
Co-operative Education and the State, c.1895-1935

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ABSTRACT The co-operative movement is currently exploring ways of engaging with changes in government education policy to develop schools with a distinctive co-operative ethos. While drawing on the opportunities in changing policy, these initiatives can also be seen as offering alternatives to the prevailing tenor of government thinking. This is not the first time that the co-operative movement has negotiated sometimes difficult relationships with state educational policy. From the late nineteenth century, the co-operative movement was a significant provider of education that utilised, tested and challenged the principles and practices of state provision. This article considers two episodes in this relationship. The first revolves around the expansion of state elementary schooling at the end of the nineteenth century, which allowed the co-operative movement to develop other kinds of education. Co-operators, however, were very critical of the 1902 Education Act, which was seen as undermining an important tradition of accessible higher-level education for working people. In the second case, the 1918 Education Act potentially offered a new forum for co-operative education, which required co-operators to re-assess their relationships with state-provided education.

Introduction

Recent trends in the governmental regulation of education have opened opportunities for non-state, or even non-educational, organisations to take a role in the provision and management of new kinds of schools. Controversially, initiatives such as academies, trust schools and faith schools offer openings to external agencies, while limiting the extent of local education authority (LEA) control (although in some respects central direction has increased). Private providers have always been a feature of the educational field, but these latest developments constitute a more far-reaching reconfiguration of the landscape. One agency that has begun to take advantage of these changes in regulations is

the co-operative movement, although this perhaps presents a rather different case.[1] Under the umbrella of the Schools Co-operative Society, several hundred schools are now drawing on the ideals and principles of co-operation to give a distinctive ethos and direction, whether through formal arrangements or more informally. In doing so, the co-operative movement is continuing a long-standing commitment to education, and to the democratic control of education.[2] From early in the nineteenth century, co-operators saw education as an important component of their activity, establishing newsrooms, libraries, reading rooms, lectures, classes or just making space for people to discuss issues of the day. This was part of a wider tradition across labour organisations, which saw education as central to the elevation and enhancement of the lives and status of working people. At a time when established authorities could be hostile to the whole idea of popular education, this activity had to be through self and mutual instruction. As the state gradually took on responsibility for mass education, there was less need for the co-operative movement, amongst others, to fulfil this need.

Thus, there has long been a symbiotic relationship between the co-operative movement and the state in terms of education. At times, co-operators have filled a gap left by the state, but then relinquished the responsibility when it was no longer necessary. At others, the movement has been suspicious of what the state provided, or the principles on which it was based, and thought it necessary to maintain a separate educational provision to preserve values that appeared to be under threat. In this article, some of the relationships between co-operation and the state will be explored through several case studies from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. This was a crucial phase in the emergence of state educational policy, but which also impacted on ideas and policies on education within the co-operative movement. The first case considers some of the ways in which the expansion of state elementary education in the late nineteenth century required, and also offered an opportunity for, co-operators to rethink their whole policy towards education. This became caught up in the wider debates over the 1902 Education Act, which was highly controversial for working-class organisations. The other main example revolves around the 1918 Education Act, where, once again, government legislation opened new opportunities for non-state providers to take a role in providing education for young employees through continuation schools. How to engage with this policy caused further debate within the co-operative movement, leading to another important educational initiative. We will finish by considering the extent to which the current situation parallels those of a hundred years ago.

Co-operative Education and State Policy, 1895-1905

Education had always been an important commitment for the co-operative movement.[3] A key founding father, Robert Owen, ensured that the children in his model community were in school rather than his own factory. One of the

earliest moves by the Rochdale Pioneers, generally credited with establishing the modern form of co-operation, was to set aside a portion of their profits to support educational activity. It was one of the features that set co-operation apart from being simply a trading operation. Co-operators were not alone among working-class activists in promoting self and mutual instruction. An important argument among Radicals from the late eighteenth century was that only when people had rejected the ignorant reliance on paternalism and embraced right reason could a truly democratic movement take hold.[4] Groups of working people gathered, often secretly, to read and discuss political ideas and, in this context, mutual instruction was a form of resistance to the state. In different forms, the principle that an enhanced educational and cultural level was necessary for the emancipation of the working classes remained in force throughout the nineteenth century and beyond. By the early nineteenth century, however, the political and ecclesiastical authorities concluded that banning education altogether was never likely to succeed and agreed that it was better to provide, and seek to control, the education of working-class children. Thus, the need for mutual instruction among working people remained just as important. Co-operators sought to provide for their members, primarily through libraries and reading rooms, but also with lectures, classes and cultural activities to raise the tone of working people above the limited three Rs allowed by the state. There was also, of course, the need to educate the wider working classes in the value of co-operative principles.

