

Record Progress made by Movement's Think Tank

The SCS held its Annual Conference and AGM at the Co-operative College on 20/21 September 1997.

News in Brief

The Weekend proved to be a highly successful event for the Society. Issues covered and information furnished included a record increase in membership; the consideration of key issues such as "Stakeholding" which has attracted speakers of the highest quality; the development of a Research Project on the theme of Mutuality entitled "Reasserting the Co-operative Advantage"; a new logo and promotional material; Successful Fringe Meeting and arrangements already made for 1998 Fringe Meeting in Lincoln; the high standard of the Journal and improved layout and content and the Election of two new Presidents of the Society.

Annual Conference

The 1997 Conference theme was "Towards a Stakeholder Economy" and the two principal speakers were -

Simon Blackley, Management Consultant and Member of the General Council of ICOM who spoke on "How the Co-op Sector can contribute to the development of a Stakeholder Economy", and

Peter Couchman, Member and Public Relations Manager of the Oxford, Swindon & Gloucester Co-operative Society who spoke on "What does stakeholding mean for a Co-operative Society" (Co-op News reported Peter's contribution in the issue dated September 23 1997).

Following each presentation members divided into 'buzz' groups to consider the subject matter in greater detail and then Peter and Simon responded to a range of questions and general observations. The two excellent presentations were praised by members who also expressed considerable satisfaction in the

new Conference structure which allowed the membership greater opportunity in the 'buzz' groups and workshops sessions to contribute to a topical issue that needed to be addressed by a much wider audience.

The text of Simon's presentation appears in this issue. An article by Peter has already been published in the last issue.

On the Sunday morning the Conference received a presentation from the Society's newly established Research Sub-Group. Roger Spear a member of the Sub-Group presented proposals for a research project on the theme of "Mutuality" entitled "Reasserting the Co-operative Advantage". He indicated that there were numerous examples of co-operative innovation and good practice, and there was a mood for reasserting features of co-operation that "makes the difference" - in business terms and ethically. Good business and high standards could be a winning combination. But something needed to be done fast to help tackle the problem and to capture the spirit of reasserting the co-operative advantage.

Following the presentation members divided into groups to discuss the proposals outlined. A high level of support was expressed by members for the research proposals and a number of suggestions made by members would be addressed by the Research Sub-Group at their next scheduled meeting in October. Roger Spear was praised for his highly effective presentation.

The AGM of the Society took place on Sunday 21 September at the conclusion of the Annual Conference. The retiring Chairman Len Burch reported on a busy year for the Society. He stressed the importance of the development of the Society's research project, and the greater efforts which had gone into promoting the Society and the results of this work were evident in the excellent increase in membership and distribution of the Journal. He concluded by praising the contributions all the officers and committee members were making on behalf of the Society.

The Secretary, John Butler, indicated that it had been a year of consolidation for the Society with the committee working well as a team. Specific reference was made to the Society's growing links with other Co-operative organisations such as the UKCC, Plunkett Foundation, Co-operative College and Open University - Co-op Research Unit. The Society had also during the year

developed a new logo and greater efforts were being made to promote the Society more widely. Dr Butler highlighted the successful fringe meeting that had been held at the Cardiff Congress and revealed that the Lincoln Congress Fringe Meeting would be held at the Turk's Head pub on Sunday 24 May 1998 and it was anticipated that a leading Co-operative personality would be the keynote speaker.

Frank Dent the Treasurer & Membership Secretary was delighted to be able to record encouraging increases in subscription income. Membership of the Society had increased by nearly 30 per cent over the year from 251 to 323.

The Journal Editor, Johnston Birchall reported on his second full year as Journal Editor. Members acknowledged the high standard of articles that had appeared in the Journal over the past 12 months and the improved layout and content were appreciated. Members were encouraged to contact the Editor with their views on the Journal it being noted that the Editor greatly valued the opinions of readers.

The following officers and committee members were appointed to serve for the year 1997/98.

Chair	Peter Davis
Vice-Chairs	Rowland Dale Jim Craigen
Secretary	John Butler
Journal Editor	Johnston Birchall
Treasurer & Membership Secretary	Frank Dent
Additional committee members -	Martin Stears Peter Clarke James Bell Rita Rhodes
Immediate past Chair	Len Burch
Auditor	Peter Roscoe

In recognition of their excellent contribution to the development of the Co-operative ideal members unanimously

supported the election of two new Presidents of the Society - Mr Terry Thomas, retiring Managing Director of The Co-operative Bank plc and Mr A Sneddon the recently retired General Manager of the Co-operative Insurance Society Ltd.

It was agreed that the 1998 Conference and Annual General Meeting of the Society would be held at the Co-operative College, Stanford Hall, during the weekend 26/27 September 1998.

The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to Len Burch for his second year as Chairman and the way he had conducted the weekend Conference and Annual General Meeting.