

II. W.P.W.: 'MANY HAPPY RETURNS'

These greetings from some friends and associates speak also for many others.

PROFESSOR T.F. CARRERY: University of Strathclyde

Will Watkins is a delightful man in almost every way. I have long thought that the three litmus paper tests of a man are:

- a) would you want him as a neighbour?
- b) would you want him as a colleague?
- c) would you want him as a brother-in-law or father-in-law?

To my mind Will more than qualifies on b) and c). I am not so sure as a neighbour, unless he is going to live two or three doors down. I say that because one suspects he is as "haunless" as I am myself ("haunless" is the antithesis of handy). He does not strike me as the man to help me repair the lawn mower or the washing machine. Indeed I doubt if he has either.

The late Monsignor Ronald Knox once on the occasion of the installation of a Scottish bishop, observed

"A bishop is valued on earth and will surely be judged in Heaven not by the quality of his sermons, the efficiency of his diocesan administration or even the justice of his ecclesiastical law making, but rather by the extent to which eyes twinkle and hearts leap at the sight of his coming."

Eyes twinkle and hearts leap to see Will Watkins. He should have been a bishop!

MAUDE E. DAVIES (nee Cunningham): formerly
tutor at the Co-operative College

W.P. (Will) Watkins was a colleague of mine on the teaching staff of the Co-operative College, then in Manchester, when I joined it in 1929 and for several years afterwards.

He was immensely popular with his students, sharing with them his profound knowledge of the Movement and the principles and philosophy which inspired it. Most of the young people who attended the College in those days came from comparatively narrow urban environments and one of his main aims was to extend their horizons and enrich their cultural experience. Thus he and his wife Mary entertained groups in their own home where they had a fine collection of records of classical music. He lent them his own books, encouraged them to go to concerts and with him on long hikes in the Peak. They talked as they walked - about a diversity of subjects, from scientific and artistic values, from travel to natural history and archeology and even to what we now call ESP, in which at that time he was particularly interested.

Above all he taught them to challenge authority of any kind if it did not stand up to informed criticism and he applied this to his own views which he provoked them to analyse and dispute if they thought fit. In short he trained a succession of objective thinkers,

many of whom have since given valuable service to the Movement. His aptitude for languages was already an asset, as when he welcomed and helped foreign students, and in the wider field of international conferences where he was even then an outstanding figure.

Although through the years our paths have diverged I still remember him with respect and affection. He was, and I am sure still remains, an individual with a completely independent mind and personality - his own man in every sense.

DR. ERWIN HASSELMANN: retired member of the Board of Directors of the Central Union of German Consumer Co-operatives

The first time I met Will Watkins was in the spring of 1934. I had come to England as a "refugee from Nazi oppression" to mention the official "title" given to the anti-Nazis by the British authorities.

Before the Nazi seizure of power I had been in close contact with the Co-operative press in Hamburg and from leading German co-operators I had received, after the "Gleichschaltung", inside information on the Nazi anti-Co-operative intentions. So I was able to inform Mr. H.J. May, then Secretary of the I.C.A., of these Nazi plans. That was the beginning of my work for the I.C.A. - and later with the I.C.A. - and also of my friendly connection with Will Watkins which has now lasted for more than half a century.

In Will Watkins I found a friend with a very wide international horizon and a deep understanding not only of the difficult problems of international Co-operation, but also of the internal problems of the Co-operative movements of other countries. Unfortunately Will Watkins left the I.C.A. after H.J. May's death in November 1939. But we remained in close contact.

Will Watkin's knowledge of German was - and still is - excellent. And also his knowledge of the history and the problems of the German Co-operative movement. These were two good reasons for utilising this knowledge after the fall of the Nazi regime when the British military government in its German occupation zone tried to help the German Co-operators to rebuild their Co-operative structure. But before Will Watkins appeared on the post-war German scene more hindrance than help for the German Co-operators had come from the military authorities.

In November 1946 Will Watkins attended a German Co-operative Conference in Dusseldorf, and soon afterwards became "Co-operative Adviser" to the British Military Government in Germany. In that capacity - and as a friend I should say - he helped the German Co-operators a great deal in rebuilding their movement.

I had returned to Germany in 1948 and had become a member of the Board of Directors of the Central Union of German consumer Co-operatives in Hamburg and thus I had again "working contact with Will Watkins. And I greatly enjoyed working together - even if in different fields - with my good old friend in my homeland on the same big task. Will was a great

help to the German Co-operators and they all regretted his departure from Germany in 1950 when he returned to England to become the director of the International Co-operative Alliance.

