

“Developing The. Research Still Needed”

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The title is taken from the “Purpose” of the Society as defined in its constitution and, of course, the development of research has been discussed in national and regional meetings and in the *Bulletin*. One prospect of development which the Education Department and College is plotting with the support of the Society is worth reporting—though the “plot” is still to be planned in detail and set in motion.

I. DIMENSION AND SCOPE

The intention of the research would be to identify and measure as far as we can some of the changes and challenges that will face the Co-operative Movement in 5 or 10 years and draw up guide lines that would help to shape our response to these conditions. This is not, of course, to overlook or minimise the necessary pre-occupation with immediate problems. Research, however, in this sense cannot come to the aid of managers for these immediate tasks—but it can offer help to those faced with the responsibility of decision in 5 or 10 years time.

The national officers of the Society listed some projects that could well fall within such a definition.

- Business finance and particularly problems of capital and of investment appraisal.
- Taxation and its relation to Co-operative societies.
- Price policies and, in particular, the question of price cuts—the different techniques and their consequences.
- National reorganisation and structure; the aims and strategy.
- Goods assortments and their relation to consumer demands.
- Analysis of the successful Swedish Co-operative organisation such as the Domus stores and, in particular, the contribution of management training to that success.
- Regionalisation within a national Movement.

2. RESOURCES FOR THE RESEARCH

Clearly we can get this research undertaken only if we have the resources to support competent practitioners—and this is not a specially favourable time in which to be mounting an appeal for money. However, the national officers of the Society expressed approval and support for the proposal of the Education

Department and College to raise a national fund. And we have a very useful beginning. The Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society in acknowledgment of its centenary has given an assurance of £2,000 on the understanding that there should be a wider national appeal and if this national appeal is not successful the Wholesale Society, reasonably enough, will be free to reconsider this allocation.

We are, therefore, planning the national campaign—and where helpful will link this with the 50th anniversary of the College in 1969. This may be of considerable service in releasing the generosity of ex-students whether from their own resources or from their professional responsibilities in Co-operative service. And we are not overlooking the inauguration and funds of the Distributive Industry Training Board. The intention is to bring together a small representative committee which over the next month or two will plan the campaign as effectively as possible.

3. ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES

This term may suggest too strongly a centralised dictation of the work but it is intended to indicate only some general planning. Various important questions will arise quickly. Should we envisage a small unit of Co-operative research in a university or more limited projects taken up by different universities—or both? Which projects should be given priority within the long list that could readily be drawn up? And so on: there are many questions to be settled. The urgent thing is to get a start made on a scale and area of research likely to show useful results and encourage confidence in the productivity of this kind of investment.