

The Society for Co-operative Studies

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1970/71

1. The five Presidents of the Society remained in office at the beginning of the year—but we have had, unfortunately, to accept the resignation of Lord Jacques. However, he will be sent full information of any Society occasions in the south and as far as possible we shall retain his interest and participation there. We are bringing to the Annual General Meeting a recommendation that Sir Robert Southern be appointed as President and, in the meantime, we have appreciated his attendance at our meetings as an observer.

Mr. John Roper has occupied the Chair—and, of course, we congratulated him on his election to Parliament in June 1970. Mr. W. J. Philpott has joined Mr. W. E. Lawn as Vice-Chairman and, as past Chairman, Dr. T. F. Carbery has been invited to attend the meetings of the National Officers in the year.

The Officers have had three meetings and the following is their report for presentation to the Annual General Meeting on 16th/17th April 1971.

2. Membership

(a) At 31st January 1971 the membership of the Society (with the 1970 figures given in brackets) was:

Region	Individuals		Organisations		Total
	'Co-operative'	Other	'Co-operative'	Other	
Metropolitan and Southern ..	9 (7)	4 (4)	6 (9)	1 (2)	20 (22)
Midland ..	13 (13)	5 (4)	4 (4)	1 (2)	23 (23)
North ..	4 (5)	1 (2)	— (3)	— (1)	5 (11)
North-West ..	9 (12)	8 (6)	5 (3)	1 (—)	23 (21)
Scottish ..	18 (21)	9 (10)	3 (3)	2 (2)	32 (36)
South-West ..	3 (3)	1 (—)	2 (2)	— (—)	6 (5)
West ..	6 (5)	— (—)	— (1)	2 (1)	8 (7)
Yorkshire and Humberside ..	4 (5)	1 (1)	8 (9)	— (1)	13 (16)
Overseas ..	2 (1)	— (—)	— (—)	— (—)	2 (1)
	<u>68 (72)</u>	<u>29 (27)</u>	<u>28 (34)</u>	<u>7 (9)</u>	<u>132 (142)</u>

(b) In total, the membership has been maintained fairly well. Yet these factors need to be heeded: the Co-operative Union nominates fifteen and the S.C.W.S. twelve individual members; and in the total there are twenty-three new individual members and six new organisations.

3. The "Bulletin"

The programme has been to publish Bulletins No. 10, 11 and 12 during the year. The annual bibliography was included in *Bulletin* No. 11 and we owe its preparation to Mr. B. Howcroft, F.L.A., Manager of the Library and Information Unit of the C.W.S. Marketing Services, assisted by professional colleagues at the Co-operative Union, the International Co-operative Alliance and the Co-operative College.

4. Other National Activities

(a) RESEARCH

Co-operative College Endowment Fund

Our last report summarised tentative suggestions we made then at the invitation of the Education Executive for the disposition of this fund. The resources available in it now are £3,704 in gifts; and £2,336 annually in seven-year covenants. In addition the Co-operative Insurance Society has contributed £2,000 in annual covenant, generally for the promotion of "senior management training" and the College has, we understand, promoted various projects with its aid.

The Officers gave further consideration to the disposition of the fund and the following summarises their advice which has been forwarded to the Education Executive:—

- (i) That the terms of the research should be distinctive from the immediate "operational investigations" which the trading authorities of the Movement were undertaking or should undertake as a matter of immediate necessity.
- (ii) That the forms through which the work could be undertaken should be:—
 - Research by experienced Co-operative officials withdrawn from their practical work for short sabbatical periods of about three to six months, preferably at the Co-operative College.
 - The projects undertaken at universities and colleges—preferably in the Midlands, so that the Co-operative College could be positively linked with them.
 - Other individual projects of particular interest such as those already supported in the case of Mr. D. Lock (Loughborough University of Technology—Aspects of Member Participation) and Mr. T. E. Stephenson (University of Leeds—Aspects of Management in the North Eastern Society).
- (iii) That in the selection of areas of research there should be consultation with the appropriate Co-operative agencies and particularly with the national federations who were more and more assuming responsibilities of initiative and planning in Co-operative development.
- (iv) That the following general areas were of particular attraction:—
 - the management structure of large and complex societies;
 - regional development; industrial, commercial and urban and its significance for Co-operative retail distribution.

We understand that discussions are proceeding promisingly with the universities in the neighbourhood of Stanford Hall.

(b) STORAGE OF CO-OPERATIVE RECORDS

The suggestion was made at the last Annual General Meeting that some further provision was needed for the storage of Co-operative

records particularly where mergers and amalgamations were being carried forward. Following this there was an offer from the Librarian of the Social Sciences Library of Birmingham Public Libraries of facilities for storing and preserving records which might otherwise be lost. The matter was discussed with the Librarian of the Co-operative Union and he is preparing advice to co-operative societies throughout the country about the measures they should take.

5. Regional Developments

METROPOLITAN AND SOUTHERN

The branch has continued to meet on a quarterly basis at the College for the Distributive Trades. Attendances remain small despite attempts to widen the active membership. Consideration was given to four papers during the year: "The Future of the Co-operative Movement", "Comparing the Movement with our Private Competitors", "Selective Employment Tax", and a "Survey of Education Committee Attitudes".

Arising from the meeting on S.E.T. a discussion paper has now been produced.

