

NEWSLETTER

by

PETER CLARKE

The European Commission has now turned its attention to Co-operatives as prime examples of Local Employment Initiatives (LEIs). LEIs take a number of legal forms, including worker Co-operatives and are sparked off by a variety of situations. This approach was identified in the United Kingdom by the Centre for Employment Initiatives and expounded in the report (1981) "Whose Business is Business" (Published by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 98 Portland Place, London W1N 4ET).

A Survey of LEIs in the Community

Despite rejection of this report by the Manpower Services Commission, the European Commission showed interest and financed a similar report covering every country of the European Community. A series of local consultations were organised with those active in local initiatives. Each organisation was given the opportunity to explain its work and indicate the obstacles it had encountered. Twenty-two consultations occurred and over 1200 people took part directly. In the United Kingdom consultations were held in Newcastle upon Tyne, Glasgow, Belfast, the London Borough of Brent, Bangor and Cwmbran. The European Commission will be publishing a report on the consultations during 1984. (Enquiries to Directorate General V/A/1, Commission of the European Communities, Rue de la Loi 200, B1049 Brussels, Belgium.)

The consultations showed that local advisory support structure assisting local initiatives from the earliest stages, through start-up, and during their subsequent stages of development was of vital importance to their success. In Britain such a role is often played by local CDAs as well as local enterprise trusts and similar bodies: in France much the same role is played by the Butiques de Gestion, which led in many areas to a rapid growth in worker Co-operatives.

The hope of the Centre for Employment Initiatives that its study will be influential in developing programmes for small enterprises and local initiatives in the fight against unemployment is borne out by a communication from the Commission to the Council of the European Community ("Community Action to Combat Unemployment. Contribution of local employment initiatives" (COM (83) 662 final). This seeks to encourage Community Governments to provide a framework which takes account of the special requirements of LEIs and thereby allows them to flourish.

The Community is already providing help through the Social Fund to existing agencies involved in LEIs, but the Commission proposes to intro-

duce some specific measures directed at small enterprises, particularly in connection with experimental training methods and activities designed to meet the needs of young people and women. It also anticipates help from the non-quota section of the European Regional Fund and will be examining possibilities of using global loans from the European Investment Bank and the European Coal and Steel Community — already adapted to the needs of small and medium sized enterprises — for the comparatively minute financial needs of LEIs.

Publications from Local CDA's —

A number of publications from local Co-operative Development Agencies have reached me.

At least two local CDAs are now producing regular newspapers. From Newham, in East London has come Newham Co-op News. It is a more or less monthly news sheet, all the better for being eclectic. Greater Manchester CDA has also launched a newspaper "COG". It will be produced every other month to publicise the Agency and Co-ops in Greater Manchester. It is being distributed widely among local CDAs and Co-ops and is also sent to other business development agencies and local politicians. (Newham CDA, 55 West Ham Lane, Stratford, London E15 and Greater Manchester CDA, Holyoake House, Hanover Street, Manchester M60 0AS.)

Manchester CDA have also produced "Use Your Local Co-operative. Directory of Co-operatives in Greater Manchester". It is in the innovative and informative image of London ICOMs' successful publication. Two further editions are being prepared: an interim edition which will simply be an amended version of the first edition and a completely new edition with a new format. Each Co-op will get a page to advertise the full range of its goods and services. This will be available by Easter 1984.

Well produced and attractive annual reports have been published by Brent CDA (for 1982/1983) and Hackney Co-operative Development (for 1983). (Hackney Co-operative Development, 16 Dalston Lane, London, E8 3AZ and Brent CDA, 192 High Road, Willesden, London NW10, price £1.25.)

— And a Report on Brent CDA

Brent CDA reports that they have taken the unusual, but welcome, step of commissioning independent research into their progress and performance. The report by the School of Advanced Urban Studies at Bristol University called for the CDA to take a broader approach to Co-operation. "Some client groups felt that they wanted to develop their own ideas of how to achieve Co-operative working, and thus it was important to apply Co-operative principles in a way which respects their particular problems and views."

