

Society for Co-operative Studies

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1968/69

1. During the year the five Presidents of the Society have remained in office. Mr. T. E. Stephenson has occupied the chair and Dr. T. F. Carbery has joined Mr. W. E. Lawn as Vice-Chairman. Following the suggestion of the 1968 Annual General Meeting the National Officers invited the Past-Chairman, Dr. Wilson, to attend the meetings in 1968/69: and they would also like to record their pleasure in the participation of Mr. R. Southern, General Secretary of the Co-operative Union, at meetings where Lord Jacques, Chairman of the Union, and one of the Presidents, has not been able to be present.

The Officers have had three meetings in the year and the following is their report for presentation to the Annual General Meeting on 11th/12th April, 1969.

2. Membership

At 31st January 1969 the membership of the Society (with the 1968 figure given in brackets) was:

Region	Individuals		Organisations		Total
	"Co-operative"	Other	"Co-operative"	Other	
METROPOLITAN AND SOUTHERN	12 (12)	5 (10)	5 (5)	1 (1)	23 (28)
MIDLAND	10 (8)	4 (4)	3 (6)	1 (2)	18 (20)
NORTH	5 (9)	2 (3)	3 (4)	— (2)	10 (18)
YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE	4 (4)	— (2)	9 (9)	2 (2)	15 (17)
NORTH-WEST	10 (11)	7 (7)	4 (10)	— (1)	21 (29)
SCOTTISH	19 (3)	6 (2)	2 (2)	1 (2)	28 (9)
SOUTH-WEST	1 (1)	— (—)	2 (2)	— (—)	3 (3)
WEST	4 (2)	— (1)	1 (3)	1 (1)	6 (7)
	<u>65 (50)</u>	<u>24 (29)</u>	<u>29 (41)</u>	<u>6 (11)</u>	<u>124 (131)</u>

The 1968/69 figures include the following new members:

Individuals		Organisations	
"Co-operative"	Other	"Co-operative"	Other
9	6	2	—

We appreciate still, of course, that the division into "Co-operative" and "Other" is not using exclusive categories and is not very exact: but it is still a useful indication of the general distribution of the Society's membership.

3. The "Bulletin"

There have been three issues of the *Bulletin* in the year and they have followed the general objective set for the publication: to give information and views on the engagement in various forms between universities and colleges on the one

hand and the Co-operative Movement on the other. The *Bulletin* has been well received and the officers appreciate particularly the services which Miss J. M. Abbott, B.A., gave to it as Co-Editor with the Secretary and the Treasurer. By the same token they were sorry when she gave up this post on her resignation from the Education Department of the Co-operative Union in June 1968, and they have accepted with appreciation the offer of Mr. J. R. Hammond, Dip.P.E.S.S. to take the appointment.

4. Guide Lines for Action

Following the Annual General Meeting 1968 the National Officers considered what guide lines they should mark out as suggestions for regional action. In brief they dealt with two reference points, study projects and research:

(a) Study Projects

After reviewing various topics that might be promoted in the Regions, they agreed:

- that two areas of study and discussion should be suggested: the Future of Co-operative Democracy—particularly in regional societies; and the “National Structure of the Movement”; particularly the relations between the trading and the non-trading federations. It was not, of course, envisaged that these topics should be “compulsory” for all Regions or that they should represent the only activity in any Region.
- that Dr. Wilson and Mr. Watkins would prepare notes respectively on these topics which would seek to provide a framework for discussion. It was appreciated that Regional groups might well adopt their own framework and, even if they adopted the suggested pattern initially, they might well pass later to other lines of enquiry.
- that Regional groups be invited to send in reports of their discussion and views by the end of January 1969 so that these could be considered as a basis for a compilation to be published in the *Bulletin*.

The notes by Dr. Wilson and Mr. Watkins were published in *Bulletin No. 5* and members have expressed appreciation of them. There has been some organised and sustained discussion but this “guide-line for action” has not, so far, been as productive as the officers hoped.