A new impetus to state education was launched with the 1870 Elementary Education Act.[5] Under this legislation, in areas where there were too few school places, a School Board could be established to channel local and central funding into the building and running of new schools. The School Boards were ad hoc local bodies, elected on remarkably democratic lines. Women and working people were eligible as candidates and those eligible to vote could cast as many votes as there were places on the Board. Although this system could mire a School Board in controversy, as other local political issues were played out in a convenient forum, it offered a popular platform for local democracy. As schools provided by rate-payers, they were to be non-sectarian in their religious instruction. By the early 1890s, with additional state funding, elementary education had become compulsory and free and the School Board system expanded enormously, coming to provide almost half of elementary school places. A significant emergent component was a higher form of elementary schooling.[6] For children who wanted to stay on in school a while longer, for pupil teachers or for those studying a more scientific curriculum, a higher level was introduced, including in some areas, specialised schools where older pupils could be brought together for a higher-grade education. By the late 1890s, these constituted almost a quasi-secondary schooling, although with a much more practical aspect and much more accessible to working-class children. At the same time, local authorities were increasingly providing adult education, free public libraries and advanced forms of scientific and technical instruction.[7]

As the state came to provide more and better quality popular education, questions were raised at the annual Co-operative Congress about the condition of education in the movement.[8] Supporters of education had been sceptical for some time that, despite the high ideals, local societies were not really doing all that much. Consequently, a special committee was established to review the situation. They circulated a general inquiry to all local societies, receiving responses from 402. Of these, 133 admitted to having no educational fund at all. This survey was followed up with visits to a selected few representative societies to give a more detailed and rounded impression. This investigation showed that, consequent on local authorities expanding their provision, especially with respect to technical education and public libraries, local societies were increasingly passing over their educational functions. Nearly every society reported that technical education was being provided by public bodies in their area. Of 26 societies that had given up classes in various subjects, 13 stated definitely that they had done so because local authorities had taken up the work, while another 4 gave this as a reason for not having an educational fund at all. In those societies that had no educational fund, it was noted that technical education was being provided by non-co-operative agencies. In library provision and reading rooms, these remained one of the most important components of educational spending by societies, but this too was being eroded. One society had handed over its books to the public library and provided a hall to house them. Another gave a yearly grant to the public library and another one did the same when it could. Some societies noted, however, that use of their own libraries had actually increased alongside the expanding public service. Worryingly, however, while societies were handing over educational responsibility, they exercised only limited representation on public committees. A total of 32 societies reported having some representation on technical, evening or University Extension committees. A total of 350 co-operators from 114 societies sat on educational governing bodies, although not necessarily as co-operative representatives. Other forms of liaison with local agencies included societies paying members' fees to attend classes or offering prizes to encourage participation.

The special educational committee concluded that there was no point in swimming against the prevailing tide. Co-operators may once have been pioneers, but local authorities were rapidly surpassing them, especially in technical studies. In the case of libraries, that these were still so prominent did not really represent a current need, but was perhaps simply a convenient and time-honoured outlet for educational funds, when nothing else could be conceived. Thus '[t]he most reasonable course for co-operators to take seems to be to *co-operate with existing organisations in every way*' (original emphasis).[9] While accepting this, the committee identified a gap within the movement that clearly needed to be filled. There was a dearth of systematic training in industrial and municipal subjects, either by co-operative or any outside body. In 1895, only 15 societies had offered classes in social subjects, and the survey had only confirmed the lack of interest in co-operative teaching and class work. If

local authorities were taking over the more routine aspects of educational work, '[h]ere, in the *teaching of industrial economics and of the duties of citizens*, is the new pioneer work lying at the doors of co-operators' (original emphasis).[10] This would enable co-operators to retain their position as social reformers, and also contribute to the extension of municipal involvement through better-informed citizens. The special report went on to outline a series of measures to reorganise education in the movement, which were, in large part, implemented. From the late 1890s, there was a substantial expansion of education, especially through classes on the history and principles of co-operation, industrial history, and citizenship, for both adults and juniors.[11]

