department of
Agriculture and Markets, Says:**



Ralph Ammon

"After 11 months as director of your state department, I am more convinced than ever that farmers must organize to help themselves through cooperation.

"Too many farmers, and that is the discouraging thing, are sitting back, refusing to join farm cooperatives, hopefully waiting for someone in Washington or in Madison to wave a magic wand which is to bring them prosperity. But I don't care how smart a man you put in Washington or how brilliant a man you put in charge in Madison, the farmers' problems cannot be solved unless the farmers organize.

"As Director of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture and Markets, I want to help farmers, but I am helpless until the farmers themselves are thoroughly enough organized."

CONGRESSMAN GEHRMANN SAYS:

I have stated on many occasions that I have given up the idea that the farmer's will ever have determination and sense enough to become thoroughly organized. I get discouraged over their indifference and attitude of letting "Jack do it," while the large majority sit idly by and expect a miracle to happen. But then I always change my mind and feel that I should renew my efforts of attempting to convince at least a few that nothing worthwhile has ever been accomplished without the help of the majority, and always a few have carried the load.

So I want to plead with those farmers, who have carried the burden of organization for years, not to get discouraged, or to give up simply because so many of your neighbors have failed to assist you. It has always been that way in everything from the beginning of time.

Instead of giving up, redouble your efforts, because the satisfaction of having fought for a good cause, even though very little gains have been made, is a grand feeling of pride when we approach the end of our earthly career. The need for united action has been so thoroughly demonstrated hundreds of times that there is nobody to deny it.

Be loyal to yourself, your neighbors, and your Business. Join the Local Equity Union NOW, or assist in organizing one if there is none in your neighborhood. Your neighbor needs you, and you need him more than ever before. I don't believe any farmer wants to be a slacker, and after studying the need for united action thoroughly, he will do his bit or her share in organizing for mutual benefits.

The old Equity now merged with the Farmers Union has a record of accomplishments we can all be proud of. This same tradition is carried on by the Equity Union, and every farmer should feel duty bound to build this into a forceful, dominant organization in Wisconsin.



Congressman Gehrman

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**JOHN M. CARMODY of the Rural Electrification
Administration, Washington, D. C., Says**

January 28. 1939

Mr. K. W. Hones, State President
Farmers Educational & Co-op. Equity Union of America, Wis. Div.
Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin
Dear Mr. Hones:

We in REA will long remember the unselfish efforts of the Farmers Union, and especially of your Division, to bring electric service to farm people. Your influence has made itself felt not only in your own State of Wisconsin, but throughout the county.

Early in the spring of 1935, your members took a leading part at a meeting of all Wisconsin farm organizations to tie together educational programs for rural electrification. In consequence, you were ready to act when President Roosevelt established the Rural Electrification Administration in May of that year.

Your group was one of the first to approach REA. In cooperation with other Wisconsin farm people, you asked us to meet with you. We did. At that meeting was born a most healthy relationship between your members and our organization. This relationship, strengthened as we have gotten to know one another better, has continued to the present time. It has resulted in your consistent support of the REA program; I can assure you all of us appreciate this deeply.

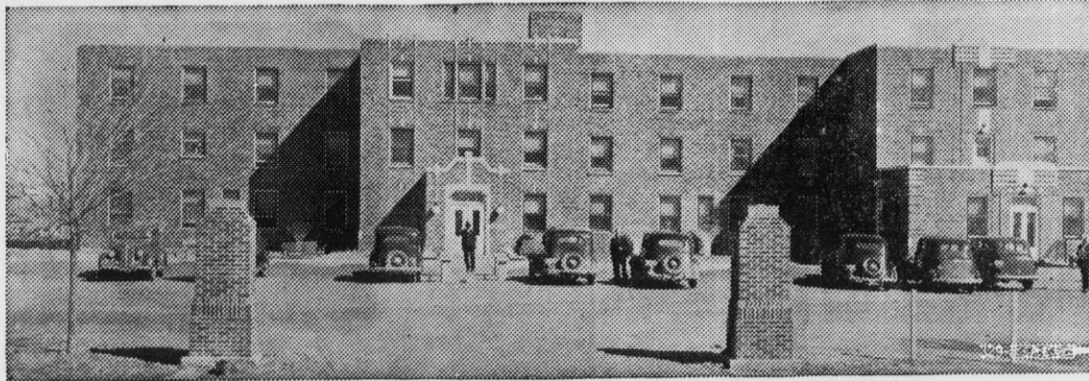
The whole-hearted support of your late President, C. C. Talbott, and his full understanding of farm problems, helped us greatly. We have continued to benefit from the continuing support and advice of his daughter, Mrs. Gladys Talbott Edwards. The efforts of members of your organization now on our staff have been most effective. George Lewis, former Vice-President of the Equity Union and Chairman of the original coordinating committee, has been with us since the fall of 1935. His complete knowledge of farm problems and of the application of electricity has been extremely valuable to our work.

Then, too, the educational efforts of your official paper, the Farmers Equity Union News, have aided us continually since the spring of 1935. Its printed word, spreading good will, has materially helped co-operating ownership and to place the State High in the list of those benefiting from REA's program.

Sincerely,

John M. Carmody, Administration.

WHAT ORGANIZED FARMERS OF OKLAHOMA HAVE DONE



THE GREAT COOPERATIVE HOSPITAL AT ELK CITY, OKLAHOMA

The Farmers Union, with the assistance of Dr. Michael Shadid, organized the first cooperative Hospital in the United States at Elk City, Oklahoma, in the fall of 1929.

2500 families are receiving full surgical, dental, medical care, and hospitalization. This hospital does much to keep its members well by advocating frequent examinations and care of first noticeable ailments.

They pay an average of \$25.00 per year per family to maintain their medical staff, and operate their hospital on a cost basis. They maintain their hospital through the payment of \$2.00 per day, which covers room, board, nursing, medicine, dressing, etc., and by paying \$2.00 to \$3.00 for an X-ray film and \$5.00 to \$20.00 as an anaesthetic-

operating room fee in cases of surgical operation.

They find the arrangement very satisfactory to themselves and the doctors are equally satisfied and happy. Their association is founded on the principles of

1. Group Medical Practice.
2. Preventive medicine.
3. Periodic payment.
4. Consumers Cooperative control.

Dr. Shadid says—"I would never again return to the individual practice of medicine."

The Wisconsin Farmers Equity Union is advocating the very same type of a program in conjunction with our family group health insurance when we get our program under way.

The Wisconsin Division of the Farmers Equity Union Is Affiliated With:

**Farmers Union Central Exchange
St. Paul, Minn.**

**32 Farmers Union Bulk Oil Assn. Heading Companies,
Wisconsin**

**Farmers Union Live Stock Commission Co.
South St. Paul, Minn.**

**Equity Live Stock Sales Association
Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

**Farmers Union Live Stock Co.
Chicago, Illinois**

**Central Cooperative Wholesale
Superior, Wisconsin**

**Farmers Mutual Automobile Insurance Co.
Madison, Wisconsin**

**Integrity Mutual Fire Insurance Co.
Appleton, Wisconsin**

**Home Mutual Insurance (Cyclone)
Appleton, Wisconsin**

**Northern States Cooperative League
Minneapolis, Minnesota**

**Wisconsin Cooperative Milk Pool
Oshkosh, Wisconsin**

**Wisconsin Cooperative Wool Pool
Portage, Wisconsin**

