

The British Consumer Co-operative Movement and Film, 1896-1970

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ABSTRACT

The British Consumer Co-operative Movement was a pioneer of the industrial film. The Movement engaged with cinema from the late 1890s and film was used to promote its ideals and trade well into the twentieth century. Existing studies of Labour cinema in Britain have paid little attention to the film propaganda of Co-operators and this thesis challenges the historiography for being too concerned with a narrowly defined political activism and chronologically restricted to the decade 1929-1939. An examination of the cinema of Co-operation reveals a far broader engagement with film; both in terms of its role in promoting a moralistic form of distribution, which sought to replace Capitalism and the exploitative profit system; and in the Movement's notable achievements with film both before and after the pre-World War two decade.

The thesis begins by considering the treatment of the Co-operative Movement by Labour historians, and demonstrates an equal diminishing of its role in workers' cultural and economic struggle as that characteristic of Labour film scholars. The historiographical analysis is succeeded by an examination of the culture of Co-operation, considering the Movement as an alternative and oppositional formation to the dominant society, and proceeds to survey some of the principal cultural and recreational activities and formations sponsored by Co-op Societies: education, drama, music, sport, holidays and the family.

The historiographical and cultural analysis contextually informs the succeeding historical examination of the Co-operative Movement's engagement with film in the period 1896-1970. This work arises out of a close inspection of the primary evidence preserved in the wealth of literature put out by the Movement. The observations and conclusions presented here are significantly informed by a reading and analysis of the numerous Movement films, the majority of which have never been consulted by film scholars before, and have come to light and been preserved as a part of the research conducted for the thesis. A detailed critical filmography, presented as an appendix, supplements the thesis.

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For Sue, as always.

Alan Burton, Leicester, September 2000

"Time and Chance can do nothing for those who do nothing for themselves"

- *George Canning*

"The Co-operative store is in reality the outpost of a new civilisation"

- *Co-operative Union, 1924*

"Some day a record will be compiled of all films produced which have some direct bearing on the Co-operative Movement here and elsewhere"

- *George Durham, July 1953*

Introduction

The late nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw tremendous advances in mass communications and concomitant developments in publicity, propaganda and education. It was widely felt in the rapid growth of commercial advertising, and the potential for the wholesale manipulation of public opinion was seemingly demonstrated in the First World War when the belligerents mobilised established and new media technologies in the service of the war effort. As Philip M. Taylor has argued, the widespread employment of propaganda between 1914 and 1918 served to transform its meaning into something more sinister; and the term took on a characteristic pejorative meaning. He further reveals that propaganda, the act of persuasion, "became a regular feature of international relations between the wars". He attributes three reasons for this: an increased popular interest and involvement in political affairs; technological developments in the field of mass communications; and the ideological context of the inter-war period.¹ The domestic scene was also transformed by these forces, notably in consequence of the extension of the franchise (1918, 1928), which trebled the size of the electorate and brought the political parties to experiment in the techniques of mass persuasion. Such international and national propaganda activities were often couched in terms of 'political advertisement', 'national projection' or 'publicity', and however reluctantly practised in the liberal democracies were increasingly accepted as an essential feature of modern political and international affairs.²

Only quite recently has there developed an awareness among historians of the importance of mass communications in shaping historical developments during the last century.³ Attention has largely been devoted to the systematic or scientific employment of propaganda in the service of Government, and far less historical emphasis has been placed on unofficial activities in the field of commercial advertisement and ideological projection. This thesis takes the British Consumer Co-operative Movement as its object of enquiry and examines Co-operation's engagement with cinema and film propaganda across the period of the 1890s to the late 1960s. The Movement is a collection of local retail Societies, and national and regional federal Societies engaged in manufacturing,

wholesaling and service activities, which grew to great prominence in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. By 1900, 1,439 Societies held a combined membership of 1,707,000 and shared an annual trade of £50m.⁴ The Movement represented a significant and distinct oppositional formation of working-class families and aimed to bring about social change through the mechanism of consumption. The rapid growth and penetration of distributive Co-operation attracted considerable concern and reaction among the traditional forces of the competitive system, both private traders and monopoly Capitalists, who sought to restrict Co-operators in their business and activities. Co-operation's critique of the profit system won it powerful enemies, and it was necessary, therefore, for the Movement to promote its trade and to present its ideals, activities which were essentially inseparable, to the wider public. An engagement with propaganda, both commercial and ideological, was, therefore, inevitable, and the Movement conformed with the general expansion in commodity advertising and political promotion characteristic of the late Victorian period.⁵ Working-class consciousness was being forged by the increased spread of socialist propaganda, and some Labour periodicals and publications achieved high circulations, such as the *Labour Leader*, *The Co-operative News*, the *Clarion* and Robert Blatchford's *Merrie England* (1893). Supplementing these were a host of newspapers and periodicals issued at the local level and which more directly addressed community issues; taking one example, Rita Rhodes has identified in South-East London the *Labour Journal* of the Woolwich Trades Council, *The Woolwich Pioneer*, and *Comradeship* published by the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society, which commenced publication in 1897.⁶

Publicity and promotion increasingly exercised the minds of Co-operative officials who sought to satisfy three fundamental aims: to improve trade; to increase membership; and to turn members into Co-operators. To those ends, resources were devoted to advertise, inform and educate. Consequently, promotion became an increasingly professionalised role within trading departments, and for many Societies, and the Movement nationally, publicity and educational budgets absorbed ever greater funds.⁷ In the early 1920s, the Movement formalised some of its dispersed arrangements into a Joint Propaganda and Trade Committee, comprising of the national representative bodies of the Co-operative Wholesale Society (CWS) and the Co-operative Union. The

Committee employed full-time propagandists who were charged to take the Co-operative message into new districts, and to help Societies organise propaganda campaigns to boost trade and membership.⁸ The nomenclature was illustrative of the Movement's ease with the notion of persuasion, and was brought again into public prominence later in the 1920s with the institution of National Propaganda Fortnights, when concerted effort was brought to bear on working-class consumers to join the local Society and to shop at *their* Co-op.

Film was brought into this Co-operative propaganda work at a remarkably early stage, and before the end of the nineteenth century film shows were attracting attendances at members' meetings and illustrating Co-operative manufacturing. The CWS was among the pioneers of the industrial film, while the Co-operative Movement was far in advance of other Labour groups in Britain in bringing the cinema to bear in its promotional and educational activities. The following thesis is an historical survey of the British Consumer Co-operative Movement's engagement with film in the period from the 1890s, when moving pictures were adopted into an extensive Victorian visual culture, to the 1960s, by which time the Movement had largely transferred its attention to the moving image culture of television. The emergence and practice of Left-political film in Britain has been surveyed and examined by a number of scholars, although the Co-operative Movement's contribution has been relatively ignored. The product of that scholarship has been a particular emphasis on the inter-war period, and only very recently has attention been directed to the post-war years. That still leaves the formative time of early and silent cinema largely without consideration. The original wave of writers on workers' film in Britain were clearly stimulated by the events of May 1968 and interested in the relations between politics and the arts.⁹ For one group of scholars that meant an engagement with a Labour cinema of the past that would inspire and inform current independent cinema activity: this was couched as a 'critical return' to a site of an earlier class struggle.¹⁰ The approach formed a critique of concurrent 'celebratory' surveys of 1930s independent cinemas, and in terms of workers' cinema the historical scholarship exemplified by Bert Hogenkamp. While acknowledging such work as progressive and an attempt "to examine for the first time an area of social practice in the cinema of the Thirties which has been repressed by orthodox film histories"¹¹,

Hogenkamp's scholarship has been criticised in the sense that its revelation produces "no effects in itself".¹² Informed by an anti-historicism drawn from modern critical theory, the critique sought an intervention into radical film practice consequent to a period of significant alternative cinema activity in the 1970s; such an approach would produce concepts "which have political implications for current 'independent' practice and thus for future strategy".¹³

This thesis documents and analyses the Consumer Co-operative Movement's engagement with cinema and adopts the methodological approaches, derived from empirical historical scholarship, characteristic of Bert Hogenkamp's pioneering work on Left-political film in Britain between the wars, an approach maintained by Stephen J. Jones, another academic historian who has examined Labour cinema in the inter-war period.¹⁴ To reiterate, the method adopted here is to chart and assess Co-operative film policy and practice through a careful attention to empirical evidence. The thesis thus seeks to present a detailed chronological account of film work within the wider ramifications and experiences of the Movement, and to situate it within broader conceptual frameworks of Labour Movement historiography and Left cultural practice. The determining approach is, therefore, historical, with observation and analysis deriving from evidential data, resources in which the British Co-operative Movement is extremely rich. It is the author's contention that the more elaborate theoretical interrogations are only applicable *to* a secure and defensible historical account. Existing historical surveys of Labour film have been partial and selective in their chronology and in their treatment of the mighty Co-operative Movement, and it is necessary, therefore, to commence with a careful, extensive and detailed examination of Co-operation's aspirations, engagements and achievements with film *before* other critical and political issues can be legitimately framed. Suggestions as to where further productive enquiries might be made deriving out of the historical survey and analysis presented here are offered in the Conclusion. There has been a tendency to dismiss the Co-operative Movement's contribution to Left-political cinema, it being considered insufficiently politicised, a judgement reached before historical scholarship has adequately assessed the Movement's contribution to Labour film in Britain. The following work seeks, therefore, an historically objective sense of its subject of enquiry, from which other scholars may develop their own critical

insights: be they ideological, motivational, representational, or, indeed, historical.

The thesis is divided into five chapters, with the first two chapters, examining contextual and historiographical issues, divided into two related sections. Chapter One commences with a consideration of the Co-operative Movement's place within the broader Labour Movement. Essentially an historiographical analysis, the chapter demonstrates and accounts for Co-operation's marginal position within British Labour Movement history; a history that has privileged direct political struggle and workplace activity, and thus paid particular attention to the Labour Party (and other smaller political groupings) and trade unionism. Such observations are crucial for considering the similar partial treatment of Co-operative film work within the wider workers' film culture. This is supplemented by an outline historical account of the Consumer Co-operative Movement in the period since the late 1890s when film became a social, ideological, commercial and recreational consideration for Co-operative policy-makers and activists. Such a framework is necessary to contextualise the varied debates and applications that attended film work in the Movement.

Chapter Two considers a set of related cultural issues presented by the study of Labour film and Co-operation. The first section provides an examination of the particular cultural formation and cultural expressions of the Co-operative Movement. Again, surveys of Labour culture have relatively ignored the culture of Co-operation which offered working-class families numerous opportunities for leisure and recreation, as well as a participatory democracy through which to organise consumption according to a set of social values. In dealing with the distinctive character of Co-operation and its moralistic conception of consumption as a harbinger of social change, I draw on the analysis of Peter Gurney and his ground-breaking formulation of the culture of Co-operation. Dr. Gurney's original analysis and thesis has yet to be fully absorbed into scholarship attending to Labour culture, but offers the promise of a proper and adequate place for the, as yet, marginalised Co-operative Movement. The numerous and varied cultural activities, both educational and recreational, are then assessed in terms of how these formed an expression of cultural identity and aspiration for Co-operators and their ideals of fraternity, equality and democracy. The brief examinations presented here, of education, drama, holidays, sport, music and the family, are largely original surveys of

cultural expressions as yet unexplained by historians. Again, such incidence provides a necessary context for an adequate appreciation of how the Co-operative Movement approached cinema, and how that approach was informed by wider cultural considerations and practice. A second section in this chapter examines the film culture that emerged on the Left, and additionally outlines and critiques the historiography of workers' cinema in Britain. While acknowledging the significant historical scholarship that has attended to Labour cinema, it also criticises that scholarship for marginalising the considerable contribution made by Co-operators to oppositional film culture in Britain, as well as demonstrating a broader chronology for Left-political film work that needs to be traced back to the beginnings of cinema in Britain.

The remaining three chapters which follow set out a chronological, empirical survey of the Co-operative Movement's engagement with film. The material is borne out of close inspection of varied primary sources, the majority of which are new to the consideration of Labour film in Britain. The Movement, both national and local, published a wealth of literature detailing its activities, aims and ideals, and these form the published evidential basis for the accompanying historical construction. Prominent among these is the Movement's weekly newspaper, *The Co-operative News*, which was expansive in its coverage of events, developmental issues and policy debates. Also important have been the *Minutes* and *Reports* of the numerous committees serving the Movement, especially those servicing the Co-operative Union, the central federal organisation responsible for policy development and implementation, and additionally fulfilling widespread promotional and educational roles. The author was unfortunately unable to access comparable material for the CWS. These records, seemingly guarded by the organisation, have not been made available for any recent independent researcher, and while these would have thrown greater light on the significant film activities of the central wholesaling and manufacturing division of the Movement, they should not be deemed essential as, in many cases, the CWS was represented on the committees of the Union and, therefore, its representatives' views were recorded there.

The empirical historical reconstruction and analysis attempted here conforms methodologically with a prominent tradition in British cinema historical scholarship. Two leading exponents of that approach, Prof. Jeffrey Richards and Dr. Anthony

Aldgate, have labelled it 'contextual cinematic history': "for it places particular emphasis on the exploration of the context within which a film was produced".¹⁵ Richards' and Aldgate's own work has primarily examined Britain's commercial narrative cinema, in terms of film content and structure, box-office trends, stardom, cinema-going and censorship; and to consider these elements in their political, social and cultural context.¹⁶ In addition to the films themselves, these scholars have examined various sources in the written record: official documents and reports, trade papers and the press, autobiographies and memoirs, fan magazines, and censors' reports prominent among them. Their approach is essentially the method of the academic historian and it has been fruitfully brought to bear on British cinema in its historical context. The historical reconstruction offered in this thesis, while distinct in dealing with a political and alternative cinema, similarly contextualises the cinema of Co-operation within broader commercial, social and political trends experienced by the Co-operative Movement. The empirical base of the thesis has been the published evidence contained in the Labour press, committee reports and minutes, trade publications, and the cinema press, and has especially relied on the invaluable archives of primary resource materials assembled by the Co-operative Union at Manchester and Loughborough. The research for the thesis has rescued the bulk of the Movement's filmic record which had vanished into obscurity. While some of the Movement's films had been collected in national and regional film archives, they had largely been unacknowledged by film and Labour historians. Many additional titles have been located or identified as a consequence of researching this thesis, and where possible have been placed in official film archives. In an archival sense, therefore, the thesis has led to a fuller primary record than previously realised, with new materials becoming available for consultation by scholars and students.

The historical survey is divided into three distinct periods. Chapter Three deals with the Co-operative Movement's early activities with film, in the years 1896-1926, and corresponds roughly to the period of silent cinema in Britain. Such responses were framed within an emerging accommodation with popular culture and the mass media, as well as a rapidly transforming commercial landscape. How cinema could be mobilised to improve trade, increase membership and inform members: to aid in the

social transformation of society; was tentatively worked through and established in this formative period. Chapter Four assesses the years from 1927 to 1945. A period commencing with a stimulus to cinema work coming through the international Movement, which sought to promote Co-operation through shared film provision, through to the activities of the Workers' Film Association (WFA), formed in 1938, a collaborative film body representative of Co-operators, trade unionists and the Labour Party. The latter body was a significant expression of the changing social climate of the war years and the Labour Film Movement's contribution to expressions of the 'People's War'. Unlike previous studies of workers' cinema in Britain, the chapter culminates not with the outbreak of war in Europe, but rather with the declaration of victory in 1945. This is presented as a more obvious watershed when considering the cinema of the Co-operative Movement: the WFA, though restricted, continued in its activities and to remain meaningful sought ever closer involvement with Co-operative organisations and film activists; and Co-operation's own film bodies, unlike counter-parts on the extreme Left like Kino, made significant progress in the war years.

Chapter Five charts the WFA's mutation into the more inclusive National Film Association (NFA), a body which aspired to be the film propaganda organisation of the entire democratic Left at the time of the first majority Labour Government. The disappointment of the NFA in failing to realise any lasting achievements with Labour film passed into a period of shifting emphasis as the Co-operative Movement's film propagandists directed more and more resources to television advertising. Such a re-allocation was indicative of the blurring of distinctions between the member, traditionally privileged within Co-operative practice and discourse, and the customer, an abstracted statistic of distribution. This ideological shift manifested itself in a variety of guises from the 1950s onwards; not least in the controversial, and contested, erosion of the special benefit to members, the cash dividend on trading, which was largely displaced by voguish trading stamps in the mid-1960s and made available to all customers. The great variety of cinema work supported by the Co-operative Movement, covering most aspects of production, distribution and exhibition, both at professional and amateur levels, had virtually disappeared by the later 1960s, and hence it is redundant to consider its film propaganda beyond that point. As both a commercial and

ideological organisation the Consumer Co-operative Movement had sought, and achieved, much with film; it practically engaged with cinema much earlier than the other wings of the British Labour Movement, the trades unions and the Labour Party, and assumed a dominant position in the shared workers' film organisations, the Workers' Film Association and the National Film Association. It also made comparable provision in industrial cinema work as the leading commercial users of film, for instance, Cadbury's, Beecham's and Ford.

