

# What Value do Co-operative and Mutual Enterprises in General, and the Co-operative Movement in Particular, Add to the Citizenship Agenda?

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'Loyalty, Endeavour and Good Citizenship'

*Words on a scroll held by a coal miner on the banner of privately-owned Browney Colliery, near Durham City. The colliery was shut down in 1938, but the banner was carried at the Durham Miners' Gala in 2002.<sup>1</sup>*

## **Putting the question**

This conference is an ideal site on which to put - and then to answer - the question:

What value do Co-operative and Mutual Enterprises (CMEs) in general, and the co-operative movement in particular - and, in the context of this conference, distributive co-operative societies in Britain, well represented at the conference - add to the Citizenship agenda?

The early twenty-first century is clearly a good time to put such a question, while a Labour government is in power. Particularly a Labour government whose Party revived its connections with the labour movement's co-operative 'wing' by jointly setting up the Co-operative Commission, with the General Secretary of the TUC in the chair in the year 2000. The Party thereby also extended its links with the trade union 'wing' of the movement, at the same time resurrecting the National Council of Labour (founded in 1934).

Thanks to David Blunkett as Secretary of State for Education and Employment from 1997 to 2001, the Labour government also renewed its interest in 'citizenship' as a subject to be taught in schools and practised in society, in inclusive ways. Bernard Crick was invited to lead the government's thinking on this. David Blunkett acknowledged connections between learning for active citizenship and the collective self-help tradition in Britain, to which the co-op belongs.<sup>2</sup> Active citizenship in civil society has never been better exemplified than in working-class associations in Britain from the

1820s onwards. Many of their members - men and, even more so, women - did not have a (Parliamentary) vote until the late 1920s, although there was plenty of (more direct) voting in their own associations, such as CMEs. One of the objectives of Freehold Land Associations, a form of mid-nineteenth century building society, was to enfranchise their members, the vote being linked, as it was in Britain for more than a century, to property qualifications. Someone with memories of Darwen Co-operative Society in Lancashire, even in the post 1945 period, once told me how much keener elections for the Board of that Society were - and how much more interest they excited in the town - than local government elections. The Co-operative Society central buildings in Darwen served as town hall, library, dance hall, social centre, as well as shop and giant savings club, based on the quarterly dividend.

### Locating this contribution

The background to this paper has been unusually influential on its contents. The paper - and the conference talk on which it is based - comes from my location in two organisations, each of which connect *citizenship* with *co-operation*:

- The *Centre for Civil Society* at the London School of Economics, where I am a Visiting Professor, established a 'Mutuality Network' during the years 2000 to 2002. This Network consisted of practitioners, policy makers and academics. Seminars were held, and publications produced. The focus was on the value added by the history and modern practice of Co-operative and Mutual Enterprises (CMEs) in a number of fields, particularly as regards *membership* and *belonging*.<sup>3</sup> The question was asked: what *social capital* is stored within CMEs, which could be 'realised' in the interests of citizenship, in order to correct a growing national and world-wide *democratic deficit*? The same question provides one of the threads running through a number of recent, innovative government papers.<sup>4</sup>
- The *Co-operative College*, where I am Chair of the Board of Management, has concentrated since 1919 on the education and training of members and officials of Co-operative Societies. Its UK work has mainly been with the consumer movement, or 'the co-op'. Its overseas work has been more eclectic. The College now plans to extend its offer to CMEs more widely. When the International Co-operative Alliance

(ICA) adopted a *Statement of Co-operative Identity and Principles* in 1995, the College developed learning programmes in the new *Values and Principles*, working closely with Graham Melmoth, then Chief Executive of CWS. The first ICA Principle is 'Voluntary and Open Membership'. 'Co-operatives are voluntary organisations, open to all persons ... The second of the seven 1995 Principles is 'Democratic Member Control'. 'Co-operatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions'. The third is 'Member Economic Participation'. 'Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative'. From these three Principles alone, it is clear how central Co-operatives could be to correcting a democratic deficit. Co-operatives are based upon belonging, universality, activity, and democratic control of the 'economic' as well as of 'policy'. To bring together (and thus to redefine) the *economic*, the *political* and the *social* is a radical thing to do, in capitalist societies whose historic project has been to pull them apart. *The Co-operative Advantage: the report of the Co-operative Commission* (January 2001) was based upon such a bringing together, by means of the Co-operative Movement made more co-operative. The Co-operative College was charged by the Co-operative Commission to develop its work; Recommendation 5.4 of the Commission was specific:

the Commission believes that the time is right for the College to lead on behalf of the Movement the development of a modular Co-operative and Mutual Enterprise programme entitled "Learning, Citizenship and Community through Co-operative and Mutual Enterprise". The programme should be capable of being used at all stages of learning; available both within Societies and outside the Movement; and should be fundable via various DfEE programmes including the Learning and Skills Council'.<sup>5</sup>

### **Answering the question: 1. Citizenship plus**

My first answer to the question is to list six *general characteristics* of 'citizenship' and to suggest that 'co-operation' adds specific value to each of them.

