

Wider Still and Wider Relations with Universities

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" . . . our final recommendation is that the Movement should formally re-examine . . . its basic trading problems at least once every decade".

The advice from the Independent Commission is sound. Like any other social organisation we need, of course, to meet the demands of today and tomorrow—and that is exacting enough at present. We need also to add a dimension of long-term analysis to our efforts: to identify and measure as far as we can the new challenge that will face us in five or ten years and draw up the guide-lines that will shape our response to these conditions. This is not, of course, a task to be taken up every five or ten years: it has to be a continuing preoccupation of agencies serving the Movement. And it is pleasant to speculate on one form of association by universities in this preoccupation, particularly against the background of co-operative engagement with them so far.

For example, one of the major developments in the early years of the College at Stanford Hall was the establishment by the University of Nottingham of a Diploma for which students in a two-year course at the College could be prepared, and which would include within the general context of social, economic and political studies considerable concentration on co-operative principles, history and organisation. Again, in more recent years, there has been the promotion by universities, particularly through their extra-mural departments and particularly in the North-East, North-West and North, of courses for co-operative officials and directors: it is pleasant to note in the present session the entry of three more universities into this provision for the first time—Birmingham, Leicester and Oxford.

LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

More immediately, however, there has been a new and significant development in the relation between the College and its neighbour, Loughborough University of Technology. We have looked across the river Soar, from our modest cell of learning at Stanford Hall, to this great and growing neighbour—with admiration for their achievement and with appreciation of the helpful relation we have always had with them. The University is now instituting the award of a Diploma in Co-operative Development (overseas) for which students will come into residence for a session, October to June, at the College.

Since 1947, the College—with the backing of the appropriate Government Departments, and most recently of the Ministry of Overseas Development—has provided courses on the application of co-operative principles and techniques within the conditions of the developing countries. It is still maintaining the course for its own Certificate, but there will now be added the more advanced course and award of the University—and this provision is fully supported by the

Ministry. The normal requirement for entry to the course will be a University degree. However, other candidates may be accepted if they have had practical experience and/or possess professional qualifications that are acceptable to the University.

"Development" is an area of study on which various courses are now offered in universities and colleges in Britain, but this is the first British provision on a University level of a Diploma course covering the broad context of economic and political development, with concentration on the role of co-operation and on the problems involved in its organisation and promotion. It is particularly suitable for officers of Government departments who, in practice or in prospect, are involved in policy-making for co-operative development, for senior officials of Co-operative Unions and large co-operative societies, and for teachers in co-operative colleges and training centres in the developing countries.

APPOINTMENTS FOR CO-OPERATIVE RESEARCH?

Wider still and wider, therefore, shall the bounds of this engagement be set. Where to? What next? A very good step would be to promote under the joint auspices of the College and one or more neighbouring universities, appointments for research in areas of particular relevance to co-operative development in this country. We are beset by immediate problems which will not await approach through research of this kind—but, in five or ten years' time, we shall be facing new problems and should be preparing for them well in advance.

So we need:

A general University-College collaboration for the scheme;

A pattern of research projects, related both among themselves and to what is being done by other agencies;

A number of appointments, probably as University posts, to carry out the work.

Above all, we need co-operative money with which to approach a university for even a modest start. For example, a covenanted annual payment of £2,000-£2,500 for seven years would make a beginning—and a growing point of great value.