That the movement was prepared to cede so much of its traditional educational activity suggests a good deal of confidence in the capacity, and appropriateness, of local authorities to provide it. Harmonious relationships are recorded by several societies in their jubilee histories. For example, the Eccles Provident Industrial Co-operative Society Ltd began evening classes in 1877, which were maintained until 1895 when the local authority took them over.[12] A few years later, the society started a system of paying half fees of members and their children to attend the classes. In Bury, co-operators seem to have provided the basis for a significant portion of the town's educational structure.[13] Co-operative classes in elementary subjects, then on technical areas spread across the borough from the 1870s. In 1892, the society's educational committee amalgamated with the Corporation's School Attendance Committee. Following the passage of the Technical Instruction Act, the society decided they did not need to offer their own classes, so handed them and their equipment to the corporation. They then established evening continuation classes, which went well, and then were also transferred to the corporation when it set up its own classes. This record of close liaison on educational matters belies the arguments about poor relationships between local authorities and co-operators on other matters, such as retail outlets.[14] Presumably, local authorities were only too glad to take over classes that were already a going concern, and where there was no sense of competition. By the same token, societies may have been as happy to relinquish a drain on resources, although this seems less likely if there was a tradition of commitment to educational activity.

If relationships with local School Boards and Technical Instruction Committees could be very good, there was much greater scepticism about the development of central state policy with the debate surrounding the Cockerton Judgement and the 1902 Education Act. This was a major piece of legislation that transformed the organisation of education in England and Wales.[15] The Cockerton Judgement ruled that, since School Boards were established to provide elementary education, and received rate support accordingly, they could not legally offer any education beyond elementary level. This immediately rendered the sector of higher grade schools illegal; it also undermined the evening continuation classes that had been a popular form of remedial tuition for adults. Consequently, new legislation was required to reorganise the

educational structure. The 1902 Act swept away the range of ad hoc administrative bodies that had evolved through the nineteenth century, including School Boards, and replaced them with a uniform system of LEAs, with responsibilities to develop all forms of education in their areas. This included not only elementary education, but to begin to develop state-funded secondary schools. Opinion is divided on the 1902 Education Act.[16] One view sees it as a progressive measure that removed a chaotic educational administration and replaced it with a rationalised system capable of further expansion and development. Alternatively, it is regarded as a cynical and retrograde step that abolished a thriving, popular and democratically controlled higher elementary sector and replaced it with very selective and traditional grammar school-type secondary schools. Moreover, it allowed religious schools access to state funding without full state management.

The co-operative movement was decidedly against these developments. As soon as it was issued, the Cockerton Judgement was taken up by the Co-operative Congress' Joint Parliamentary Committee, which scrutinised government legislation for its potential effects on co-operators.[17] A strongly-worded letter was sent to the Duke of Devonshire, head of the education department, expressing concern on two points. Firstly, that School Boards would be prevented from offering anything other than purely elementary education, secondly that evening schools could no longer cater for adults. This, it was argued, would have a disastrous effect on working-class education, as it removed the most accessible forms of higher-level tuition from their reach. Noting that as representative of a movement with 1.7 million members, which gave over £60,000 of its own funds for educational purposes, it had a right to speak on the matter, the committee called for the powers to provide advanced education to be granted to the School Boards. By the time Congress met, a draft Bill had been produced, which was debated in somewhat bellicose tones.[18] Moving a condemnatory resolution, H.J. May saw the government seeking to protect its friends in the Church of England. Co-operators had a particular right to feel aggrieved in that they had often pioneered popular education, which had been taken up by the School Boards when it had proved successful. While not advocating physical force, he suggested the School Boards simply ignore the Cockerton Judgement and defy the government to put them in prison. There was no support for the Bill and the only point of debate was about the proposal to have a specially elected authority having control over the whole educational system in an area or whether it should fall to the existing local government authorities. Some felt that there were already too many ad hoc local authorities, but the prevailing view supported the resolution. The system of democratic control enshrined in the School Boards ought to be preserved.

The Education Bill had a tumultuous passage through Parliament and was still up for debate by the time of the next annual Congress.[19] Reviewing its activity over the last year, the Joint Parliamentary and Educational Committees had met to draw up the position the Co-operative movement should take. They admitted that they had experienced much debate and division themselves

although primarily over whether the authority responsible for education should be specially elected for the purpose or be a component of a larger local authority. Plans were made for a deputation to the Duke of Devonshire, but he declined to receive it, although a smaller one waited on Campbell-Bannerman, so that one of the political leaders in Parliament heard the co-operative view. When Congress met again, a new Bill had been drawn up and a revised position agreed on. One of the key points in the Bill, the rationalisation of local educational agencies and their replacement with just one body to control all aspects of education in an area, was now supported. It was agreed that there had been a good deal of fragmentation in the control of education and some measure of co-ordination was required. On most other aspects of the Bill, however, especially concerning the democratic control of education, co-operators were opposed. A key point was that the education authority should be elected on the basis of one vote for one candidate and women should be eligible for election as well, as they had been for School Boards. A major objection to the Bill was that sectarian schools would be eligible for public funds but would retain the majority on management committees. It was argued that the management of all schools in receipt of public funds should be entirely controlled by the local authority. The original concerns also remained, that there should be no age limit for day or evening schools and no dilution of educational standards in elementary schools.