In summary, Co-operation adds **collective to individual** citizenship  
**rural to urban**  
**economic to political**  
**universal to national**  
**ownership to participation**  
**responsibilities to rights**

By 'general characteristics' I mean tendencies or clusters of meaning which inhere in 'citizenship' because of its history as a *keyword* in European, and then in American, societies since the French Revolution (1789) and, before that, since classical Greece and Rome. Keywords are words whose meaning is important enough to be contested, or used for competing projects and purposes. *Citizenship* is best understood as one of these.<sup>6</sup>

Keywords like citizen and citizenship carry the {dominant} meanings that they do because of the (dominant) uses made of them in practice by {dominant} social groups. *Dominant* is in brackets here, to draw attention to the fact that there are always *residual* or *emergent* meanings of such keywords, used by residual or emergent social groups or classes, often in conflict with dominant social groups or classes.<sup>7</sup> Creative struggles always develop around keywords, including 'democracy' itself. Is democracy a finished fact, a description of 'Western', Parliamentary institutions which need defence? Or is it an unfinished struggle, needing creative development? Co-operators have always seen 'democracy' as the latter. As an emergent social group in an emergent social movement since the first industrial revolution, co-operators, alongside millions of members of other CMEs, have enriched, and can still transform, the dominant meanings of citizenship listed here. These six dominant meanings of 'citizenship' may be listed as:

- individual
- urban
- political
- national
- 'participatory'
- concerned with 'Rights'

It would take more space than is available here to show, historically, how these have been the general characteristics, or dominant clusters of meaning, attaching to 'citizenship' since the 'dual revolution' which made the modern world.<sup>8</sup> Personal 'rights' within a nation, or against a state, began by being revolutionary. Tom

Paine's *The Rights of Man* symbolised this fact from the 1790s onwards in Europe and America. It remains an inspiring text for citizens, although stronger on national welfare than on mutual benefits. Nation and state eventually came together in 'the nation state', with unfortunate twentieth century outcomes: nation states from the 1920s onwards, tended towards the proposition that citizens belonged to them, rather than that they - nation states - belonged to citizens. This took extreme forms in communism and in fascism, but was evident also in 'Western democracy'.

Revolutionary thoughts tend to normalise, as common sense. Who in 'the West' would now question:

- The assumption that people possess Rights as individuals, rather than as members of a hierarchy or 'estate'.
- The assumption that Rights are best articulated via intermittent votes (in secret), for representatives (not delegates) who participate, on individual voters' behalf, in permanent, political institutions - Representatives tend to act for citizens, as opposed to citizens acting through delegates. Commentators on the Conservative Conference of 2002 drew attention to the fact that its participants were not delegates, as they are at the Labour Party Conference, but representatives.
- The assumption that cities and towns are the places where the edges of citizenship cut most sharply, and have been since the Greek agora and the Roman forum. It is interesting that the words: civic, civil, etc. came to have urban connotations, even though their roots in the Latin *civitas* went wider than that. The Latin *civitas* was a grouping of citizens seen as a whole, rather than townfolk.
- The assumption that a professional Political, and in the end a Party, sphere is best kept separate from 'private' spheres, like property, love, profits, wages, livelihoods, work and play?

