

Society for Co-operative Studies

Annual Report for 1969/70

1. During the year the five Presidents of the Society have remained in office. Dr. T. F. Carbery has occupied the chair and Mr. John Roper has joined Mr. W. E. Lawn as Vice-Chairman. As Past-Chairman Mr. T. E. Stephenson was invited to attend the meetings of the National Officers in 1969/70: and following the invitation to each Region not included among the National Officers to nominate a representative, we have been joined by Mr. E. P. Pritchard, University of Birmingham. We have also enjoyed the participation of Sir Robert Southern, General Secretary of the Co-operative Union, as an observer—and this gave us an opportunity to offer to him personally our warm congratulations on his Knighthood in the 1970 New Year's Honours List.

The Officers have had three meetings in the year and the following is their report for presentation to the Annual General Meeting on 3rd/4th April, 1970.

2. Membership

(a) At 31st January, 1970 the membership of the Society (with the 1969 figures given in brackets) was:

Region	Individuals		Organisations		Total
	'Co-operative'	Other	'Co-operative'	Other	
Metropolitan and					
Southern	7 (12)	4 (5)	9 (5)	2 (1)	22 (23)
Midland	13 (10)	4 (4)	4 (3)	2 (1)	23 (18)
North	5 (5)	2 (2)	3 (3)	1 (-)	11 (10)
Yorkshire and					
Humber-side ..	5 (4)	1 (-)	9 (9)	1 (2)	16 (15)
North-West ..	12 (10)	6 (7)	3 (4)	- (-)	21 (21)
Scottish	21 (19)	10 (6)	3 (2)	2 (1)	36 (28)
South-West ..	3 (1)	- (-)	2 (2)	- (-)	5 (3)
West	5 (4)	- (-)	1 (1)	1 (1)	7 (6)
Overseas	1 (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	1 (-)
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	72 (65)	27 (24)	34 (29)	9 (6)	142 (124)

(b) We have noted with satisfaction the maintenance and indeed some increase in our membership and we acknowledge that, if anything, this emphasises the importance of developing functions and services which will justify and retain this support.

3. The "Bulletin"

Bulletins No. 7, 8 and 9 have been published during the year and have been received quite well. One new feature was inaugurated in *Bulletin* No. 8—the bibliography: and it is the sadder to record the death of its author Mr. Desmond

Flanagan whose service will be missed from the Society as from many other areas of Co-operative activity. We believe that the preparation of this bibliography annually will be of considerable value to members of the Society.

4. Other National Activities

(a) STUDY PROJECTS

It will be recalled that we recommended for Regional discussion two areas of study last year and published notes on them: the intention was that reports would be submitted from the Regions which might then form the basis for a compilation to be published in the *Bulletin*. This scheme, however, did not develop any real vitality and it has not been as productive as we had hoped.

(b) RESEARCH

In accordance with the scheme approved at the last Annual General Meeting it was intimated in the *Bulletin* that grants up to a limit of £30 in any instance were available to assist research projects which had a Co-operative relevance. Two awards have been made: £15 and £30 respectively to Mr. D. Smyth and to Messrs. Hopwood and Birch for their projects on Membership Participation in the Operation of Co-operative Retail Societies in Western Europe and on Capital Investments in Large Retail Co-operative Societies. Another grant, though for a somewhat different purpose, was that of £25 towards the expenses of Mr. W. P. Watkins in attending the Sixth International Congress of Co-operative Science at Giessen. Mr. Watkins has prepared an account of this Congress for the *Bulletin*.

(c) CO-OPERATIVE COLLEGE ENDOWMENT FUND

This Fund promoted on the Jubilee of the Co-operative College had received assurances by the end of December 1969 of gifts amounting to £3,300 and of seven-year covenants yielding £1,700 annually (plus £2,000 in annual covenant from the Co-operative Insurance Society earmarked initially at least for seminars for senior Co-operative management). The purpose of the Endowment Fund was stated in general terms—to provide resources for College projects for which money was not otherwise readily available but research had been envisaged as a very worthwhile line of action. The National Officers of the Society were invited by the Education Executive to give their advice on making effective use of the money for research and in their first response the National Officers have made these points:

- That if an experienced and full-time academic research fellow were envisaged then the annual expenditure might well be of the order of £2,500—to cover not only remuneration but also office facilities, travel facilities and superannuation, etc. The question was raised of the prospect of getting some contribution at least from a university with which a research project might be jointly mounted—but the times were not very propitious for this.
- Another possibility of “academic” research lay in part-time commitment by one or more university staff members and this could be quite productive.
- Exploration about either full-time or part-time work of this kind could best

begin by consultations with the sympathetic heads of relevant departments in one or two universities. In this connection there was agreement on the value of an association between the College and Loughborough University for at least one project.

—Another possibility of approach was to have the research undertaken by an experienced Co-operative official who would be seconded for the required period and sustained by an adequate grant from the Endowment Fund. This might be particularly relevant for projects that required practical experience of Co-operative organisation.

—In discussing possible areas of research there was agreement that these should be related in a practical way not so much to the more immediate problems of the Movement but to the conditions and challenges it would face within the calculable future, say, in a few years' time and to the responses it ought to make. Within these terms some possible topics were:

Function of management in a Co-operative setting.

A feasibility survey for a national society.

Co-operative retailing in New Towns.

The pressures of taxation on Co-operative development and the forms of taxation least detrimental to that development.

Case studies of successful Co-operative development.

Implementation of a regional society.

Co-operative member education.