I still am in close contact with Will Watkins though we are both "onlookers" now.

LORD JACQUES of Portsea Island: formerly
Chairman of Co-operative Union

One of the happy memories of my stay at the Co-operative College as a student in 1924-5 was seeing Will Watkins at work. He was, and has remained a kind and unassuming man. He was a teacher who not only knew his subject, but taught it in such a way as to foster the interest of the pupils and encourage them to think for themselves.

When, five years later, I was about to return to the College as a tutor, I was looking forward to working with him, but alas shortly after my arrival he left for the International Co-operative Alliance. He left behind for the guidance of students the standard text book on the British Co-operative Movement of which he was a co-author.

He gradually became an outstanding figure in the International Co-operative Movement. He will be especially remembered in West Germany for his contribution to the rebuilding of the German Consumer Co-operative Movement immediately after the second world war. As Director of the I.C.A. (1951-63) his activities and his fame spread far beyond the established

Co-operative movement in Europe to the less well-developed parts of the world.

Those of us who have had the privilege of contact with him in his life's work salute this Grand Old Man of the International Co-operative Movement.

MALTE JONSSON: Head of Development Section, ICA

I am particularly happy to take this opportunity of sending Will my warmest greetings on his 90th birthday. It is an auspicious occasion. Besides congratulating him on such an achievement, one also wants to thank him for enriching the lives of others throughout his many years.

My own life was enriched when I first met Will in Greece in 1965/6. Of course, I had previously known of him as a distinguished Co-operator; also for his work in the British and German movements and in the ICA.

By the time we met, Will had retired as Director of the ICA and was working as the Senior Consultant to PASEGES, the Greek agricultural Co-operative apex organisation. He was advising them on a new education programme and on the development of their Co-operative College. I was then in charge of an OECD Project which was training 15 university graduates to work in PASEGES. Will was accompanied by his wife, Mary, and the three of us became firm friends.

I learned a great deal from Will's long Co-operative experience and came to admire

his clarity of thought and expression. While others will honour Will as a Co-operative historian, I should like to recall his ability to direct a meeting and to summarise its conclusions. Also his linguistic skills, particularly in French and German which no doubt reflect his dedication to internationalism. But I shall also remember our time together in Greece for more aesthetic reasons. Together with his wife, Mary, who also spoke excellent German, we explored a great deal of art and literature.

Our work in Greece was the start of a warm friendship. It is in that friendship, coloured by respect for a great Co-operator and a fine aesthete, that I send Will my heartiest greetings for his 90th birthday.

DR. R.L. MARSHALL: formerly Principal of the Co-operative College

It would be apt enough to quote on Will what has become a traditional Co-operative anthem - indeed he has not ceased from mental fight, nor has his sword slept in his hand. A fancy, however, takes me to another line from Blake:-

"Without contraries is no progression"

And the fancy is not at all wayward for one of the sources of his strength and one of the joys of knowing him is that he does accommodate within himself capacities which, if not contradictory, are not frequent allies.

For example, he comes, as the phrase runs, "from a Co-operative family" and a distinguished one. That might have made his Co-operative commitment a matter primarily of faith which would, for evidence, see or select only the supporting facts. As the lecturer said: "First I shall explain my theory on which my facts are based." With Will both faith and facts have always, it seemed to me, been fully respected. He has always applied stringent tests from history and reality to the convictions he professes. And in distant days, in controversies within Co-operative education when I was trying to argue the same case, I had always the greater comfort and assurance for feeling I was on his side!

Again he has been the outstanding figure of our times in the international Co-operative Movement and indeed shared some dangerous, un-English characteristics, contradicting in his interests and scholarship the generally safe proposition that the English are "the least a nation of pure philosophers". And yet "he is an Englishman", more particularly a West countryman, very agreeably in voice, in character, in practice. If as a philosopher he asks vigorously "What do we mean?" and explains cogently, he also as a pragmatist asks insistently "What shall we do about it?"

Yet again, with all the seriousness of that high commitment, intellectual vigour, power of exposition and insistence on action, he has still given his friends the joy of good company, a share in his range of cultivated pleasures and the charm of his unfailing good manners.

And so on in the catalogue of contraries. Such capacities have achieved outstanding

service in far and high places in his various appointments. It has occurred to me quite often - and this is one of the few judgements I have some qualification to make - that they belong to the job-specification for a distinguished Principal of a Co-operative College.