To these dominant, assumed meanings, co-operators, because of their own residual and emergent, but not yet dominant, history, can add a number of alternative or, rather, additional meanings. ('Alternative' suggests 'either/or', 'additional' suggests not only but also. Co-operators have always preferred the latter. It has been one of the most interesting characteristics of their thought.) In their turn, some of these additional meanings have recently become common

sense. The late twentieth century reiteration among 'new' politicians of *not only rights, but also responsibilities*, provides one example. Co-operators have always spoken that language. 'Citizenship in terms of the articulation of certain rights' is one thing, Andrew Dobson argued in an essay on *Social inclusion, environmental sustainability and citizenship* (2002):

there is an alternative way of thinking about citizenship - in terms of the meeting of obligations or the exercise of responsibilities. This is a subordinate tradition in citizenship theory and practice - or at least it is subordinate when looked at from today's liberal democratic vantage point. This idea has it that citizenship is more about duty than rights - duty to the Republic **either** (my emphasis) in whatever way is deemed appropriate by the Republic **or**, in the best light, in ways **mutually agreed upon by citizens themselves** (my emphasis).<sup>9</sup>

Co-operative societies provide associational forms, or enterprises (fully socialised) , within which, and between which, citizens negotiate, 'own' and thereby sustain, mutual agreement. Co- operators, by definition, work not only individually, but also together. Because of the history of the co-operative movement, and the large scale achieved by co-operative societies among CMEs, citizenship came to be seen among large numbers of members of co-operative societies as:

- not only individual but also collective
- not only urban but also rural
- not only political but also economic
- not only national but also universal
- not only participatory but also concerning ownership
- not only concerning rights but also concerning (mutual) responsibilities

It is in these ways that value is added to the modern discourse on citizenship by co-operation, and by the Co-operative Movement. The discourse has grown in response to a growing democratic deficit. But within the conversation there has also been

unease that the left's ideas about citizenship should end up as nothing more than a package of rights without obligations, a programme for a loose society in which relationships are contingent and undemanding.<sup>10</sup>

It is precisely this unease that the history and present practice of CMEs can address.

The co-operative history, of social relationships which are more than contingent, cannot be set out here at adequate length. To the audience at this conference, which included delegates from five co-operative societies, and three Co-operative Group Regions, each with its historical inheritance of citizenship, it was only necessary to trigger historical memory.<sup>11</sup> The word **delegates** is itself additional. Co-operators have always preferred directly accountable delegates, with mandates from, and reporting relationships with, their associations, to **representatives**, with a less demanding and spasmodically accountable relationship with their constituents. The democracy which characterises large-scale working-class associations has never been entirely 'Parliamentary', in this, and in other respects. 'Block' voting, 'mandating', 'compositing' (motions etc) were, originally, devices for giving audible, countable and accountable voices to hundreds of thousands of people not in the hall.

Co-operative societies have necessarily been collective or corporate - as societies incorporated under Industrial and Provident Society legislation - as well as individual. It was always double-edged - serving the interests of the State as well as Societies - that Societies should acquire a legal, incorporated existence separable from their members. They lived with this contradiction, sometimes to their own advantage, sometimes not. Co-operative Societies, and other CMEs, have necessarily been mutual in their sense of responsibility rather than individual in their sense of rights. 'Mutual' is important here, because responsibilities are shared among Co-operators, horizontally and federally, rather than exercised vertically *de haut en bas*, with a sense of *noblesse oblige* or any of the other Gallicisms which patrons use as euphemisms for patronising 'lower class' people.

Members belong to their societies as well as their societies belonging to them: one for all as well as all for one. Co-operative societies have necessarily based themselves as much in the countryside as in cities, and been international as much as national in their project. They do not owe as much as nations must, either to the idea and project of the nation or to the idea of the state. Co-operative societies are not intrinsically national. Their project is to reconstruct 'the state', rather than to obey it. They do not see the state as an 'it', or as a thing - William Cobbett's *The Thing* - but as a (changeable) set of social (or anti-social) relations. The membership of Co-operative Societies is 'voluntary **and open**'. The words 'universal' and 'world' (a new moral world) were repeated in the

early nineteenth century by co-operators, in anticipation of the late twentieth century concept, 'global'.

*Not only political but also economic* refers to the fact that Co-operators' idea of the fully 'social' - a word they favoured, particularly during the first half of the nineteenth century when 'social' had a hard, critical edge - was a critique of the separation between the economic and the political (and the moral). They contested such separations. Their 'social science', which they invented, was the opposite of what they saw as the anti-social, or 'dismal' science of competitive political economy. Theirs was to be business **integrated with** community; immediate, material needs integrated with ultimate, equitable ambitions; now, the present, integrated with then, the future; necessity integrated with desire; production integrated with distribution and exchange (better words, for Co-operators than 'consumption').

*Not only participatory but also concerned with ownership*, refers to the fact that a co-operative is, to use the ICA's 1995 definition:

an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically controlled enterprise.

