

Society for Co-operative Studies

REPORT OF THE FOURTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
3RD-4TH APRIL, 1970

AT THE CO-OPERATIVE COLLEGE, STANFORD HALL, LOUGHBOROUGH, LEICS.

1 Attendance of Members

The following members were present: where the participant represented an organisation in membership of the Society, this is given after his name:

F. ABBOTTS	
D. BROWN	Co-operative Union (Northern Section)
F. BRUCKSHAW	Co-operative Press
L. E. BURCH	
DR. T. F. CARBERY	University of Strathclyde
S. P. CLARKE	Bradford Society
H. G. CLODE	Co-operative Union
K. COOPER	
W. A. EDWARDS	Portsea Island Society
L. C. FOX	
E. C. HANCOCK	Chesterfield Society (Educ. Comm.)
L. A. HARRISON	Greater Nottingham Society
P. HARTY	Newcastle Society (Educ. Comm.)
D. HIBBERD	
W. E. LAWN	
R. A. B. LEAPER	Swansea University
J. LEONARD	Co-operative Productive Federation
D. LOCK	Loughborough University
R. T. LOWE	Leicestershire Society
R. L. MARSHALL	Co-operative Union Education Dept.
MRS. M. MCALEESE	Coatbridge Society (Educ. Comm.)
K. A. NOBLE	Co-operative Wholesale Society
S. OLIVER	Brightside and Carbrook Society
W. F. PICKARD	
K. M. PIKE	
MRS. N. M. NUZUM	
I. RAWLINSON	Hyde Society
L. J. ROBSON	
J. ROPER	
B. J. ROSE	Co-operative College
N. SIDDONS	Chesterfield Society
MRS. J. STANSFIELD	
E. W. TAYLOR	Harrogate Society
E. P. TURRALL	London Society (Education Committee)
W. P. WATKINS	
D. L. WILKINSON	North Eastern Section
DR. A. WILSON	
S. WILLIAMS	

2 Introduction by the Chairman

Dr. Carbery was pleased to report an increase in membership. The case for the Society was that it was the main link between the Universities, the College and the Co-operative Movement.

Members should keep in mind; firstly the need of the freedom that comes from its own finances, as indicated by the results of a recent one day school in Scotland; secondly the need to ensure that anyone assisting from the Universities was welcomed for any ideas he or she might contribute; and thirdly an awareness that a healthy bias towards research was beneficial to the trading side of the movement.

3 Apologies and welcome

Apologies for absence were presented on behalf of Mr. A. Beaumont, Mrs. D. E. Bootman, Mr. and Mrs. W. F. Higgins, Mr. J. B. Lamb, Mr. Paisley, Mr. D. Smyth, Mr. T. E. Stephenson, Mr. W. T. Welch, Mrs. J. M. Wheeler and Mrs. N. E. Willis.

4 Report of the National Officers for 1969-70

This had been printed in *Bulletin No. 9* of the Society and was reviewed.

It was noted with pleasure that Mr. T. E. Stephenson had been appointed senior lecturer at Leeds University.

(a) MEMBERSHIP

An increase during the year to 142 members was a welcome sign of growing interest in the Society's work. During the year there had been 7 new members from organisations and 27 new members as individuals. Members noted a recommendation from the National Officers that they should inform the Secretary of the Society of persons likely to be interested and able to contribute to the Society's objectives.

(b) THE BULLETIN

Publication of Nos. 7, 8 and 9 were noted, and the contribution by the late Mr. Desmond Flanagan to the bibliography in issue 8 was acknowledged.

(c) STUDY PROJECTS

The comparative failure of the 1968-9 projects was noted. A suggestion was made that "Industrial Relations" and "Workers Participation" be considered as possible projects for future study.

(d) RESEARCH

Note was taken of the two awards of £15 to Mr. D. Smyth and £30 to Messrs. Hopwood and Birch for projects on Membership Participation in the Operation of Co-operative Retail Societies in Western Europe and on Capital Investments in Large Retail Co-operative Societies; and of the grant of £25 to Mr. W. P. Watkins, to whom the thanks of the Society were recorded for his report of the Sixth International Congress of Co-operative Science published in the *Bulletin No. 9*.