Secondly, the review emphasised the need for the CDA to work with the local authority, which was simultaneously developing an employment

and economic strategy, the local enterprise board, the new Brent Business Venture Scheme, and the Local Economy Resource Unit, run by the Trades Council.

Thirdly the review showed that more work was required in a number of areas especially in Co-operative education. Other areas included Co-operatives and trade unions, the involvement of women in Co-ops, the special problems of helping unemployed young people to play a part in new Co-operative enterprises, and additional finance and accounting advice for existing Co-operatives.

The Social Economy and Social Ownership

The visit to London in November 1983 of the French Interministerial Delegation of the Social Economy focussed attention on the concept of the Social Economy and its relevance in the United Kingdom.

Upon coming to power in June, 1981 the Socialist administration in France introduced the concept that the national economy consisted of a Governmental Sector, a Private Enterprise Sector and a Sector of the Social Economy. The sector of the Social Economy comprises economic organisations created by voluntary association, inspired by Co-operative principles and mutual aid rather than profit. It includes the Co-operatives and mutual benefit societies.

On 25th November, 1981 an Interministerial Delegation of the Social Economy was set up as a department in the Prime Minister's office. Headed by a Delegate, it is at the disposal of the Minister of Planning and the Chairman of the Supreme Council of Co-operation. The Delegation's task is to promote Co-operative, mutual and other enterprises based on free association. Its work reinforces that of the Supreme Council of Co-operation. The Supreme Council was established by the French Government in 1959 for consultation and advice on Co-operative affairs; it consists of equal numbers of Government officials representing ministries directly concerned with Co-operatives, and Co-operators representing the several Co-operative federations.

This is a powerful example to us since the French recognise that the popular desire for freedom, of enterprises as well as from the State, can only be released by group action, group initiatives, and Co-operative enterprise.

Further details are available in a new pamphlet published by the Co-operative Party: "The Social Economy and Social Ownership" by W.P. Watkins — Price 20p plus 17p postage from 158 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9UB. Discount on bulk orders.

Agricultural Co-operatives — Food From Britain

Nearly a year has elapsed since the Central Council of Agricultural and Horticultural Co-operation was transformed into the Co-operative De-

velopment Division of Food From Britain. Judging from the first edition of its Journal "Farming Business", it has now established itself on a firm footing.

The Co-operative Development Division, under its Director, Bill Bailey, is divided into four departments: there are 10 Regional Officers and a Business Development Executive; the finance department has four financial advisors and three grant officers co-ordinated by the Head of Financial Advice and Grants; and there are four planning project staff and, finally, the Secretary of the Division.

This impressive set-up is a model for other Co-operative sectors. The lessons are fairly clear. First, the division is highly motivated with a single aim: the improvement of agricultural and horticultural marketing in the Co-operative sector. Agricultural Co-operatives are regarded as high-powered businesses, and the simple objective of the Co-operative Development Division is to help them with their business. Secondly, this approach is supported up to the hilt by the agricultural sector. Thirdly, it also has complete support on both sides of the House of Commons. Moreover, the Government sees the agricultural Co-operative sector as an integral and vital part of its overall agricultural policy. Although the Minister of State at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, John McGregor MP, cautioned in October 1983 that spending on agricultural Co-operatives could not be isolated from the Government's general limitations on public spending, so far this seems only to have expressed itself in a slow-down in the growth of money available as grants for agriculture and horticultural Co-operatives.

Worker Co-operatives should seek to emulate this performance.

Co-operative Development Division of Food From Britain can be contacted at Market Towers, New Covent Garden Market, London SW8 5NQ. Telephone: 01-720 2144.

Directory of Agricultural, Horticultural and Fisheries Co-operatives 1983

The Plunkett Foundation for Co-operative Studies has now published the 1983 edition of this Directory. It contains details of over 760 agricultural, horticultural and fishery Co-operatives registered in the U.K. Each entry contains the following information:

- Name, address and telephone of Co-operative
- Telex number (where applicable)
- Name of Chairman, Chief Executive and Secretary
- Registration Number
- Type of Activity, and Turnover
- Number of Members
- Name of Marketing Agent (where relevant)

This is an invaluable work of reference for all concerned with agricultural Co-operatives whether in a commercial or in any other capacity.