Without, in Shakespeare's phrase, 'joint **and several**' (my emphasis) ownership, co-operatives would fall outside the category 'CME' altogether. Joint ownership of co-operative societies provides the material basis for joint and equitable decision-making in and between those societies. This is based on the fact of membership rather than on the size of shareholding. It entails joint allocation of the trading surplus by means of individual and community dividends. This is more than participation in someone else's permanent institution, whether Parliament or PLC. It is making, owning and controlling one's own association - not only individually but also severally. 'Participation' in 'democracies' can cover a multitude of less than fully democratic ideas and practices, as Carol Pateman observed in her *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge University Press, 1970). Arnstein once constructed a 'ladder of citizen participation' in the *Journal of the American Planning Association* (vol.35, no 4 pp216-224) whose 'top rungs' alone involved any actual power sharing by governments with citizens. The other rungs of the ladder (5 rungs out of 8), he described in terms of 'degrees of tokenism' and 'non-participation'. The rungs moved down from 'placation' of the citizenry to outright 'manipulation'. Joint and several ownership entails more than that.



## Answering the question: 2 Democracy minus

My second answer to the question is to characterise the democratic deficit, in such a way as to prepare to show - in my third answer - that CMEs are well adapted to be powerful entries on the plus side of the democratic ledger.

First the facts of the deficit, and then - at a higher level of abstraction - its character. It is its character which will lead directly to the third and final answer to the question.

### The facts of the deficit

These may be established, first, by means of politics in the UK. But contemporary politics in the UK immediately connect with 'global' politics. And they connect, even more, with global economics, as do all national politics in the twenty-first century.

The most striking feature of the democratic deficit, as seen from the year 2002, is that a world **economy** has been in existence for more than a century, but democratic arrangements to accompany it have scarcely been made. Historians write about a world economy from at least the late nineteenth century onwards. Transnational corporations now dominate almost every nation's institutions. They dominate most nation states, which are the organisations to which citizens are presumed to have democratic access. Wal-Mart's revenue in the year 2001 was approximately that of Sweden; ExxonMobil's was larger than that of Turkey; General Motors than that of Denmark, and so on. Out of the largest 100 economic units on the planet, 51 are corporations, 49 states.<sup>12</sup> George Monbiot wrote of 'The Corporate Takeover of Britain' in his book *Captive State* (Pan Macmillan, 2001).

World political organisation lags far behind World Trade Organisations and World Banks. World organisations with democratic citizen access scarcely exist. 'Delegates' to the United Nations General Assembly are ours as individual citizens in only the most tenuous sense. 'Global governance' is referred to by social scientists. There is an active Centre for its study at the London School of Economics. But it is not something over which citizens can exercise formal power. 'Global civil society' has recently become an object of research, but remains difficult to classify.<sup>13</sup> Influence can be exerted by means of social movements, protests, 'terror', religious organisations and more-than-national associations such as CMEs. The advantage CMEs have over social movements, protests etc is that their project is intrinsically democratic. They form societies out of which society may be constructed *ab initio* or brick

by brick, in a way which is not necessarily true of other social movements, protests etc. World economics is daily bread: world government remains a pipe dream and world democracy almost inconceivable.

In such a deficit situation, dangerously irresponsible 'regimes' and anti-social movements, if technically equipped, wield immense power, when compared to idealistically responsible social movements and voluntary associations. To anticipate, it can readily be seen, in such a deficit situation, what a contribution could be made by any more-than-national, large scale organisation or movement which put together the politics and the economics, the government (self-government) and the business {our own businesses), to form social cells {or enterprises) capable of reproduction. This is what CMEs do.

Components of the current democratic deficit include:

- Mainstream party politics, including Labour politics, which has become more consumerist and less based on 'ideology'. The rejection of ideology has sometimes spilled over into the rejection of values and principles. New Labour boasts of its modernity in this respect, using every business and marketing tool available for government. Could government itself be 'put out', or privatised: would this be the beginning, or the end, of democracy?

