

International Notes

W. P. WATKINS, J.P., B.A.

(Mr. W. P. Watkins, a President of the Society for Co-operative Studies, is a former Director of the International Co-operative Alliance)

NEW GERMAN TRAINING CENTRE

The German Co-operative Bank (Deutsche Genossenschaftskasse), the central financial institution in which all four branches of the Co-operative Movement in the Federal German Republic are united, celebrated its 75th anniversary in October 1970. The celebration took the somewhat unusual form of a short meeting of about 150 representatives of the Co-operative Movement, the Federal and Regional Governments and university institutes of Co-operative Studies, convened to witness the formal dedication of a building, newly required by the Bank, to the use of the Unions of urban and agricultural credit co-operatives as a management training centre. The building is not new. It is a castle, built about the year 1700, standing on the summit of a huge mass of basalt above the little town of Mountabaar in the Westerwald, the district where Fredrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen worked out, over a century ago, the type of rural co-operative credit society, since adopted in almost every part of the world, where small peasant holdings form the prevailing land system.

Examples of important Co-operative financial institutions which celebrate their success by endowing their respective Co-operative Movements with educational centres are rarer than they might well be, but this concern for the promotion of Co-operative studies and research has been characteristic of the Deutsche Genossenschaftskasse ever since it was transferred from Berlin and re-established in Frankfort-on-Main in 1949. Its research department collects news and information diffused through its own bulletins one of which every year is devoted to a comprehensive survey of Co-operation in Western Germany and an assessment of its progress and situation. The department began to publish several years ago a series of monographs on various aspects of Co-operation, national and international. The eight volumes which have already appeared represent a valuable contribution to Co-operative knowledge. There is no doubt that this policy will be continued under the Bank's present President Professor Georg Draheim, whose writings on Co-operative theory and practice are widely known.

CO-OPERATION AND EDUCATION

The principal address at the ceremony at Schlors Montabaar was delivered by Professor Dr. Fredrich Furstenberg, who is holder of a chair at the College of Social and Economic Science at Linz, Austria, on the subject of Co-operation and Education. Dr. Furstenberg's observations were based on the premise that the mission of the Co-operative Movement to promote the economic welfare of its members necessarily implies a contribution to their education, no less, rather even more, to-day when success and survival demands trained efficiency from officials and members, than in its pioneer epoch. The concept of Co-operative education is inseparable from the Movements need to master the problems arising from its present situation, and education, its aims and processes, must be oriented to that fact. In other words it must be directed towards the twofold aim of enabling Co-operators to define their problems

correctly and to act effectively in solving these. Education thus has certain fundamental tasks, all of which have economic, technical and social aspects. Professor Furstenberg enumerated five fields of study as follows: comprehensive and more or less long-term planning of the Movements objectives; the organisation of social relations within Co-operative organisations on the basis of a corresponding definition of fields of activity; the activation of the members' participation and the improvement of the efficiency of both members and employees; the actual direction and control of business operations; the representation of the management in relation to the board of directors and general meeting of members, together with the representation of a society in relation to the wider Movement and the public at large.

Another consideration, flowing from the preceding and strongly emphasised by Dr. Fürstenberg, is that Co-operative education should enhance the dynamism of the Movement by giving Co-operators greater mastery of and confidence in flexibility of organisation. Dogmatic rigidity is a positive hindrance in competition. Co-operators have not merely to react to change, to make adjustments to modifications in their societies' external circumstances. They must themselves initiate changes, attack as well as defend. It is not changes in themselves, but creative changes, which are necessary. This in turn necessitates a continuous and unending process of learning-which implies not only re-learning, but sometimes unlearning. The end of the argument is inevitably a concerted effort to express in concrete terms, corresponding to the Movement's contemporary situation, the true essence of a specifically Co-operative educational system.

CO-OPERATIVE STUDIES AT HAMBURG

The statement in the November 1970 issue of the Bulletin that Professor E. B. Blümle, formerly Rector of the Swiss Co-operative Seminar at Multenz had been appointed to the Chair of Business Economics at Hamburg University in succession to the late Professor Reinhold Henzler, although made on good authority, turns out to be incorrect. The Chair carries with it the directorship of the Co-operative Institute. The Institutes latest report, however, makes it clear that Professor Blümle, although he was lecturing on Co-operative subjects temporarily at Hamburg during the summer term of 1970, declined the Senates offer of the Chair. The Institute has been temporarily in the charge of Professor Otfried Fischer since the end of September, the teaching being carried on by academic assistants. The work of the Institute will henceforth be planned by a council set up under a new university regulation.

One feature of last year's activity was the contribution by members of the staff of articles, based on the Institute's research work, to scientific and Co-operative periodicals. During the year 25 diploma studies and one dissertation were completed by students. A considerable number of subjects were suggested by Co-operative societies and their unions, which also gave the students useful help in getting material and provided financial support for the Institute. The Institutes specialised library now comprises over 4,500 books, reports and memoranda.