The Directory also includes information about agricultural marketing boards and associations of bodies engaged in the organisation, co-ordination, promotion and development of Co-operation in agriculture and horticulture. A special section is devoted to Co-operative representation in the EEC which contains the names of those serving on the various COGECA Committees. Federal bodies and their member Co-operatives are included, as are Fisheries and Cottage Industries, and an index provides a geographical dimension by allocating Co-operatives to their respective countries.

Cost £6.00 or by post £6.30 — from Plunkett Foundation for Co-operative Studies, 31 St. Giles, Oxford OX1 3LF, England.

Second Open Conference — S.C.S. in Ireland

Our sister society, the Society for Co-operative Studies in Ireland is holding its second open conference and third Annual General Meeting on 12/13th April 1984 at An Grianan, Adult Education College of the Irish Country Women's Association, Termonfechin, County Louth (Nr Drogheda) Irish Republic. The cost looks reasonable — IR £30 inclusive of accommodation and meals and the organiser to be contacted is Mr. James Creed, Director, An Grianan.

The programme includes these papers:

The Development of Non-Profit Housing Sector in Germany with special reference to Co-operative Housing.

Dairy Co-operatives and the Prosperity of the Small Irish Farmer

Some Co-operative Education and Training Courses in Ireland — What is on Offer and What is Required.

Connolly, Larkin and the Co-operative Commonwealth, 1909-1923

European Trade Union Attitudes to Industrial and Service Co-operatives

Industrial and Service Co-operatives in France — Their Growth and the Support System Available to Them.

Popular Perspectives on Community Development Co-operatives: Findings from Surveys in Galway and Kerry.

Credit Union Affiliation and Growth in Limavady and Dungiven.

We hope to have the chance of including at least a short report on the Conference in the next Bulletin.

"Industrial" or "Workers" or "New"?

It is Richard Hoggart who holds that a society to develop, must have a sufficiently sophisticated and adept language in order to describe new developments or it is held back.

I have often been struck by the variety of terms used to describe the mass of new Co-ops in the industrial, commercial and service sectors which have registered since 1976. The term "Worker Co-ops" is pretty universal and appropriately used when this applies to Co-ops where only workers are members and only members are workers. The problem is, of course, that not all of these newly registered Co-ops can be so described. For example, how about Co-ops using CDA 1982 Model Rules, — the updated Co-operative Productive Federation Rules? How do we deal with community Co-operatives, neighbourhood Co-operatives, and Instant Muscle Co-operatives?

The Co-operative Union has adopted the term "new and emerging Co-ops". This is sufficiently general to be descriptive for the time being, but what happens later when these "new" Co-ops have been around for some time? The 1978/1981 CDA tried to introduce the term "industrial Co-ops" but as Will Pollard rightly points out, many new Co-ops are not devoted to industry i.e. manufacturing, but are in the service or commercial sectors. The term "industrial" is unsatisfactory for another reason. Until quite recently retail societies were universally referred to as "industrial societies" — witness, for example, Margaret Digby's 1982 book "Producers and Consumers". Indeed, some societies still retain the term "industrial" in their title — Leeds and Radstock spring immediately to mind, but there are many others. Chappenden explains that the term "Industrial and Provident Society" was arrived at because societies had to be "industrial" in making their profits and "provident" as to their distribution so as to assure themselves a future. These splendid sentiments will, I hope, ensure that the term is retained in future legislation, since they are a lesson to all Co-operators, especially today!

If we are to communicate our Co-operative ideals to those outside the Movement, whom we hope to convert to the ways of Co-operation, we really must agree upon a set of terms which are both sufficiently descriptive and command universal support within the Movement. This plea is made all the more poignant by the recollection that many of the reservations within the retail Co-operative Movement about the "Tony Benn Co-operatives" were based upon their use of the term "Co-operative", to describe their constitution. Indeed, much the same feelings lay behind the Co-operative Union's reservation about the Labour Party's more aggressive conversion policy in rescue situations.