Business will eventually take over the functions of government, since it is much better, more effective, at simply satisfying people's desires than any politician ever was.<sup>14</sup>

During the 1990s, both the main parties encouraged a contractual relationship between themselves and individual voters. New Labour produced a simulacrum of a political credit card or 'Pledge Card' in 1997. Parties 'deliver' products and services. Successful parties get branded as their leaders, who turn into -isms: Thatcherism, Blairism. Voters offer support, conditional upon delivery. This is withdrawn if a rival party, or leader, offers more for less. Votes are given, to the extent that individuals choose to exercise them, in return for measurable outputs. Beliefs, including political beliefs, which individuals of course still have, become 'baggage', to be stored appropriately.<sup>15</sup> People without baggage travel lightly, from shop to shop, party to party, single issue to

single issue. Or they stay at home. Fewer people voted in the General Election of 2001 than at any election since 1918. Among those people, decisions by a small number of floaters in key seats, determine the outcome. In 1992 in Britain it was estimated that 2,000 people were instrumental in electing the Conservatives with a majority of 22. In 1997 the votes of around 100,000 people in a small number of seats delivered a landslide victory to Labour. Focus groups focus on floaters. Consequences for democracy and for citizenship build up. Society becomes sufficiently loose for even the winners, after they have taken all, to worry about it. The Labour Party's National Policy Forum Consultation Document on *Democracy, Citizenship and Political Engagement*, issued in 2002, was full of alarm. It was very frank about the deficit which has accumulated. People, it was suggested, no longer believe in politics, active citizenship is in trouble, political education dead, social cohesion threatened. David Blunkett expresses similar anxiety. Many of his public utterances seem like pre-emptive strikes against an ugly, right-wing take-over. Cynicism grows among the governed, in the Executive arm of government, and among 'new' political formations concerning Representative Democracy.<sup>16</sup> Helena Kennedy recently suggested that, if sleaze was the last government's Achilles heel, this government's will be that of being seen as 'fixing things'.

- Caesura between a not-very-democratic local tier of government, an undemocratic regional tier of government (in England, less so in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) and an archaic parliamentary tier of government. The one area where information and communications technology has scarcely begun to be applied is that of enabling **two-way**, or mutual, communication between governors and the governed. The compilation of the Electoral Register itself leaves 38.2 per cent of those who rent furnished accommodation in Britain voteless.<sup>17</sup> Local Government lost authority, and turn-out at elections, as it lost an independent financial base. Central government calls Local Government and Local Education Authorities 'strategic'. It then subtracts from their remit. Regional government could be dynamic, but inconveniently so for 'the centre' (a new term of the late 1990s), and for key Departments of State. So it remains financially and democratically un 'devolved'. Regional Development Agencies and Assemblies do not have the democratic accountability or the financial clout to re-make

twenty-first century local government. At 'the centre', the potential of the information and communications technology revolution for citizen control, membership, belonging and modern democracy remains largely unrealised. Voting by post is being trialled as a general, rather than a marginal, phenomenon in only a small number of local elections.

- Multiplication of Non Governmental Organisations, Non Departmental Public Bodies, Public-Private Partnerships, etc. Resources are now concentrated into bodies which are at arms length not only from government, but also from citizens. In the case of Public Private Partnerships, the resources of generations of citizens as yet unborn are being committed by governments who are taking out massive mortgages on future public spending. Finding out who is responsible, being shunted from automatic voice mail to automatic voice mail, is now a daily household experience. New semi-public bodies are not themselves democratic, even in intention, in the way that all CMEs are. The Learning and Skills Council, for instance, had £6 billion at its disposal from April 2001 onwards. It is entirely innocent of all elections. So is the National Health Service, the largest employer in Europe. This service is seen as a management, or an organisational problem, and a professional minefield, rather than a democratic opportunity. Even devolved NHS Trusts, like post nationalised and post pie Rail Authorities, are stronger on selection than election. They lack direct consumer > user > member control, let alone the member ownership which defines CMEs. The Public Interest Company, even though not a Co-operative or Mutual Enterprise, may yet prove to be a great leap forward.
- A bid culture replacing a grant culture, leading to shifting partnerships and consortia which citizens do not understand. Very few people can conjugate Single Regeneration Budgets, Phoenix Funds, European Social Funds etc, let alone how the National Lottery works as a powerful funding agency. The Lottery is a less alienated, more voluntary form of regressive 'taxation' than any other. No *effort* was made to consult its players on which pie should be 'franchised' to run it. No effort has yet been made to open its funds to contributor control. Information and Communications Technology makes this fully possible. No text book on Citizenship for schools, or for any other level of readership, attempts to render a complex new 'funding regime' transparent to its beneficiaries (citizens?) in the way that thousands of Citizenship manuals did between

c1870 and c1950. H O Arnold Foster's, *The Citizen Reader*, 'For the Use of Schools' (Casell, London 1886), had reached its 310 thousand copy and multiple editions by 1898. Chapter 3 *How the Country is Governed* was short (10 pages) and confident. I have a shelf full of such texts from c1870 to c1940. Would it be possible to produce one in 2002-3 which is adequate, from a general citizens' point of view, rather than that of an expert, a professional or a manager.

