

REPORT

by Dr. R. Johnston Birchall

Brian Rose in The Chair

1. The minutes of the 1986 AGM were agreed to be a correct record.
2. Matters arising: David Hutton suggested that, in view of the quality of the articles being published in the Journal, we publish an index of authors and subjects; this was agreed.

3. Reports of National Officers:

(a) *Chair:*

Brian Rose reviewed the major achievements of the year. These had included the commissioned research which had resulted in publication of the 'Save our Shops' book and its update in the Journal, continued support for, and monitoring of, the Co-operative Forum, and two research seminars on housing and worker Co-operatives. We had also provided funding of £250 for a useful survey of 'Who Lives in Housing Co-ops?' undertaken by the National Federation of Housing Associations, and £25 for a 'best student' prize on the University of Ulster Co-operative Studies course.

He drew our attention to the Society's financial situation; owing to the GLEB grant not being renewed, we are unable to fund any major projects this year out of our own resources.

(b) *Secretary*

Johnston Birchall's report in Journal 60 was taken as read.

(c) *Membership Secretary:*

John Brown reported that by the beginning of the Conference the Society had 222 members, compared with 227 at this time last year (subsequently by the end of the conference he noted that 8 more members had signed up, making one more than last year). The 222 were made up of 150 individuals and 72 organisations. 112 had paid this year's subscriptions so far, compared with 129 last year. A circulation of 32 retail societies not in membership had produced 8 new corporate members. Members paid tribute to Nancy Scott for her work in keeping up the membership; about 50% of members are in the Metropolitan and Southern region, the only really active regional branch of the Society.

Various suggestions were made: (i) that we write to both lay members and managers of societies, (the Membership Secretary confirmed that we do both); (ii) that we invite members of the Institute of Co-operative

Directors to join; and (iii) that we advertise in Co-operative News. It was agreed that the report to the News include an appeal for new members.

(d) *Treasurer:*

Apologies were received from Alan Rhodes, but he had prepared a set of notes amplifying the accounts for 1986-7 presented in Journal 60, which John Brown read out. Here is a summary:

- (i) Subscription income was lower than for the previous year, but the rise in subscription rates should offset this.
- (ii) The high level of Journal sales was due to a one-off sale, and cannot be repeated this year.
- (iii) CIS, Co-operative Bank, Co-operative Union and CRS have paid their Journal support grant for the second year, but before the next AGM alternative financial support will be needed.
- (iv) Reduction in donations and grant reflects the inability to secure a further GLEB grant.
- (v) National officers' travel has been sub-divided into committee and other meetings.
- (vi) Additional secretarial costs are due to room bookings and stationery for the Metropolitan and Southern Region.
- (vii) The Journal is now being published and printed by the Co-operative Union, and distributed by CWS, and this has improved the presentation but slightly increased the cost.
- (viii) The loss on the 1986 Conference more than doubled that of the previous year, and so a cancellation charge of £5 will have to be paid, and if cancellation is after the College receives final figures, no refund is possible.

Finally, in real terms income exceeded expenditure by £116 (after allowing for the GLEB grant). But this includes £905 interest on investments, and the position had worsened against the previous year by £562. We cannot afford to sponsor major new initiatives at present. In addition, in the ensuing discussion it was noted that there may be further charges in relation to the research. Expenditure on research was felt to have been worthwhile though, as it had contributed to making this Conference one of outstanding quality; in Tom Carbery's opinion the best in ten years, if not the best we have ever had.

(e) *Editors:*

Bob Marshall reported on the last three issues of the Journal, confirming the editorial policy that their central intention was to review the consumer Co-operative movement, but relating this to other sectors and to other movements world-wide. Prospects for 1987-8 include the following:

(i) Problems of capital resources for retail Co-operative developments; a subject which is being reviewed by a Co-operative Union working party; our aim is to anticipate this in Journal 61 and to help in building an informed climate of opinion.

(ii) Co-operative housing; includes, new housing policy initiatives by the present government which will affect Co-operatives.

(iii) A calendar of research into consumer Co-operation in the U.K.; Garth Pratt had agreed to do this, and took the opportunity to distribute a form eliciting information.

(iv) An annual review of retail Co-operative performance. This would be in three stages: Steve Worthington of the University of Stirling and Professor Carbery to contribute statistics on indicators of Co-operative and private sector performance: a panel of independent experts giving their views on the significance of these indicators, and finally a single author, Tom Carbery, examining the agreements and differences among the experts.

Finally, the editors were thanked for all the hard work they had put into publishing the Journal.

4. Accounts

Adoption of the accounts was agreed.

5. Change in Constitution

It was agreed that we amend the Constitution to read, in the section on 'Presidents':

"the Society shall have presidents, elected by and in such number as decided by the Annual General Meeting, in recognition of their contribution to Co-operative study and research, who shall be eligible to attend, without voting powers, all meetings of the Society and its committee".

6. Election of Committee

The following were elected:

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| (a) Chair | Geoff Wade |
| (b) Vice Chairs | Peter Davis
Lily Howe |
| (c) Secretary | Johnston Birchall |

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| (d) Membership Secretary | John Brown |
| (e) Treasurer | Alan Rhodes |
| (f) Editors | Tom Carbery
Bob Marshall |
| (g) Additional members | Fred Broughton
Ivor Moody
Nancy Scott |

John Brown and Alan Rhodes gave notice that they would be serving for the next year only. Fred Broughton and Nancy Scott will have to retire next year, after serving their maximum of 3 years; the committee are to look into this problem.

7. Election of Presidents

The presidents were re-elected en bloc.

8. Appointment of Auditor

Alex Wilson was re-appointed, with thanks for his continued help.

9. Activities 1987-8

Bruce Bennett suggested that the next Annual Conference should give attention to the question 'what is a real Co-op shop?', that is, what is it that makes a Co-op shop different from a privately-owned shop? It was noted that this had some relation to a seminar to be organised under the joint auspices of the Society and the East Midlands Regional Management Centre by Peter Davis and Edgar Parnell on Co-operative management, in which a similar question of the Co-operative 'difference' will be explored. The out of town shopping centre issue was also suggested, but members thought that this was too big a subject, needing too great a research capability, and that others were already researching it.

10. Thanks

Thanks were expressed to all committee members and officers for the work they had put in over the year.