

Editorial

This issue of the *Journal* is the first to incorporate the *World of Co-operative Enterprise*, in association with the Plunkett Foundation. Under the joint agreement, I am very pleased to welcome a large number of new readers to the *Journal*. Traditionally, our focus has been on the UK consumer co-operative sector, attempting to appeal to a broad audience including practitioners, members and academics; in line with the objectives of the Society. More recently, the *Journal* has been strengthened by contributions from other co-operative sectors and greater international content. The intention looking forwards is to provide for the interests of both the Society and the Plunkett readership. To this end, each issue will have sections dedicated to Plunkett sourced papers, for shorter 'Journal' articles and finally, for longer refereed papers.

For many, the *World of Co-operative Enterprise*, with a history stretching back over seventy-five years will require little introduction. We start this issue with a joint statement from the respective chairs, Rita Rhodes and David Button. This is followed by a preliminary paper from Edgar Parnell, who was himself Chief Executive of the Plunkett Foundation for a number of years. The paper provides a fascinating insight to the past development of the Foundation and its role today and into the future, which will be of particular interest to existing readers of the *Journal*.

There are four short articles in this issue. The first is from Malcolm Corbett, looking at the potential for developing participation using recent innovations in communications technology; perhaps something understated in the recent Co-operative Commission's report. The author is actively involved in strategies to make this happen and his passion and commitment are inspiring. The paper was first presented at the ICA's research conference in Oslo, August 2000.

The remaining three short papers come together as a package, having been presented at a recent law seminar in Manchester on 'Co-operative Opportunities'. Ian Snaith explores the legal definition of an industrial and provident society. Roger Jones looks at the UK polarisation between consumer and worker co-operatives and reflects on the scope for accommodating employee interests within legal constraints. This theme is extended by Cliff Mills to highlight opportunities for a co-operative solution in situations where existing models appear flawed. In all three papers, readers have the benefit of the authors' reflection on the Co-operative Commission findings in the legal context.

Finally in this issue, we have a single refereed paper; on this occasion from Scandinavia. Antti Miettinen, from Finland, is currently studying co-operative provision of welfare services in the Nordic countries. This paper focuses on member behaviour in Swedish day-care nurseries; a sector where co-operatives are strong. The key interest is to explain how formal structure and more informal considerations affect participation in decision making. The findings concerning the exercise of power by sub-groups of members and by employees should find resonance amongst analysts of the consumer sector more generally.

Welcome once more, to our new readers. I hope you will find the *Journal* both stimulating and enjoyable.

James Bell
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