- Globalisation and bloc-ism - the Atlantic bloc, Europe, the Pacific Rim ... - opening up previously national and public provision of services like education and health, notionally to free competition, and thereby to transnational, private, pie provision. The combination of world 'free trade' and powerful transnational blocs will inevitably mean that, in the same way that public spending now has an agreed, approximate, intra-national ceiling (c40 per cent), the proportion of services such as education and health which are ring-fenced for national, public or state provision will also be fixed (at c40 per cent?). The remainder will be opened to less accountable, international, private, competitive tender. To the degree that there is accountability to individual shareholders, there will be accountability to individual citizens as shareholders, if they buy shares. No more accountability than exists in transnational corporations: and therefore less accountability than that which inheres between members, one of another, expressed in individual and several, co-, common, mutual, co-operative ... ownership, of a CME.

### **The overall character of the deficit**

The character of the deficit is best expressed as separations, or as divisions of labour<sup>18</sup> between spheres of human activity which, if deficits are to be corrected, need bringing back together again. CMEs came into being to perform exactly this task: to make whole human beings out of divided human beings, and to make whole societies out of a society so divided that it had emptied the very meaning of the words 'society' and 'social'.

Economics separated from Politics is one such separation: economics 'freed' or corralled into a 'market' which operates in ways - and which can be studied scientifically in ways - which are hidden from deliberate, collective, general, human choice and, therefore, from democratic politics. Politics separated from Economics is another such separation, the other side of the same

coin. Politics gets professionalised, becoming the activity of Politicians organised into Parties which offer Policy choices to consumers in much the same way that supermarkets offer choices to their customers.<sup>19</sup> These policy choices may concern economics, at a macro level. But they do not concern the micro details of what it is that humans produce, distribute and exchange, with and for each other, and how they (we) do so. During the last two hundred years, 'economics' became a separate sphere or science, as did 'politics'. This process is a major strand in the history of ideas, and in the history of the academy, during the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries. Each of the separate spheres became recalcitrant to full, general access by 'ordinary' people and their (our) necessary activities. These activities consist of making things (necessities) and making choices {desires}, for ourselves. To cut a long and complex story short, the words 'social' and 'society' thereby lost a great deal of their meaning. 'Social' became an adjective to describe things and relations which were seen as separate from economic-al things and relations (business, industrial, agricultural, work etc) and separate from political things and relations. Separate, divided, things and relations often became an adjunct one to the other, or an alternative one to the other, work or play, as in spheres called 'leisure', 'rest and recuperation' 'a social life', 'family life', and so on. How did trade unions allow themselves to be corralled into '**industrial** relations', divided from social relations more generally, and kept by 'social democrats' and others safely separate from politics, even Labour politics? 'Society' became a noun abstracted from its active and collective making by all of us in freely chosen associations. The noun became commonly applied to almost any human or animal aggregate, regardless of their degree of socialisation. A residual tradition in economics and in social thought, quite close to the co-operative movement, contested this throughout the nineteenth century, running from William Thomson, to John Stuart Mill, to John Ruskin, to J A Hobson and many others - not to mention the work of Karl Marx. The tradition remains residual, but is emerging once again in the work of the New Economics Foundation, most ambitiously in their work, with Mutuo, on 'the Mutual State'.

### **Answering the question: 3**

Not only may Co-operative and Mutual Enterprises become victims of 'democracy minus' - embedded as they necessarily are in that which they came into being to oppose - but they are also well

placed to address deficits in democracy. As a precondition of the value they can now add to active citizenship, CMEs have to concede that the larger they grow the easier it is for them to become not only part of the solution but also part of the problem. But part of the solution they remain.

This is because they (we) represent forms of membership, ownership, democracy and accountability **ourselves**, in the fibres of our own, species, being, rather than assuming that democracy and citizenship goes on 'somewhere else'. CMEs constitute unalienated, do it yourselves (ourselves) democracy. 'Co-operative Societies are like miniature republics, and one of their first principles is the equality of members'. They represent what the women's movement of the 1970s knew as 'prefigurative forms'.<sup>20</sup> That is to say forms of association, of politics **and** of production, which make no break between processes and results, means and ends. Such forms prefigure what they are working for in the future by who they work with, and how they work, in the present.

