

The Society for Co-operative Studies

REPORT OF THE SEVENTEENTH
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

at the Co-operative College

on 24th September 1983

1. The minutes of the 1982 AGM were taken as read.
2. There were no matters arising.
3. Chairman's Report

Tony Eccles reported that the main regret of his period of office was the continuing low level of recruitment in the academic world. Beyond that there were two positive items for report.

- a) As the result of a Society initiative, the Co-operative Development Agency had on 21 September organised a forum attended by leading members of most of the national Co-operative federations. This forum had considered a paper from a Society member, John Morley, which had proposed the establishment of a central consultative council to deal with matters of general Co-operative interest. Participants had responded positively to this idea and had agreed to take it back to their respective organisations with a view to a further meeting to discuss detail in January 1984.

- b) The Society's officers had submitted an application for grant aid to the Greater London Enterprise Board. The grant would be for research of value to workers' Co-operatives, seminars and conferences and, if needed, informal consultancies. GLEB had responded positively to the application and a cheque for £4,250 had just been received. This money was available to be spent and it was important that it should be.

Finally, the Chairman expressed his thanks to the other officers for their support during his term.

4. Reports from Other National Officers

- a) Membership Secretary: commenting on the report contained in Bulletin 48, Alex Wilson drew attention to the overall stability of the numbers of members. New recruits were doing little more than replace members leaving despite the sterling work of such as Nancy Scott in the Metropolitan and Southern Region. The Society was still tiny.
- b) Treasurer: Alex Wilson pointed to the modest improvement in the Society's finances (accounts published in Bulletin 48) largely due to the CWS's assistance with the printing of the Bulletin. Membership subscriptions had been kept down but may need further consideration.
- c) Joint Editors: Bob Marshall reported that the Bulletin continued to provide an informed and reasoned appraisal of the issues facing the Movement and was

characterised by a variety of topic and of author. The past year had seen the themes of the future of the retail movement, women and the Co-operative movement, and the international movement. Plans for the next Bulletin were the celebration of two birthdays: Will Watkins' ninetieth and the Independent Commission Report's twenty-fifth.

Possibilities for future issues included an analysis of difficulties facing the three sections of the labour movement; workers' Co-operatives; problems common to all types of Co-operative; Co-operatives and unemployment; and "Democracy and Structural Change". In addition to content, Bob Marshall also urged that consideration should be given to resources for improving the appearance of the Bulletin and to the marketing of it.

In subsequent discussion there was a suggestion that the Bulletin should be concerned not only with an analysis of Co-operative organisations but with a critique of other areas of social and economic activity from the standpoint of Co-operative philosophy.

5. Accounts

In considering the accounts, David Hutton, supported by some other members, argued that since the Society's additional savings were a consequence of the CWS subsidy to the production of the Bulletin, that money should be invested in the CWS

rather than the National Savings Bank. Alex Wilson pointed out that the NSB offered a better rate of interest than the Co-op. Bank but it was agreed that the officers should note the feeling of the meeting that it would be appropriate for money saved in consequence of CWS support to be placed in Co-operative organisations. The accounts were then adopted.

6. Election of Officers for 1983-84

The following elections were made:-

- a) Presidents: re-elected en bloc
- b) Chairman: Jack Prichard
- c) Vice-Chairmen: Mike Gibson
Basil Loveridge
- d) Secretary: Brian Rose
- e) Membership Secretary: Alex Wilson
- f) Treasurer: Alex Wilson
- g) Auditor: Alan Rhodes

David Hutton moved a formal vote of thanks to all retiring officers.

7. Annual Conference 1984

- a) General Arrangements: It was agreed that while September remained the favoured month, there was now a preference for Saturday and Sunday. It was further agreed that the officers should look into the possibility of participants being able to book in for the Friday night or for Saturday lunch.

- b) Possible Topics: Suggestions were an analysis of the various sectors of the labour movement; a Co-operative critique of some non-Co-operative area of social or economic affairs; consideration of a pilot scheme for converting a closing retail Co-operative store into a workers' Co-op.

8. Other Activities

The main discussion centred around a proposal for a "roadshow" aimed at Universities and polytechnics with a view to influencing curricula in favour of more consideration of Co-operatives. Peter Davis expressed a willingness to approach Leicester Polytechnic for a pilot. It was agreed that the officers should give this further consideration.

9. In conclusion, Jack Prichard moved a vote of thanks to Tony Eccles for his contribution to the Society during his year of office.

Brian Rose