

Society Notes



*And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight*

It seems so, as I make these Notes towards the end of the general election campaign. The main guide line I cling to, for steadiness and direction over the darkling plain, is a question: what is the balance discernible in each Party's principles and practice between service to individual and sectional interests, on the one hand, and the public interest on the other? The guide line is leading me, I think to putting my cross in the right place on polling day - but at the rendezvous I shall try to remember a piece of advice which I heard from the Reverend Dr. Donald Soper at an eve of poll meeting many, many years ago.

He and I had the rôle of keeping more or less contented an audience waiting in Hammersmith Town Hall for the arrival of the candidate at the end of his final tour of the constituency. Dr. Soper opened his deliverance with an unexpected and memorable caution to the congregation on these lines: "You expect me, perhaps, to tell you that the choice tomorrow is between a set of sinners and a set of saints. Not so. The choice is between two sets of sinners - and I will tell you why I think my set is less sinful than the other".

Society Considerations -

The same search for the right balance, I suppose, led me also to my Co-operative engagement - and leads me now (at long last) to this Society and these Notes.

The Committee has been heartened recently by reports from Frank Dent, the Membership Secretary of two developments: the positive responses by members to the invitation for Optional Sponsorship Additions to the subscription rates for 1991-2 and by Co-operative societies to the suggestion that they sponsor into the S.C.S. universities and colleges within their areas. The Committee has also been surveying the programmes for the 1994 celebrations of the Rochdale Pioneers, with an eye of course for any niche which the S.C.S. can fill and is still discussing ways of promoting Co-operative research. Of all that, no doubt, more details later.

The annual conference and A.G.M. of the SCS has been set for Saturday and Sunday, 12/13 September at the College, on the theme "The Application of Co-operative Values" with contributions from a wide range of Co-operative experience. This is being publicised separately.

Then a note of farewell and hail. Geoff Wade, in deference to pressures of work in his Society has resigned as secretary of the SCS and the Committee in thanking him for his service, hoped also for his continuing support. Garth Pratt, formerly Manager, Economic and Research Services of the Co-operative Union, and now working with a CDA has accepted the invitation to take the post and has been warmly welcomed into it.

Journals Present and Future

This first part of Journal 74 is confidently dated for distribution at the end of April and the second part, the annual supplement *Reflections and Projections on Co-operative Trade 1991* will follow in June. The detailed statistics for 1991 are not available to the contributors until the latter days of May and their help in meeting very exacting deadlines is specially appreciated. The Co-operative Union is distributing the Supplement as last year, to reach directors and officials of all its member Societies.

The contributors will be Professor N. Branton, formerly Dean of the School of Business and Administration at the University of Strathclyde; A.L. Cook, until recently Chief Executive Officer of Anglia Regional Society; Dr. Leigh Sparks of the Institute of Retail Studies, University of Stirling; T.E. Stephenson, writer, lecturer and consultant on Co-operative Management, and James Wood, Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company.

Journal 75, the pre-Conference issue, due out in August/September will deal with the Conference theme and, in particular, provide a series of commentaries on the report from the International Co-operative Alliance on Basic Co-operative Values which is to be submitted to the ICA Congress in Tokyo in October. We plan to discuss the review of subjects of cross-sector relevance, which as Keith Brading reported in Journal 73 "could be used in presenting the needs of the Co-operative sectors to an incoming government." We shall also resume the Reviews section - to be provided from time to time, by Malcolm Hornsby of the Co-operative College.

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R.L.M.