(b) Research

As the 1968 A.G.M. acknowledged, systematic research depends upon the commitment to it of qualified individuals and this in turn depends on resources adequate to support such individuals and their work. Sources of money for such research as set out in the report of the A.G.M. were reviewed by the officers and ways in which the Society might generally assist were discussed:

- by disseminating information of research which was already being undertaken and developing a sense of common interest among the participants. The *Bulletin* and the Regional meetings should be of help in this.

- by providing opportunities for research workers to report to Regional and national meetings. It is hoped to have two such reports at the 1969 A.G.M.
- by helping in gathering information for such research from the members of the Society whose sympathy could be counted on. For example, Mr. M. Gibson, University of Leicester, has been assisted by the Co-operative Union in the framing and distribution of a questionnaire to Chief Officials of Co-operative societies.
- by the members of the Society helping when they could in support of Co-operative research from the sources available.

More specifically, the national officers considered a short paper from the Secretary/Treasurer outlining a scheme envisaged by the Education Department and College for a Co-operative national research fund, and approved the general aim and scope:

- that there be established a national fund for Co-operative research at the disposition of the Co-operative Union's Education Executive who would act in consultation with the Society.
- that the scheme would involve definitions of the areas of research which should have priority, determination of the institutions, including the Co-operative College and universities which could best carry out the work, and settlement of the forms and duration of the research that would be most useful.
- that to build up the fund, contributions should be sought from as wide a range as possible, including Sections and individual Co-operative societies and organisations and not forgetting the possibility of resort to non-Co-operative organisations whose purposes and funds might be related to the projects that were undertaken. The 50th anniversary of the Co-operative College in 1969 could also be exploited in a fund-raising campaign.

The Officers agreed that in any appeal for contributions it would be important to give specific examples of the areas of research that might be undertaken and listed some items which could be commended.

The general scheme is now being pursued by the Co-operative Union.

5. Regional Developments

The situation at the end of January 1969 as reported from each region is:

Metropolitan and Southern

The Southern branch of the Society is seeking to arrange meetings on a quarterly basis.

One meeting was devoted to a contribution delivered by a senior representative of the John Lewis Partnership, who drew comparisons between his Organisation and Co-operative enterprise. Four papers have been prepared by mem-

bers and will be discussed in detail in January 1969. These contributions are largely concerned with the future of Co-operative democracy and in particular the problems of regionalisation. A document was presented by the Secretary of the Co-operative Party reviewing his organisation in the light of present attitudes towards both the Party and Regionalisation.

Midland

Meetings of the Society have been held in May, September and January. The topics under review have included "Co-operators and Democracy", "Democracy and Competition in Consumer Co-operatives", and "The difference between Co-operative and capitalist undertakings".

Discussion on these topics is to be continued at future meetings and further discussion papers are to be prepared.

North

The branch has distributed two questionnaires to Co-operative societies in the Northern region—one on "The Future of Co-operative Democracy" and one on junior recruitment. The replies are being evaluated and will be the subject of a later report.

The next meeting of the branch will be concerned with Career Prospects within Northern Co-operative societies.

Yorkshire and Humberside

Early in 1969 Mr. T. E. Stephenson will present the report of the study group on "Democracy in a Regional Society".

Associations with other organisations in the region continue and contacts with Universities and Colleges have been usefully developed.

North-West

Three meetings have been held during the year. The study paper prepared by Dr. Alexander Wilson on "The Future of Co-operative Democracy" was the subject matter of the May and September meetings. The November meeting saw Mr. D. Flanagan of the Co-operative Union present a paper on "Co-operative Journalism and Communications", emphasising that effective communications were a necessary feature of any virile democratic process.

Scottish

The year commenced with a wine and cheese conversazione which was a most enjoyable occasion and facilitated a useful exchange between members and other interested parties.

Other meetings have included discussions on "The Co-operative Movement and Taxation" and "The Future of Co-operative Democracy". These have stimulated considerable interest and will be followed by further discussion meetings.

South-West

Explorations have proceeded during the year regarding the appointment of the acting joint convenors and contacts with Universities and colleges have been usefully maintained.

