

# The Society for Co-operative Studies

## REPORT OF THE SIXTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

7TH-8TH APRIL, 1972

AT THE CO-OPERATIVE COLLEGE, STANFORD HALL

### 1 Attendance of Members

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

MR. F. ABBOTTS	
MR. J. A. BEAUMONT	Chesterfield & District Society
MR. T. BENTLEY	Greater Nottingham Society
MR. J. BLAIZE	North Midlands Society
MR. F. D. BOGGIS	University of Strathclyde
MR. D. BROWN	Co-operative Union, Northern Section
MR. F. BRUCKSHAW	
MRS. D. BUTTON	Greater Nottingham Society
MR. S. P. CLARKE	West Yorkshire Society
MR. G. N. COOKE	North Midland Society
MR. W. A. EDWARDS	Portsea Island Society
MR. W. H. FARROW	North Midland Society
MR. W. G. GIBSON	Co-operative Wholesale Society Ltd.
MR. J. GREEN	Colchester Society
MR. J. R. HAMMOND	Co-operative Union
MR. E. C. HANCOCK	Chesterfield & District Society
MR. L. A. HARRISON	Greater Nottingham Society
MR. R. HARRISON	
MR. A. HEWITT	
COUN. W. F. HIGGINS	Greater Nottingham Society
MR. D. HOPWOOD	
MR. J. G. JAMES	Co-operative Union
MRS. D. JEUDA	Union of Shop, Distributive & Allied Workers
MRS. E. KING	Central & East Fife Society
MR. I. KIRKPATRICK	
MISS M. LARGE	Birmingham Society Education Committee
MR. W. E. LAWN	Co-operative Union
MR. J. LEONARD	Co-operative Productive Federation
MR. R. W. MACKIE	Central & East Fife Society
MR. R. L. MARSHALL	Co-operative Union
MRS. M. MELLOR	
MR. M. MELLOR	
MR. R. J. MITCHELL	
MR. D. C. MORDAUNT	
MR. D. G. F. MUNSON	Colchester Society
MR. K. A. NOBLE	Co-operative Wholesale Society
MRS. N. NUZUM	Greater Nottingham Society
MR. W. J. PHILPOTT	I.L.E.A. College for the Distributive Trades
MR. G. V. J. PRATT	North Eastern Section

MR. I. RAWLINSON	Hyde Society
MR. C. F. RINGROSE	London Society Education Committee
MR. H. ROBINSON	Greater Nottingham Society
MR. B. J. ROSE	Co-operative Union
MR. W. E. ROUNCE	North Eastern Society Member Relations Comm.
PROFESSOR J. SIZER	
MR. J. W. SMITH	
MR. W. J. STEWART	University of Strathclyde
MR. E. W. TAYLOR	Harrogate & District Society
MR. T. WARDLE	Greater Nottingham Society
MR. W. P. WATKINS	
MR. S. WILLIAMS	Greater Nottingham Society
DR. ALEXANDER WILSON	University of Manchester
MR. A. W. WOOD	North Midland Society
MR. L. WILKINSON	Co-operative Union

## 2 Introduction by the Chairman

Mr. W. E. Lawn extended a welcome to all present and expressed satisfaction that the A.G.M. and Conference had attracted such a large number of participants. He also expressed thanks on behalf of all the members to the domestic and administrative staff of the College.

## 3 Apologies

Messages of apology and good wishes had been received from: Professor K. J. W. Alexander, Mr. Harry Bailey, Mr. L. C. Fox, Mr. John Gilbert, M.P., Mr. H. Kemp, Professor R. A. B. Leaper, Mr. D. McNab, Mr. T. E. Stephenson.

## 4 Report of the National Officers for 1971/72

This was introduced by the Chairman. Among the points made in review of the report were:

### (a) BULLETIN

Publication of Nos. 13, 14 and 15 was noted and the contribution of Mr. B. Howcroft to the bibliography in issue 15 was acknowledged.

### (b) RESEARCH

The Secretary and Treasurer reminded the Conference of the offer by the National Officers to make available a grant of £40 to each Region towards the cost of research projects; this offer was still open.

### (c) FINANCE

Some satisfaction was expressed at the financial position of the Society, but it was noted that this reflected the failure of the Society to expand its programme up to the limit of the resources that could reasonably be made available.

## 5 Future Development of the Society

A discussion on this was introduced by Mr. Marshall and some points made in it were:

- That the possibility of some regional organisation based on a University or group of Universities should be tested, if possible.
- That there was a case for a series of Regional Working Parties dealing with current Co-operative problems including, for example:
  - (i) Capital
  - (ii) Human resources
  - (iii) Objectives

It was suggested that the National Officers could usefully suggest a range of topics for consideration by such Working Parties.

- That a particular role of the Society was to help the Movement to think more reflectively. It also reached individuals who may not otherwise be actively involved in Co-operative organisations.
- That the National Officers should consider distributing a questionnaire to members of the Society seeking their views on its future development.
- That the Society should be more widely publicised particularly in educational journals.

## 6 Appointment of Officers for 1972/73

Thanks were expressed to the Officers for their services during 1971/72 and the following were recommended and approved for office during 1972/73:

- (a) All Presidents, still in office, to be re-elected, with the addition of Mr. C. C. Hilditch.
- (b) Mr. W. J. Philpott to be Chairman.
- (c) Mr. S. P. Clarke to join Mr. D. Hopwood as Vice-Chairmen.
- (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*.

## 7 Conference Papers

### (a) "The Co-operative Movement: A Perspective for the 1970s"

A paper entitled "The Co-operative Movement: A Perspective for the 1970s", presented by Mr. J. Hughes, is published elsewhere in the *Bulletin*. In discussion of it, some of the general points were:

- (a) Agreement on the urgent need for an alliance between the C.W.S. and the large regional societies. This would facilitate a co-ordinated and strategic use of the Movement's capital and would make it possible for the Movement to achieve the economies of scale instead of the diseconomies of small scale.

- (b) The need for a programme of research and development linked to the key investment decisions.
  - (c) The need for a new system of accountability to be built into the Movement's structure of consumer democracy.
  - (d) Urgency of the Movement resolving the problem of social control within large scale organisations. The basic Co-operative principle was association or unity: the central problem confronting the British Movement was to find the right units in which it could function effectively.
  - (e) The problem of identifying the main agencies of change in the present situation. The decisions which needed to be made could not be implemented within the existing structure.
- (b) "The Formation of a Regional Society"**

Mr. L. A. Harrison, Chief Executive Officer of the Greater Nottingham Co-operative Society, and Mr. R. Harrison, Financial Controller of the North Eastern Co-operative Society, introduced the paper on "The Formation of a Regional Society" by Mr. T. E. Stephenson of the University of Leeds, which had been published in *Bulletin* No. 14.

In the discussion some of the general points were:

- (a) The need for more guidance from the national federations on the personnel, financial, and administrative problems involved in mergers.
- (b) The importance of full consultation with trade unions during merger negotiations.
- (c) That regionalisation in itself was no panacea for the Movement's problems, but it provided a basis for further advance. Through regionalisation it was possible to achieve economies of scale, opportunities for growth, the ability to absorb losses, and the resources to appoint specialist officers.
- (d) That one of the problems confronting the executives of newly formed regional societies was the need to run a continuing economic operation and at the same time to plan ahead for the future.