A key evidential base which supplements the main historical discussion is a detailed filmography presented as a separate appendix. This, equally, represents a significant addition to historical knowledge, contributing a distinct archival dimension and providing an original evidential base to the thesis. Technical and synoptic discussion of the films is located in this filmography and a system of cross-referencing between the main body of the thesis and the appendix alerts the reader to the relevant material for each film. Thus, when a title is first mentioned in the text of the thesis it is accompanied by its filmographic code in the form [NCFC n]. This precludes the unnecessary presentation of technical and synoptic detail in the thesis, which is thereby freed to address larger historical, discursive and critical issues regarding the Movement's engagement with cinema. Some historical and contextual discussion accompanies each entry in the filmography and this largely supplements the material in the main body of the thesis. As a result the filmography should be consulted in association with the thesis as they have been researched and designed to be complementary. In places some repetition of material between the filmography and the thesis is due to the intention to make the filmography meaningful and valuable in its own right. There is clear potential for professional film archivists in the information contained in this aspect of the thesis, and it has been organised to assist identification and classification of titles held in collections or material which might emerge for acquisition.

The filmography compiled for this project considerably extends the earlier, partial and selective samples presented in Ryan and Hogenkamp, and seeks to be inclusive.¹⁷ It lists over five hundred individual titles identified in the written record, of which over three hundred films survive as extant prints. Many of these titles were unknown prior to the commencement of this thesis and have consequently been entered into the

preservation arrangements of the formal archive sector, and will as a result become available for the first time to the wider research community. In a number of instances prints have been located for films noted by the previous filmographies, *Peace Parade* (1937) [NCFC 062] and *The Rape of Czechoslovakia* (1939) for example, which were assumed lost.¹⁸ The thesis also draws upon films that arguably meet the defining criteria of earlier filmographies, but, seemingly, were unknown to the compilers: in particular records of Woodcraft Folk camps [NCFC 087, NCFC 055]; records of an international Co-operative gathering [NCFC 032, NCFC 034]; a film of the Women's Co-operative Guild Congress (1939) [NCFC 086]; an anti-Conservative election film of 1939 [unlocated]; and local Society films outlining their cultural and propaganda activities [NCFC 036, NCFC 047]. Significantly, the filmography, and evidential base for the thesis, extends the view beyond the 1930s to assess what was happening before and after that significant decade and it is original in that achievement.

This film archive dimension to the thesis developed out of the author's personal involvement with the Co-operative Movement in the early 1990s. Employed as a Co-operative Education Officer I became aware of numerous prints of historic Movement films collected, and often forgotten, in Co-op libraries or in the possession of local Societies. It was immediately apparent that many of the titles were not recorded in existing filmographies of Labour Movement cinema, and that led me to reassess the marginal treatment of Co-operation in studies of workers' film and non-fiction cinema in Britain. In that respect it is revealing to consider the two principal published filmographies of the British Labour Movement, compiled by Ryan and Hogenkamp. Both of these restrict themselves to the pre-World War Two decade and explicitly exclude the commercially orientated advertising films of the Co-ops. On this latter point, Trevor Ryan fails to accept such films as 'alternative' or 'oppositional' to the dominant ideology of the mainstream cinema and dismisses them simply as 'entertainment', 'interest', 'travel' or 'publicity' films.¹⁹ This thesis counters that historiographical assessment, and argues that the moral economy of Co-operation itself represented an 'alternative' to Capitalistic forms of economic organisation, and that all endeavours to promote social and economic forms of Co-operation were ideological interventions ostensibly aimed to bring about social transformation: to bring forth the

ideal of the 'Co-operative Commonwealth'. The social and economic philosophy of Co-operation was explicit in its antithetical position to Competition, the economic rationale of Capitalism. With that premise it is entirely defensible to include *all* films produced and commissioned by the Co-operative Movement as each cultural expression of Co-operation was in ideological contest with the dominant Capitalistic form of economic and political organisation and hegemony. The persistently hostile treatment meted out to Co-ops by the forces of Competition was testament to that fact. These issues are developed in Chapter One, where the Co-operative Movement's claim to be accepted as a legitimate Labour Movement organisation, serving the interests of working-class families and seeking the eradication of competitive economic forms is argued.

Taken in conjunction, the historical assessment presented in the main body of the thesis, and the evidential base of archival material compiled in the filmography, offer a detailed examination of a significant commercial organisation, predicated on alternative social democratic principles, and its approaches to the film medium to extend its propaganda for the purposes of promoting trade, membership and education. Considerable thought, conviction and resources were expended on film and the Movement's undulating aspirations, rationales and practises are charted in this thesis. Histories of British cinema have not taken much account of activities outside of the dominant commercial entertainment film industry or those officially sanctioned engagements with film such as to be found with the celebrated British Documentary Film Movement. Little has yet been revealed of the extensive use of film in industry, education, science, publicity, public relations and promotion. The Co-operative Movement intersected with many of these neglected aspects of British cinema history, and, significantly, made substantial, if largely unacknowledged, contributions to the Labour Film Movement and its repertoire of oppositional cultural practises. The following thesis addresses that neglect through a careful and detailed empirical reconstruction of Co-operation's engagement with cinema, and argues for a more sympathetic acceptance of the Movement as a legitimate oppositional expression of the British working-class. Of course, the significant commercial achievements of Co-operation, regardless of any 'alternative' philosophical outlook, warrants a careful historical assessment of the Movement. This is a legitimate task of business and

economic history, although these disciplines have as yet taken scant notice of Co-operation. However, historical scholarship should approach Co-operation on its own terms; a body of Co-operative philosophy clearly marked the Movement out as oppositional to Competition and it is in that sense that scholarship should assess the Movement's promotional activities and achievements.²⁰ Film, recognised and accepted as a valuable mass medium of propaganda in influential sections of the Movement, was adopted to promote Co-operation as a more ethical form of distribution and to contest the selfish interests of competitive trading. That was no small ambition and is deserving of historical recognition in a time when consumption has been all but stripped of any moral dimensions and materialism configured as a self-serving ideal in its own right. For about a century Co-operation presented a significant challenge to the system of acquisitive self-interest embodied in Competition and, unsurprisingly, film was mobilised in the endeavour to bring to an end the exploitation of working people through the replacement of Capitalism by Co-operation. The following thesis is, in essence, an historical assessment and explanation of that ambition.

NOTES

1. Taylor, P.M., 'Propaganda in International Politics, 1919-1939' in Short, K.R.M. (ED), *Film and Radio Propaganda in World War Two* (London: Croom Helm, 1983): 19-20.
2. Ibid.: 27.
3. Ward, K., *Mass Communications and the Modern World* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989): 4.
4. Cole, G.D.H., *A Century of Co-operation* (Manchester: Co-op Union, 1945): 257.
5. Richards, T., *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England. Advertising and Spectacle 1851-1914* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990).
6. Rhodes, R., *An Arsenal for Labour. The Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society and Politics, 1896-1996* (Manchester: Holyoake Books, 1998): 11.
7. Hall, F. and Watkins, W.P., *Co-operation. A Survey of the History, Principles and Organisation of the Co-operative Movement in Great Britain and Ireland* (Manchester: Co-op Union, 1937): Ch. XXI.
8. Ibid.: 247.
9. This is made explicit by three of the main authors/groups who have addressed the subject: MacPherson, D. (ed), *British Cinema. Traditions of Independence* (London: BFI, 1980): 1-2; Hogenkamp, B., *Deadly Parallels. Film and the Left in Britain 1929-39* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1986): 7; Dickinson, M., *Rogue Reels. Oppositional Film in Britain, 1945-90* (London: BFI, 1999): 6.
10. Willemen, P., 'Presentation' in MacPherson, D. (ed), op.cit.: 1.
11. Johnston, C., 'Independence' and the Thirties. Ideologies in History: An Introduction', in MacPherson, D. (ed), op.cit.: 9.
12. Tribe, K, quoted ibid: 10.
13. Johnston, C., ibid.: 12. See also, Trevor Ryan's comments in 'Film and Political Organisations in Britain 1929-1939', in MacPherson, D. (ed), op.cit.: 51-52.
14. Jones, S.J., *The British Labour Movement and Film, 1918-1939* (London: RKP, 1987).
15. Richards, J. and Aldgate, A., *Best of British. Cinema and Society 1930-1970* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983): 6.
16. Ibid; Richards, J., *The Age of the Dream Palace. Cinema and Society in Britain 1930-1939* (London: RKP, 1984); Aldgate, A. and Richards, J., *Britain Can Take It. The British Cinema in the Second World War* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).
17. Ryan, T., 'Filmography' in MacPherson, D. (ed), op.cit.: 208-224; Hogenkamp, B., op.cit.: 215-231.
18. Ryan, T., op.cit.: 208; Hogenkamp, B., op.cit.: 215.
19. Ryan lists 14 Co-operative Movement films; Hogenkamp lists 13 Co-operative Movement films.
20. For articulations of Co-operative philosophy, see, Mercer, T.W., *Towards the Co-operative Commonwealth. Why Poverty in the Midst of Plenty?* (Manchester: The Co-op Press, 1936): Section 8, 'An Alternative to Capitalism'; Hall, F. and Watkins, W.P., *Co-operation. A Survey of the History, Principles and Organisation of the Co-operative Movement in Great Britain and Ireland* (Manchester: Co-op Union, 1937): Ch. 12, 'Co-operation and Capitalism'; Gronlund, L., *The Co-operative Commonwealth. An Exposition of Modern*

Socialism (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1896); Kallen, H.M., *The Decline and Rise of the Consumer. A Philosophy of Consumer Co-operation* (New York and London: D. Appleton-century Co., 1936).

1.1 Co-operation and The Labour Movement.

A hundred years hence, school text-books and learned treatises will give more space to consumers' Co-operation, its constitution and ramifications, than to the rise and fall of political parties or the personalities of successive prime ministers.
(Sydney and Beatrice Webb, *Consumers' Co-operation*, 1921)¹

The Webbs' honest, if ultimately idealistic, viewpoint, was indicative of a common assumption amongst contemporary activists and supporters of the Movement: the inexorable rise and ultimate triumph of Co-operation was widely, if now surprisingly, accepted as inevitable. The natural superiority and efficiency of Co-operation over Capitalism was a dominant theme of the Movement's propaganda and JTW Mitchell's famous maxim that "the profits of all trade, all industry, all commerce, all importation, all banking and money dealing should fall back again into the hands of the whole people" was generally taken as incontrovertible and irresistible.² Contemporary text-books and histories of Co-operation abound in such faith, propounding the Movement's "own inherent law of continuous and uninterrupted growth" and sure in the belief that:

So powerful has the Movement already become, so impregnable are the well-tryed principles upon which it is founded, so immense are its resources, and so unlimited are its possibilities for further expansion and development, that Co-operation now offers to mankind the only true and complete solution of the social problem of the twentieth century.³

It was believed that the forward march of Co-operation had been set in train and the Movement's propagandists and educators joyously pronounced the coming of the Co-operative Commonwealth, whereby the worker would be set free from the shackles of industrial Capitalism. As scores of students of Co-operation were informed by a widely circulated text-book on the Movement:

The Movement thus tends to diminish the power and authority of the capitalist and private enterprises by setting consumers, and producers also, free from dependence upon them, and making them masters of their own economic destinies. The stores displace the private baker, the wholesale societies the private miller, and the Wheat Pools the grain dealer and speculator. The logical end of all this is clear. If all consumers and producers were co-operators, loyal to their organisations, and closely linked together, the capitalist would be no longer master because he would be superfluous.⁴

Of course, the prophecies of the Webbs proved to be wildly over-optimistic. In fact, something approaching the opposite proved to be nearer the case and as a

consequence a recent historian of the Movement has dejectedly concluded that "The English Co-operative Movement has received scant attention from professional historians in recent years, although it was one of the largest working-class associations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries".⁵ In a recent examination of the historiography of the Co-operative Movement, Peter Gurney refers to a "strategy of condescension" adopted by historians and commentators towards the Movement and considers that this has acted as "a major obstacle blocking a proper, critical appreciation of this important location of working-class creativity and practice".⁶ Similarly, and with an ironic turn of phrase, Labour historian Paddy Maguire has recently referred to the dominant historiographical trend as producing 'respectable' histories, situating Co-operation firmly within the discourse of Victorian self-improvement and denying it an oppositional character that sought to change society.⁷ Such academic histories are somewhat in contrast to the view that had been held within some influential quarters of the Movement. In consequence, Gurney quite rightly distinguishes between "histories from the inside", those produced within the structures of the Movement - "not merely as the product of passive reflection ... but as an active ingredient in a developing movement culture" - and "histories from the outside", wherein working-class reformism was the conceptual framework and:

Co-operation figured as the province of a small, selfish stratum of the working class, the respectable, sober artisans or labour aristocrats who had turned their backs on revolution once and for all.⁸

In his assessment of the post-1950s literature, Gurney recognises the varied nuances of approach adopted by different historians and concedes that in the shift of emphasis from an institutional focus to the broader concerns of working-class experience and culture - from Labour to working-class history - there has emerged a far superior scholarship. However, marginalised within this historiographical development have been the aims, ideals and experiences of Co-operators whose aspirations have often been reduced to simple self-interest, and correspondingly found themselves presented as being more "interested in money than in social development".⁹ The single most influential articulation of this view of the Co-operative Movement, whereby a materialistic concern with the dividend, the return of the Society's trading surplus to the consumers, replaced

the Owenistic vision of a New Moral World, was presented by Sydney Pollard in an article first published in 1967. According to his argument, the consolidation of the Rochdale model of Co-operation after 1844 dissipated the radical proclivities of earlier experiments, which had sought a confrontation with Capitalist society, and offered in their place an inspiration "dissolved into misty vagueness", wherein honest men of goodwill had erected "a powerful means of social amelioration, but were essentially reconciled to the existence of capitalism as such".¹⁰

In subsequent examinations of the British Labour Movement, Pollard's thesis has figured prominently with the result that little or no detailed discussion of Co-operation has followed its post-Chartist phase. In his assessment of Labour Movement historiography, John Benson confidently asserts that the Movement's phenomenal growth resulted from the abandonment of its original Socialist objectives and that it consequently lost "much of its fascination for historians of the labour movement".¹¹ That was undoubtedly so for a generation of post-war historians schooled in the dogma of the New Left who were concerned with more 'heroic' phases of Labour struggle. The post-war literature correspondingly groans under the weight of Marxist and Labourist accounts of the English Revolution, Owenism and Chartism; a research agenda which also encompassed the formation and development of Trade Unionism and The Labour Party, organisations which, unlike the Co-operative Movement, clearly demonstrated influence at the time when those histories were in preparation. As a recent summary of British working-class history has argued:

The study of class has never been dispassionate. Histories of the working-class are not detached studies of how manual workers lived in previous generations, even if they present themselves as such. They are also political documents. They contain implicit, and sometimes explicit, ideas about social and political change, which can only be understood in the context of historians' own beliefs about the nature of class divisions and hopes for political change.¹²

The perceived anti-radical nature of the post-Rochdale Movement, whereby the consolidation of the dividend on cash purchases was uncritically accepted as an index of 'embourgeoisement', making for 'stakeholders' in capitalist society, thus led Labour scholars to virtually write Co-operation out of working-class history; denying it the prominence accorded to trade unionism which offered the 'credibility' of workplace struggle or the Labour Party which, in contesting the electoral platform, operated in a

straight-forward political context.¹³ One of the most absurd manifestations of this trend appears in Andrew Davies' study of the British Labour Movement wherein he presents a schematic diagram of the *Labour Movement's Organisations and Parties*. Clearly separated into two elements, the reformist tradition (trade unions and Labourist bodies) distinct from avowedly Socialist elements (Communist Party and other small Socialist parties), the massive Co-operative Movement in all its ramifications (retailing, wholesaling, manufacturing, publishing, cultural organisations, youth groups etc.) does not figure at all. Thus, a working-class organisation with a membership greater than the combined total of all other workers' organisations put together is left out of the picture and seemingly fulfils no role in the history of working-class consciousness and experience since the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁴

A further factor underlying this trend in the historiography has been suggested by Peter Gurney. He stresses the detachment from, rather than the commitment to, the Labour Movement, evident within the species he refers to as 'Homo Academicus', an increasingly professionalised cadre of university scholars. In such circumstances the Co-operative Movement has found itself between two extremes: a research agenda influenced by a desire to produce history that could inspire radical potential and commitment, for which Co-operation seemed to lack political ambition¹⁵; and, alternatively, a less passionate, 'routinised' scholarship which, slavish to the dominant view of the Co-operative Movement as a 'stores movement', has been unwilling to penetrate beyond to a more considered assessment of the Movement as a central incidence and expression, economically, politically and culturally, of British working-class experience in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁶ Labour historians Bill Lancaster and Paddy Maguire, while acknowledging this political interpretation of the historiography, argue for a more generous acceptance of working-class organisations providing "a class-based service" rather than "a party-based sermon". Additionally, they view the essentially provincial nature of the Movement as having been crucial in the resulting treatment of it by historians:

Avowedly provincial, the relative absence of a national (and certainly of a metropolitan) voice has scarcely headlined the movement either in contemporary political debates or in subsequent historical discourse ... Historians in general have preferred centralised organisations as these provide easier access to records, publishing, policies, personalities

and debates, particularly if the centralised coincides, as it generally has in the twentieth century, with the metropolitan.¹⁷

It is now necessary to suggest an acceptable method for integrating Co-operative history into the broader current of Labour history. A number of historians have offered potential strategies which generally demand a shift away from a doctrinal emphasis on production and work-based struggle, towards a more political notion of consumption. In a recent discussion of the decline of British radicalism, Dorothy Thompson has sought a new emphasis for 'non-political' forms of Labour organisation. Commenting on the decades following the Chartist agitation, traditionally damned on the Left as the forcing-ground of the ideology of gradualism and reformism, she argues for a more sympathetic view of labourers' responses:

[I]t was precisely the retreat from the centralising politics of the radical reformers of the 1830s ... that made it possible for the regularly employed working people to return to their own forms of protection and defence within their own trades and their own communities. To see such activities as "non-political" is to use a very narrow definition of politics.¹⁸

A small number of younger scholars have echoed Thompson's concerns. The notion of reformism has been subjected to some scrutiny and in the process has become problematised as a conceptual strategy, especially in terms of its lack of sensitivity: "it ignores distinctions and complexities that are important both for recovering the richness of a tradition and to political practice itself".¹⁹ For studies of Co-operation, that would require a reconciliation of idealism with material improvement. It has been argued that the acceptance of Co-operation as "the transformative social and economic strategy based on the association of workers around the sphere of consumption" offers a strategy to achieve that analytical shift.²⁰ A cultural studies perspective has now deeply pervaded the traditional disciplines of academia and history has not escaped its influence: the old orthodoxies have had to accommodate the new critical methodologies derived from linguistics, semiology, psychoanalysis and feminism. So far, Co-operation has not figured to any extent in the emerging new approaches to Labour history. A notable example is Patrick Joyce's *Visions of the People* (1991), which modishly claimed to expand "the senses in which 'language' is used by historians" and adopted a particular emphasis on "The 'semiology' of community".²¹ As a study of industrial Lancashire

from the mid-nineteenth century through to the First World War, which purports to examine popular experience and popular politics in that region, it is striking that there is not one single mention of the Co-op. The massive impact and legacy of Rochdale Co-operation, nowhere more evident than in the north west of England, has not impressed itself on Joyce's influential study at all. The social historian of Lancashire considers this an "outrageous omission" and expressed even greater concern that reviewers of the book failed to pass comment on that notable failing.²²

As the research focus shifts from institutional associations of working-class consciousness (as previously argued, invariably explored in terms of trade unions and political parties), to what have been considered the 'main sites' of working people's experience and desires: "the home, the market place, the locality, and the imagined 'nation'"; the Co-operative Movement, which represented to many of its millions of members a crucial expression of community identity and uniquely perhaps, through the myriad incidence of daily acts of consumption by its women members, the creation of a distinct socio-political identity for a huge, but marginalised, sector of the population, still fails to register in the discussion.²³ Happily, one historian, whose central concern of inquiry is the Co-operative Movement, has sought to integrate the issues of culture, class, consumption and identity, derived from modern critical theory, with the more traditional perspectives of associational form and class expression embodied within institutional structures. For Peter Gurney, "the growth of consumer and class consciousness in the early twentieth century (is) a topic which deserves systematic enquiry".²⁴ He notes that on the Left there has traditionally been a singular lack of attention paid to consumption, which, along with other aspects of popular culture, has been demonised as a commercial activity serving the interests of Capitalism. He contrasts that assumption with the credibility accorded to the sphere of production, regarded as "a source of authenticity and 'species being'".²⁵ In seeking to revise this dichotomy and to gain recognition for Co-operation as a transformative social-political activity, he argues that "the constitution of a particular mode of consumption (Co-operation) generated fierce class and gender conflicts which were just as heated and important, though often not as visible, as those which occurred around production".²⁶ This association of workers around the sphere of consumption, whereby participation

and membership are contrasted with passivity and acquiescence, is recognised as being of considerable significance in that period of commercial transformation dominated by what Michel Aglietta has labelled the "capitalist production of the mode of consumption".²⁷ In an examination of such circumstances from the perspective of Co-operation, Gurney has argued that:

As many workers enjoyed higher earnings, especially from the turn of the century, they were faced with a bewildering array of commodities from which to choose. And the choice between Sunlight Soap, Lipton's Teas or the productions of the Co-operative Wholesale Society, the choice between being a co-operator or a 'mass consumer', *was a cultural and political choice of major consequence*. No object of material culture was necessarily anti-revolutionary; what really mattered was how the consumption of particular goods was organised socially through different and competing forms of association.²⁸

What can repeatedly be demonstrated is the widespread hostility shown to the Movement from Capitalist businessmen and their supporters who recognised in Co-operation both a serious commercial and ideological threat. It is, for example, Stephen Yeo's contention that there were "those in twentieth-century Britain who thought Co-operation more powerful than many co-operators did"²⁹, and that in consequence "a broadly successful vaccination programme was undertaken by capital, against labour's associated potential".³⁰ The contest and conflict was manifested in a variety of ways: the establishment of private traders' defence associations; manufacturers' boycotts against the Co-op; and Parliamentary initiatives, political and financial, designed to hinder the Movement, being the more obvious strategies.³¹ It is evident from such responses that private interests recognised, on their part, the ideological nature of the marketplace and were prepared to confront and combat mutual forms of trading. As Peter Gurney has recently demonstrated, certain factions within the Co-operative Movement articulated the case for struggle against Capitalist organisation, and consequently, as would be expected, initiated a reaction.³² In the view of Stephen Yeo:

The vision of the main body of the movement has been that through associations for exchange (co-operative societies/stores) members would use what they produced and produce what they used, making capital into a hired servant of theirs rather than their continuing as hired servants of capital.

As such, Co-operation was a "living critique of competition"³³, and historians have remained largely ignorant of these tensions and have generally failed to acknowledge that consumption, as well as production, offered the potential for class expression and

struggle.

Labour historiography must also come to recognise the close affiliations, both formal and informal, between the varied wings of the Labour Movement, which have been a constant feature of Labour organisation in Britain since the late nineteenth century. In a direct challenge to the rigidity of that historiography, Left historians Raphael Samuel and Gareth Stedman Jones have offered a reconsideration of the character of Labour Socialism and its array of interlinked associations in the first half of this century:

At a local level, for instance, if we leave aside trade unions, perhaps the most striking difference would have been the importance attached to Co-operation. In most general histories of the Labour Party, Co-operation merits no more than a cursory mention. It is usually treated as a nineteenth-century remnant harking back to the remote days of Robert Owen and the Rochdale pioneers and this picture is reinforced by its nineteenth-century historians who conceive its evolution to be that from community-building to shop-keeping. But in fact the greatest period of the growth of Co-operation was the first thirty years of this century, not only as a form of retailing, but also as a social and political movement. The Utopia of most Labour Party activists at least until the Second World War was entitled the 'Co-operative Commonwealth'. Nearly all Labour families were convinced Co-operators. Thus Co-ops were represented on the National Executive Committee, not out of deference to the pre-history of the Labour Party, but because they represented a crucial component of Labour's inter-war strength. The largest women's organisation in the Labour Party was the Co-operative Women's Guild. Meetings of local Labour Parties often took place in recently built Co-op halls.

The place of Co-operation in the history of the Labour Party after 1918 is only one indication of the extent to which the Party at that time - or more accurately its affiliated institutions - aspired to organise the total environment of its active members in a way reminiscent of the pre-1914 German Social Democratic Party and it is a clue to why so many active supporters thought in terms of a labour movement, rather than just a Labour Party.³⁴

The tendency to write histories from an institutional perspective, emphasising policy and the decision-taking structures, has consequently downplayed the lived experience of day to day membership far removed from the areas of leadership. For Co-operation that demands an acceptance from Labour historians that the Movement was an integral and dynamic part of working-class culture and played a role in the wider debates concerning Labour. There is abundant evidence to support such an assertion: the role of Co-operation in local Socialist politics; the widespread transfer of trade union funds into the Co-operative Wholesale Society Bank following World War One; the deepening perception within the Labour Movement after 1917 that Co-operation

represented a more desirable form of economic organisation than private enterprise, which had, from the perspective of the Left, become synonymous with profiteering; the numerous instances of material support provided by Co-op Societies to unions engaged in local disputes; similar acts of generosity and sympathy paid to the hunger marchers of the inter-war years; the deepening apprehension on behalf of the State that the Movement was becoming more involved in the wider sphere of Labour politics; the Movement's national schemes to raise and provide assistance for Republican Spain in the mid-1930s, and the propaganda emanating from sections of the Movement supporting a People's Front against Fascism and the National Government; and the clear recognition throughout the sectors of the Labour Movement that the Co-op was a proper ally in the struggle against industrial injustice.³⁵

The case that Co-operation has been inadequately represented in accounts of the British Labour Movement and working-class history should not be taken to suggest that the history of the Co-operative Movement is yet unwritten. Press and publishing ventures were developed by the Movement, generating and disseminating huge amounts of information and, as Peter Gurney has acknowledged, the Movement's own histories - "histories from the inside" - represent an important element of the Movement's culture and a perceived force for propaganda.³⁶ The following section will examine the main contours of Co-operation's development into the twentieth-century.

1.2 The Co-operative Movement in the Age of Film

The Slogan of the Twentieth Century

Co-operation is the slogan of the twentieth century among all progressive wide-awake people. It is the era of trusts and combines. To such an extent has organisation been carried that the people must organise to protect their interests, for the individual no longer stands any show as against the combine. The time has arrived when to combat the trust successfully it is necessary to form a colossal trust of the people, by the people, and for the people.

(The Co-operative News, 14 May, 1910)

Unless the workers control capital, capital will control the workers.

Through Co-operation the workers have acquired capital. It is seen in Co-operative stores and bakeries. It stands solidly in CWS factories and farms. It is employed in Britain, India, Africa and Canada. Millions of pounds of capital are under the workers' control. Since the war this has enabled them to restrain prices - for example, flower and bread prices. It is not enough - not nearly enough. Complete what you have begun. The workers capital is the fruit of pounds, shillings and pennies, saved through Co-operative stores. Continue the good work. *To achieve the control of capital invest your savings in the stores.*

(The Wheatsheaf, local pages Colne and District Co-operative Society, October, 1919)

The history of the British Consumer Co-operative Movement is, in many respects, a local or regional affair. However, the numerous community based Societies had increasingly to respond to national trends in commerce, retailing and demographics, and correspondingly strengthened their associations with federal Co-operative bodies, such as the Co-operative Union and the English and Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Societies. It is possible, then, to briefly sketch out the main lines of development in Co-operative trade and activity since the late Victorian period.³⁷

The Movement's progress within the second half of the nineteenth century was rapid and within a few decades of the successful establishment of the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Society (1844):

The main features of the movement's national identity were in place. The Co-operative Wholesale Society was established in 1863, the Co-operative Insurance Society in 1867, the Co-operative Congress in 1869, the Co-operative Bank in 1872, the Co-operative Union in 1873 and the Women's Co-operative Guild in 1883. In that sense the movement offered its members the economic equivalent of a 'cradle to the grave' service by the last quarter of the nineteenth century.³⁸

It has been estimated that by the turn of the century Co-operative stores accounted for

approximately 6-7 per cent of the United Kingdom's retail consumer goods market; while in some regional markets the local Society could command the lion's share for some products, placing them in a position to determine local prices. The Movement's advantage over the large number of independent traders derived from its successful strategy of vertical integration and the development of the branch system. Co-operative historian Malcolm Hornsby has summarised the situation:

The competitiveness of co-operative societies was based upon retailing efficiency at local level, combined with a central federal structure which provided low procurement costs obtained by the scale economics of centralised buying and backward vertical integration to the most advantageous point in the production chain. This structure gave the advantages of quality control, predictability of supply and cost benefits.³⁹

Examining the context of late Victorian society, Johnston Birchall posits five factors, which, taken in conjunction, "explain much of the 'why' of Co-operative growth": the need for a retailing revolution, the ability of the Co-op to provide it, the availability of talented promoters, a favourable climate of opinion, and the creation of a supportive legal framework based on the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts.⁴⁰

Admittedly, powerful competition was looming in the rise of multiple trading firms, yet, the Co-operative Movement, firmly entrenched in many communities, entered the new century in a confident mood: the 1,229 Societies boasted a total membership of 1.5 million and a combined annual trade of over £50,000,000, which made it a commercial and associational giant. Moreover, beyond actual membership and financial statistics there were more concrete expressions of the Co-op's presence in the industrial landscape. Social historian, John Walton, has noted for instance, how, in a locality where the Co-op had attained a commanding market penetration, a Society could appear ubiquitous, with its increasingly impressive and distinct buildings communicating the Society's power:

Not only were the branches which, in towns like Preston, were colonising every working class neighbourhood by the turn of the century, often built in an ornate and architectural style ... there were also the flagship buildings displaying pride in the society's progress, such as the great central stores and department stores, offices and headquarters buildings, warehouses and bakeries which were opened with ever more elaborate ceremonies and ever more eminent speakers. The big stores, especially, became particular features of the larger Lancashire towns around the turn of the century, rivalling the town halls and other emblems of municipal socialism which also represented a powerful influence for social improvement and harnessed civic pride and

identity in positive ways through the workings of local democracy.⁴¹

However, Britain's High Streets had not totally succumbed to the march of the Co-operatives. Whereas the Movement's organisational structure had presented distinct advantages over independent traders, it in turn faced the challenge of giant food chains such as Liptons, Home and Colonial, Maypole Dairies and International Tea Stores, which were becoming a significant market force by the 1890s. Multiple trading in non-foods was a further characteristic of the late Victorian 'retail revolution', and the consolidation of efficient trading concerns like Marks & Spencer, which had recently moved to fixed-site trading, and the American variety chain of F.W. Woolworths, and the spread of large department stores made for a difficult diversification for Co-operative Societies away from their notable area of strength, the food sector. The multiples, with their highly competitive pricing policy and lavish advertising quickly established a national market profile and sorely tested the traditional trading loyalty of Co-operators. The Co-operatives' emphasis on service and high dividends was in stark contrast to the price competitiveness of the multiple traders.⁴²

In spite of the competition, the Movement continued to develop new markets, improve market share and expand volume sales well into the new century. The number of Co-operators grew steadily and by the outbreak of the First World War the Movement claimed over three million members and considerably more customers, while the various Co-operative Societies accounted for approximately ten per cent of the nation's retail trade. Along with the general growth of membership and trade by the distributive Societies, economist and Labour scholar G.D.H. Cole points to another outstanding feature of Co-operative development in the years before the First World War:

[T]he expansion of the CWS which grew steadily both by building new factories and depots of its own and by taking over a number of the independent productive Societies which had been previously controlled largely by federal investments of the retail Societies.⁴³

The CWS rose to be one of Britain's largest businesses. In 1907, the combined Wholesale Societies (English and Scottish) were ranked twenty-first amongst the largest

industrial employers in the United Kingdom. Tremendous expansion in the next three decades improved the ranking for the CWS alone to ninth in 1935, wherein a total of 49,182 employees were registered. If the employees of the one thousand plus retail Co-operative Societies were added to that figure it is evident that the Movement progressed into the twentieth century as a commercial giant and leading employer in the manufacturing and distributive sectors. In 1938, the CWS operated 192 factories and workshops in which were produced goods to the value of £47,000,000 annually. The total sales of the CWS stood at £125,000,000, while those of the SCWS amounted to £27,000,000.⁴⁴ In addition to retail and manufacturing, the Movement, primarily under the auspices of the CWS, participated successfully in the financial services sector. The former Co-operative Insurance Company was re-organised into the Co-operative Insurance Society in 1899, and was taken over by the Joint Wholesale Societies in 1912-13 when it began to considerably expand business. The CWS Banking Department also expanded from its modest beginnings as the Loan and Deposit Department of the CWS. It was successful in securing substantial business from trades unions and local authorities as well as industrial account holders and would eventually emerge as a leading high street bank, achieving full clearing status in 1975. Co-operation contributed to the emergent Building Societies Movement with the formation of the Southern Co-operative Permanent Building Society in 1884, which ten years later dropped its regional specificity, reflecting its growing national network of agents. The Co-operative Permanent was a fully autonomous organisation with ideals which located it close to the wider Consumer Movement. It remained in membership of the Co-operative Union until March 1970.⁴⁵

The First World War brought a significant alteration in the relationship of the Movement to the State. Political neutrality had long been enshrined as an ideal by Co-operators as it seemed to aid in the widest participation for the democratic organisation. However, the politics of consumption of wartime Britain raised the controversial question of Co-operators seeking "direct representation in Parliament and on all local administrative bodies" to a new level of importance.⁴⁶ A leading advocate for rationing, the Co-operative Movement sought to secure fair treatment for the poorer sections of the consuming public yet persistently met hostility in trying to promote its egalitarian ideal.