MIDLAND

During the year the branch has concentrated its attention on the problems of "Democratic Structure within a Regional Society", and has reviewed a discussion paper on this topic by Mr. M. Kirkman of the Leicestershire Society. The branch arranged a seminar on "Industrial Relations in the 1970s" but this has had to be postponed until a later date.

NORTHERN

Due to the fluid situation during the formation of the North Eastern Society no regional meetings were held in 1970. It is hoped to renew branch activity in 1971, when an early topic for consideration will be the structure of the new supra-regional society in the North.

NORTH WEST

The branch has met at regular intervals during the year. Topics under review have included: "Industrial Relations in the Co-operative Movement" and "A National Co-operative Society". Members of the branch have appreciated the quality of the discussion papers presented for consideration and the useful publicity which has been achieved for the Society.

SCOTLAND

Whilst the Scottish branch have not held many meetings during the year its members have supported meetings of P.A.C.E. and a Strathclyde University seminar on the bicentenary of Robert Owen's birth. Seven new members have joined the branch during 1970.

WESTERN

The Western branch has been without the services of joint convenors throughout 1970 and the branch membership is still very weak numerically. Further approaches have been made during the year to rectify this situation and it is hoped that activities will be resumed in 1971.

YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE

No regional meetings have been convened during the year, although the study group based on Leeds University—which is in effect a continuing meeting of the Society—has met at regular intervals. With the appointment of Mr. Pratt as regional Secretary branch activities will be resumed at an early date.

6. Relations with Other Organisations

Informal but helpful relations have been maintained with the British Section of the International Centre for Research and Information on Public/Co-operative Economy, the International Co-operative Scientific Forum and the Institut des Etudes Co-operatives.

7. Finance

The Cash and Bank Account for the year ended 31st December, 1970 is as follows:

RECEIPTS		1969		1970	
		£	s. d.	£	s. d.
Cash in hand brought forward	10	0 0	2	5 5
Cash at Bank brought forward	499	15 4	603	4 4
Subscriptions	640	1 6	570	2 0
Fees—A.G.M. and Conference	80	8 4	76	0 0
Fees—Seminar	—	—	5	0 0
Sales—Society Bulletin	2	7 0	8	0 0
Bank Interest	3	3 9	3	8 3
		<hr/>		<hr/>	
		£1,235	15 11	£1,260	8 0
		<hr/>		<hr/>	

PAYMENTS		1969		1970	
		£	s. d.	£	s. d.
Printing—Society Bulletin	260	8 6	295	0 0
Research Grants	70	0 0	—	—
Stationery and Postage	117	6 10	61	16 4
Typewriting	24	13 7	9	18 3
Telephone	5	8 8	1	6 6
Advertising	8	8 0	—	—
Annual General Meeting	94	7 6	66	8 0
Other Meetings	46	14 0	59	4 0
Subscriptions Refunded	1	10 0	2	0 0
Fees Refunded—Seminar	—	—	5	0 0
Carriage Refunded	14	0 0	—	—
Cheque Books	—	—	6	2 2
Bank Commission	15	1 0	9	6 6
Cash in hand carried forward	2	5 5	14	0 0
Cash at Bank carried forward	603	4 4	758	5 3
		<hr/>		<hr/>	
		£1,235	15 11	£1,260	8 0
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8. Conclusion—and Continuation?

It is time for realistic assessment of the need and function for the Society and the Officers are hopeful that this can be the main and constructive pre-occupation of the 1971 meeting.

In their discussions during the year they have noted a feeling, at least in some quarters, that while the Society involved quite considerable administration, the results regionally appeared on the whole to be meagre; that nationally they were more substantial, though even on that level they were disproportionate to the administration and to the hopes entertained for this Society in the beginning.

In particular these questions and possibilities were raised for attention:—

- (a) Was it accepted that a primary purpose of the Society was to increase the number of people in universities and colleges interested in the Movement, studying its problems, and engaged in a useful dialogue with it. This was generally agreed by the officers.
- (b) Would the aim be better achieved by a different basis of organisation: e.g. by taking as a basis universities, or groups of universities throughout the country, and if the initial concentration were on a gathering in each of these of staff and students with some degree of interest in the Movement?

In the discussion some of the points made were:—

- (i) That while the present organisation had not significantly increased the number of “academics” positively engaged in studying the Movement, it had helped to promote the dialogue between university and college people and active co-operators.
 - (ii) The stimulus and support for research work in universities which might be achieved from the College Endowment Fund could do a great deal to further the general purpose of the Society.
 - (iii) It was necessary to examine whether the results achieved, or achievable, by the kind of separate organisation which the Society represented might be equalled, or even surpassed, by a resumption in the Education Department of the Union of responsibility for many of the regional activities sponsored under the name of the Society, and with the addition of a panel of active advisers to the Department on a national level.
- (c) The officers agreed that the following tentative guide-lines for action in the immediate future would be particularly worth discussing at the Annual General Meeting:—
- (i) That while the national activity of the Society had been comparatively worth while, consideration be given to its adaptation in the future: the maintenance of the Conference; the possibility of the *Bulletin* being published annually to include papers particularly relevant to the Society, the bibliography, etc.

- (ii) That regionally the record was not so convincing; that where, as in the south, it appeared that a group had established itself, this should, of course, be encouraged; but that there should be a positive effort in each region in the next year to establish in a university or association of universities, a group of staff and students, and associated with them of active co-operators, who could develop a programme of study and discussion on co-operative topics.
- (iii) That, as any revision in the function of the Society was carried out, there should also be review of subscription rates.