JOHN MORLEY: Chairman, Plunkett Foundation for Co-operative Studies

It makes a change from the usual run of festschrift contributions when the person in whose honour they are composed is celebrated not for his past achievements but for one confidently expected in the future. Others who have written about Will Watkins' successes in promoting improved Co-operation at an international level will have been understandably silent about the scene in the United Kingdom itself, where Co-operation between the various Co-operative sectors has been sporadic, at best, and more often non-existent. Now at last there are signs of a change, and some hope that the different interests will begin to become better acquainted. This is due, in large measure, to the circumstances of the time, but it also owes not a little to the insistence of one man, Will Watkins.

What has made his views command attention? They are respected for several reasons, but principally because they represent the knowledge and experience of a man generally regarded as the best informed about the Co-operative situation in this country and overseas of all the men and women of his generation. 'Knowledge is power', says an old maxim, and here we see its truth exemplified.

J.H. OLLMAN: formerly P.R.O. of the I.C.A. and
Editor of the Review of International Co-operation

"The International Co-operative Movement represents a great and inspiring idea of significance to the whole of mankind Thus Co-operation as a constructive expression of man's age-old instinct for mutual aid holds out hope. It offers men and women a clear, unbroken line of thought and action, leading from association with their nearest neighbours and fellow-workers stage by stage to mutually helpful relations with other men and women in the farthest corners of the world."

These words quoted from the Epilogue of W.P. Watkins' 'The International Co-operative Movement' have at all times been the key to his conception of the Movement. This concept inspired me, back in 1962, to join the Secretariat of the Alliance giving me the great privilege of working under him for the World Co-operative Movement. In every aspect of this Movement, W.P. Watkins enhanced all deliberations with his long and strongly-held convictions that created bonds of sympathy and loyalty between Co-operators transcending race, nationality, religion and political doctrine.

Perhaps his most outstanding achievement was his concept of launching the Co-operative Development Decade in response to a decision of the U.N. Economic and Social Council to assess the contribution that could be made by the World Co-operative Movement. In all international meetings of Co-operators, be it small sub-committees of the Executive or large gatherings in the World Congresses of the Alliance, it was

always his ability to guide, to direct, to compromise when necessary, but never to give in on principles of democracy which helped to retain Co-operative growth in the right way.

At all times throughout W.P. Watkins' Co-operative work, the plain statement of Jawaharlal Nehru that Co-operation was a movement which should grow from below upwards, was his driving force and message to us working alongside him and became the legacy that inspired me for over two decades to follow my Co-operative mentor in my work for the Alliance.

Thank you W.P.W. for World Co-operation and for your guidance past and present.
Happy Birthday, Will!

LAURIE PAVITT: Labour/Co-operative Member of Parliament

Ageless! Yet truly a man of his age. Nearly 50 years ago when our friendship commenced the Co-operative establishment was increasingly out of step with both Co-operative Youth and Woodcraft Folk. There was never a generation gap between us and Will Watkins. The same mature and rather incisive consideration of Co-operative matters was present then. It was present just a few weeks ago when he analysed Co-operative developments under Mitterand in France and changes in Barcelona.

Every month I send him the Catalan Co-op News. "Can you read Catalan, Will?", I asked. "Enough", he replied, "when you know

French, Italian and Spanish and with my original learning of Latin I have enough to be able to assess the Co-operative law now being passed in Barcelona".

At his four-score years and ten he shows his youthfulness in his retention of idealism. It was never blind faith. Always faith reinforced by knowledge which for me has always contained that much rarer human characteristic - wisdom. A Co-operator of all seasons, serving in differing sectors of our Movement at home and abroad.

His first love was Co-operative education. He never forgot his first love.

He not only shared his knowledge but he shared people. The two who immediately come to my mind are Lewis Mumford, the American philosopher and Herman Stolpe of Sweden. Lewis Mumford? Will brought him to meet our "ginger group" with the consequence that many of us became disciples and Mumford influenced education within the BFYC. Stolpe had established folk education at the grass roots through an entirely new technique. As Secretary to the BFYC we adopted this and I wrote three guides under the title of "Talking to Some Purpose". One acknowledgement was "Thank you to W.P. Watkins for once again pointing out the right road and plotting out the journeys".

Forty years later he is still pointing out the right road and helping us to plot out the journeys.

