

**A CENTURY OF  
CO-OPERATION  
By G. D. H. COLE**

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Professor Cole has also written the following books dealing with working-class and Co-operative history:

*Life of Robert Owen.* (Macmillan.)

*A Short History of the British Working-class Movement.*  
(Allen & Unwin.)

*The Common People, 1746-1938.* With R. W. Postgate.  
(Methuen.)

*British Working-class Politics, 1832-1914.* (Routledge.)

*Life of William Cobbett.* (Collins.)

*Persons and Periods.* (Macmillan.)

*Chartist Portraits.* (Macmillan.)

*Attempts at General Union, 1829-1834.* (International Institute  
of Social History, Amsterdam.)

*James Keir Hardie.* (Fabian Biographical Series.)

*Richard Carlile.* (Fabian Biographical Series.)

*John Burns.* (Fabian Biographical Series.)

*William Cobbett.* (Fabian Biographical Series.)

*Socialism in Evolution.* (Penguin Books.)

He has also edited:

*A New View of Society, and other Writings.* By Robert Owen.  
(Everyman's Library.)

*Marx's Capital, Vol. I.* (Everyman's Library.)

*Paine's Rights of Man.* (Thinker's Library.)

*Hodgskin's Labour Defended.* (Workers' Library.)

*Cobbett's Rural Rides.* (Peter Davies.)

## PREFACE

**T**HIS centenary history of British Co-operation has been written at the request of the Co-operative Union, and forms a part of the Movement's tribute to the Rochdale Pioneers. It has had to be written under difficulties; and I could not have written it at all had I not collected much of the material needed for it over a long period of years before the war. For the collection of local information I have had to rely mainly on correspondence, though I was able to pay a special visit to Rochdale and to extract from the records of the Pioneers' Society a good deal of information which had not been used, or had been misinterpreted, by previous historians. I wish to thank the numerous officers of local Societies who have helped me with records and facts that I needed. I wish it had been possible to include much more than limits of space allowed me to include about the history of particular Societies: those who furnished me with data that I have not been able to reproduce can rest assured that I found them of the greatest help in arriving at a realistic picture of the history of Co-operation in its successive stages of growth.

My thanks are due in very special measure to Miss M. Goulding, of the Co-operative College, who has helped me at every stage of the writing, finding material for me, checking facts, offering useful comments, of which I have taken frequent advantage, and, in the final stages, working with me in correcting the proofs and preparing the index. I also wish to express my great indebtedness to Mrs. R. V. Broadley, of Nuffield College, Oxford, who has given me unstinted help with the task of production from first to last. Their aid has been invaluable. I have also to thank cordially my old friend, Mr. A. Bonner, of the Co-operative College, for help in working on the records of the Pioneers' Society; Mr. J. A. Hough, of the Co-operative Union, for checking my statistics of contemporary Co-operation, and for making useful suggestions; Mr. R. Southern, Legal Department of the Co-operative Union; Mr. J. Bailey, of the Co-operative Party; Miss G. F. Polley, of the International Co-operative Alliance; Mr. J. Hallsworth, of the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers; Mr. J. J. Worley, of the Co-operative Productive Federation; Mr. Percy Redfern, the historian of the C.W.S., from whose works I have borrowed freely; Mr. J. L. Willson, of the Co-operative Youth Movement; and Mr. E. Topham,

who has been responsible, on behalf of the Co-operative Union, for arranging for the printing and publication under the considerable difficulties of war-time production, aggravated by a manuscript considerably longer than he bargained for at first. Another old friend whom I should have delighted to thank has gone from among us while this book was being written. Miss Margaret Llewelyn Davies placed at my disposal her personal records of the Women's Co-operative Guild, and I must place on record my deep sense of indebtedness to her, not only for this help, but also for inspiration in the study of the Co-operative Movement over many years. Her close friend and collaborator, Miss Lilian Harris, is fortunately still within reach of my thanks, which I offer to her gratefully as the survivor of a great partnership.

As there will be, I hope, an opportunity later on of revising my book, may I say that I shall greatly value intimation of any slips of which I have been guilty, or further information particularly about the largely unwritten local history of the Movement in its early days.

G. D. H. COLE.

OXFORD,  
*November, 1944.*

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