Citizens in co-operative societies associate 'in ways mutually agreed upon by citizens themselves' rather than 'in whatever way is deemed appropriate by the Republic'. The fourth Principle agreed upon by the ICA in 1995 was 'Autonomy and Independence'. 'Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organisations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.' The sixth Principle was 'Co-operation among co-operatives'. 'Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the Co-operative Movement by working together .. .'. Thereby societies can transform a society, co-operating to introduce old-new forms of ownership, democratic control, and distribution of surplus.

The values and principles of CMEs build-in social goods, to actually existing associations. They do not make connections *de novo*. 'In one form or another, throughout the ages, Co-operation has existed between person and person; for the most part, unconscious Co-operation, but none the less real.'<sup>21</sup> CMEs build-on connections which already exist, in and between humans as creative, productive, social beings, even when these connections have been severed, buried, or forgotten. They may be forgotten even within CMEs themselves, once they grow large, oligarchic and long in the tooth. Co-operators make 'society' out of societies, which themselves cannot easily be classified as either economic, or political, or 'social' in its weak, diminished, abstracted sense.

CMEs do not stand for a sense of belonging: they stand for

actual belonging. CMEs do not stand for 'ownership' in management speak. They stand for actual ownership. CMEs do not stand for democracy as someone else's professional activity, conducted for them by people now known as 'the political class'. Democracy is their own. This is why the way in which T W Mercer expressed the co-operative political project - as bringing co-operation into politics, not politics into co-operation - remains a helpful way of putting the co-operative political agenda. It is a different kind of politics we need, not different people accessing the old politics, using Parties and labour movement organisations as climbing frames on their way up.

This is a formidable learning and teaching agenda for the International Association for the Study of Co-operation in Education and for the Co-operative College, whose partnership produced this conference.<sup>22</sup> 'The past', as Prospero said in 'The Tempest', 'is prologue ... The future, in your and my discharge'. Mutuality networks, centres of excellence in co-operative learning and teaching, have never been more needed. The best way to address alienation from representative democracy may be to do what CMEs have always attempted to do, namely to build democracy and stakeholder accountability directly into all forms of purchase and provision of every aspect of economic + political = fully social life. A whole programme of citizenship education, political education with a small p, followed by practice, follows. 'The mission of the College', as Bob Fryer put it of the Northern College for Residential Adult Education, in 1997, 'commits itself both to widening participation and to contributing, through learning, to the strengthening of active citizenship ... The College seeks to resource people in their own lives for paid work, community activity and personal development'. So does the Co-operative College, with our particular focus on the co-operative movement.<sup>23</sup>

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### **Notes and references**

- 1 The text on the scroll began 'mines owned by the nation for the nation'. The banner was restored in 2002, and carried at the Durham Miners' Gala that year, for the first time in 63 years. In spite of the closure of the colliery in 1938, the banner was carried at 'the Big Meeting' in 1939, *Northern Echo*, 29 June 2002. A picture of the restored banner was sent to me by David



- Connolly, Member Relations and Education Officer for the North-East and Cumbrian Co-op, a Region of the Co-operative Group (CWS) Ltd.
- 2 Introduction to *The Learning Age*, DfES, 1997; and David Blunkett, *Politics and Progress: Renewing Democracy and Civil Society*, Demos, Politicos, 2001.
  - 3 Nicholas Deakin ed *Membership and Mutuality: proceedings of a seminar series organised at the LSE Centre for Civil Society*, Report no 3 CCS Report Series, 2002.
  - 4 Stephen Yeo, *Co-operative and Mutual Enterprises in Britain: ideas from a useable past for a modern future*, Report no 4, CCS Report Series, 2002. See also, M Wann, *Building Social Capital: Self Help in a 21st century state*, IPPR, London, 1995. A cluster of joined-up government papers relevant to the same question, but also ranging more widely into the not-for-profit, voluntary and social enterprise fields, was published during the second half of 2002: *Social Enterprise: a strategy for success*, DTI, July 2002; *The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery: a cross cutting review*, H M Treasury, September 2002; and *Private Action, Public Benefit: a review of Charities and the Wider Not-for-Profit sector*, Cabinet Office, Strategy Unit, September 2002. A 'deficit' was also acknowledged as existing in civil society during the 1990s. see B Knight and P Stokes, *The Deficit in Civil Society in the UK*, Foundation for Civil Society, Birmingham, 1996.
  - 5 *The Co-operative Advantage: the Report of the Co-operative Commission*, January 2001.
  - 6 For keywords see Raymond Williams, *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society*, Fontana, London, 1976. 'Citizens' and 'Citizenship' were not included by Williams, but would be excellent candidates for historical, class-contested soundings of his kind. What did the coal miners of Browney Colliery mean by 'good citizenship', on the banner quoted at the beginning of this paper? Simon Schama called his 'Chronicle of the French Revolution', *Citizens*, Penguin Books, 1989. For 'citizenship' and its novelty, see Schama pp858-860.
  - 7 For 'dominant', 'emergent' and 'residual', see Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford University Press, 1977.
  - 8 The French political and the British industrial revolutions, as interpreted in E J Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789-1848*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1962.
  - 9 Andrew Dobson's essay is in Judith Cohen and Simon James eds *Learning to Last: skills, sustainability and strategy*, Learning and Skills Development Agency, London, 2002, pp41-54.