The Movement's principal grievances have been summarised by Sydney Pollard:

Among the chief of these complaints were unfair treatment over the allocation of food, particularly of sugar and wheat; biased and hostile decisions by the military selection tribunals over the deferment of staff; the application of the Excess Profits Duty to Co-operative dividends, though they had for many years been recognised by the revenue authorities to be rebates rather than profits; and the persistent slighting and neglect of Co-operators in the manning of Ministries and local tribunals dealing with distributive matters.⁴⁷

The consequence of such maltreatment was the direct entry of Co-operation into politics, a decision only arrived at after considerable soul-searching. At the 1918 'Coupon Election', A.E. Waterson became the first successful candidate of the National Co-operative Representation Committee, securing a seat at that centre of producer Co-operation, Kettering. His immediate acceptance of the Labour Party whip established the important precedent of the Co-operative Party (1919) working closely with the Labour Party.⁴⁸

Wartime conditions brought about other crucial changes in distribution and consumption, which impacted significantly on the Co-operative Movement. The evident fairness of its treatment of the consumer won considerable praise and support and retail Societies found their figures swelling healthily. By 1919, there were 1,357 Societies with a membership of 4,131,000 which accounted for an annual trade of £199,000,000.⁴⁹ That expansion in membership significantly widened the social base of membership, which increasingly began to incorporate relatively lower income groups. For many reasons the Movement felt confident about progress and considered itself in the vanguard of important social, economic and political trends. As Lancaster and Maguire have recently observed:

The war, particularly after 1917, also witnessed fundamental shifts in expectations and attitudes. To those who considered the war to be the inevitable outcome of international capitalist conflicts, Co-operation offered a substantially different agenda for the future.⁵⁰

In fundamental respects, the Movement remained vital throughout the inter-war period and continued to enjoy spectacular growth. A notable trend was the re-orientation of Co-operative strength from its traditional heartlands of the North to the areas of economic recovery and development in the South and Midlands.⁵¹ The new

'super' Societies of the inter-war years were located in the South: the progressive Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society (RACS), trading in South-East London, claimed 332,000 members by 1940; and the gigantic London Society added a further 817,000 to the impressive membership total of the metropolitan area. A series of post-First World War merges and amalgamations had led to the formation of large-scale Societies such as London and South Suburban (South-West London), which were efficient, aggressive and innovative.⁵² The region's vitality and the successful Co-op approach to commerce was reflected in the fact that only the Southern Section of the Co-operative Union recorded a significant increase in total sales for the period 1919-36, with the volume of Co-operative trade more than doubling to £51.2 million in that period.⁵³

The CWS, through its significant investment in new plant and processes, and the retail Co-operative Societies, through successful marketing and selling strategies, readily adapted to the new trading circumstances of the inter-war years. Centralisation and diversification enabled Co-operation to engage in a more concerted effort in the new vibrant consumer industries. Nearby Societies invested in federal schemes to establish regional bakeries, dairies and laundries and in terms of federal retail activity the trading of funerals and pharmaceuticals were significant areas of growth. By 1935, these federal local Societies numbered over fifty. The successful expansion of such provisions was to some extent linked to new distribution patterns, which retail Co-operatives helped pioneer. The regional profile of the Movement meant that Societies were keenly aware of local markets and responded quickly to the new demographic circumstances of inter-war Britain with its characteristic ribbon development, suburban expansion and new housing estates. Co-operative Societies met the challenge with innovative canvassing campaigns, the increased use of hire-purchase, the development of doorstep delivery services and investment in mobile shops. The Movement achieved striking success in the sale of milk and bread, attaining market shares approaching 20 per cent by the end of the thirties. Co-operative farms, dairies and bakeries contributed to a vertically integrated chain of production and supply, making the Co-operative Movement a vital contributor to the nation's diet. The establishment of national co-ordinating bodies such as the Co-operative Milk Trade Association (1930), the National Co-operative Coal Association (1930) and the National Laundry Trade Association (1941), greatly assisted

the Movement in its dealings with government and national marketing boards and the Co-operative share of those trades proved significant.⁵⁴

Co-operative production and retailing also participated in the emergent consumer goods industries. Large urban Societies established department stores, such as the Tower House store (1933) operated by the RACS and the Newgate Street store opened for Newcastle Co-operators in 1934. Although the Movement had a limited impact in this new sector of retailing, smaller regional Societies invested in efficient and impressive central stores and emporia through which were sold a bewildering variety of Co-operatively produced consumer goods and services.⁵⁵ The larger Co-op stores incorporated beauty and hair salons and tempted their customers with attractively appointed cafes. The increasing demand for leisure goods and associated life-style products led to the appearance of the Co-operatively produced 'Defiant' radio in 1934, the marketing of records on the CWS's own label, Unison, and increased production at the CWS Tyseley factory in Birmingham, which expanded the range and unit turnover of the Federation brand bicycle.⁵⁶

Although the Movement sought to diversify into new markets, it accomplished only partial success. The Co-operatives' core business remained food retailing, with over 70 per cent of their trade in grocery and provisions.⁵⁷ While sales of grocery remained fairly static, substantial growth was achieved in butchery, green foods and other fresh foods, reflecting a re-orientation of consumer demand through improvements in distribution, and for some families, a more favourable cost of living index. Profit ratios were often higher for retailers in these buoyant trading areas, and in particular the Co-operative Movement was able to maintain high dividends and member-customer loyalty through the success of bakery, dairy and doorstep deliveries, which expanded considerably in the 1920s and 1930s.⁵⁸

The Co-operatives' continued prosperity through diversification and improved sales was widely commented on during the period; especially as the Movement largely maintained its economic success in the face of general depression. Such a performance won Co-operation many adherents and much acclaim. As Maguire and Lancaster have observed:

Whilst many businesses went to the wall and particularly in the mid-1930s whole

industries appeared on the brink of total collapse, the co-operative movement continued to grow. Its rivalry with private capital and its self-proclaimed status as an alternative to competitive capitalism were perhaps never more sharply focused than in the 1930s.⁵⁹

However, it is evident with hindsight that the Movement failed to meet the challenges thrown up by new trends in demand and fashionable departures in distribution. Significantly, the growth in sales by multiple outlets far outstripped that of Co-operative Societies, and in particular in recent product lines like ready-made clothes and shoes. A successful multiple firm like Burtons, which had over 400 branches by 1935, through investment in extensive advertising, innovations in salesmanship and efficient investment in smaller, non-elaborate retail units, sustained a keen competitive edge over the Co-operatives. A typical Co-op store expensively drew on classicist preferences in architectural presentation (or increasingly in more voguish modernist styles) and the solid permanence of such buildings was in stark contrast to the multiples' approach of renting small shops allowing for lower initial investment as well as improved mobility in a market that was contorting to a significant reorientation in demographics.⁶⁰ Moreover, the Movement's 'reputation for quality', which often translated into higher prices and reduced choice, and a sometimes sluggish approach to new trends in salesmanship and advertising, often placed the Co-op at a disadvantage to leaner multiple businesses, which were often more willing to innovate in the newest retailing techniques. In important emerging and expanding markets, those exemplified by taste and fashion and a characteristic element of the new consumer demand of the inter-war period, the Movement failed to exert itself fully and in an important respect was beginning to lose touch with consumer trends. As Kinloch and Butt have noted:

Shoppers then, as now, were prepared to sacrifice a degree of quality for fashion. Perhaps the Co-operative Movement, with a tradition of making goods to last, rather than producing cheap and more expendable goods, was failing to satisfy the consumer.⁶¹

The efficiency of the Movement was also compromised by an over-reliance on small local distributive units, which failed to match the economies of scale of the newer multiples. To some extent that was a reversal of circumstances and was only partially solved through federal action. The result was a declining sales per member, a problem that came in for considerable scrutiny in the post-war period. It should be borne in mind that the consumer Co-operative Movement remained confident in the inter-war

period and that the serious structural problems that were beginning to store up would ultimately have to be confronted in the 1950s, when increased affluence made matters considerably more acute. In fact, a strategy had emerged in the mid-1930s in the form of a 'Ten Year Plan of Co-operative Development', which was designed to revitalise the Movement in time for the centenary celebration of the Rochdale Pioneers in 1944.⁶²

In an important way the Second World War acted as a check on recent trading developments and market conditions returned to something like the circumstances characteristic of the late Victorian period, which suited the Co-operative Movement: choice was restricted to fairly narrow limits and the reward for customer loyalty - the dividend - received a temporary rise in popularity. The Movement's reputation for honesty and fairness, which had been crucially tested and found sound in the turbulent struggles to rationalise consumption in the First World War, ensured substantial levels of registrations with Co-operative Societies following the re-imposition of rationing during World War Two. From a population of nearly 44,000,000, the Co-operative Movement received registrations of over 11,000,000 for most basic foodstuffs by 1942.⁶³ Co-operative retail trade was stabilised at a healthy percentage of the national total and the Movement's factories worked at full capacity to service both consumer demand and to fulfil gigantic contracts from the services.⁶⁴ Malcolm Hornsby has assessed the stability and importance of the Movement on the eve of World War Two:

There was never any doubt that a politically powerful trading federation which collectively controlled around 10 per cent of the retail trade and had a sizeable stake in wholesaling, manufacturing and farming, besides being the biggest distributor of basic foodstuffs, including milk and bread, would be deeply involved in Government plans for war-time food supply.⁶⁵

The consolidation of Co-operation as a system of distribution during the war further encouraged the growth and retention of membership, which had grown by 1946 to a figure approaching ten million. However, G.D.H. Cole's study of the Movement, published in 1945, was already expressing anxiety with regard to the Movement's membership base, as well as to attendant factors such as trade per member and the average size of Societies. He thus commented on recent membership trends:

There is no doubt at all that the great increase of Co-operative membership in recent years has been largely among persons who have not as yet any strong feeling of Co-operative 'loyalty' or much understanding of the principles on which Co-operation is

supposed to rest.⁶⁶

The Movement would remain perplexed by these 'bread and milk' members who failed to meet the loyalty test imposed by Boards of Directors and Movement analysts. In the immediate decade following the war, Co-operators confronted an apparent paradox: trade and membership continued to grow to new high levels, yet it was becoming increasingly evident that the Co-operative Commonwealth was retreating ever further from the grasp of attainment. In some areas the Movement continued to innovate, most notably with the introduction of American style self-service stores, partly attributable to staffing problems in the post-war period.⁶⁷ However, from its pinnacle in the mid-1950s, the Movement plunged into irrevocable decline. A complex of factors contributed to the downturn: a lack of development capital; changing consumption patterns and legislative frameworks; the lack of relevance of the principles of Co-operation in modern Britain; the break-up of traditional communities; the increased role of the State in citizens' well-being; and an apparent conflict between managerialism and membership. Such an unfavourable environment forced the Movement into significant operational and organisational restructuring.⁶⁸

Following the war, the Co-ops faced a frustrating complex of financial problems. Put simply, Societies attempted to maintain high dividend levels in a drive to maintain member-customer loyalty. In the stringent commercial environment of the period, wherein net profit on sales was in decline, dividend levels were maintained through reducing allocation for depreciation and by subsidy out of reserves. Such temporary expedience was compounded by a flight on capital as members were tempted by better savings rates at the Post Office and the Trustee Savings Bank, and were themselves confronting a rising cost of living and inflation. Savings were increasingly withdrawn as more and more consumer goods became available following de-rationing, which commenced in the late 1940s. According to Malcolm Hornsby, the "Lack of development capital was a major factor in the slowing down of Co-operative growth and the erosion of market share in the 1950s".⁶⁹

The financial difficulties, which had seen the establishment of a Financial Policy Committee in 1950 and which aimed to remedy the situation, led to significant problems

with regard to resources for investment. This was illustrated in the Movement's inability to match the competition during the second phase of expansion in self-service trading. Considerably greater sums were required to build larger, new supermarkets, and the Movement's lead, derived from the conversion of existing, smaller units, was soon eroded.

The traditional structures and operations of the Co-operative Movement became increasingly unfit to meet the challenges thrown out by new patterns of consumer demand. The march of the multiples had continued unabated and by 1957 they claimed a market share of over 25 per cent compared with the Movement's 11.62 per cent (within an overall reducing number of shops and an increased size per unit). The retail Societies were often less efficient and were disadvantaged through the requirement to service excessive overheads, both factors in part a historical legacy. The new demands of the increasingly mobile shopper were often poorly served by a small, ill-placed community Co-op store, which operated according to archaic work practices - and opening times. The new consumer - rarely a 'captive customer' - was attracted by competitive prices and was decreasingly tempted by the prospect of accumulating dividend. By the mid-1960s, the Movement was making insufficient surplus to offer the traditional dividend arrangements (partly a consequence of the abolition of Resale Price Maintenance in 1964) and converted to a fashionable trading stamp scheme, which was controversial as it no longer distinguished between member and customer (in its turn the dividend stamp was largely superseded by discounting schemes). Professor Sparks has characterised the circumstances regarding consumption in the period:

The essence of the discussion of consumption is that previous limits on the purchasing power of individuals have been eased so that customer demands and horizons have expanded. As choice has expanded so the willingness of consumers to make decisions has increased. Consumers therefore select and use products, shops and retail locations on a far different basis from that of previous decades and exercise choice in a more informed manner.⁷⁰

The Movement's problems were becoming increasingly apparent to its governing structures and debate intensified with regard to possible strategies for solution. The single most important incidence of this process was the establishment of the Co-operative Independent Commission that reported in 1958. The continued influence of the Co-operative Movement was reflected in the fact that the Commission's Chairman

was Hugh Gaitskell, who attained leadership of the Labour Party by the time of the Commission's final report.⁷¹

Both wider social trends and organisational and operational issues exercised the minds of the Movement's analysts and supporters. Much was made of the decline in appeal of Co-operative principles and the ideals of association. From the high expectations of May 1945, the Movement became disappointed of its treatment by the majority Labour Government, which pursued centrist and statist economic policies and fraternized more readily with producer organisations like the Trades Union Congress and Federation of British Industry. Moreover, the welfare state seemingly encouraged people to expect state help and replaced the initiative of self-help, which had driven the Co-operative Movement for the previous century. Professor Sparks has summarised the situation:

Freedom of association and unity are cornerstones of Co-operation, and are being articulated in Great Britain through the notion of local societies, particularly in the case of retail societies. In practice, however, the need for voluntary organisation for mutual aid and the principles of good neighbourliness and community are being reduced steadily in the post-war period. Society as a concept has been redefined and restructured by the process of the affluent society and the capitalist enterprises that service this society. The role of neighbours, clubs, associations and shared experiences is not one that is as recognised as fifty years ago. Individualism and fragmentation have been the main components of modern Britain with only pressure groups taking on this associative role and then normally as a response to an external threat. For a Movement based on the concept of mutual aid and co-operation it is relevant to note that many are now looking after themselves, by themselves, and that this has been promoted as an expectation by successive governments.⁷²

If we translate some of these wider trends into distinct problems, or perceived problems, confronted by the Co-ops, then the following were among the more pertinent: recruitment; member apathy; and the failure of the Movement's critique of commodity culture. As the Movement's relative decline became more evident the calibre of its managers and officials came to be questioned. Traditionally, the local Co-operative Society had offered the talented working-class youth a crucial opportunity for career advancement and security. The post-war erosion of social and class barriers broadened the horizons and opportunities of the working-class generally, through greater participation in further education and higher education, and subsequently on into recruitment into corporate businesses, which were beginning to figure prominently and

were strongly competing for talent. The Co-operative Movement proved complacent and uncompetitive by comparison and its ability to recruit and harness talented and motivated managers proved disappointing.⁷³ Generally speaking, the Co-ops failed to match their competitors in key areas such as store design and layout, the application of new technology and staff training. In many respects the Movement also suffered by comparison in its approach to advertising and product design. A central source of these difficulties was reckoned to be the large number of small, individual Co-operative Societies, which lacked the efficiency to be derived from economies of scale. These thousand or so local retail Societies wished to preserve their autonomy, small-scale democracy and sense of local community, and resisted calls for amalgamation and merger. Thus, the basic problem was recognised to be that:

The Movement had so far failed to co-ordinate the enormous buying power of the retail and wholesale sides and wield it as a national marketing and sales promotion force. Fragmentation and local autonomy prevailed in almost every field of Co-operative trading at a time when private enterprise was marshalling its forces into specialised, nationally controlled units.⁷⁴

As the efficacy of the Movement's recruitment and employment practices came in for scrutiny, so did its democratic structures and member participation. The distractions of the consumer society were judged to have seriously eroded the democratic potential of retail Co-operation and member apathy to have sapped the democratic vitality of the Movement. Concern with the apathetic member was not novel to the post-World War Two period but the intensity and urgency of the debate with regard to Co-operative democracy reached new levels.⁷⁵ The crux of the problem centred on what the Co-operative Movement was actually offering the bulk of its membership when the appeal of the dividend was patently in decline and the continued social significance of the Movement was in question. The Movement's governors, educationalists and analysts looked alarmingly at the data: diminished attendance at Society meetings; a proportional decline in voting; an increase in uncontested elections; and the decline in membership of the auxiliary organisations such as the Guilds and youth groups.⁷⁶ In such a climate critics queried whether Co-operation had a continued sense of purpose, while its supporters looked for ways to rekindle faith in the Movement's ideals. The status of dividend was much examined and a reaffirmation was sought, "that the aim of Co-

operation [was] not the provision of dividend but the transformation of society"; and the Movement's relation to Socialism was declared problematic and confusing, such that it was:

Vital to the continued development of the Co-operative Movement for us to define this relationship in the context of the affluent society if the Movement is to develop beyond being a permanent [and diminishing] irritant to an expanding capitalist economy.⁷⁷

The appeal of democratic participation at a members meeting was felt lacking in contrast to the attractions offered by the new wealth of home-centred entertainment, the chief of which was recognised to be the popularity of television. In such a context, affluence was thought to have re-structured the class relations of post-war Britain and commentators advised that the Co-operative Movement should re-orientate itself away from its traditional working-class base and become more specifically a consumers' Movement.⁷⁸

In view of the difficulties experienced by both the commercial and democratic representatives of the Movement, it is unsurprising that tensions developed between them. The professional managers were inclined to blame the unwieldy democratic structures for making the Movement unresponsive to change and sluggish in performance, while, in turn, the elected officials bemoaned the poor performance of its hired managers who threatened to discard Co-operative ideals and demonstrated scant regard of the essential Co-operative difference that put the consumer before profit.⁷⁹

Co-operative historian, Peter Gurney, has offered one further explanation for the decline of the Movement, which was essentially fundamental in that, as he maintains, "the Co-operative project was internally flawed and contributed in significant measure to its own defeat".⁸⁰ He judges Co-operation's critique of, and response to, the new commodity culture of the twentieth century to be severely limited. In this argument, the Movement's adherence to rational consumption, predicated on notions of thrift, restraint and utility, made it an anachronism in the face of its competitors. While, conversely:

Consumer capitalists were not constrained by such scruples and for them consumption implied excess and was limited only by the desires of the 'masses' which were waiting to be stimulated.⁸¹

The consumer commodity culture of the new century embraced the pleasures of fantasy and escape, but in contrast, the Victorian legacy of the Co-operative Movement

tyed it to principles of utilitarianism, exemplified in its cautious approach to advertising and a continued faith in its maxim of production for use and not for profit.⁸² It was thus, ultimately, unsuited to maintain a dominant position as distributor of the nation's commodities, and was consequently forced to confront serious actual decline commencing in the late 1950s, as moral imperatives attracted a low and diminishing regard within an enhanced consumerism.

NOTES - Chapter 1

1. Quoted in Bonner, A., *British Co-operation* (Manchester: Co-operative Union, 1961): 137. In other writings the Webbs were not totally uncritical. For a brief discussion of the Webbs' involvement with the Movement, see, 'The Webbs and Co-operation', *The Co-operative Official* (December 1947).
2. Quoted in Mercer, T.W., *Towards The Co-operative Commonwealth* (Manchester: Co-operative Press, 1936): 94. J.T.W. Mitchell was President of the Co-operative Wholesale Society between 1874-1895 and greatly influential in the development of the CWS and the Movement in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. For recent assessments of Mitchell, see, Yeo, S., *Who Was JTW Mitchell?* (Manchester: CWS Membership Services, 1995); Melmoth, G., 'JTW Mitchell and the Shaping of the Co-operative Wholesale Society' in Lancaster, B., and Maguire, P. (eds) *Towards the Co-operative Commonwealth* (Manchester: HWT, 1996).
3. Mercer, T.W., op.cit.: xii-xiii.
4. Hall, F. and Watkins, W.P., *Co-operation* (Manchester: Co-operative Union, 1937): 358. For an examination of 'The Doctrine of the Co-operative Commonwealth' and its centrality to the utopian mission of Co-operation, see, Hornsby, M., *Co-operation in Crisis, challenge and response in the co-operative retail movement in England from the late to the mid-20th century* (Unpublished M.Phil. Thesis, University of York, 1989): 36-47.
5. Gurney, P., *The Making of Co-operative Culture in England, 1870 - 1918* (Unpublished D.Phil. Thesis, University of Sussex, 1989): n.p.
6. Gurney, P., 'Heads, Hands and the Co-operative Utopia: An Essay in Historiography' in *North West Labour History*, 19 (1994/95): 4. Co-operation and Labour Movement historiography is also considered in Lancaster, B. and Maguire, P., 'The Co-operative Movement in historical perspective' in Lancaster, B. and Maguire, P., (eds) op. cit.: 3-5. Dr Gurney's argument is also presented in *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870-1930* (Manchester: MUP, 1996): 1-26.
7. An observation Paddy Maguire made at the Co-operative History Workshop, Stanford Hall, February, 1996. Elsewhere, Maguire has written: "Even overtly sympathetic left historians, like G.D.H. Cole, have been deeply ambivalent in their attitudes, affirming the successes whilst bemoaning the apparent absence of political direction (in all senses of the term), whilst to unsympathetic ones the movement has been the archetypal example of labourism, but without even the political dimension associated with most other labour organisations normally grouped under this heading". Lancaster, B. and Maguire, P., op. cit.: 4.
8. Gurney, P., 'Heads, Hands and the Co-operative Utopia', op. cit.: 10.
9. Johnson, P., *Saving and Spending. The Working-class Economy in Britain 1870-1939* (1985) quoted in Gurney, P., op. cit.: 13. Elsewhere, Keith Burgess has linked the re-emphasis on 'working-class history' with the concerns of post-structuralism: "The historiographical shift in the last 20 years from a concern with the history of the labour movement - 'labour's forward march' - to the history of the working class including the unorganised, the unskilled and women, has established that class is a *construction* and is not a predetermined consequence of structural forces", Burgess, K., review of Joyce, P., *Visions of the People* (1991) in *Scottish Labour History Society Journal*, 27, (1992): 73-74.
10. Pollard, S., 'Nineteenth-Century Co-operation. From Community Building to Shopkeeping' in Briggs, A. and Saville, J. (eds) *Essays in Labour History* (London: MacMillan, 1967). This article represents the fullest articulation of an argument that can be traced back through A.L. Morton and G. Tate to G.D.H. Cole's centenary history of the Co-operative Movement published in 1945. To the former historians the progress and emulation of 'New Model Co-operation', as practised in Rochdale, was simply "the diversion of energy from the politics of class struggle into a more limited field". See, Morton, A.L. and Tate, G., *The British Labour Movement 1770-1920* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1956): 109. Co-operative historian Malcolm Hornsby has demonstrated how historians created a powerful myth of the Rochdale experiment of 1844, and by placing undue attention on the mechanism of

- the dividend ensured that the Co-op would be understood as "a commercially based ameliorative movement". See, Hornsby, op. cit.: 17.
11. Benson, J., *The Working Class in Britain, 1850-1939* (London: Longman, 1989): 188. In a bizarre instance of searching out evidence to support an argument the author cites a local study of inter-war Oxford (hardly a noted centre of Co-operation!) where it was claimed that a large proportion of members were Conservatives and "Co-operation is the very antithesis of socialism". It hardly needs to be stated that Co-operation has achieved minimal recognition in general social histories of the period. Recent studies of wide currency which conform to this tendency include: McCord, N., *British History, 1815-1906* (Oxford: OUP, 1991); Lloyd, T.O., *Empire to Welfare State, English History 1906-1976* (Oxford: OUP, 1979); Blake, R., *The Decline of Power 1915-1964* (London: Paladin, 1986); Royle, E., *Modern Britain: a social history, 1750-1985* (London: Edward Arnold, 1987); McKibbin, R., *Classes and Cultures. England 1918-1951* (Oxford: OUP, 1998).
 12. Savage, M. and Miles, A., *The Remaking of the British Working Class 1840-1940* (London: Routledge, 1994): ix. Chapter one of this study provides a useful summary of the main trends in British Labour historiography since 1945.
 13. It is Lancaster and Maguire's view that "Labour historians in particular, and left historians in general, have preferred to concentrate on organisations and institutions more openly combative and ideologically oppositional or on minuscule sects commemorating their impotence in polemical rectitude and theoretical talismans". Lancaster, B. and Maguire, P., op. cit.: 4.
 14. Davies, A.J., *To Build A New Jerusalem. The British Labour Movement From The 1880s to the 1990s* (London: Nicholas Joseph, 1992). The diagram is reproduced inside the front and back covers. Further recent general surveys of the British Labour Movement and working-class history which have perpetuated a marginalised role for the Co-operative Movement include: Burgess, K., *The Challenge of Labour* (London: Croom Helm, 1980); Benson, J., op. cit.; Hopkins, E., *A Social History of the English Working Classes* (London, Edward Arnold, 1979); Cole, M., 'The Labour Movement Between The Wars' in Martin, D.E. and Rubinstein, D. (eds), *Ideology and The Labour Movement* (London: Croom Helm, 1979); and Davis, M., *Comrade or Brother? The History of the British Labour Movement 1789-1951* (London: Pluto, 1993).
 15. Margaret Cole evokes the quaint view of "the sleepy English Co-operative Movement". See Cole, op. cit.: 192.
 16. The disparaging phrase is Pollard's. Gurney suggests that the transformation towards a more detached scholarship was also bound up with the triumph of Thatcherism and the crisis of Labour. For an incidence of that unease concerning the Rightward drift of academic history, see, 'Conspiring historians?', *The Guardian*, (16 April 1996): 8.
 17. Lancaster, B. and Maguire, P., op. cit.: 4. The authors also see this lack of a centralised, metropolitan identity as helping to marginalise Co-operation within business history, adding that business historians "have opted for a largely *ex post facto* teleology, celebrating the rise of contemporary retailers in terms of individual entrepreneurship, innovation and market dynamics, a version of history that has left little room for the largest single retailer in the country", *ibid.*
 18. Thompson, D., 'Radical Rethink' in *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, (22 September 1995): 28.
 19. David Bentham quoted in Gurney, P., op. cit.: 13. For a recent examination of the current state of Labour history, see, 'Conference Report - "The Future of Labour History"', *Labour History Review* (Winter 1990).
 20. Gurney, P., 'Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Working-Class Consumption in England, 1870-1940'. Unpublished paper presented at the Social History Society Conference (January 1993): 3; Gurney, P., *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870-1930*, op. cit.: 29-57.
 21. Joyce, P., *Visions of the People. Industrial England and the question of class 1848-1914* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991). The quotations are taken from the inner sleeve. For a discussion of the impact of post-structuralism on Labour history see: Flett, K., 'Where is labour going?', *Labour History Review* (Spring 1993): 35-36; Samuel, R., 'Reading the Signs', *History Workshop Journal*,

- 32-33, (1992).
22. Walton, J.K., 'Co-operation in Lancashire 1844-1914', *North West Labour History*, 19 (1994/95). For reviews of Joyce see, Belchem, J., *Labour History Review* (Autumn 1992): 43-44; Burgess, K., *Scottish Labour History Society Journal*, op. cit.
 23. Bourke, J., *Working Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960* (London: Routledge, 1994): 1. Recent feminist histories of the Labour Movement and women's histories provide little analysis of Co-operation as a site of women's political experience. See, Davis, M., op. cit.; Purvis, J., (ed), *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945* (London: UCL, 1995). In a recent study, Bill Lancaster makes the interesting suggestion that the focus should be shifted away from women as passive consumers, a traditional notion of the Left, and "towards a perspective that views women as rational actors who often articulated their concerns through the 'world of goods'", *ibid.* Lancaster does not progress this idea to consider the position of the female customer-member of a Co-operative Society who even more clearly occupies a political position within the sphere of consumption. Lancaster, B., *The Department Store. A Social History* (Leicester: LUP, 1995): 192.
 24. Gurney, P., 'Heads ...', op. cit.: 17.
 25. Gurney, P., 'Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Working-Class Consumption in England, 1870-1940', op. cit.: 1.
 26. *Ibid.*: 4.
 27. Quoted in Gurney, P., 'Heads ...': 18. See also his treatment of Aglietta's thesis in Gurney, P., 'Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Working-Class Consumption in England, 1870-1940', op. cit.: 1-2.
 28. Gurney, P., 'Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Working-Class Consumption in England, 1870-1940': 4. In contrast to the Capitalist mode of mass consumption Gurney posits what he terms the moral economy of Co-operation, see: 23. Emphasis in the original.
 29. Yeo, S. (ed), *New Views of Co-operation* (London: Routledge, 1988): 207. This collection of essays is an important study contributing a "reinterpretation of the changing place of working-class association in capitalist Britain, with particular reference to Co-operation and the Co-operative movement", *ibid.*: xii.
 30. *Ibid.*: 5. Accordingly, Lancaster and Maguire dryly comment that, "Opponents of co-operation, like William Hesketh Lever, had fewer illusions about whose class interests the movement served, which certainly did not include, in his view, those of capitalists like himself". Lancaster, B. and Maguire, P., op. cit.: 6. The same point was forcefully made by Tony Benn in his opening address to the Co-operative History Workshop, July 1994, held at the Co-operative College, Loughborough: "If I were to look at all the things in my life that have seemed to me to be the most powerful, as weapons for progress, it is the argument for democracy which is deeply rooted in the movement. When one starts asking democratic questions then one really does anger powerful people, as the movement has often discovered in its various battles with private retailers and their political allies". The text of this speech is reproduced in Lancaster, B. and Maguire, P., op. cit.: 1-2.
 31. For details of these activities see: Yeo, S., 'Rival Clusters of Potential: Ways of Seeing Co-operation'; Maguire, P., 'Co-operation and Crisis: Government, Co-operation and Politics, 1917-22'; and Killingback, N., 'Limits to Mutuality: Economic and Political Attacks on Co-operation During the 1920s and 1930s', all in Yeo, S. (ed), op. cit. For a discussion of private traders defence initiatives and manufacturers boycotts, see, Gurney, P., 'Co-operative Culture and Working-Class Politics in England, 1870-1940', op. cit.: 23-35; and Gurney, P., *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870-1930*, op. cit.: 95-125.
 32. In a useful discussion, Dr Gurney reveals how Co-operative education was seen as a crucial part of the general transformative strategy of the Movement, Gurney, P., *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870-1930*, op. cit.: 29-57.
 33. Yeo, S. (ed), op. cit.: 1-2.
 34. Samuel, R. and Jones, G.S., 'The Labour Party and Social Democracy' in Samuel, R. and Jones, G.S. (eds), *Culture, Ideology and Politics* (London: RKP, 1982): 327-328. A quick survey of

the Labour press reveals the multitude of points of contact between the different wings of the Labour Movement. To take one pertinent example: local Labour parties were encouraged to let their local Co-op supply foodstuffs, furniture, stationary, transport etc. Such actions would, "help cement our alliance with the Co-operative Movement by loyalty in these respects. It is contrary to all common sense that Labour men and women should continually encourage the system they are 'out' to destroy", *Labour Organiser* (June 1938): 11. It is also interesting to note that the embryonic Labour Party was at pains to court the Co-operative Movement, and the great trades unionist, Ben Turner, stressed in 1905 that "most of the members of the National Committee of the L.R.C. are purchasing members of co-operative societies", *The Co-operative News* (24 June 1905): 775.