5. Regional Developments

The situation at the end of January 1970 as reported from each Region is:

MIDLAND

Three business meetings have been held during the year together with a One Day Seminar and two papers were presented by members; Mr. C. S. Nuttall presented his paper on "The Co-operative Movement in Trade—Members and Consumers". A second paper "In Competition for Market Share—What Difference Is There Between Co-operative and Capitalist Undertakings?" was presented by Mr. M. Gibson.

In an effort to stimulate interest in the Society and to recruit new members a one day seminar was held at Nottingham, the theme being "Problems of the Co-operative Movement and Suggested Means of Solution".

NORTHERN

During the year Mr. W. M. Reed relinquished the chairmanship owing to pressure of other commitments and Mr. P. Harty, Snr., was unanimously elected in his place.

Future activities of the Branch have been discussed and it has been agreed

that wherever possible meetings should be held in universities and colleges in order to increase the opportunity of staff participation.

It has also been decided to explore the possibility of convening meetings jointly with other organisations whose field of activity is closely associated with that of the Society.

YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE

Association with Universities and Colleges has continued, in particular the Management Course for senior officials at Leeds University. This in effect is a continuing meeting of the Society and deals with many aspects of Co-operative Management and other topical matters.

It is the intention to discuss the report of the study group on "Democracy in a Regional Society" when this is available.

NORTH WEST

Meetings of the Society have been held on four occasions in 1969.

Mr. S. Stett spoke on "Co-operative Capital", Mr. D. G. Hopwood presented some aspects of his research into "Capital Investment", Mr. F. Bruckshaw reported on the I.C.A. Congress and the November meeting consisted of an open discussion on the I.C.A. resolution on "Democratic Involvement".

SCOTLAND

During the year a number of members' meetings were held and these discussed "The Future of the Co-operative Movement", "Democratic Control", and "Democratic Involvement in a Regional Society".

The branch has held a One-Day Conference in association with the Edinburgh University Extra Mural Department. The subject was "Urban Renewal and Its Effect on Retailing", and five speakers gave lectures.

METROPOLITAN AND SOUTHERN

The branch has met on a quarterly basis and has been supported on each occasion by 10-12 active members. The output of the branch has been fairly high and during the year, the following papers were submitted and discussed:

"Co-operative Democracy" by Paul Derrick.

"The Regional Plan and Democracy in the Kent Co-operatives" by B. le Bargy.

"Co-operative Democracy: District Committees in a Regional Society" by D. Hutton.

"The Co-operative Regional Plan and Political Activity" by T. E. Graham.

"Democratic Involvement in a Regional Society" by the R.A.C.S. Education Department.

"Training and Education in the 1970s" by W. J. Philpott.

WESTERN

During the year the Western Branch concluded its examination into Capital and the problems being experienced by the Co-operative Movement.

The main investigation centred upon the successes and failures of other organisations to attract Capital during the past five years. The Working Party was extended to twelve in an attempt to consolidate attendances. The Region lost the services of its two joint convenors which considerably curtailed activity.

6. Relations with Other Organisations

Informal but helpful relations have been maintained with the British Section of the International Centre for Research and Information on Public/Co-operative Economy (P.A.C.E.).

7. Finance

The Cash and Bank Account for the year ending 31st December, 1969, is as follows:

		1968		1969	
		£	s. d.	£	s. d.
RECEIPTS					
Cash in hand brought forward	.. ..	2	0 0	10	0 0
Cash at Bank brought forward	.. ..	512	17 6	499	15 4
Subscriptions .. ..	.. ..	505	0 0	640	1 6
Fees—A.G.M. and Conference	.. ..	71	14 0	80	8 4
Sales—Society <i>Bulletin</i>	.. ..	3	10 6	2	7 0
Bank Interest	.. ..	2	0 0	3	3 9
		<hr/>		<hr/>	
		£1097	2 0	£1235	15 11
		<hr/>		<hr/>	
PAYMENTS					
		1968		1969	
		£	s. d.	£	s. d.
Printing—Society <i>Bulletin</i>	.. ..	289	2 10	260	8 6
Research Grants	.. ..	—	—	70	0 0
Stationery and Postage	.. ..	125	0 0	117	6 10
Typewriting .. ..	.. ..	6	10 0	24	13 7
Telephone .. ..	.. ..	1	4 1	5	8 8
Advertising .. ..	.. ..	5	5 0	8	8 0
Annual General Meeting	.. ..	84	0 6	94	7 6
Refunds—A.G.M.	.. ..	2	8 0	—	—
Other Meetings	.. ..	70	5 0	46	14 0
Fees Refunded	.. ..	2	4 0	—	—
Subscriptions Refunded	.. ..	—	—	1	10 0
Carriage Refunded	.. ..	—	—	0	14 0
Cheque Books	.. ..	0	16 8	—	—
Bank Commission	.. ..	0	10 7	0	15 1
Cash in hand carried forward	.. ..	10	0 0	2	5 5
Cash at Bank carried forward	.. ..	499	15 4	603	4 4
		<hr/>		<hr/>	
		£1097	2 0	£1235	15 11
		<hr/>		<hr/>	

8. Conclusion—and Continuation

In 1969/70 the Society numerically has maintained its position: locally and regionally there has not been much evidence of vitality or initiative: nationally, our services we feel have been reasonably developed.

In this respect, and with special regard to the first of these two points, members of the Society who will be attending the Annual General Meeting may care to give consideration to the following questions.

- (a) To what extent should local regional groups hold meetings for the presentation of, and discussion on, papers?
- (b) What other activities can be profitably pursued by such regional groups meeting say one night every two months?
- (c) To what extent are those identified with regional groups capable of undertaking modest research activities (e.g. the conduct of a survey) which may be of advantage to local co-operative trading interests?