- 10 G Mulgan, *Citizens and responsibilities*, in G Andrews, ed *Citizenship*. Lawrence and Wishart, London 1991.
- 11 The Co-operative Group Regions represented at the Conference included the South East, the North East and Cumbria, and, more than a Region, Scottish Co-op. The independent Societies present included Midlands Co-operative Society, Chelmsford Star Co-operative Society, and Ipswich and Norwich Co-operative Society.
- 12 *New Internationalist*, July 2001. P Drucker, *The Global Economy and the Nation State*', in *Foreign Affairs*, Sept-Oct 1997 is a useful analysis.
- 13 *The Global Civil Society Yearbook* nos 1 and 2 were published by the Oxford University Press for the Centre for Civil Society and the Centre for Global Governance at the LSE, in 2001 and 2002. Pioneering work was done by L Salaman and H Anheier, *The Emerging Sector: an overview*, The Johns Hopkins Comparative Non-profit Sector Project Studies, Baltimore, 1994; and L Salaman, H Anheier, R. List, S Topler, W Sokolowski et al. *Global Civil Society: Dimensions of the Non Profit Sector*, Johns Hopkins Centre for Civil Society Studies, Baltimore, 1999.
- 14 Tim Adams, in an article on Edward Bernays, the father of Public Relations and the nephew of Sigmund Freud, in *The Observer Review*, 10 March 2002.
- 15 'Survey work done for the Electoral Commission during and after the 2001 General Election campaign suggested that interest in politics in general has not declined, but that party politics - especially as expressed in election campaigns - is failing to connect with the public', Sam Younger, Chairman, Electoral Commission, in *newpolitics: Bulletin*, December 2001; see also Chris Lawrence-Pietroni, 'Unlocking Democracy', in *newpoliticsnetwork*, Briefing Paper, September 2001.
- 16 Philip Gould, *The Unfinished Revolution: How the modernisers saved the Labour Party* Abacus, London 1998, as a classic New Labour text, reveals manipulative illiberalism, amid its commercial populism.
- 17 *Democratic Audit*, Charter 88, 1997. The comparable figure for those who own property is 2.6 per cent.
- 18 For the division of labour in this context see Stephen Yeo, *Co-operative and Mutual Enterprises in Britain: ideas from a useable past for a modern future*, Report no 4, CCS Report Series, 2002, pp34-37. Charles Gide, *Consumers' Co-operative Societies*, Co-operative Union, Manchester, 1921, pp5, 7, 193-5, 237 discusses Co-operation and the division of labour in lucid ways.

- 19 For this analogy, and for the classic theorisation of 'another theory of democracy', designed to replace 'the classical theory', see J A Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (English edition), Unwin, London, 1943.
- 20 Charles Gide, *Consumers Co-operative Societies ...*, p75. Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright, *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism*, Merlin, London 1979, especially Sheila Rowbotham, 'The Women's Movement and Organising for Socialism', pp21-156.
- 21 Edward Jackson, *A Study in Democracy: being an account of the rise and progress of industrial co-operation in Bristol*, CWS Printing Works, Manchester, 1911. I have changed 'man and man' in the original to 'person and person'.
- 22 Supported financially by the Co-operative Group (CWS) Ltd, the National Co-operative Education Association, Ipswich and Norwich Co-operative Society, and the School of Education, Westchester University, Pennsylvania.
- 23 'Learning and Society', introducing a series of publications of which the first was Lewis Minkin, *Exits and Entrances: Political Research as a Creative Art*, Sheffield Hallam University Press, 1997, p369.