

Co-op. Great BritainFOREWORD

The debate continues, though perhaps that term suggests more vitality and balance than have in fact been achieved. The advocacy for Co-op. Great Britain at least publicly has not moved forward at all significantly into any further formulation: the analysis and challenging scrutiny of the idea have been more reasonable and developed. If the aspiration fails to get a fair scrutiny and assessment, that will be the fault of its supporters not of those who are opposed, sceptical or uncertain.

Anyhow as a contribution through the Society Professor Branton sets out some general issues which a "national society" must confront if its possibility is to be taken seriously. We are also fortunate to have Dr. Rauter report from the experience of Konsum Austria for the comparisons and contrasts which can be drawn with the British position. There was also the chance of an article, which we eagerly seized, from Mr. Stephenson on the importance of "control" systems in a national society. Hope of an article extending the proposals for a national society into terms of more specific and more practical organisation was hope disappointed - or at least for the moment hope deferred.

Northern Light

For further international comparison there is also considerable interest in Co-op. Document No. 3.79 issued in August by K.F. International Department, 10465 Stockholm 15. This is a summary of an Organisation Committee's proposals to the National Assembly of K.F. in June of this year under the title "Swedish Consumer Co-operation on the Threshold of the 1980's". Within a scope covering the efficiency of the Swedish movement in business operations, in consumer policy and in democracy there is a scrutiny of the advantages and disadvantages of a fully integrated enterprise "Co-op. Sweden". Essentially the Organisation Committee recommends that there is no reason at present to suggest the establishment of Co-op. Sweden. However, since the present forms of co-operation between K.F. and societies do not work satisfactorily, certain reallocations of responsibility and work should be made. These are defined fairly specifically - but also of great interest is the process from which the proposals emerge and the further process to which they are now committed.

There were preparatory studies by a working party set up in 1973. The Organisation Committee drawn from K.F.'s Board of Directors and Executive was established in 1975. Now, following the Assembly in 1979, the proposals will be discussed both by societies and in the local Study Groups of members organised by K.F. The views expressed will be sent to

K.F. and on their basis, final proposals will be submitted to the National Assembly in 1980 and 1981. The final project will be put into effect in January 1982.

It is an impressive record and prospect bringing into happy conjunction purposive national leadership and popular discussion and decision. It illustrates the capacity and justification of democratic, representative government, i.e., "that it enables communities to change, to seek new departures, while at the same time subjecting all innovations to the test of citizen support".

R.L.M.