

The Emergence of Global Citizenship; Utopian Ideas, Co-operative Movements and the Third Sector

Edited by Chushichi Tsuzki, Naobumi Hijikata and Akira Kurimoto

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Anyone with an interest in social history will be familiar with the perennial debate in that discipline between the 'Great Men' theory of history (and they invariably are men!) and the 'Great Movements' theory of history. Within the story of the co-operative movement we can identify both individuals such as Robert Owen and groups of people such as the Rochdale Pioneers who have been granted a privileged position within the movement's history by many scholars and co-operators alike down the years.

It was with these thoughts then that I read the first section of this book – a collection of essays about various aspects of Robert Owen's philosophy, life, work and impact. These contributions fitted well with Ian MacPherson's later essay in section 11, *Founders and the formative years of Caisses Populaire and Credit Unions in North America* and had the book stopped there, I would have been able to confidently recommend it to anyone with an interest in social history or co-operation.

Within the addition of a discussion setting this debate within the context wider questions of 'structure' and 'agency' in the social sciences (ie the extent to which individuals and groups of people behave as independent agents for change and the extent to which these actions are constrained by social structures beyond their control), the book could have been welcomed by a wider readership still.

However, the further through the volume I got – and it runs to 326 pages containing 19 substantial essays – the more I was drawn towards the frustrating conclusion that, despite raising many fascinating practical and theoretical issues, as a whole it was seriously lacking in coherence and at times seemed to

amount to little more than a random selection of papers.

This is a great shame because any of the topics touched upon – the role of co-operatives in conflict resolution, the relationship between economic globalisation and concepts of 'global citizenship', placing co-operative histories within the context of changing economic and social environments, or discussing Co-operative Values within the context of debates about whether there is such a thing as 'universal' human rights, would justify a collection of essay in their own right which would almost certainly command a greater audience than this unwieldy volume.

In particular, Roger Spear's essay looking at the wider 'Third Sector' and 'Social Economy' policy discourse could have been the basis of a series of papers looking at the sometimes contested relationship between Co-operation and Social Enterprise in Britain and the United States compared with the more integrated 'Third Sector' approaches he describes in much of continental Europe.

Reading the Editorial Note, it is clear how this particular format came about. In 1992 the Robert Owen Association of Japan produced a collection of essays entitled *Robert Owen and the World of Co-operation* and "the present volume is (their) attempt to publish a similar volume, a sequence to the first, after the lapse of more than a decade".

Before publishing a third volume, I would respectfully suggest that the Executive Committee of the Robert Owen Association of Japan either begin a regular Journal along the lines of the *Journal of Co-operative Studies* and/or an occasional paper series on the model of that produced by the Socialist History Society in the UK.