35. On the place of Co-operation in local Labour politics see, Lancaster, B., *Radicalism, Co-operation and Socialism: Leicester Working-Class Politics 1860-1906* (Leicester: LUP, 1987): Ch.10; Attfield, J., *With Light of Knowledge. A Hundred Years of Education in the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society, 1877-1977* (London: RACS/Journeyman Press, 1981); Marriot, J., *The Culture of Labourism. The East End Between the Wars* (Edinburgh: EUP, 1991): 39-53; Rhodes, R., *An Arsenal for Labour. The Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society and Politics 1896-1996* (Manchester: Holyoake Books, 1998). For a discussion of the relationship between Co-operation and organised Labour, see, Hall, F. and Watkins, W.P., op.cit.: 342-351; and for the state of Co-operative employment, Cole, G.D.H., *A Century of Co-operation* (Manchester: Co-operative Union, 1945): 335-351. By the end of World War One 900 trade unions were banking with the CWS depositing total funds of around £2.5m, *The Co-operative News* (2 November 1918): 711. On the Movement's formal entry into politics and the State's increasingly alarmist tendency see: Pollard, S., 'The Foundation of the Co-operative Party' in Briggs, A. and Saville, J., (eds), *Essays in Labour History 1886-1923* (London: Macmillan, 1971), and Maguire, P., op. cit.. For occasions when Co-op Societies provided succour to hunger marchers see, Kingsford, P., *The Hunger Marchers in Britain 1920-1940* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1982): 95, 121, 122, 142, 143, 186 and 211. The Co-operative Movement's involvement in broader Labour initiatives to raise support for Republican Spain is briefly alluded to in, Buchanan, T., *The Spanish Civil War and the British Labour Movement* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991): esp. 119-120, 15-56 and 168. Finally, it is worth quoting from the Socialist journal, *The New Leader*, and the evident satisfaction expressed following the political alliance in 1927 between the Co-operative Movement and the Labour Party:

The decision of the Co-operative Congress to ratify the agreement between the Co-operative Party and the Labour Party marks another definite stage in the advance towards the Co-operative Commonwealth.

We welcome the Co-operative Party as allies. We congratulate its builders upon the foundations which they have laid. But as socialists we must do more than welcome and congratulate. We must devote ourselves to the development of the Co-operative Movement, in the realisation that it is helping to maintain and improve the workers' conditions as definitely as the Industrial Movement, and that it is constructing Socialism as surely as the political Movement.

Quoted in *The Co-operative Productive Review* (July 1927): 305.

36. Gurney, P., 'Heads ...': 4-8. A point also made by Lancaster and Maguire, op. cit.: 4.
37. A bibliography of local Co-operative Society histories has been compiled by Smethurst, J., *A Bibliography of Co-operative Society Histories* (Manchester: Co-op Union, nd). For an extensive bibliography on the Movement in the period under review, see, Hornsby, M.T., op. cit.: 320. For a substantial survey history of the Movement, see, Cole, G.D.H., *A Century of Co-operation* (Manchester: Co-op Union, 1944). For a history of the Co-operative Union see: Flanagan, D., *A Centenary Story of the Co-operative Union of Great Britain and Ireland*. (Manchester: Co-op Union, 1969).
- The CWS is expansively dealt with in Redfern, P. *The Story of the CWS, 1863-1913* (Manchester: CWS, 1913) and Redfern, P., *The New History of the CWS* (London: J.M. Dent, 1938); and Richardson, W., *The CWS in War and Peace, 1938-1976* (Manchester: CWS, 1977).

- The history of the SCWS can be found in, Flanagan, J.A., *Wholesale Co-operation in Scotland* (Glasgow: SCWS, 1920); and Kinloch, J. and Butt, J., *History of the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society Limited* (Manchester: CWS, 1981).
38. Lancaster, B. and Maguire, P., op. cit.: 7.
 39. Hornsby, M., 'Co-operative Societies in Distribution', a lecture presented at the *Towards the Co-operative Commonwealth Conference*, Stanford Hall, July, 1994. Figures for Co-operative market share are given in, Hornsby, M., 'Co-operation in Crisis ...', op. cit.: 72.
 40. Birchall, J., *The People's Business* (Manchester: MUP, 1994): 66-77. It should be recognised that a considerable ideological contest was fought out within the Co-operative Movement in the last quarter of the nineteenth century between advocates of producer and consumer Co-operation. The latter were ably supported by J.T.W. Mitchell, president of the CWS, who eventually won out. For details see, Gurney, P., *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870-1930*, op. cit.: 148-156. For Mitchell's standpoint see: Yeo, S., *Who was JTW Mitchell?*, op. cit.
 41. Walton, J., op. cit.: 118-119. The literature is currently lacking a study of the Movements' architecture, its impact and legacy.
 42. For a discussion of the impact of multiples on Co-operative trading, see, Hornsby, M., *Co-operation in Crisis ...*, op. cit.: 82-90, 99-105.
 43. Cole, G.D.H., op. cit.: 258.
 44. Jeremy, D.J., 'The Hundred Largest Employers in the United Kingdom, in Manufacturing and Non-Manufacturing Industries in 1907, 1935 and 1955', *Business History*, 33 (January 1991): 93-111. Dr. Gurney gives the figure of 150,000 employees for the Movement as a whole in 1914, making it the country's second leading employer after the General Post Office, see, Gurney, P., *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870-1930*, op. cit.: 173. By 1935, the English CWS was one of the top two employers engaged in the food/household goods sector, behind Unilever. It should also be recognised that women made an increasingly important contribution to employment in the retail and light manufacturing sector in the inter-war period. As Miriam Glucksmann has pointed out, "Most employees in the new retail outlets were women and ... shop work expanded enormously as a form of employment for women during the inter-war years", Glucksmann, M., *Women Assemble* (London: Routledge, 1990): 85. This study contains five 'profiles' of firms substantially employing women in the new industries. Unfortunately, neither a major retail Co-operative Society nor the CWS were selected, which would have provided a useful point of comparison.
 45. Further details on banking, insurance and financial services can be found in, Redfern, P., op. cit.: 401-434; Richardson, W., op. cit.: 336-348. For an examination of Co-operative values in relation to banking see, Davis, P. and Worthington, S., 'Co-operative Values: Change and Continuity in Capital Accumulation. The Case of the British Co-operative Bank', *Journal of Business Ethics*, 12, (1993). The story of the Co-operative Permanent Building Society is told in Cassell, M., *Inside Nationwide. One hundred years of co-operation 1884-1984* (London: Nationwide Building Society, 1984).
 46. The resolution was accepted at the Co-operative Congress, Swansea, May 1917. The significant period of the First World War for the Co-operative Movement is treated in Cole, G.D.H., op. cit.: 257-271. For a discussion of Co-operators' attitudes towards the State, see, Gurney, *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption, 1870-1930*: 208-225; and towards Collectivism, see, Gurney, *ibid.*: 167-192.
 47. Pollard, S., 'The Foundation of the Co-operative Party', op.cit.: 185-186.
 48. Craigen, J., 'The Co-operative Party: Out of Labour's Shadow', in Lancaster, B. and Maguire, P., op. cit.
 49. A useful range of statistics are presented in Cole, G.D.H., op. cit.: 370-392. The Movement's post-war membership figure represented an impressive 30% increase over the pre-war level.
 50. Lancaster, B., and Maguire, P., op. cit.: 8.
 51. This trend is dealt with in detail in Southern, J., 'Co-operation in the North-West of England, 1919-1939: Stronghold or Stagnation?', *North-West Labour History*, 19, (1994/95).

52. Details of the mergers and amalgamations which led to the formation of four sizeable Societies serving the metropolitan area - London, Royal Arsenal, South Suburban and Enfield Highway - can be found in Newens, S., 'The Transition from Small to Large Scale Co-operatives in London', in Lancaster and Maguire, op. cit.. Between 1918 and 1921, two major multiple amalgamations reduced the eleven retail Societies in London to four. Details of the trading activities of London Co-operation can be found in Hornsby, M., *Co-operation in Crisis ...*, op. cit.: 157-161.
53. Figures presented by Hornsby, H., 'Co-operative Societies in Distribution', op. cit.
54. Detailed information regarding the Movement's approach to its markets between the wars is presented in Hornsby, M., *Co-operation in Crisis ...*, op. cit.: 134-221; Cole, G.D.H., op. cit.: 293-309; Kinloch, J., and Butt, J., op. cit.: 283-311.
55. The historian of the British department store believes that the Co-operative Movement never seriously mounted a challenge in the new form of trading, suggesting that the Movement was hampered by its traditionalism and emphasis on economy and rational consumption. Lancaster, B., *The Department Store: A Social History*, op.cit.: 88-89, 95-104.
56. The CWS radio was produced in the face of considerable hostility by the Radio Manufacturers' Association, which sought to deny the Co-operatives the 'Advantage of offering dividend on purchases of radio equipment'. The dogged 'defiance' of the CWS, and ultimate triumph is recounted in: Geddes, K. in collaboration with Bussey, G., *The Setmakers. A History of the Radio and TV Industry* (London: BREMA, 1991): 178; 'CWS and Radio. Action Against Threatened Boycott', *The Co-operative News* (28 January 1933): 1; "Defiant" and Victorious. Popularity of CWS Wireless Sets', *The Co-operative News* (13 January 1934): 1; 'What the CWS is Doing. The Radio War', *Ourselves* (January 1934): 3. A similar confrontation was experienced in the manufacture of lightbulbs, wherein the SCWS took on the Electric Light Manufacturers' Association. The tale is told in Kinloch, J., and Butt, J., op. cit.: 297-298. For details of the Co-op 'Unison' record label and the CWS 'Sylvaphone' gramophone, see, *The Co-operative News* (25 January 1930): 20. In the early 1920s, the CWS Tysley factory was for a short period tooled to produce a Co-op motor car, the Federation. It was spurred on by the popular demand for "a cheap, reliable motor-propelled vehicle", see, 'Travel Comfort at Low Cost', *The Co-operative News* (13 May 1922): 10.
57. Carr-Saunders, AM. et al, *Consumers Co-operation in Great Britain*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1938): 107.
58. Hornsby, M., *Co-operation in Crisis ...*, op. cit.: 178. By the end of the 1930s, the English Movement commanded a 23 per cent market share for milk, and baked 21 per cent of the nation's bread. In 1936, there were 800 bakeries operated by Co-operative Societies, and, in addition, 14 federal bakery Societies, which together supported 15,446 bread delivery vehicles. The proportion of Co-operative trade in Scotland was appreciably higher throughout the period.
59. Lancaster, B., and Maguire, P., op. cit.: 10. Throughout 1931-33, the Movement was able to increase its membership by more than 2 per cent annually.
60. Kinloch, J., and Butt, J., op. cit.: 291-294.
61. Ibid.: 294. These authors suggest that this 'problem' of quality and expense partly accounted for the Movement's inability to significantly improve its dry goods trade and was as pertinent to its manufacture and retailing of furniture as it was clothes and shoes. In the event, the situation with regard to furniture would become acute in the post-war period. It should be noted that the contemporary survey of the Co-operative Movement by Carr-Saunders and his team (1938) reported that 'disloyalty' in members purchases in dry goods resulted from high prices and low quality. This team's findings and the 'obstacles to growth in the non-food sector' are examined in Hornsby, M., *Co-operation in Crisis ...*, op. cit.: 215-220. A discussion of the Co-operative Movement's practical and ideological approach to advertising is developed in Chapters 2.2 and 5.
62. The declared aim of the plan was to create "A Co-operative Movement serving the bulk of the homes of Great Britain, supplying most of the domestic requirements from Co-operative factories and giving a range of services at least as wide as the best examples among present day

- Societies", quoted in Cole, G.D.H., op. cit.: 307.
63. Figures are presented in Hornsby, M., *Co-operation in Crisis ...*, op. cit.: 223.
64. The mobilisation of the SCWS for war is re-told in *The SCWS at War*, (Glasgow: SCWS, 1947). For the English CWS, see, Richardson, W., op. cit.: 63-149.
65. Hornsby, M., *Co-operation in Crisis ...*, op. cit.: 221.
66. Cole, G.D.H., op. cit.: 379.
67. An examination of the Movement's early conversion to the supermarket principle can be found in Hornsby, M., *Co-operation in Crisis ...*, op. cit.: 226-238. By 1950, the Co-operative Movement had established an early lead in self-service retailing operating 90 per cent of the 500 outlets in Britain. The extension of consumer choice offered by self-service brought its own problems for the Movement in that CWS brand products struggled in open competition with popular brands heavily promoted on the new commercial TV channel that began broadcasting in 1955. For some contemporary commentary on the self-service ideal, see, Twigg, H.J., 'Self-Service in Co-operative Trading. A Critical Examination', *The Co-operative Official* (June 1949); Webber, H., 'Horace Webber Reviews Self-Service History', *The Co-operative Official* (April 1951); Forsyth, C.T., 'Co-operative Self-Service and the Changing Pattern of Retailing', *Co-operators' Yearbook* (Leicester: CPF, 1956).
68. A detailed and broad examination of the pressures on, and responses by, the Co-operative Movement in the post-war decades can be found in Sparkes, L., 'Review - and prospects', *Journal of Co-operative Studies*, (February 1994).
69. Hornsby, M., *Co-operation in Crisis ...*, op. cit.: 236.
70. Sparkes, L., op. cit.: 13-14.
71. *Co-operative Independent Commission Report* (Manchester: Co-op Union, 1958). The charge of the Commission was as follows: "That the Inquiry Commission shall prepare and submit to the Central Executive for submission not later than the Congress to be held in 1958 a report and recommendations designed to secure the greatest possible advantage to the Movement from its manufacturing, wholesale and retailing sources and to produce to the Central Executive such methods and organisation as may be thought best suited to address this". Quoted in *The Bulletin: A Quarterly Journal for Co-operative Educationists*, (April 1959): 1.
72. Sparkes, L., op. cit.: 37. On the latter observation, that of the strengthening ethos of individualism, Professor Sparkes is referring to more recent trends whereby collective philosophies have been castigated by current ideologies, especially since 1979. He goes on to quote: "A common failing with respect to the principles is that of applicability. Society and the economy have changed fundamentally since the 1950s and this change has probably been the most rapid and dramatic in the history of the country. The old certainties have been replaced by a society where individuals care less for each other and more for themselves, yet has its basic needs met more readily than ever before. The basic requirement of the Co-operative movement to meet the simple, everyday needs of the majority of households is no longer there. The needs have changed and the ties to a Co-operative society noted in the past have broken". Sparkes, L., op. cit.: 55.
73. *The CIC Report* had commented on the variable quality of the Movement's managers and pointed to those areas where adjacent, similar-sized, Societies were performing quite differently. The obvious conclusion being that some Co-ops were good at what they did while others were mediocre. In 1953, G.D.H. Cole had accused the retail managers of lack of imagination, and, furthermore, judged Committee officials as "a rather dull kind of person". See, Cole, G.D.H., *Democracy and Authority in the Co-operative Movement*, (London: London Co-operative Societies Joint Education Committee, 1953).
74. Richardson, W., quoted in Birchall, J., op. cit.: 147. The Movement's uncompetitiveness in comparison to other leading firms is addressed in Harris, R. and Seldon, A., *Advertising in Action* (London: The Institute of Economic Affairs, 1962): 151-152.
75. The 'Apathetic Member' was a subject of concern at the Co-operative District Conference held in Fratton, Hampshire in 1921. The representatives:
Desired to have the difficulty of getting members of retail societies to record

their votes for management and education committees dealt with ... It was obviously unnecessary to scrutinise the percentages of voting members very closely to perceive that the position was a very serious one. For, after all, the danger was this, that democracy was not receiving the training necessary to fit it for the larger sphere they were aiming at, even a sphere far short of the commonwealth they mentioned so glibly on their platforms.

The Co-operative News (12 November 1921): 11.

76. Contemporary discussion and assessment of these factors can be found in: Cole, G.D.H., *Democracy and Authority ...*, op. cit.; 'Apathy - Is There A Cure?', *The Co-operative Productive Review* (February 1954): 36-37; Ostergaard, G., and Currell, M., 'The Active Minority', *Agenda* (June 1960): 38-49; Smith, B., 'Member Participation' *Co-operators Year Book* (Leicester: CPF, 1960): 68-73; Ostergaard, G., and Currell, M., 'Recent Trends in Co-operative Democracy', *Agenda*, (September 1961): 58-64. The crucial measures for participation were recognised as trading, attendance at member's meetings and voting in Society elections. Surveys revealed that all three indices were in decline and one summary of the findings ventured to assert that "With regard to attendance at meetings there appear to be no organisations with such low rates of member participation as those prevailing in the British retail societies", Ostergaard, G.N. and Halsey, A.H., 'Power in Co-operatives', in Banks, J.A. (ed), *Studies in British Societies* (London: RKP, 1969): 112.
77. Rose, A.P., 'In search of a sense of purpose', *Agenda* (June 1962): 62. An editorial in a Co-operative periodical following the 1959 General Election, reflected that, "It is a sad thought that after years of attempting in the Co-operative Movement, and the wider Labour Movement, to arouse a social conscience in the people of Great Britain, it should be so completely missing at this time", *The Bulletin: A Quarterly Journal for Co-operative Educationists* (October 1959): 2.
78. Knox, F., 'The Movement and the Working-Class', *Co-operative Productive Review* (August 1957): 146-147.
79. Critics of the Societies' Boards of Directors pointed to the average age of the representatives and complained of the cautious and unimaginative approach of this 'gerontocracy'. See, Ostergaard, G., and Halsey, A., 'Power in Co-operatives' in *Studies in British Societies* (London: RKP, 1969): 112.
80. Gurney, P., 'Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Working-Class Consumption in England, 1870-1940', op. cit.: 35-36.
81. Ibid.: 36.
82. Dr. Gurney believes the Movement's period of decline to become apparent around 1930, and argues for the inter-war period as one of 'containment' and 'defeat'. In particular, he sees the triumph of commercialism over Movement culture in that period, Gurney, P., *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870-1930*, op. cit.: 226-238.

