

REVIEWS

by

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The last Bulletin's Reviews section was devoted to Co-operative journals with the result that there are a good many books clamouring for space this time around. Inevitably this means that I must omit perfectly useful publications (as indeed I do each time - but this time the problem is more acute). Perhaps, therefore, a concluding list of recent publications received but not reviewed would be a useful part of this section of the Bulletin. I should be glad of members' views on this (and glad, as ever, of information about publications I may have missed).

As an inveterate peruser of lists I'm delighted to be able to report this time that a really first-rate one has come my way. Patricia M. Hill, Maryjean McGrath and Elena Reyes' Co-operative Bibliography (University Center for Co-operatives, Wisconsin - unpriced) is a massive guide to over two thousand English language monographs on Co-operation. All entries are listed by both author and title, a selective subject listing is included, and an analytical index lends further value. In addition, most entries are annotated. It is always possible to find some work which has evaded the attention of the compilers of a survey of this kind, and an additional small problem for British users that (naturally) American editions are always quoted when available. But this is mere quibbling. I expect to use the bibliography a great deal and know that it will be of enormous value not only to me but to all students of Co-operation.

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Elena Reyes has also compiled a Food Co-op Bibliography (University Center for Co-operatives, Wisconsin, unpriced) which concentrates on American publications, but includes theses, reports and articles as well as monographs. Its use will clearly not be as wide as that of the general bibliography, but it should be very helpful within its area.

Two new books on agricultural Co-operation, both published by Gower, deserve attention. Gordon Foxall surveys Co-operative Marketing in European Agriculture (£14.50). Boldly the book might be described as an annotated data-sheet on Co-operative marketing performance in the European Community (excluding the U.K. and newcomer Greece). This would be somewhat unfair, for Foxall does expand considerably on his figures and gives a useful commentary throughout. Nevertheless, with eight countries covered in less than a hundred pages of text one cannot expect too much depth, and the presentation for each country of appropriate statistics for the seventies (the research took place in 1979/80), an outline history and structure is valuable in itself.

Malcolm Sargent's previous publications have mainly been detailed studies of Co-operative practice. In his new book Agricultural Co-operation (like Foxall's £14.50 I'm afraid) he stands back somewhat and looks at his subject in a wider perspective - the British condition compared with elsewhere, but also related to Co-operation in general and in principle and to other Co-operative types. This consideration of Co-operative practice with regard to the social origins and implications of the Co-operative principle, whilst not uncommon in studies of industrial worker Co-operatives, seems to me a rarity in the literature

of modern British and European agricultural co-operation, and is much to be welcomed.

A handy survey of a field which will clearly be of increasing importance in the future comes from Nora Stettner. Her new publication Community co-operatives: their potential for rural and urban development (Plunkett Foundation £1.95) is a brief guide to the whole subject which concentrates particularly on the less well explored urban potential of community Co-operatives by means of ten very quick case outlines. Of their very nature Co-operatives of this type are likely to differ considerably from one another, responding to the needs and conditions of the local environment, and when an attempt is made to list the types of prime mover and of sources of external support these are found to number no less than eight and nine respectively - and that in a study of only ten cases. But if such variety makes a typology more difficult it should also stimulate the imagination of the new development worker or would-be Co-operator in the search for inspiration or aid. It is in the hands of these two categories of participant that the booklet is likely to prove most valuable.

In looking at initiators/catalysts in the formation of community Co-operatives Nora Stettner is touching on issues which form the focus of a recent working paper by Jane Cosyns and Ray Laveridge - The Role of Leadership in the Genesis of Producer Co-operatives (University of Aston Management Centre, £1.00). This is a fairly academic analysis, drawing heavily upon organisation theory. I am not sure that the title altogether expresses the content

which seems to me to be rather a study of organisational outcomes of differing forms of leadership and catalysis in the beginning of a Co-operative than a study of the leadership role itself. This is no disparagement of the paper, however, for such an analysis is perfectly valid and interesting.

Under New Management (Pan, £2.95) is an account by S.C.S.' own Tony Eccles of the K.M.E. Co-operative, with which he was himself so intimately involved. The events are of course enormously complex, and the book makes fascinating reading simply as a story. More importantly this analysis, about the fullest we have of any of the major rescue Co-operatives of the seventies, leads Eccles to the conclusion that "Unless K.M.E. is an aberration, industrial democracy and sizeable worker co-operatives will not work in Britain whilst worker attitudes and trade union policies remain as they are". A more forthright statement could hardly be desired, and it is likely that the view will provoke considerable opposition from many who would identify other factors as more significant in the demise of K.M.E. and its various counterparts elsewhere. I shall not expand further on a book which most S.C.S. members are probably aware of anyway - but it is clear that this is a major addition to the literature on worker Co-operatives.

Note of the Author

STEPHEN DRODGE is Librarian of the Co-operative College and member of I.C.A. Librarians' Working Party. Previously spent four years in public library service.