

Report by the Secretary

A Year of Challenge

The SCS held its Annual Conference and Annual General Meeting at the Co-operative College on 26/27 September 1998. The weekend proved to be a highly productive event for the Society.

The 1998 Conference theme was "Can Businesses be Ethical" and the two principal speakers were Paul Monaghan, Senior Manager - Ecology Unit, The Co-operative Bank plc, who spoke on "How does an organisation go about defining its ethical position, and how does it subsequently demonstrate ethical performance" and John Donaldson MA (Oxford), Author/Researcher, Associate of the Unit for Member-based Organisations at the University of Leicester, who spoke on "Business Ethics, Values and Governance in the Co-operative Context".

Following the presentations members divided into buzz groups to consider the subject matter in greater detail and Paul and John responded to a range of questions and general observations. The presentations were praised by members who again expressed satisfaction in the Conference structure which allowed the membership greater opportunity to contribute to a topical issue that needed to be addressed by a much wider audience. Paul's colleague at The Co-operative Bank, Dr Sara MacKian has expanded in this issue on aspects relating to the partnership approach in an article entitled "Profits with Principles: Developing co-operation for sustainable stakeholding.

On the Sunday morning the Conference received a progress report on the research project "Reasserting the Co-operative Advantage" from Roger Spear, Alan Wilkins and Peter Davis. Following the Presentation members questioned the research partners on different aspects of the research and strong support was expressed for the methodology being followed and the need to carry out research on the theme of mutuality.

The AGM of the Society took place on Sunday 27 September at the conclusion of the Annual Conference. The retiring Chairman, Peter Davis, reported on a busy year for the Society and its Chairman. For the Society, it had seen the successful launch of the research project - "Reasserting the Co-operative

Advantage". He mentioned the important role played by the Society's Executive Committee and the Research Sub-Committee who had driven the idea forward following up Rita Rhodes' suggestion calling for such a project to be undertaken.

The Chairman stressed that he had promoted the Society to colleagues in the International Co-operative Movement in literally every continent from Winnipeg to Manila and from Mochi to Pune. A special word of appreciation was therefore extended to the Society's Vice-Chairman, Rowland Dale, who deputised when the Chairman was abroad and also when matters to which the Chairman had a special interest concerning the Research contract were being discussed by the Executive Committee. He concluded by praising the contributions all the officers and committee members were making on behalf of the Society.

The Secretary, John Butler described 1997 and 1998 as being a year of challenge for the Society with the Research Project, endorsed at the previous AGM in 1997, requiring a great deal of hard work from officers and support staff. The raising of over £24,000 for the research project was a very satisfactory outcome and it was hoped that additional contributions would be made to the Research Fund by societies, individual members and advisers connected to the Co-operative Movement.

Members raised a number of questions in respect of contributions made to the Research fund, the payment of subscriptions by direct debit; extending the Society's membership to other sectors of the Movement; the colour and design of Journal cover; interest received on certain Society investments; Gift Aid and Deeds of Covenant in regard to donations to the Society; promoting the society on the internet. Suitable responses were given by officers to certain questions raised whilst others would receive the early consideration of the Executive Committee and be reported back to members in due course.

Frank Dent, the Treasurer and Membership Secretary stated in his report that the Committee was addressing the issue of the deficit by both controlling costs and increasing income. Despite the excess of expenditure over income amounting to £726, the Society was still in a sound financial position with net assets of £18,818.

Membership had held up well and the Committee had agreed that Journals for overseas would be provided by Journal

subscription rather than membership.

The meeting also expressed thanks to the Society's Auditor, Peter Roscoe, for the work he had undertaken on behalf of the Society.

Johnston Birchall the Journal Editor reported on his third full year as Journal Editor. The Journal editions had been well received, the articles on the Lanica Affair in the September Journal in particular causing comment and interest. Articles for future editions were now arriving steadily and the refereed system was working well. Members were encouraged to contact Johnston Birchall 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 1998/99 -

Chair	- Rowland Dale
Vice-Chairs	- James Bell Rita Rhodes
Secretary	- John Butler
Journal Editor	- Johnston Birchall
Treasurer and Membership Secretary	- Frank Dent
Additional committee members	- Len Burch Gillian Lonergan John Launder
Immediate Past Chair	- Peter Davis
Auditor	- Peter Roscoe

The existing Presidents of the Society - Professor Tom Carbery, Professor Tony Eccles, Dr Bob Marshall, Graham Melmoth, Alan Sneddon, Lord Terry Thomas, Lord Michael Young and Dr Alex Wilson were re-elected.

The meeting was informed that John Butler had indicated his intention to carry on as Secretary for the coming year but would step down at the 1999 AGM. The Executive Committee would be addressing the need to find a replacement.

The past service of retiring Executive Committee members Peter Clarke, Jim Craigen and Martin Stears were acknowledged with appreciation and thanks.

The Treasurer reported upon the proposed rate of

subscriptions for year ending 31 March 2000. After careful consideration it was agreed that the membership subscription rates be increased by £1 for individuals and £5 for organisations to the following -

Full time students/unwaged

- Basic £6
- Sponsor £11

Waged

- Basic £10
- Sponsor £15

Organisation

- Basic £30
- Sponsor £80

It was agreed to keep this matter under review.

The meeting noted the review that the Executive Committee were undertaking in respect of next year's Annual Conference/AGM. It was agreed to hold the event at the Co-operative College, Stanford Hall, during the weekend 9/10 October 1999.

Following the meeting the Society was pleased to announce that the two principal speakers at the 1999 Annual Conference would be Dr Ian MacPherson, Dean of Humanities at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada and Graham Melmoth, Chief Executive of the CWS Ltd.

The meeting concluded with a Vote of Thanks to Peter Davis for his year as Chairman and the way he had conducted the weekend Conference and AGM.