2.1 The Culture of Co-operation

Now Co-operation is not a plan of salvation, fixed and rigid; it is not a scheme of social reform, set and lifeless: it is a movement, live and progressive, towards a New World, a New Civilisation in fact - that is why we call it the Co-operative Movement. There can be no movement forward without an educated rank and file. Education and Progress go side by side in the march of life. It is precisely for that reason that Education and Culture must take equal place with Trade and Commerce in the Co-operative Movement. True, we have a body to be fed, to be clothed, to be sheltered, through the medium of the co-operative store; but we have also a soul to be inspired, to be nurtured, to be directed, through the activities of co-operative educationists. Man first eats, and then thinks. Every day, in every country, new adherents are coming numerous into our Movement. They are attracted by the material benefits, knowing on which side their bread is buttered; but they know not the spiritual strength to be gained that shall free them from the chains of the cursed capitalistic system. The new members must be enlightened as to our principles and outlook - aye, and older comrades in the cause must have their faith confirmed and revived, lest they fall away from grace.

(Charles E. Tomlinson, *Towards Co-operative Culture*, 1929)

Culture and the Working-Class

The late nineteenth century bore witness to a revolution in consumption and leisure: Great Britain was rapidly assuming the features and characteristics of a recognisably 'modern' society, and the culture of the popular classes was being transformed in the period. The Co-operative Movement made significant contributions to the new patterns of retailing and distribution, yet, as a mass Movement of working-class consumers, it was additionally involved in the social and cultural life of its members. The aspirations and practices around a specifically Co-operative culture were formed and shaped within the broader regimes of both a working-class culture, embodied within the newly emergent commercial culture thrown-up by monopoly capitalism and which ruthlessly forged leisure and recreation with profit, as well as a Labour culture encompassing other Socialist or Marxist traditions. Before examining the characteristics of a specifically Co-operative cultural formation, it is necessary to consider the physical and intellectual impact of both mass and workers' culture on the Movement.

Culture is a notoriously difficult term to define, as the work of numerous scholars has attested.¹ Recent analysis has moved beyond both the crude and elitist notions attached to intellectual attainment and aesthetic discernment (culture as the repository of all good things said and done), and the lingering anthropological legacy with its view of culture as being

contained in the artefacts, capabilities and habits of a society (culture as explicit structural conditions and practices). Labour historians are now more concerned to investigate culture in terms of negotiation, transaction and transformation, where culture is appreciated more as a process to which the working-class both respond and yet inform. As Heerma van Voss and van Holthoon put it, "By negotiation and transaction cultures undergo the transformations which historians seek out to find the key to the secret of culture as a human phenomenon".²

Such a concern with the dynamics of popular culture is present in Eileen Yeo's examination of the Labour Movement in Britain since the eighteenth century. Without invoking the actual terms, notions of negotiation, transaction and transformation are implicit to her reasoning that, "In a society with unequal power relations the labouring poor or the working-class cannot produce popular culture in free and unconstrained ways or in pure and uncontaminated forms", and consequently culture becomes the "ways of producing social life and consciousness within social relations and social struggle".³ Thus, any indigenous alternative culture of Labour had to contend with a dominant culture that could be both coercive and seductive; impose containment and offer counter-attractions. If the Chartists and early Associationists had to withstand the iron hand of suppression, then later Socialists and Co-operators were equally subjected to a regime of rival attractions and commercial populism. The imperatives of cultural reform also impacted greatly on the Labour Movement in this period, and the moral influence of rational recreation with its promise of respectability held many Labour activists in its thrall.

Stephen Jones has discerned a variety of responses within the Workers' Movement to this reorientation of leisure, culture and recreation, which became apparent in the later nineteenth century. He has termed these 'Labour highbrow', 'Libertarian Socialism' and 'Marxist': perspectives he maintains that were never clearly defined or delineated. The first perspective was informed by the Victorian ideal of rational recreation and closely accorded with the central Labour traditions of self-improvement and character formation. Its essential cultural elitism and puritan inheritance despised materialism and hedonistic pursuits and sought to elevate the worker into an appreciation of cultural forms and activities that were uplifting and edifying. The commercial imperatives of popular culture, considered brash, vulgar and spiritually barren, were shunned in favour of the natural and lasting virtues inherent to folk tradition (a focus on the restoration of a golden past, most strikingly embodied in the notion of a 'Merrie England'), or, alternatively, with the reasoned values of high cultural forms

such as literature, music and drama.

An alternative perspective was conditioned by more libertarian traditions within Labour culture, and one that promoted choice for the individual, whether it be Hollywood movies or grand opera. Such a position was much more sympathetic towards the new commercialised forms of leisure and was no doubt tactically crucial for many local activists, who, close to their community, had a far more sensitive appreciation of the uses and value of popular commercial leisure for ordinary working people.

Finally, Marxism provided an influential critique of mass culture, and one that attracted significant support in the inter-war period. For Marxists, commercialised recreational forms were straight-forward products of Capitalist society and were intended to 'dope' the workers into acquiescence. Institutions and activities such as the press, motion pictures and popular music were organs of the Capitalist establishment and engaged in cultural manipulation, forming public opinion and tempting workers away from genuine radical cultural activity, thus reducing their willingness to participate in revolutionary activity. For Marxists, commercial mass culture eroded self-culture and self-discipline.⁴

At any time, all Left political groups were likely to contain exponents of each of the three cultural positions. Thus, leisure was a contested area that aroused considerable passion among the various advocates who saw in it both the potential for character reformation or moral dissipation, educational self-improvement or intellectual numbness, and an incentive for Socialist struggle or entrapment in idle amusements.⁵ That stated, cultural pessimism remained a characteristic feature on the Left, and, as Chris Waters has concluded, tended to result in a criticism of individual workers for their personal inadequacies, rather than the development of a critique of modern commercial culture and its appeal in working-class life. Summarising the outlook of Socialist cultural critics, he concludes:

The attitudes they shared were predicated on a series of moral categories through which popular culture had been judged and found wanting throughout the nineteenth century, and they directed socialists to focus less on the industry that flattered the new consumer of leisure than on the moral failings of the individuals who were themselves being flattered. In other words, although socialists were fuelled by a desire both to transform the individual and to change the environment, the intellectual baggage they inherited meant that when they turned their attention to workers' recreational pursuits, more often than not they simply blamed individuals for the poverty of their cultural preferences, tastes and desires.⁶

Co-operation shared in the diversity of viewpoints and approaches that the British Left exhibited towards popular culture and recreation, and the vision of the 'Co-operative

Commonwealth', with its ultimate promise to solve the 'economic problem' and to free the worker from the grind of industrial Capitalism, placed particular emphasis on leisure. There was a pronounced tendency to translate Co-operation's material mission of providing pure and unadulterated goods to the cultural sphere, with the ideal of supporting 'wholesome leisure' and 'profitable hobbies'.⁷ At its most severest this could result in a criticism of the way members decorated and furnished their homes⁸, or of their elocutional deficiencies, with calls for speech-training and the study of courtesy.⁹ The more libertarian viewpoint acknowledged that the Co-operative Movement itself was largely the product of the leisure of working men and women, and for these cultural advocates it was "most unwise ... to extol the arts and decry the sports, or to foster music and neglect the cinema". However, even here, there was a desire to promote "those pursuits which [were] social by nature, that is, those which require association for their utmost enjoyment, such as the drama and choral and orchestral music".¹⁰

The Culture of Co-operation

The Movement has rarely figured in the numerous examinations of Labour culture in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The main reason for this has been the common tendency among social historians to denounce the materialism of the Movement, and to reduce it to a 'culture of consolation'; a practice that can be traced back to the Christian Socialists in the mid-nineteenth century.¹¹ Only recently has Peter Gurney offered a thorough-going examination of the Movement's culture, which he defines as "the 'way of life' co-operators attempted to construct within and around the Movement, an oppositional and alternative 'way of life' which represented a profound challenge to bourgeois individualism".¹² In a challenging conclusion, he considers the Movement to have made possibly the most important contribution to the general culture of Association in the period.¹³ It is important to stress the cross-connectedness of Labour cultural activity and not to treat the various provisions as exclusive. To take one example, the famous Clarion Vocal Union, the largest of the Socialist choral bodies in Britain, had been established in 1894 by Montague Blatchford and was a broad church of Labour and Socialist activists. Its founder was the honorary conductor of the choir of the Halifax Industrial Society and his participation was indicative of the inter-weaving of much Left cultural activity.¹⁴ Similarly, the consumers of workers' culture rarely observed the factional boundaries maintained by some Movement leaders and perpetrated by some

historians; thus, working families were equally likely to avail themselves of, say, a social evening offered by the local Labour Party, a sports event sponsored by the Communist Party, a summer gala mounted by the Co-operative Society, a youth group organised by the Independent Labour Party, and drama events, film shows and day trips made available by various progressive political and social organisations.¹⁵

Gurney interrogates Co-operation according to a range of cultural criteria: education, recreation, internationalism, advertising and consumption, and historical consciousness, and reveals a rich and diverse Movement culture that sought to create active 'members' rather than passive 'consumers'. This culture, he believes, was not abstracted from the economic and commercial operations of the Movement, and was in no way a secondary or subordinate concern of Co-operators, "but was itself intimately bound up with the production of a new form of moral economy".¹⁶ At the centre of this culture was the local store, the embodiment of distinct Associational values and a focus for the rituals of Co-operative consumption. The most obvious, but not only, manifestation of this store culture was the dividend; however, the moral economy of Co-operation extended beyond the return of the trading surplus, and the store could additionally act as a social venue attracting fierce loyalties and representing a defining feature of working-class community and neighbourhood life:

The local store, which met most grocery and provision requirements, overflowed with Co-operative goods, particularly CWS productions emblazoned with the wheatsheaf design symbolizing the power of association. Women and children not only shopped in this qualitatively specific and particular social space, they met their friends and discussed their joys and sorrows there. These consumption practices undoubtedly helped cement collective class and gender identities.¹⁷

Co-operative Societies also employed a range of social, educational and recreational activities that encouraged active participation by the membership. The tremendous extent of this provision by hundreds of local Societies across the country has not largely registered with historians but in many respects its scope and characteristics compare favourably with the impressive, and well-documented, social provision of the German Labour Movement in the period before the First World War.¹⁸ Summer galas, parades and processions often involved thousands of people, and importantly were democratic and inclusive, unlike many other domains of popular culture that were exclusively masculine or restricted to adults.

A local Society could make an impressive showing with a May Day procession, as was the case with the Stratford Society in 1910, when it mounted a parade a mile long, consisting of 145 horses and 118 vehicles.¹⁹ Such occasions were declared "object lessons" in

demonstrating the achievement and strength of a Society to local inhabitants, with onlookers invariably surveying the scene with great enthusiasm.²⁰ A 'Great Vehicular Procession and Demonstration' had marked the opening of the new central premises of the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society, Morrison Street, Glasgow in 1897. Around 350 vehicles drawn from various Co-operative Societies and bodies were brought into action, with the whole event culminating in an exhibition housed in the new building and representative of the great achievements of Co-operation in Scotland.²¹

A common component of Co-operative culture were summer fetes and galas, important events for families and children. An editorial in *The Co-operative News* of August 1907, explained their purpose and value:

All true play educates. A man who goes forth joyously into life, playing the game, is educated in a real sense. To play aright is to live aright ... Co-operative faiths are symbolical of the joy which Co-operation brings. Always the children laugh the merriest, and educated co-operation removes the burdens which press heavily upon the backs of weeping children, and enables them to laugh on their way to the later years. It is well with a country in which the children laugh.²²

The 'Great Co-operative Gala Day' was an annual event at Preston and in 1910 attracted an attendance of 40,000 people. The generosity of the Society was evident in the large amounts of refreshments that were distributed free: 900 gallons of coffee, 19,000 CWS Crumpsall buns, 500lbs of meat, 400 loaves and 800 dozens of assorted cakes.²³ The statistical data relating to edibles, consumables and attendance was a feature of the reporting of such events and was an important element of the discourse of plenitude and benevolence associated with Co-op galas. It would remain a feature of Co-op/Labour pageants in the 1930s, whereby the idea of the mass in unity played a fundamental role in the proceedings. Even smaller Co-ops like the Blackley Society could muster an impressive attendance, and at that Society's annual summer festival in 1909, 9,000 children, accompanied by 4-5,000 adults, were entertained by a variety of attractions, and consumed 12,000 buns, 9,000 packets of sweets (CWS Crumpsall), 700 gallons of milk, 160 4lb loaves, 20 hams, 80lbs of tongue, 300 weight of sugar, 35lbs tea and 150 boxes of mineral waters.²⁴

By the 1920s, the summer fetes and galas were largely subsumed within the newly instituted International Co-operators' Day held on the first Sunday of July each year. Around the country, local and regional Societies mounted processions, exhibitions, sports and entertainments, and *The Co-operative News* devoted several pages across the month reporting on the festivities. In the second year of celebrations the following attendances were recorded:

12,000 were entertained at Enfield; 6,000 at Grays; 3,000 at Basingstoke; 4-5,000 at Gillingham; and over 3,000 at Torquay.²⁵

It is evident from such figures that nationally, hundreds of thousands of people were entertained and treated each summer by their local Co-operative Society. Such activities provided a potent demonstration to the community of the ambition and success of the Society and no doubt acted as important occasions for recruitment. The emphasis was also on children and their amusement and the Co-operative Movement was not so evangelical that it failed to address the merriment of its younger brethren: it did indeed seek to put smiles on the faces of the children.²⁶

International Co-operators' Day, first celebrated in 1923, was an important expression of independence from the broader Labour Movement, and included the adoption of the Rainbow Flag in place of allegiance to the traditional Red Flag.²⁷ Peter Gurney has suggested that the affinity between the Co-operative Movement and internationalism was greater than that which existed for other working-class Movements, and indeed, represented a central component of Co-operative culture. It was evident in the international links forged through the International Co-operative Alliance, in the mythic place occupied by the Rochdale Pioneers within other national Co-operative Movements, the faith in pacifism to counter international war, and in the repeated support for Esperanto as an international language, which it was believed would reduce national tensions.²⁸ To facilitate the exchange of knowledge and information, the ICA maintained a 'News Service', which reported through a monthly bulletin. Numerous British Co-operative journals availed themselves of the service and included periodic reviews and digests of International Co-operation: *The Co-operative Educator* - 'Our International Review' section; *The Producer* - 'In Other Lands' section; *The Co-operative News* - 'Our International Service' section.

As Eric Hobsbawm has observed, the development of an alternative Labour culture often involved the transformation of public rituals and modes of celebration to the cause of the Socialist Commonwealth. May Day, instituted as a Left ritual in 1890, was undoubtedly the most significant example of appropriation, and, along with other public demonstrations, acted as a regular public self-presentation of class, an assertion of power, and in the invasion of the establishment's social space, a symbolic conquest.²⁹ For most participants, the joyous events of the day represented no more than an exercise in pleasure, although they could also serve as contestations of power and influence, evident in the various attempts to curtail such

activities by hostile councils, and, in terms of the Co-op, the private traders who complained of unfair competition, and that local demonstrations were simply designed to publicise Co-operative trading.

