

REVIEWS

by

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This is the first appearance of what should become a regular feature of the Bulletin. The reviews will usually be of books relating to Co-operation, but new pamphlets, journals, videotapes and so on are not excluded. I hope the section will prove useful to readers.

All the books covered in this first Reviews section have recently come into stock at the Co-operative College Library. Naturally I make no claim to have seen every new book of Co-operative interest, so I shall be pleased to receive details of valuable new publications from anyone who cares to communicate them to me.

The Political Economy of Co-operation and Participation: a Third Sector, edited by Alasdair Clayre, (Oxford University Press, £10.00).

A large number of contributions are brought together on the subject of the possible development of workers' Co-operatives and their permeation through the economy. The book is based on a conference, and takes as its starting point Peter Jay's well-known paper The Workers' Co-operative Economy, which it reprints. It continues with a further ten papers of varying length and very varied level, interspersed with brief comments from participants in the conference. Discussion centres particularly on the role of Co-operatives and participative enterprises in the wider economic structure, and on the most satisfactory form of ownership of each enterprise, and includes notes on current practice in several countries. Perhaps

inevitably with so many contributions the overall effect is somewhat "bitty" and this impression is increased by the contrast between some highly technical economic contributions and some fairly elementary outlines of practice. As a package the book is useful for the range of views it presents - though the specialist will find some sections rather basic, and the non-economist will have problems with some other sections.

Some Reference Books

A number of useful co-operative reference books appeared during 1980, and deserve to be mentioned here. The Co-operatives Research Directory (Co-operatives Research Unit, Technology Faculty, Open University, Milton Keynes £0.75) lists 46 research projects in the Co-operative sector, with details of the researchers involved, an outline of the project, and a note of any publications to have come out of the work. Co-operative topics of widely differing types are included - though unfortunately the directory is arranged by the researchers' names instead of by the subject of research, which would have been more useful.

A revised edition of Co-operative Information (Department of Industry, Small Firms Division) is a handy checklist of a few of the major addresses of organisations able to give help and advice of one sort or another.

Co-ops: a directory of industrial and service co-operatives (Co-operative Development Agency £5.00) is more ambitious altogether. It sets out to list "every industrial and service Co-operative known to the CDA at the time of going to press" and displays an impressive, though undoubtedly and inevitably incomplete range.

The arrangement is in (almost) alphabetical order, with a useful regional key and a section on advisory and promotional bodies. An index of activities would be valuable in the next edition.

Another new and hopefully continuing venture is Co-operative Literature (Plunkett Foundation £2.00). This is a subject guided list, compiled by the librarians of six Co-operative Libraries in the U.K., of their libraries' accessions - with such a span of libraries, it also approaches being a bibliography of English language publications on Co-operation. The first edition covers accessions during 1979, and gives locations for all titles.

Pioneers of Co-operation: the history and growth of the Co-operative Movement, (Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society £65.00).

This is a new tape-slide package outlining the nature of Co-operation and of the British Consumers' Co-operative Movement. The taped commentary (pulsed to change the 80 slides at the appropriate moment) is informative without being too heavy, though its pace is perhaps a little too fast at times. If the standard of the slide is good - and it is in this case - brief silences are perfectly supportable. The set does not attempt to convey a vast amount of information, and is certainly suitable for people with no previous knowledge of the Movement, including school children. Primarily the content refers to current structure rather than the historical development of Co-operation, which is dealt with fairly summarily. A final quibble with what is generally a useful, though not outstanding, package, is its strong emphasis on the role of the C.W.S. at the expense of information about how retail societies operate - a curious imbalance perhaps,

considering the source of the set.

Office management for co-operatives, by John
Lauder (Intermediate Technology £2.00).

This is the latest in a series of basic guides for co-operators. The target audience of the book is in the Third World, but this very simple, programmed text might be equally useful in this country for people with absolutely no business or administrative experience who find themselves involved in running a Co-operative. Topics covered include fundamental requirements of financial control, staffing, organisation and physical layout of offices - each of them very briefly within a short book. Not everyone finds self-teaching texts of this sort congenial, but for those who do, this will be a useful first primer.

Note on the Author Stephen Drodge is Librarian of the Co-operative College, member of I.C.A. Librarians' Working Party and editor of a short guide to the literature of Workers' Co-operatives due to appear later in the year. Previously spent four years in public library service.