The combined Parliamentary and Educational Committees were candid in admitting that there had been much debate and division over their response to the Bill, but the position they had reached was to recommend a series of amendments. It was still not unanimous and when Congress debated the proposals the divisions resurfaced on the floor.[20] Some accepted that they were never likely to get a government measure with which they entirely approved, and felt that they should seek to improve an admittedly deficient Bill as much as they could. There was a strong sentiment, however, that it was better to reject the Bill altogether. Barring women from governing authorities, removing democratic control, the lack of uniformity in administration and the protection of sectarian interests, were all issues that had to be opposed on principle. A new objection raised was that there was inadequate provision for secondary education. Indeed the scope for the expansion of secondary schooling under the Bill was limited, but few working people at the time thought that extensive secondary education was likely. Somewhat optimistically, some felt that, with the size and long-standing commitment to education of the co-operative movement, their opposition might be sufficient to sink the Bill. Ultimately, Congress passed a resolution condemning the Bill, "because it makes no adequate provision for secondary education or for the improvement of general education, and removes the whole question from the hands of the directly-elected representation of the people".[21]

Despite vigorous and extensive opposition from more than the Co-operative Congress, the Education Act, eventually, was passed. At the following Congress, one of the leading lights of co-operative education, W.R. Rae, put

forward a substantial discussion paper on how societies could best utilise their educational funds given the new situation.[22] In many respects, it revived points first raised by the special educational inquiry of almost ten years before, but stated with considerable emphasis and summed up in a resolution that 'This Congress earnestly recommends societies to concentrate their efforts on the formation of co-operative character and opinion rather than to carry on work or any portion of work which is more correctly the work of the local or municipal authorities'.[23] Rae argued that it was time for local societies to pass over their provision of libraries and reading rooms. Co-operators may have pioneered facilities for basic literacy, but most local authorities now had free libraries. With a side swipe at the low level of literature stocked by most co-operative libraries, he pointed out that there was no point in societies competing to provide the latest works of fiction, and leaving real books gathering dust. The scale of what he envisaged was remarkable; with roughly 140 libraries, 400 reading rooms and nearly half a million books, costing over £6000 a year to be handed over to the local authorities. Similarly, there was no real need for co-operative societies to put on classes in science and art. These too were sufficiently provided for by local authorities. If successful and efficient classes were being run at no great cost, then they could be continued for now, but he was suspicious that LEAs might take advantage of successful co-operative classes to evade their own educational responsibilities. This might quickly become a significant drain on co-operative resources, effectively subsidising local authorities. Where societies could use their resources was to pay fees and scholarships for youngsters who could benefit themselves, co-operation and the wider world with some higher education. Most importantly, the main outlet for co-operative educational funds was to support classes specifically in co-operation. 'Here there is no doubt – no hesitation. These deal with our very existence, and are as valuable to us as a knowledge of the principles of truth and honesty'.[24] In this respect, there needed to be more for children and much more for adult members and for employees. It was a bold and in places rather bald statement, suggesting the ending of a significant component of co-operative tradition. Some discussants deprecated the idea of losing their libraries, others thought Rae had been either too lacking in radicalism, or speaking in too high-flown terms for the majority of societies. Overall, however, there was little real opposition. The resolution proposed by Rae was passed 'with enthusiasm'.

Co-operative societies did not readily hand over their library provision and this remained an important tradition.[25] Classes in science and art increasingly required specialist and expensive equipment, which state agencies were much better placed to provide. The main thrust of the article, however, that co-operative education should focus on the teaching of co-operation became the guiding light for the next several decades. It was based on an accommodation with the extension of state schooling. Co-operators by no means agreed with the direction of state policy, but they were apparently satisfied with the standards of what was provided, at least in certain respects and

came round to the view that they should no longer provide what it was properly the responsibility of the state to provide. The movement did not need to cater for basic literacy any more, nor could it really keep up with advances in scientific and technical education. What state schools offered in terms of citizenship training was another matter, and this was where co-operators needed to concentrate.

