

The Society for Co-operative Studies

REPORT OF THE SEVENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

27TH-28TH APRIL, 1973

AT THE CO-OPERATIVE COLLEGE, STANFORD HALL

1 Attendance

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. ATKINSON	London Society
MR. T. BENTLEY	Greater Nottingham Society
MR. K. BRADSHAW	Leicestershire Society
MR. R. BRISCOE	Plymouth and South Devon
MRS. R. BRISCOE	
MR. D. BROWN	Co-operative Union
MRS. D. BUTTON	Greater Nottingham Society
DR. T. F. CARBERY	University of Strathclyde
MR. H. CATION	Central and East Fife Society
MR. K. COOPER	Derby and Burton Society
MR. L. C. FOX	Co-operative Union
MR. W. FROST	Co-operative Union
MR. J. R. HAMMOND	Co-operative Union
MR. D. G. HOPWOOD	
MRS. L. HOWE	Co-operative News
MR. K. HULSE	Co-operative Union
MRS. E. KING	Central and East Fife Society
MR. M. KIRKMAN	Leicestershire Society
MISS M. LARGE	Birmingham Society
MR. W. E. LAWN	Co-operative Union
MR. N. MCARDLE	
MRS. N. MCARDLE	
MR. D. MCKELVIE	
MR. R. L. MARSHALL	Co-operative Union
MR. S. MARTIN	Co-operative Union
MR. G. K. MEDLOCK	
MR. R. J. MITCHELL	
MR. W. J. PHILPOTT	College for the Distributive Trades
MR. G. V. J. PRATT	Co-operative Union, North-Eastern Section
MR. I. RAWLINSON	Hyde Society
MR. H. ROBINSON	Greater Nottingham Society
MR. L. J. ROBSON	Greater Nottingham Society
MR. E. W. TAYLOR	Harrogate Society
MR. D. L. WILKINSON	Co-operative Union
DR. A. WILSON	University of Manchester
MR. W. WILSON	North-Eastern Society

2 Introduction by the Chairman

Mr. W. J. Philpott extended a welcome to all present and expressed thanks on behalf of the members to the domestic and administrative staff of the College.

3 Apologies

Messages of apology and good wishes had been received from the Presidents of the Society and particular reference was made to Mr. S. P. Clarke who had hoped to share in the presentation to the first session.

4 Report of the National Officers for 1972/73

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

(a) BULLETIN

Publication of Nos. 16, 17 and 18 was noted, and the contribution of Mr. B. Howcroft to the bibliography in issue 18 was acknowledged.

(b) REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

The formation of a West Midland Group of the Society was noted with interest and its present activities and future plans were reviewed.

(c) FINANCE

The financial position of the Society was noted and that in particular the balance available for future development while substantially reduced was still useful.

5 Future Development of the Society

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

—That the Society had a number of achievements to its credit but in the main on national level, including:

- (i) The publication of the *Bulletin*
- (ii) The organisation of the Annual Conference
- (iii) The stimulation of research

—That on balance there were advantages in the Society continuing to function as an independent voluntary organisation.

—That the main line of development appeared to be in national scope though there was appreciation of the possibility exemplified in the West Midland Group of local organisation bringing together neighbouring universities, colleges and societies.

There was a general review of these possibilities.

6 Appointment of Officers for 1973/74

Thanks were expressed to the Officers for their services during 1972/73, and the following were recommended and approved for office during 1973/74:

- (a) All Presidents, still in office, to be re-elected.
- (b) Mr. D. G. Hopwood to be Chairman.
- (c) Mr. S. P. Clarke and Mr. C. J. F. Ringrose to be Vice-Chairmen.
- (d) Mr. R. L. Marshall to continue as Secretary and Treasurer.
- (e) Mr. Marshall and Dr. T. F. Carbery to continue as Editors of the *Bulletin*.

7 Conference Papers

(a) "Current Retail Developments: and the Co-operative Counter-Attack"

A paper entitled 'Current Retail Developments: and the Co-operative Counter-Attack' had been published in *Bulletin* Number 18. This was introduced by Mr. D. G. Hopwood, Department of Marketing, University of Lancaster. The author and his remarks were supported by contributions from the experience of Mr. D. McKelvie, Chief Executive Officer, Lancastria Co-operative Society, and Mr. G. K. Medlock, Chief Executive Officer, Birkenhead Co-operative Society. In discussion of it, some of the general points were:

- (a) That the Movement's operations tended to be too much food oriented and that expenditure on food would form an ever decreasing share of consumer spending. Instead the Movement should concentrate more of its activities on leisure industries including motoring, travel, restaurants, etc.
- (b) That there was a need for a clear management structure within each society and job descriptions delineating the responsibilities of each officer within the overall structure.
- (c) The need for a central development agency, initiated by the C.W.S., to plan and co-ordinate a strategy for retail development.
- (d) The need for a revised version of the Regional Plan taking account of current relationships and taking as a basis the present large societies.

(b) "Co-operative Democracy—A Final Comment"

Dr. T. F. Carbery introduced the paper on "Co-operative Democracy—A Final Comment" which had been published in *Bulletin* Number 18. In the discussion some of the general points were:

- (a) That in some cases lay boards of directors were still making management decisions, i.e., removing the decision-making function from professional management. There was a need for clarification of which topics or points were matters for the board and which were the responsibility of management.
- (b) That the information provided for boards of directors should assist them in reaching sensible decisions.

- (c) That the crucial factor was the quality of the Chief Executive Officer and the relationship between the Chief Officer and the board. The future of the Co-operative Movement would depend substantially on the Movement's ability to recruit Chief Executive Officers of calibre for the large regional societies.

- (d) That the Movement was failing to attract to lay democratic participation members of quality in sufficient numbers and the reasons for this were reviewed.