

NEWSLETTER

This is the fourth edition of the Newsletter and you may well ask why I did not say what I am going to say now in the first edition. It is to try and explain some of the reasoning behind the introduction of the Newsletter.

There were two reasons. The first main hope for the Newsletter was that it would provide a mini-forum for the Movement by giving news from the various sectors; consumer, agriculture, housing, producer and credit etc. So far it has tended to concentrate on this.

There was, however, the second reason that because the Society draws its members from a wide range of Co-operative interests it does not always find it easy to maintain links between them or to establish a clear identity. While the Bulletin, regional meetings and the Annual Conference all play an important part it was felt that a Newsletter could help to foster more personal links. And this issue turns happily to that commission. So, here goes! New members first - and selection, as ever, is difficult and dangerous'.

New Members

Among those who have joined recently is Len Freeman. Besides being a Director of the Cambridge and District Co-operative Society, Len is also secretary to the Cambridge Co-operative Party which is an organisation member of the Society.

We are also pleased to welcome Lord Oram into the Society. Literally, he needs no introduction having spent long years in the movement, the last three of them as Chairman of the CDA. As any of

those associated with the Agency will know, these years will not have been easy for him. Hopefully, with fewer pressures, Bert will have more time to become involved in the Society's activities. In fact, he has already done so and attended the Co-operative Researchers' Seminar we organised last June. This reminded us of Bert's own Co-operative research interests. He was the Co-operative Party's Research Officer before entering the House of Commons in 1955.

Jenny Thornley, too, needs little introduction to many members. Although a member of an affiliated organisation, the Co-operative Research Unit of the Open University, Jenny has also become an individual member of the Society. With Nora Stettner, she prepared the paper which formed the basis of discussion at the Co-operative Researchers' Seminar. Jenny has also seen the publication of her book 'WORKERS' CO-OPERATIVES: JOBS AND DREAMS' by Heinemann Educational last March. Members will recall that this was reviewed by Stephen Drodge in the last issue of the Bulletin. For members of the Metropolitan and Southern Region who would like to hear an updating of Jenny's views, or at least those mentioned in the book, please note that she has agreed to speak at their meeting on 17th March, 1982.

Because of the closer links he brings with agricultural Co-operation we are particularly pleased that John Morley has joined the Society. John is about to retire from the Central Council for Agricultural and Horticultural Co-operation but will be remaining as Chairman of the Trustees of the Plunkett Foundation for Co-operative Studies. We have already had occasion to be grateful to John for his ready co-operation. He chaired the Co-operative Researchers' Seminar which the Central Council hosted last June and he is also a member of

the Society's study group examining closer Co-operation between Co-operatives. For those who know John and his patrician poise it will seem incongruous if I liken him to a Catherine wheel in the way that he sparks off ideas. For me, personally, this has frequently meant more work either at the CDA, where John was a member of the first Board, or in the Society here. I am not complaining. In fact, I have enjoyed it. I am merely stating that we are lucky to have someone of John's Co-operative experience and vision joining us.

Into Print

Jenny Thornley is not the only member of the Society to have a book published this year. Congratulations to Tony Eccles, the Society's Vice Chairman, on the publication of his book UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT. Members will no doubt have seen some of the favourable reviews of this in the national press. It is published by Pan at £2.95 and deals with the setting up, career and collapse of the KME Co-operative and I expect the Bulletin will be turning its attention to it.

Nora Stettner wrote an article on British Community Co-operatives which appears in the latest edition of the Review of International Co-operation. The Plunkett Foundation plans to publish an extended version of this shortly. And the Foundation has just published jointly with the Co-operative Research Unit the very useful "Directory of Co-operative Research and Education in the U.K. and Europe 1981", available at £3.50 (p. and p. included) from the Foundation at 31 St. Giles, Oxford OX1 3LF or the C.R.U., Open University, Milton Keynes.

He Who Travels.....

Some members have been on their travels. Martin Stott who is active in the Political Economy Research

Group at Oxford and also in the Oxford and Swindon Co-operative Society attended the Third International Gathering on Workers' Self-Management which was held in Sicily in August. The subject was the strengthening of links between European Workers' Co-operatives.

In September I was off to Vienna where the better half of Rhodes and Rhodes, Bernard, was representing the Co-operative Union at the Congress of Konsum Osterreich. It was also the occasion of the celebrations of the 125th anniversary of the Austrian movement, begun like ours by a group of weavers. The visit gave me the opportunity of gaining some first hand impression of how the Austrian movement achieves its high degree of member involvement. More about this perhaps in a later edition of the Bulletin.

I was sorry, however, to miss the Society's Annual Conference but none-the-less appreciated my election as Chairman for the Coming year. Thank you.

Here's the Health

Not being present at the Annual Conference meant that I was unable to convey the thanks of the Society to its retiring Chairman, David Hutton. I know that Tony Eccles did so more than adequately but I had particularly wished to convey my personal thanks. Perhaps better than many others, I have seen, as David's deputy, how much the Society means to him and how much work he has put into it both as Vice Chairman and Chairman. Last year was not an easy year with the move to greater independence from the Co-operative Union. But David welded the national officers into an effective and good-natured working group.

Here's health, literally, to Professor Tom Carbery who has now almost completely recovered from a successful eye operation. Thank goodness, Tom's art as a raconteur was never threatened and we look forward to renewals of his distinctive 'pawky' humour.

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Rita Rhodes

Note on the Author

Rita Rhodes is Education/Liaison Officer of the Co-operative Development Agency. Has been student of the Co-operative College, lecturer in Industrial Relations in further education and Education Officer of the Scottish Section of the Co-operative Union.