Co-operation and Continuation Schools

During the First World War, relationships between the co-operative movement and the state became highly strained with the imposition of the excess profits tax on co-operative surpluses.[26] The tax was intended to prevent war-profiteering by those businesses which had made enormous sums from the unusual economic conditions of war time. Designating co-operative surpluses as profits was seen as unfair, since these were actually ploughed back to the membership that had generated them; it did not lead to large profits for private individuals or concerns. The government was unmoved and much bitterness ensued. One consequence was the formation of a co-operative political party to put representatives in parliament who could help to protect the movement from such impositions. Another outcome was a renewed emphasis on education.[27] It was felt that too many people, including the majority of members, did not sufficiently appreciate what co-operation was about. Hence, it was difficult to mobilise the movement to defend co-operative principles when they came under threat. Moves were already being made in this direction with the appointment of a Director of Education, Fred Hall, just before the outbreak of war. At the same time, a major review of the full range of co-operative activities had been launched, which took on even greater significance with the changed conditions of the war. Hall took a leading part in drawing up the various reports and ensured that education had a pivotal role. 'The present situation has made us realise, as never before, that our educational work is not something separate and apart from other forms of co-operative activity, but a form of activity closely related to all others'.[28] He saw the need to capture the hearts and minds of co-operative members themselves.

Education was also emerging as a much more important issue for the government. The war had apparently exposed the nation's deficiencies in a range of scientific and technical areas, which needed to be remedied urgently for the prosecution of the war, and expanded significantly to meet the challenges that would certainly arise in the post-war world. More generally, there had to be a much larger and firmer bedrock of educational capacity on which a more knowledge-based economy could be built. The President of the Board of Education, H.A.L. Fisher, drew up a new Bill that would, among other things, expand state provision of education, especially for adolescents in their mid-teens.[29] The school leaving age would be raised to 14 and new kinds of continuation schools would be established to provide part-time education for youngsters in work up to the age of 16 and, it was hoped, ultimately to 18.

Continuation schools would obviously require liaison between LEAs and employers.[30] Furthermore, it was allowed that modes of education outside of the local authorities, if suitable and efficient, could be recognised as coming under the auspices of the Act.

In *The Co-operative Educator*, the moves towards a new educational measure were noted encouragingly. Given their long-standing support for popular education, co-operators were always likely to be positive.[31] Continuation schools for adolescents were regarded as perfectly appropriate. While maintaining that opportunities for working-class children to go to secondary school ought to be made available, it was acknowledged that this was only likely to be a minority. It was important, therefore, that there were other avenues for continued education for those whose formal schooling ended at 14. Broadly welcoming the Bill when it was published in the autumn, there was some concern that opponents of working-class education might seek to dilute it, especially since there was a number of permissive clauses that could allow a reluctant LEA largely to evade the legislation.[32] The proposed policy of continuation schools also opened new opportunities for co-operation. As employers of youth, it was open to co-operative societies to engage with the Act, but there were questions about how. An editorial struck a note of caution.[33] In the context of sour relations with the government, there was suspicion that a state-sponsored educational measure would inevitably be based on education 'for getting on' and individual competition. Co-operators sought a different ethos, of education to promote the common good.

A separatist policy became a standard theme. Resisting a potential objection, it was pointed out that there was no inconsistency in accepting state funds and applying them for co-operative training, since co-operators' taxes went to pay for technical education that only taught private capitalism. Moreover, co-operators should seek election onto educational authorities to press for alternative perspectives in state schools and colleges. Hall set the tone of post-war co-operative educational policy when he said: 'it was the duty of co-operators to make suitable provision for their own young people. Co-operative employees ought to be trained in a co-operative atmosphere, and should study the needs of the co-operative movement beneath a co-operative roof'.[34] An important part of this was to ensure that employees knew that 'they were employed not to produce private profits but to provide social advantage for the community'. As well as instilling a certain business ethic, co-operative continuation schools should also be built on a clear educational ethos. There was some debate as to whether continuation schools should be like a part-time secondary school with a fairly general curriculum, or a substitute for an evening technical school.[35] The preferred solution was for a more general approach. This was not to denigrate technical education; most people had to work productively and it was better to be an efficient worker, with a greater understanding of work processes and outcomes than not. For adolescents, however, it was better to focus on general education, which would offer tangible benefits in employment, and also prepare for the proper enjoyment of

leisure. The key principle should be 'education as a preparation for life, and not merely for livelihood'.[36]

