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**Consumers'  
Co-operative Societies**

# Consumers' Co-operative Societies

BY

**CHARLES GIDE**

*(Professor of Political Economy in the Faculty of Laws,  
University of Paris)*

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Translated from the French by  
The Staff of the Co-operative Reference Library, Dublin.

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## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

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This translation of Professor Charles Gide's "*Les Sociétés Coopératives de consommation*" gives the English-speaking reader his first opportunity of reading what has been regarded on the Continent as the standard work on consumers' co-operation and what undoubtedly is the most careful study of the subject made by a distinguished political economist.

Professor Gide's reputation as an economist and as a co-operator is so well known that it is not necessary to enlarge upon it. He has written many books on economics and on co-operation which are standard works in his own country, and all of his works have appeared in many editions and have been translated into other languages. His principal works besides the present one are: "*La Coopération*" (*Conférences de Propagande*), "*Les Institutions de Progrès Social*," "*Histoire de Doctrines économiques depuis les Physiocrates jusqu'à nos jours*" (in collaboration with M. Rist), "*Les Principes d'Économie Politique*," which has been translated into 14 languages, and "*Des Institutions en vue de l'abolition du salariat*." The present work has already been translated into Dutch, Polish, and Portuguese, and Czech, while Ukrainian and Spanish editions are in preparation.

Professor Gide undoubtedly ranks among the great leaders of co-operative thought in the world, and his book on "Consumers' Co-operative Societies" should be a source of information to all those co-operators who take a real interest in the working of their movement.

This translation is a joint work ; part of it has been made by Miss F. E. Marks, my Assistant Librarian, and part I have written myself ; but we have both gone through the whole translation, so that it is really impossible to say that one or other of us is directly responsible for any individual part. Professor Gide himself went to a great deal of trouble to bring this edition up to date. He revised it from beginning to end and made several lengthy additions. It was unfortunately impossible to publish the book when the translation was finished (November, 1919), and he again went through it in November, 1920, and again brought it up to date.

In the French edition there are 17 chapters ; Chapters 13 and 14 are concerned respectively with the legal position of consumers' societies, and the fiscal laws and consumers' societies, and were written for the benefit of French co-operators. Professor Gide himself suggested that in the English translation these two chapters should be very much altered and made into one, and this has been done in Chapter 13, which is called "The Relations between Co-operative Societies and the State." Professor Gide has omitted a large portion

of the two chapters, which deal with purely French problems, and the whole subject has been treated in a more general way than in the French edition. Professor Gide has also written a special preface for the translation. Otherwise, this edition is unaltered.

Except in one or two small instances, we have not given any expression of our personal views, even where they do not wholly coincide with those of Professor Gide; and in the one or two instances where we have expressed views of our own, we have made it clear that they are translator's and not author's notes. Professor Hall has also added a few notes under the heading "Editor's notes." One chapter in which we are inclined occasionally to take issue with Professor Gide is Chapter 14, second section: "The Conflict between Consumers' and Producers' Co-operation," but we did not think it right to intrude our own views on the reader, except in the one or two instances where we considered that a short explanatory note would help to explain some point which might present a difficulty to English-speaking readers who are not familiar with French conditions.

We have to express our gratitude to Professor Gide for the very great help he has given us all through the work of translating his book, and to Mr. Lionel Smith-Gordon, whom we consulted from time to time.



The appearance of this book is due to a joint arrangement made between the Co-operative Union, The Labour Research Department, and the Co-operative Reference Library; but the whole work of translation has been done by the staff of the last-mentioned body.

DIARMID COFFEY,

*Librarian,*

*The Co-operative Reference Library,*

*December, 1920.*

*Dublin.*



## AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

We cannot expect to teach many new ideas to our English co-operative comrades, because it is from them that we have received almost everything. Still, it may happen that even ideas which are familiar to us appear in a more expressive and suggestive form when they return from a voyage abroad.

Moreover, if we wish really to reconstruct an international co-operative alliance in that Europe which has been so profoundly divided by the war, co-operators in the different countries must learn to know each other better, and they can only do this through translation, since the curse of the Tower of Babel still weighs on us and the era of an international language—even if it were only Esperanto—is still distant.

We have retained in the text the figures of the French edition, which are those of 1913, because the war marked the beginning of a new era and it will always be of historical interest to have the last pre-war figures. But we have added in the notes the latest figures available, that is, those for 1919, wherever they have been published, and we have further revised various chapters of the French text, to bring them up to date.

CHARLES GIDE.

*Paris, December, 1920.*

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