

## The Society for Co-operative Studies

The Society for Co-operative Studies has been formed. It will be a systematic link between the Co-operative Movement and the universities and colleges for the exchange of information and experience on Co-operative studies and research. This link will help in identifying and providing for further needs in study and research. Individuals and organisations interested in these developments may become members of this new Society, which is established in response to two developments: the quickening interest of universities and colleges in Co-operative studies and research and equally, the desire of the Co-operative Movement to draw to itself still more the interest and help of such agencies.

### ITS FORMATION

An inaugural meeting held on 3rd and 4th April, 1967 at the Co-operative College, Stanford Hall, was attended by over 60 participants from universities and colleges, the trades union movement and Co-operative organisations, local, sectional and national. Officers were elected and the scope of the Society was discussed. Then the participants divided into regional groups to clarify the existing extent of co-operative studies and research within their areas and to suggest immediate plans for local organisation and meetings, as well as recommendations for future development. The Society which will work in close association with the educational agencies of the Co-operative Movement, will rely very strongly on activities in the regions.

### THE BULLETIN

During the general discussion it was pointed out that there was a need for a bulletin giving information on the research and studies being undertaken. *The Bulletin* seeks to meet this need and will provide future opportunities for such exchanges. Meanwhile this present issue presents the history of the Society for the benefit of intending members or as a reminder for those who shared in its formation.

### THE BEGINNING

The initial general interest was in the establishment of a Society for Co-operative Studies which would concern itself, initially at least, exclusively with the immediate and long-term problems confronting the Co-operative Movement in Britain, and with the promotion of studies which might help Co-operative bodies to achieve satisfactory solutions to these problems.

The idea was discussed at a short conference of university and college representatives and some leading co-operators at Stanford Hall in May. It was decided to look more deeply into the proposal at a more representative meeting and this was held in September, when Dr. Wilson and Mr. R. L. Marshall, the Co-operative Union's Chief Education Officer, were instructed to draft a constitution with the aid of a panel. This was done and the draft was presented at the inaugural meeting on the 3rd and 4th April, 1967. After discussion and amendment the constitution was accepted in the form in which it now appears at the end of this *Bulletin*.

## THE INAUGURAL MEETING

The plenary discussion during the April meeting emphasised the valuable contribution that the Society could make in forming a bridge between Co-operative business organisation and the university, in developing the provision by universities for professional and lay management, and in encouraging greater attention to Co-operation within university syllabuses and research.

Specific areas for attention were suggested:

a general survey and definition of the Movement's role in present conditions;

housing;

the co-operative press;

the application of co-operative methods to state industries;

attention to co-operative techniques and principles in the studies in community development undertaken by overseas students in Britain, for example, at the Universities of London and Manchester.

There were several references to the fact that research could only be co-ordinated and directed by those who paid; this was accepted and a suggestion was made that societies might be willing to contribute money to sustain a specialist project each year. A survey of British co-operative education was being undertaken by the International Forum on Co-operative Research and information from this survey might be of service.

The session concluded with Dr. Wilson identifying four primary needs for research.

- (i) Recruitment, selection and training of managers which would be a follow-up to the Wells Report and would incorporate attention to the Co-operative Union Working Party Report on Staff Education.
- (ii) Attention to the structural and financial reorganisation of the Movement.
- (iii) Attention to power in Co-operative Societies.
- (iv) Research on the use of international comparisons of Co-operative performance and of inter-firm comparisons within the United Kingdom.

## MEETINGS OF REGIONAL GROUPS

The participants met in six groups: the Metropolitan area, the South, South-West and West; Scotland; the North; the North-East; the North-West; and the Midlands. Their tasks were:

- (a) To make suggestions for joint conveners for each region\* whose task, in association with their Secretary, the Sectional Education Officer, would be to launch the Society regionally.
- (b) To suggest a suitable meeting place for inaugural and other meetings and those organisations and persons with whom contact should be established in advance of the inaugural meeting.
- (c) To review existing plans for College/university courses and to what extent they could be supplemented, and to review existing and desirable research projects.
- (d) To say whether the region would like to organise the annual general meeting in 1968 or 1969.

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\*Regional addresses are given on page 15.

## INTO ACTION

Following their discussions the groups reported back. As a result, first, an approach has been made to two *acting* joint conveners, one from the "academic" side and one from the "co-operative" side, to be responsible for each of the inaugural meetings to be held at regional level. Over three hundred invitations have been sent covering all University and Extra-Mural Departments, all Technical Colleges with Co-operative Union studies and other individuals and organisations. This effort is being supplemented by sectional approaches; in addition, a general invitation has been extended to all Co-operative Societies and in particular their Education Departments. Second, the details of existing research and plans for 1967/68 college/university courses given in the groups' reports form the basis of the summary on pages 8 to 10.

## AN END AND A BEGINNING

The inaugural meeting at Stanford Hall was concluded with Professor S. Pollard, one of the three newly elected Presidents, in the chair. In thanking everyone for their attendance and contribution, he expressed the hope that we could look forward to something positive and tangible at future meetings.