

THE
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Society Notes

"It is a little curious to reflect that while each man is a mystery to himself he is an open book to others, the reason being that he sees in himself the perplexities and torment of the mental processes out of which action issues and they see in him only the simple and undeniable act itself."

- thus Frederic Manning (Private 19022) in "Her Privates We" a moving and truthful chronicle of ordinary men exposed to the pressures of soldiering in the First World War. The quotation surfaced as I looked in retrospect over the experience of Journal 62. You see, I hope with interest, this "simple and undeniable" outcome but the process out of which it issued, contained, at least for its Editors, its share "of perplexities and torments".

On the One Hand -

On the features dealing with the consumer Movement progress was smooth. David Hutton, Paul Derrick, T.R. Edmondson and George McMillan continue, from the feature in Journal 61, the effort to establish what are the problems facing societies in finding the capital resources for development and then of identifying the solutions available. George Donkin relates the International Retail Conference sponsored in October 1987 by the GDI on "Breaking New Ground" to the conditions he faces as Chief Executive at Cambridge. There are reports from Bernard Rhodes of his service as Parliamentary Secretary for the Co-operative Union and from Dr. J. Butler on the Union's initiative in establishing the Institute of Co-operative Directors and Dr. R. Briscoe outlines his proposals for the consumer Co-operatives to revitalise their structures by systematically identifying their members' interests and building networks of service to these. In general:-

Smooth and cohesive did these offerings flow,
Not impudently swift, not tediously slow

- But on the Other

The experience was a bit different when we engaged with the topic Government Policy and Social Housing. Our first intention was to have a centrepiece of comparative statements from the Department of the Environment and the Labour Party: the DoE in the event, which was quite a long time coming, felt it would rather await the outcome of a Working Party it had set up on housing Co-operatives; and of the three letters sent to the Labour Party headquarters, none was acknowledged but the second did reach the appropriate Shadow Minister - too late, however to give him and us the chance to prepare and include the piece.

Then in seeking supporting articles from different areas of experience there were some invitations repeated but unanswered; perhaps worse, we had promises apparently firmly sealed, but still quite unfulfilled; and we now wait with some certainty the "reproof valiant" or the "counter-check quarrelsome" that we have failed to add to the feature some sources that would have responded much more reliably and pertinently! We are sure, however, we have been rescued most effectively by the contributors who did respond, sometimes at short notice, and who are introduced in much more detail in an explanatory Foreword later.

To add to the riches of this issue, Peter Clarke has, as usual, cast "one auspicious and one dropping eye" over all the sectors of Co-operative development for the choicest items for his *Newsletter*; there is a report from the national C.D.A. on the Inter-Sector Forum and its Working Parties; and Jonathan Hill continues his *Reviews*.

Journal 63 and Conference 1988

The next Journal will help to prepare the way for the 1988 Conference and AGM and, be it noted, the Conference dates have been changed from 16th-17th September to 9th-10th September.

Conference and Journal will be addressed to the distinctive character and objectives of Co-operative management drawing on the Seminar which the Society and the East Midlands Management Centre have planned for May 1988 and possibly on the Review of Retail Co-operative Performance about which we wrote in Journal 61.

It is hoped to publish a first Review in Journal 63 and with it an Index for all the Journals (and Bulletins) since their beginning. The contriving and the recording of the Index proceed hopefully on the necessary assumptions: that people will want to use it - and indeed the supply of it may stimulate demand for it; and that sets of the Journal can be made available for

consultation, and in this respect the demand for it may encourage the supply.

Marketing the Journal

We feel - without, of course, benefit of prejudice - that the Journal deserves more readers and after some constructive efforts mainly within the consumer Movement the Committee has been considering what might be done in the direction of colleges and universities. Peter Davis and Johnston Birchall have agreed to draw up from their own knowledge and from the advice of other members of the Society a list of individuals who will be approached to subscribe for themselves and/or to raise the question of subscription by their departments or libraries. We hope to see some progress on the basis of Journals 62 and 63.

Regional organisation

The Committee has also been considering the development of our organisation and has defined two possible tasks for the regions which might encourage this:-

- (i) Promoting links between Co-operative activists and professionals and academic sympathisers. This could, for example, include the engagement of a consumer society with a local college or university department whose respective interests would coincide over the examination of some area of experience within the society.
- (ii) Promoting links in the regions between different kinds of Co-operatives.

The Committee is to discuss these possibilities with the four Regional Secretaries at a meeting in May.

March 1988

R.L.M.