Optimism and high ideals were punctured when the 1918 Education Act was seriously undermined by the swingeing cuts of Geddes' Axe. Somewhat ruefully, it was noted that the co-operative movement now had to fulfil its own much vaunted commitment to education and not rely on the state to do it for them, and it did.[37] Through the inter-war period, there was a tremendous expansion of co-operative education.[38] Led by Hall, a hugely ambitious programme of classes was maintained with elaborately detailed and progressively structured syllabuses, new textbooks and rigorous examinations. For the most part, this was achieved within the movement. Junior classes in co-operation were run by local societies; adult classes in social subjects were operated through a mixture of local classes, weekend and summer schools and correspondence courses. The most impressive expansion was in employee education, again through a mixed economy of tuition, aided by itinerant lecturers in more specialised areas. It was claimed that a structured programme existed that could take a junior employee through to an honours level of management. Few made it, but it was not an idle boast.

Despite the emasculation of the 1918 Act, some continuation schools did survive, and whatever the stated scepticism of the co-operative movement, numerous local societies forged close links with LEAs to offer part-time education for their junior employees. One such example was the Peter Street Day Continuation School in Manchester, which catered for large numbers from across the area, including co-operative employees.[39] Indeed, Hall and his colleagues had been somewhat relieved to pass over this work as they had begun by doing it themselves, but were soon overwhelmed by the scale of interest. At the Peter Street School, the Manchester Education Committee provided the teaching staff, buildings and equipment, while co-operative societies allowed time off for pupils, paid their travelling expenses, and offered part-time teachers for classes in co-operative management and economics. At best, there was close liaison between the school and co-operative societies, with regular reports of progress, and action if there were any problems. Some societies based promotion on how well their employees performed in the school. The curriculum catered for co-operative subjects, and prepared pupils for co-operative examinations, among other qualifications. For the most part, however, the timetable was a general and commercial one, with time devoted to English, arithmetic and physical training, as well as bookkeeping and management. Through the inter-war period, the trend was towards increasing liaison between societies and LEAs, similar to that in Manchester. By the mid-1930s, the Co-operative Educational Committee decided that this was the policy to pursue.[40] Demand for vocational training was out-stripping the capacity of the movement to supply it. Close and productive relationships had been forged in many areas, with LEAs prepared to organise classes on the syllabuses issued by the Co-operative Union, and there seemed no reason not to promote this as the normal process.

Conclusions

By the late nineteenth century, for the most part, the co-operative movement believed that education ought to be provided by the state; educating the people was a national responsibility. When this responsibility was not being met, as in the early Victorian period, co-operators took up the need to educate themselves to the best of their abilities. As the state increasingly provided education for the masses, however, local societies readily left the field. That they did indicates a recognition that the need was being met and there was no real need for co-operators to duplicate what was already being provided, and on a more extensive scale, elsewhere. Still, it must have been brave and difficult for Rae to argue that the long-cherished institutions of libraries and reading rooms, with the considerable commitment and financial outlay that they entailed, ought to be handed over to local authorities. That he could do so, suggests strongly that he thought local state authorities were worthy recipients of such largesse. Although there were examples where local government bodies were antagonistic to co-operative societies, there are plenty of examples where relationships, especially with respect to education, seem to have been cordial. Co-operators were particularly impressed with the democratic control of education enshrined in the School Boards and the accessible and the high-quality schools they provided.

Nevertheless, co-operators were not about to abandon their commitment to education altogether. There were principles and an ethos, to which the state did not subscribe, that needed to be nurtured and transmitted within the movement. From the end of the nineteenth century, a huge effort went into classes for teaching the history, theory and principles of co-operation, and the social and economic study of industrial society that under-pinned the formation of co-operative character and citizenship. When relationships between co-operation and the state reached a particular low during the First World War, a sceptical attitude initially informed co-operative policy on continuation schools, although in practice, good relationships with LEAs allowed for a genuinely co-operative venture to take place in most places. Eventually, this was recognised as the appropriate policy. Junior classes in co-operation, however, continued to be delivered within the movement.

Arguably, the developments of the last decade or so can be seen as part of a long-established cycle of relationships between the co-operative movement and the state.[41] Changes in state legislation and regulations have made an educational space that the movement can occupy. At the same time, the principles on which the changes have been made are deeply suspicious to co-operators. It is thus a positive duty, as well as an opportunity, for the co-operative movement to enter the field. Certainly, to extend the principles of co-operation, but also to uphold the wider principles of democratic control of education, open accessibility, and strong community relationships.

Notes

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