

# 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)*

## **The Future of the International Forum**

The doubts which for the last three years have overshadowed the future of the International Co-operative Scientific Forum have at last begun to be dispelled. This is the result, like the foundation of the Forums fourteen years ago, of action by the Institutes for Co-operative Studies of the Universities of Western Germany. The Working Party of these Institutes, which was set up at the time of the Congress at Giessen in 1969 (See S.C.S. Bulletin No. 9., March 1970), has since held two meetings. The second, held at Münster last March, took the form of a seminar and marked the attainment of a new level of collaboration between the universities and institutes represented. The special papers presented laid the basis for real teamwork in which not only the senior professors with years of experience in Co-operative studies but also younger lecturers and research workers actively took part. It is intended to develop the activity of the Working Party further in this direction so that its functions will not merely be informative but also productive of new thinking.

The universities participating in the Working Party are Berlin, Erlangen-Nürnberg, Giessen, Hamburg, Köln, Marburg, and Münster from Germany and Vienna from Austria. Ordinary membership is limited to the German speaking countries. Associate membership is open to individuals engaged in Co-operative research and teaching in German-speaking countries and this already comprises 14 lecturers in a further 8 universities, including two from Switzerland. A third category-corresponding membership-will be open to a still larger circle of scientists and university institutes outside the German language-area, such as the Co-operative Institute of Helsinki University which has already been accepted.

The Working Party (known as A.G.I. from the initials of its German title) is administered by a small committee with Professor Dr. Eberhard Dülfer (Marburg) as its chairman. Arrangements have been made with the publishers of the general Co-operative quarterly review *Zeitschrift Für Das Gesamte Genossenschaftswesen*, to issue a fifth number each year devoted to the activity of the Working Party, including the papers and discussions of the seminars which are intended to become annual events of increasing importance.

## **The Seventh International Co-operative Scientific Congress**

The annual seminars will also be designed to lead up, through their papers and discussions, to the triennial Congresses. Preparations have already begun for the seventh of these Congresses which will be held in Münster, Westphalia in the autumn of 1972. The general theme will be "Co-operatives – Democracy and Competition". This theme has already been broached at the Münster seminar already mentioned. It will be considered in its legal aspects at a further seminar planned for later this year. It is also hoped that, independently of the

seminar and congress programmes, the interchanges between Co-operative teachers and researchers will give rise to joint research projects which can be carried out by working groups composed in a variety of ways according to the field and aim of the research.

### **The Functions of the Forum**

Returning to the International Forum, it is to be noted with no little satisfaction that the responsibility for its direction will be shouldered no longer by a single professor, already carrying a heavy burden of academic work, but by the Committee of the A.G.I. It has been decided that one of its immediate tasks shall be the gathering and diffusion of information relating to education in the field of Co-operatives. There has been a remarkable growth during the last decade in the numbers of Co-operative teaching and training institutions, particularly in those countries of the Third World whose governments are sympathetic to Co-operation or where Specialised Agencies of the United Nations are engaged in promoting Co-operatives under schemes of technical assistance. Not merely are these new institutions largely unknown to European and American Institutes of Co-operation; they are mostly unknown to one another. Through the Forum and the International Co-operative Scientific Congresses they can be drawn into mutually advantageous communication and collaboration. The pioneer work done by Dr. George Davidovic in compiling an international directory of universities teaching and researching in the Co-operative field could well be taken up by the Forum and developed into a world survey with some pretensions to completeness. Such a directory will sooner or later become indispensable if the Forum is to select with certainty the right types of collaboration it needs for its work.

### **International Co-ordinator in Research**

The efforts of our German Colleagues to enhance the effectiveness of their teaching and research through systematic inter-university teamwork can hardly be too highly commended. Their example may well be followed in other countries with highly developed Co-operative Movements dependent more and more on university-educated management. But since Co-operation is not simply a field of study for a number of scientific disciplines, but also a system of economic social organisation which must gain adherents through its practical results, there must be understanding and collaboration between the Co-operative scientist and the Co-operative practitioner. Both are already employing research for different if complementary purposes. The time is overdue for both parties to enter into partnership, and it might well be a suitable project for the International Co-operative Alliance, in the Co-operative Development Decade, to bring them together on the international level.