

FOREWORD

A little less than three years ago Nym Wales (who in her more domestic moments responds to the prosaic title, Mrs. Edgar Snow) accompanied me to dine with a good friend in Shanghai. It was not long after the end of the Sino-Japan hostilities in that neighborhood; there was an ominous portent of coming war in Europe. Soon we talked of solutions to the economic causes of wars; and our host, a cooperative enthusiast, advanced the idea of the organization of the world on a cooperative basis as a means of making democracy work and of avoiding wars.

Nym Wales did not agree with him. She considered consumers cooperatives a mere banding together of consumers to be exploited by monopoly capital still in control of production. As usual she overwhelmed her opponent.

But a couple of days later (and I was not surprised at all; it's no doubt the Welsh in her) I heard Nym speaking very well of some of the cooperative ideas and principles which she had convinced her recent listeners were a sham and a delusion. She was advocating "refugee producers cooperatives" in China: to put an end to soup kitchens and non-productive refugee camps and concentrations. She wished to give jobs to millions of destitutes driven from the farms and workshops into the interior; and she saw the value of cooperative organization as a means of quickly rehabilitating the lost industrial bases of resistance to Japan. She saw also in one brilliant glimpse into the future the tremendous social and economic importance which such a movement could ultimately acquire in building a better post-war China.

"Industrial Cooperation," as realized today in hundreds of busy self-supporting workshops throughout China, was thus first of all the brain child of Nym Wales. It was she who first interested Rewi Alley in the possibilities of industrial cooperatives as a relief measure combined with the mobilization of skilled labor and the exploitation of hinterland raw materials as the economic basis of China's prolonged resistance. This fact is generously acknowledged by Mr. Alley (now chief technical

advisor to C. I. C.) in his recent pamphlet, Two Years of Indusco. Nym Wales in fact coined the phrase “guerrilla industry” and probably most of the now slogans and key ideas popularized throughout Indusco workshops today. Chiefly owing to Nym Wales' prodding, Alley and his Bailie engineers worked out the technical details of this scheme which has become such an important pattern of economic and social change in China. But for the soundness of her original concept, and the genius of her faith and enthusiasm, the movement might never have come into being at all--and China might never have achieved what many observers regard as the most constructive result of the war to date.

Hence is it quite fitting that Nym Wales should write the first book about Chinese Industrial Cooperatives. Speaking as a critic (that is, not as Mr. Wales) I find it highly readable and richly informative and indeed perhaps the most valuable economic interpretation yet made of China at war. It is solely in its discussion of her own role in the creative thinking which launched this great movement that one finds any exception to the admirable candor and directness which elsewhere characterize the volume. Only in that one respect, therefore, is a foreword necessary at all. Unknown to Miss Wales I have written these lines also at the request of many friends who have been inspired to contribute their time and money to what is surely an historic advance in China by the example of her own tireless and unselfish labor and devotion in the cause of a great people, and who wish to pay tribute and express gratitude to her through the publication of this book.