Co-operative Memorabilia

No one who has visited Holyoake House and had time to leave the corridors of power and wander up to the more tranquil corridor next to the library can fail to be impressed by Roy Garratt's splendid collection of early Co-op memorabilia. Each piece has a story to tell; each yields insights into the Co-operative Societies of the day and each provides abundant testimony of style and taste of Co-operative design of the day. Many

a museum or art gallery has started an exhibition with less abundance! Pondering on this theme, I came to the startling realisation that the creation of Co-operative memorabilia is still going on. Indeed it seems to be an essential element of the Co-operative condition! With little effort I was able to collect together a number of items that had been given to me:

The Co-operative Women's Guild Centenary Ash Tray;
A Biro inscribed "First Co-operative Finance Ltd";
Another Biro from the Netherlands Rabobank;
A Nuneaton Co-op Tie;
A Radstock Co-op Calender.

Add an array of posters I have been able to accumulate, promoting new Co-ops, from Hackney Co-op Development, London ICOM, the Co-op Fair, Newcastle upon Tyne City Council, Gwent Common Ownership Council, the London Borough of Haringey, Beechwood College and the Scottish Council for Social Services.

These items represent just the tip of the iceberg especially if we are flexible about the definition of the term "memorabilia". The CWS produces car stickers and calender cards. I have seen Co-op key rings (indeed, a splendid Japanese example was displayed at the S.C.S. Annual Conference), mugs, calling cards, button badges, and so on. Barrie Cooper, of the CDA — and now of the Wales Co-operative Development and Training Centre — has a large collection of calling cards. Indeed we could even include Co-op society notepaper and with some affection, Society embossed milk bottles. Maybe one day the latter will be as scarce as Society milk tokens!

Is it not time for a serious attempt to be made to collect and display these modern memorabilia? Since much of it is far more ephemeral and less durable than its predecessors, there is clearly no time to be lost. Are retail Societies alone in churning it out or is this trait also endemic amongst new Co-ops? If the memorabilia produced by new Co-ops display more flair than that produced by retail Co-ops, is there not a case for closer co-operation in this area?

As a start, I will have to report on items which members of the Society bring to my attention.

Recent Reading

"The Co-operative Way. Worker Co-ops in France, Spain and Eastern Europe" is a collection of essays by Antoine Antoni, and Alastair Campbell with a foreword by Jenny Thornley.

Antoine Antoni, who has forty years' experience of Co-operatives in France, gives practical advice on self-management within Co-ops. He emphasises the need for Co-ops to reconcile economic and social objectives if they are to compete successfully in a capitalist market.

Alastair Campbell, one of the earliest researchers to document the famous Mondragon Co-ops in the Basque region of northern Spain, describes the integrated network of social, educational and business organisations there which has proved strong enough to survive the economic recession afflicting Western capitalism. In a second paper, he outlines the features of the less well-known worker Co-ops which exist in large numbers in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria.

In a foreword, Jenny Thornley warns against attempts to translate Co-op practices wholesale without regard to the different history and culture of the workers involved. A Co-operative system must emerge from the drive and energy of the people who need it rather than from the theoretical visions of politicians.

Published by ICOM Co Publications c/o Corner House Bookshop, 14 Endell Street, London WC2. Price £3.25.

Stewart Henry who has previously published on self-help health organisations is responsible for a new book "Private Justice" which looks at discipline in industry and shows how private justice, informal social constraints, is integrally bound up with the formal law. It is a timely examination of a form of social control that exists ostensibly outside the formal legal system but upon which it crucially depends. The book explores this sensitive area in organisations ranging from private capitalistic companies to worker Co-operatives.

The book is available from Routledge & Kegan Paul, price £6.95.

Note of the Author

PETER CLARKE is Research Officer of the Co-operative Party. His published work includes studies of Government promotion of new Co-operatives, of closer relations between the retail Co-operative Movement, the agricultural Movement and the new Movements and of the Food Settlement Association, and a bibliography of recent literature on new Co-operatives.