

# CO-OPERATIVE STORE-KEEPING

EIGHTY YEARS OF CONSTRUCTIVE REVOLUTION

BY SYDNEY R. ELLIOTT

*Introduction by*

MARGARET LLEWELYN DAVIES



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## PREFACE

GREAT BRITAIN has played no small part in the creation of the world-wide Co-operative system of industry controlled by the people for the people, and it is most valuable that a fresh record and restatement of the achievements of British Co-operation, its difficulties and its lines of development, should be brought before the public in so interesting a manner by Mr Elliott.

No doubt some of the views expressed will arouse differences of opinion, but there can be no question that Industrial Co-operation is now showing itself to be what its originators intended it should be—one of the greatest pacific revolutions that the world has seen. Through Co-operation the peoples of the world have found a way by which they are gradually breaking down monopolies and vested interests, and removing inequalities of income and class distinctions. Without bloodshed or chaos, the area of capitalist operations has been invaded, and inroads have been made into the capitalist citadel of finance.

For at the same time that Co-operators were selling their groceries over the counter, they invented their own scheme of finance which has enabled them to find the millions needed for their great manufacturing and commercial undertakings, without becoming enmeshed in the capitalist web. The women's marketing basket carries the magical dividend on purchase, which automatically creates the funds for common use. These have led up to the Co-operative Wholesale Bank, which enables both the individual workers and their movements to invest their money in such a way that it may be used for their own emancipation and not for the benefit of the system they are fighting.

It would be of immediate advantage to the Labour Movement to accelerate the progress of Co-operation in every way. Co-operation can advance regardless of political reverses. It provides an industrial and trading structure for the whole Labour Movement. It checks the power of Trusts to raise prices. It gives a permanent economic backing to Labour, and in times of industrial warfare, its valuable commissariat work could be greatly increased if all the workers were within its ranks. Its completely democratic constitution enables its members to make what modifications and developments they desire; and nowhere can the door be opened more effectively to the joint partnership of workers and consumers.

There are signs that a great forward movement may be at hand. Even in this time of political reaction, Co-operation is working steadily towards the socialisation of industry. Under a Labour Government which made the fullest use of the experience and machinery of the Co-operative Movement and provided it with credits for extending its national and international trade, no more solid, effective and peaceful method of reaching their common goal could be found. To give Government support to the Co-operative Movement would not mean the undue favouring of a special interest. For Co-operation is based on the one universal interest, that of the consumer, and the needs of consumers can only be satisfied if the resources of the world and the discoveries of science are used for the benefit of all.

MARGARET LLEWELYN DAVIES.

*September 1925.*

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

**I**N a little book dealing with so large a subject, a writer cannot hope to do more than sketch briefly the history of the Co-operative Movement, describe its chief problems, and indicate its most needed developments.

I have not aimed at doing more in this book. In writing it I have been aided considerably by the expert advice and criticism of Miss Lillian Harris and Mr William Gallacher (Director, Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society), and in many other ways by Miss Jenny R. Johnston (Glasgow), Mr George A. Finlow (Rochdale), and my Father and Mother. To all of them—thank you!

S. R. E.

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