(e) CO-OPERATIVE COLLEGE ENDOWMENT FUND

Members noted donations already received, and the advice so far of the National Officers for the employment of the funds.

Possibilities welcomed or added were:

- a feasibility study of the possibility of planning for a National Co-operative Society.
- the storing and analysis of valuable records which might be thrown away, particularly with the formation of regional societies. The Society might investigate some method of putting these on micro-film. With the possibility of many small societies transferring engagements and going out of existence valuable records would be lost from a Co-operative, as well as from a local history point of view.

Mr. Marshall suggested for the Society that, whilst it had not itself the space, finances or facilities to employ experienced people to store these papers, it might act as a link between societies and the Universities with the facilities to see that these records were preserved. In general this hard-won research money should be used for a productive purpose in order to encourage further grants.

(f) REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The regional reports were noted, with the correction of the reference to Mr. Stott in the North West report.

(g) FINANCE

Satisfaction was expressed at the financial position of the Society with subscriptions for the year totalling £640. The accounts were approved.

5 Appointment of Officers for 1970-71

Thanks were expressed to the officers for their services during 1969/70 and the following were recommended and approved for office during 1970/71:

- (a) All Presidents to be re-elected.
- (b) Mr. J. Roper MA, University of Manchester to be Chairman.
- (c) Mr. W. E. Lawn to continue as Vice-Chairman and a second Vice-Chairman to be added by the National Officers, if possible from the area of technical colleges.
- (d) Mr. R. L. Marshall to continue as Secretary and Treasurer.
- (e) Mr. Marshall and Mr. J. R. Hammond to continue as editors of the *Bulletin*.

It was agreed to ask Mr. G. M. Docherty to act as auditor.

6 Future Development of the Society

Some points arising from the discussion were:

- Some better form of organisation in the Regions, perhaps based more strongly on the Universities.
- On research, the value of private individuals who did not have the ability or resources for full research, but who could greatly help with some of the more detailed work required on surveys, etc.
- A lack of up-to-date information, for students and tutors, giving Co-operative facts and figures was reported.
- The value to the Movement of academics with a continuing interest in Co-operation, who might be few in number but could give the Society and the Movement valuable services it could not otherwise obtain.
- The value of sustained courses, as in the North East, which would help equip hard-pressed co-operators with skills and information upon which to make decisions.
- The question whether the Society was achieving perhaps its most important specific aim—an increase in the number of interested academics.

Many of the points noted above depended upon having at the Universities members interested in co-operation, and prepared to give time to it.

7 Conference Papers

In a paper entitled "Guidelines on Co-operative Business Success—and Research," presented by Dr. A. Wilson, the following points were made and discussed:

- (a) A proposal for two major objectives for the 1970's:
 - (i) integration of the retail and federal societies into a National Movement.
 - (ii) provision of goods and services at a competitive price and of a nature which would attract consumers as Co-operative customers.
- (b) The connection between large trading areas and possible benefits arising from:
 - (i) large scale buying, warehousing and selling operations.
 - (ii) employment of first class departmental managers.
 - (iii) trading over a wider range of operations.
 - (iv) more immediate policy decisions on vital matters.
- (c) The need to determine and aim for the optimum size and number of retailing outlets and the optimum range of goods and services offered.

Mr. B. J. Rose BA presented a paper entitled "Guidelines on Member Participation—and the Research Needed". The following points were considered:

- (a) The unique position of the Co-operative Movement to take advantage of current and probable future trends, in particular the changes in member participation necessary to attract and satisfy:
 - (i) the growing interest of Consumers generally in quality and marketing of goods—as shown by the development of the Consumers Associations.
 - (ii) the growing demands by both producers and consumers for a greater say and control in industry and consumer services, with the possibility of government action to make big commercial concerns more publicly accountable.
 - (iii) the growing need for two-way communication as indicated by the development and success of public relations organisations.
- (b) The effects of the growth of Societies on:
 - (i) member participation and interest, and the possible needs of member participation activities to be structured on the area of the store rather than on the area of the Society.
 - (ii) the investment and withdrawal of share capital.
- (c) The possibilities of improved member interest and participation by appeals to members primarily as shareholders rather than as consumers.