BRIAN ROSE: works with Housing Co-operatives,
formerly tutor at the Co-operative College

Although, as a particularly youthful and callow student, I had been aware of Hall and Watkins, the textbook that served a generation of students, Arnold Bonner's book seemed to have superseded it. It was only when, some years later, that I made my own small revision of Arnold's book that I fully appreciated the scholarship that had gone into the original textbook on which Arnold had built.

By then, of course, I had also become aware that Will Watkins was more than just half of a historical double act. He was, and is, a considerable scholar in his own right with a substantial output of work. Whoever it was who said that most of us in the field of scholarship are pygmies standing on the shoulders of giants could well have had Will in mind as one of the giants of Co-operative scholarship.

But, in the best Co-operative tradition, Will is not only a scholar. His work in Germany after the war and his contribution to the International Co-operative Alliance are well known. The report of the ICA Commission on Co-operative Principles which bears much of his stamp, was a fitting pinnacle of his career there.

Yet, hard though it is to believe, that was almost twenty years ago and Will shows little sign of letting up. Indeed, it is since then and, appropriately enough, largely

through the Society that I have come to know Will personally. The experience has been an invaluable one. His continuing concern with the motivation and philosophy of Co-operative action as well as its mechanics, his unrivalled knowledge of Co-operation throughout the world and his keen interest in the renaissance of Co-operative ideas and practice in contemporary Britain serves as an inspiration to many of us.

MARY STOTT: journalist (including work with Co-operative Press and the Guardian), author and very active in women's movement.

It must be about 50 years since I first met Will Watkins, and perhaps as much as 25 years since I was last in his company. Our paths have not crossed since I finally left the Co-operative Press, and the editorship of "Woman's Outlook" in 1957. But I shall always remember him as one of the outstanding friends of my younger days - along with Edward Topham, editor of the Co-operative Union's publications department and Maude Cunningham, a Co-operative College lecturer who became my closest friend and who, I think, introduced me to Will. The international aspect of the Co-operative Movement always interested me most of all, and the pre-war days when the refugees from the Nazis were coming among us were stirring.

It all seems very long ago, but Will has never passed out of my life, for he is a 'Guardian' reader, and whenever I wrote on some Co-operative theme, he sent me his comments,

which were always a delight. One letter I particularly treasure, for it recalled his first sight of Margaret Llewelyn Davies "from the visitors' seats in the Newport Co-operative Congress of 1908. I can picture her now on the platform rising from among the fraternal delegates, 'divinely tall and most divinely fair'".

In this same letter Will recalled that his aunt, a teacher, taught him in a class on Co-operation when he was 12. This aunt became the Co-operative Union's examiner for junior courses, founded a Guild branch in Plymouth and contributed to the Guild's book on "Maternity".

What a background, and what a memory! Will's letters are so good that I wish he would compile a book. What a lot he could tell us, and what a good read it would be.

D. LLOYD WILKINSON: Chief Executive Officer,
Co-operative Union

In conveying 90th birthday greetings to Will Watkins one immediately thinks of him as the international Co-operator par excellence - his name is synonymous with that of the International Co-operative Alliance. But we in the Co-operative Union are also justified in thinking of him with pride and affection as one of our "ain folk" - a British Co-operator who has in one form or another given long and valuable service to the Co-operative Movement of his homeland.

It should not be forgotten, for example, that before he became the distinguished professional head of the ICA he was a prominent

educationist in the service of the Co-operative Union and a pioneer teacher at the fledgling Co-operative College in Holyoake House. He is joint author of that long established classic "Co-operation" which within its period gives a masterly account of the history of the British Co-operative Movement and is still required reading for the serious student of Co-operative history.

It has been the privilege of the Co-operative Union to act as Will Watkins' publisher on a number of occasions, including the publication of "The International Co-operative Movement" which won much critical esteem for its penetrating survey of the growth, structure and future possibilities of Co-operation throughout the world.

Will Watkins is indeed the Co-operative Movement's "Renaissance man" - he is the very antithesis of the narrow specialist of exclusive experience. Author, lecturer, journalist, diplomatist, administrator, librarian, historian, economist, linguist - Will has shone at all of these things. Even now he has one or two major books up his sleeve which the Co-operative Union looks forward to publishing.

In a sense, the fact that Will is 90 is quite irrelevant. His extraordinary vitality, freshness of outlook, keen interest in the future and readiness to use his immense wisdom and experience in the continued service of Co-operation show a youthfulness of spirit which make the passing years seem relatively unimportant. Above all Will Watkins is a genial, warm-hearted man, one of the "people who care" -- and long may he remain so.