One documented example of a conflict over public space involved the Manchester and Salford Society, commencing in 1909, and lasting over a decade. Under pressure from private traders, the local council denied the Society the right to use public parks for propaganda purposes and the broader Movement, including the Co-operative Union, *The Co-operative News* and other local Societies, was drawn into the often acrimonious contest. Such anti-Co-operative bias was interpreted as a containment of Co-operative ambition and conformed to a more general pattern of hostility evident in the activities of the Traders' Defence Association and Traders' Defence League. Victory came for the Movement in 1919, when, joined by sections of the Labour Party and Trade Union Movement, a giant procession set out to confront the opponents of Co-operation. As Peter Gurney has suggested, the exercise provides an excellent illustration of the culture of the Movement mobilised for manifestly political and class purposes:

The procession was headed by the CWS Tobacco Factory Band, which played stirring music. In the front of the procession was a decorated lorry sent by the Beswick Society, and two from the Manchester and Salford Society. The lorries displayed, on their sides, appropriate mottos, which ought to be commended to the City Council. They were: 'Co-operation', 'Equity', 'Freedom for All'. After the lorries came eight brake loads of the children of Co-operators, and members of some of the guilds. Several of the brakes displayed guild banners. Following the brakes there was carried the beautiful banner of the National Warehouse and General Workers Union. It led the first detachment of the large army of co-operators, trade unionists and labourists. The rear of the procession was brought up by two of the Failsworth Society's lorries, with guild banners; another break load of children; and a 'Co-operative News' lorry, its sides covered with the 'News' bill for the week, 'Co-operators Defy City Council'. Along the route men and boys sold a special edition of the 'Co-operative News'.³⁰

The most discussed, and possibly the most impressive, cultural events organised by the Movement were the National Co-operative Festivals held at the Crystal Palace between 1888 and 1910. These annual get-togethers and showcases sought a comprehensive demonstration of all that Co-operation could achieve, and to that end, integrated trade activities through exhibitions with more conventional cultural activities such as children's sports, flower shows, musical drill and, most famously, a performance by the United Choir. The latter body comprised of numerous local Co-op choirs which sang in unison on Festival Saturday and in 1897 numbered 10,000 voices. The achievement should be contrasted with the more celebrated Clarion Vocal Union, which nationally could draw upon, at best, 2,000-3,000

choirists.³¹

An important feature of the Festival was a giant trade exhibition, and the form of the Co-operative exhibition became an important component of the alternative culture established by Co-operators. Commencing with the Great Exhibition of 1851, exhibitions became important showcases for the commodities of Capitalism and indexes of material excess.³² The Movement's exhibitions, which became regular from about 1870, served an important propaganda purpose: they dramatically demonstrated the alternative potential of Co-operative production. For one commentator writing in the mid-1890s:

The Exhibition of Co-operative Products did much to open the eyes of members and the general public to the vastness of the Co-operative Movement, moreover, it stimulated many members to show more loyalty to the principles of co-operation by demanding goods of co-operative manufacture from the store.³³

Through such displays, members and potential members were informed of the nature and extent of Co-operative manufacturing and distribution, when in many cases they would have had no conception that working people owned farms, estates, mills, or factories. The utopian vision held out by the exhibitions was that one day the working-class would own and control the means of production, as well as distribution, and these would be democratically organised within the moral economy of Co-operation.³⁴ Local demonstrations in the form of street parades and processions performed a similar function, with Co-op iconography foregrounded in the form of dressed vehicles promoting Movement brands and products.

The cultural activities of the Movement were conceived to be accessible and inclusive, and conformed to the general Co-operative discourse of universality and democracy. Tea parties, gala days, musical evenings, choirs, trade exhibitions, film shows, lectures and discussions, fostered a collective identity and a sense of belonging. Such gatherings and activities stressed the traditional ideals of fellowship, fraternity and comradeship, the collective above the individual, and promoted the central value of working together.

Education for Social Change

Co-operators maintained the tradition of the Owenites and placed much value in education, both as a means of equipping members for the tasks of efficiently running the machinery of a great commercial enterprise, as well as preparing them for the great social and political transformation that would bring about the Co-operative Commonwealth. The rules

of the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Society had made provision for education, to be funded out of the trading surplus, and this provided a crucial model during the great expansion in local Societies in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the Rochdale system exerted great influence internationally, and the International Co-operative Alliance took it as a basis for the general principles of Co-operation as they were periodically examined and re-affirmed.³⁵

An extensive repertoire of educational forms was developed by Co-operators, and based on the assumption that the education provided by the State performed an important ideological function. As the State assumed more responsibility for education, Co-operators put considerable thought and energy into developing a specifically Co-operative education. The infrastructure for such provision was initially embodied in the creation of libraries, reading rooms and classes. In 1897, a 'Special Committee of Enquiry on Education' reported to Congress that 376 reading rooms were maintained by ninety-five Societies, and, in addition, 131 Societies supported libraries, costing £16,600 each year and containing nearly 350,000 volumes.³⁶ The later 1880s witnessed a steady development of classwork and lectures, and a new Educational Committee of the United Board of the Co-operative Union began to support Societies in their educational work. The Committee paid particular attention to lantern lecture work and a collection of suitable slides was compiled in 1889 for loan to local Societies, the first occasion of a visual approach to Co-operative education.³⁷ Educational activity was also co-ordinated through regional associations, the first being the North-Western Sectional Educational Committees' Association (1886), and by 1891 sectional educational committees existed in all six of the sections serviced by the Co-operative Union.

An integral element to the machinery of Co-operative education was the widespread publishing activity conducted to inform and educate members in the ideals, principles and structures of the Movement. A wealth of literature was produced which supplemented classwork and other formal means of education and greatly facilitated the ideal of the informed active member. The most important of the numerous publications was the weekly *The Co-operative News*, which appeared in 1871. By the end of the First World War, it had a national circulation of 100,000, which made it a giant among Labour newspapers. A general interest magazine was the monthly *Wheatsheaf* put out by the CWS and which incorporated local pages customized for individual Societies. The publication achieved a staggering circulation of half a million by 1918. More specialised journals, which addressed

particular constituencies within the Co-operative Movement, included *The Producer* (1916, trade), *Our Circle* (1907, children), *Women's Outlook* (1919, women), *The Co-operative Educator* (1917, education) and *The Co-operative Review* (1926, current affairs).³⁸

Co-operators also played a significant part in the provision of adult education and the formation of other educational agencies and activities. Various Co-operative Societies supported the initial experiments in extension work conducted by Cambridge University in 1873, and Co-operators participated in the establishment of Ruskin College, Oxford (1899) and the Independent Working-Class Education Movement which founded the Central Labour College in 1909.³⁹ Perhaps Co-operation's most notable contribution to general adult education was in the founding of the Workers' Education Association. Two prominent Co-operators, Albert Mansbridge and Robert Halstead, were instrumental in the formation of the Association, and included in the Association's original objects was the promotion of "an alliance between University Extension activities and the working-class movements by vigorous propaganda etc., at co-operative meetings".⁴⁰

The Co-operative Union assumed significant responsibility for educational provision and training, approving lessons in Co-operative book-keeping (1887) and elementary Co-operation (1889), and instituting correspondence courses in a variety of Co-operative and Citizenship subjects from the late nineteenth century onwards. Provision expanded into the new century and was consolidated in the foundation of a Co-operative College, first in Manchester as an appendage to the Co-operative Union headquarters (1922), and later more substantially with the purchase of the estate at Stanford Hall, Leicestershire in 1945, as a centenary memorial to the Rochdale Pioneers.⁴¹

Further resources were invested in textbooks and studies of Co-operation and the Movement, prominent examples being Beatrice Potter's *The Co-operative Movement in Great Britain* (1891), G.J. Holyoake's *The Co-operative Movement Today* (1891), Ben Jones' *Co-operative Production* (1894) and Catherine Webb's (ed) *Industrial Co-operation: The story of a peaceful revolution* (1904). As well as supporting classwork and study, such books introduced a generation to the theory and practice of Co-operation and contributed greatly to the creation of self-identity within the Movement. Periodically, the works were supplemented with up-dated and additional studies, of which Hall & Watkins' *Co-operation* (1937), Redfern's histories of the CWS (1913, 1938), Cole's *A Century of Co-operation* (1945) and Bonner's *British Co-operation* (1961) should be made special mention.

Peter Gurney has placed special emphasis on the production of jubilee histories by local Societies, celebrating special anniversaries, as a central component of Co-operative culture. Such works were an early expression of 'history from below' and represented a specifically Co-operative contribution to the shaping of popular conceptions of the past. As Dr. Gurney has remarked:

Many Co-operators realised that written history was a contested terrain and that it was therefore imperative that the early history of one of the most successful working-class associations was properly articulated and bequeathed to future generations.⁴²

Children were introduced to the Movement's history through a specially prepared text by the Co-operative Union, Isa Nicholson's *Our Story* (1903). A ninth illustrated edition costing only a penny appeared in 1911, running to 250,000 copies and was widely used in classwork.⁴³

Although the Movement was able to construct and maintain an extensive educational provision, the direction and focus of that education was firmly debated. Selina Todd's recent examination of the Movement's youth work in the interwar period has revealed the tension between 'official' concerns "to offer an introduction to co-operative business practices", while some local groupings held less economic views, with a belief in the dynamic of education as "a means of inspiring social change through the celebration of a socialist, co-operative culture".⁴⁴ In the political cauldron of the 1930s, this led to some of the more politically-minded young members to leave to join radical groups like the Young Communist League.

Drama

Movement history was presented in a variety of narrative forms and was a characteristic of lantern-lectures and some film work.⁴⁵ It also made a particular contribution to drama and historical representations were a notable feature of workers' pageants in the inter-war period. Such events were a special form of meeting or demonstration, and, as Mick Wallis has argued, were part of a felt tradition of protest and celebration.⁴⁶ Some of the most impressive pageants were staged during the high-point of cultural activity associated with the Popular Front in the late 1930s and Co-operators made a significant contribution to the presentations. The mass events drew together workers' musical and dramatic groups and the sheer scale ensured that the rich cultural resources of the Co-operative Movement were often a vital contribution. The Movement's own pageants were spectacular and made important

statements in the period of agitation for a Popular Front and in developing support for the notion of a People's War. *Towards Tomorrow: A Pageant of Co-operation* was mounted at Wembley Stadium in the summer of 1938 to mark the 16th International Co-operators' Day and 60,000 spectators enjoyed a seven hour presentation involving 3,000 performers. Six years later, L. Du Garde Peach's *Co-operative Century* played in one hundred proscenium productions involving 150 Co-operative Societies and was a major element of the Movement's celebrations in its centenary year.⁴⁷

Other kinds of drama work were supported by local Societies and the activity was valued for its essentially collective nature. There has been no systematic study of the Movement's involvement with the dramatic medium, although mention should be made of the considerable amount of attention the subject attracted from Co-operative educationalists and the significant level of activity that was subsequently realised. In the 1920s, notable critic and propagandist Huntly Carter gave a series of addresses to Co-operative gatherings on the progress of the stage in Soviet Russia and stimulated much thinking on the contribution of drama to a workers' state.⁴⁸ Even earlier experiments had attracted attention, such as the establishment of a Co-operative theatre in Germany in 1913⁴⁹; and a similar venture was welcomed in Britain in 1922, with the formation of the Actors' Commonwealth Limited, which received approval from the Registrar of Friendly Societies to operate as a Co-op. Such ventures were appreciated for the way they eliminated the theatrical speculator, whose commercialism was felt to be responsible for the "degradation of the dramatic art" with their typical reliance on "the sensational and the salacious".⁵⁰ The desire to raise the standard of the theatrical and musical stage, clearly part of the 'highbrow' tradition within Left cultural activity, animated much of the Movement's practice and thus an immediate endorsement was forthcoming for the proposal to form a Co-operative Opera House at the former Surrey Theatre, South London. Such a venture would enable "the placing of high-class entertainments at a reasonable charge before the people as an antidote to the pernicious influences of the sensational and suggestive films in the cheapest cinemas".⁵¹

Drama was also valued and supported as an activity by and for the members. It was typically endorsed and promoted within the broader notion of the Co-operative Movement serving the workers' mental and recreational needs, in addition to their everyday material requirements. Theatrical and dramatic work was one of the most widely practised cultural activities within the Movement, and a supportive Society like the RACS ran as many as

fourteen groups by the mid-1920s.⁵² As John Attfield has recorded, the cultural work of the RACS was transformed during the inter-war period under the guidance of its energetic education secretary, Joe Reeves, and musical and dramatic classes played a central role in this activity:

In 1927 the Education Committee reported that there were thirty-seven musical and dramatic societies under its auspices. These groups made a big contribution to the Society's educational work performing at regular concerts and special events. For example, during the Society's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 1928 the Committee staged an Educational Week of special performances of plays and operas entirely by its local groups. This was followed by a mass performance of Sir Edward German's opera *Merrie England* by the RACS choirs and orchestras at the Albert Hall.⁵³

Not all Co-operative bodies and Societies could match the resources and professionalism of the RACS, although much creditable work was achieved. Periodically, activists recommended the national organisation of the disparate Co-op drama societies with the view to raise the standard of performances and to maximise the propaganda potential of the art. In 1928, the metropolitan Societies had formed a Co-operative Drama Federation under the chairmanship of Joe Reeves, and which aimed "to encourage dramatic appreciation among adult workers so that culture in keeping with the ideals of the co-operative movement may be developed" and further, "to obtain co-operation among dramatic groups for the purpose of joint work and mutual collaboration in furthering the ideals of co-operation and the improvement of dramatic art".⁵⁴ Such collaboration would eventually lead, in the later 1930s, to some of the greatest achievements of the Left musical-drama in Britain: fundamental contributions to the massed pageants of the Popular Front; the great Co-operative pageant, *Towards Tomorrow*, held at Wembley in 1938; and a specially-prepared opera version of Handel's Oratorio *Belshazzar*, involving fifteen Co-op choirs performed at the Scala Theatre, London.⁵⁵

A suggestion to extend such collaboration nationally was voiced in the early 1930s, with a proposal for a League of Co-op Amateur Dramatic Societies and the foundation of a Co-operative Drama School.⁵⁶ Collaboration amongst societies and groups was eventually realised through the sectional machinery of the Co-operative Union, with the Midland Section forming a drama association during the war years.⁵⁷ Under the stimulus of the Rochdale centenary celebrations, and specifically the desire to mount L. du Garde Peach's 1944 pageant, *Co-operative Century*, a National Co-op Drama Association emerged, supported by the Co-operative Union.⁵⁸

Belief in the cultural value of drama to the Movement sometimes extended to significant financial investment by local Co-op Societies and bodies. In 1933, the first Co-op Repertory Theatre was launched by the Guildford and District Society, which had recently purchased the town's Theatre Royal among various acquisitions.⁵⁹ Later in the decade there was even aspiration for a National Co-operative Theatre, to be established in Manchester, with recommendations that the proposal be included as part of the 'Ten Year Plan of Co-operative Development'. Co-op historian and journalist, T.W. Mercer, in his advocacy for the scheme, rather over-stated matters when he deplored:

That the co-operative movement, great as it was in the realms of industry, had not yet made any distinctive contribution to the progress of civilisation. He did not think that co-operation had made one human being happy apart from the supplying of physical needs.⁶⁰

The idea received further contemplation and proposals later emerged for a National Co-operative People's Theatre, possibly to be located in London. The plan, originating from Pageant Meister Andre van Gyseghem, was to be launched with a provincial tour of a new play, *Doomsday*, by Montagu Slater, who had previously provided the scenario for the Wembley Pageant, and this would hopefully stimulate Education Committees to support the establishment of a National Co-operative Theatre. Van Gyseghem felt there was tremendous potential in this idea and that the Movement could be "dramatised thrillingly".⁶¹

As with so many emerging cultural activities, the immediate proposals were postponed by the outbreak of war in 1939, although in 1942 a new body was launched which bore some resemblance to the proposals of the 1930s. The formation of the People's Entertainment Society (PES) was judged to be "one of the most colourful and ambitious projects ever launched by co-operators", and the initial plan was to stage a great cavalcade of democracy to be written by J.B. Priestley.⁶² Both Andre van Gyseghem and Montagu Slater were involved in the proposals and the Society's chairman was Alfred Barnes MP of the London Society. It was noted that in recent years audiences had demonstrated a willingness to experience plays with a sound message and the new scheme was declared to:

Benefit the public by giving it what it does not possess in the commercial field - a voice in ownership and control. It will benefit the artiste by giving him (sic) more permanence of engagement, sane working conditions, an organic relationship to his audience, and the opportunity to develop his art in conditions not available in the commercial theatre.⁶³

The PES, in a manner similar to the Workers' Film Association established in 1938, was financed by member organisations who were invited to take out £200 shares, and

individual members who could purchase £1 shares (up to the value of £200).⁶⁴ The Society quickly secured funds of over £3,000 in share issues and loans.⁶⁵ The inaugural production of the new Society, penned by J.B. Priestley, was *They Came to a City*, which commenced its provincial tour early in 1943. The author described the play as "a statement in dramatic terms of the post-war aspirations of progressively-minded people", and featured John Clements, Gogie Withers and Ada Reeve.⁶⁶

On the back of this success the PES expanded its operations and acquired theatres in Huddersfield and Chatham (as well as a cinema, The Picture House, adjacent to the Chatham property), with additional plans for a West End venue. The acquisition of the Pioneer Film Unit of the London Society in 1945 led to some speculation that the PES would extend into the cinema business, though this was never realised.⁶⁷

The PES maintained an extensive theatrical and entertainment service for Co-operators and other progressive bodies well into the 1950s, and its activities demonstrate the substantial financial investment the Movement was prepared to devote to the arts and culture. The literature on worker's theatre in Britain takes little consideration of the activities of Co-operators, beyond the simple acknowledgement that Co-operative Societies supported numerous drama groups. So far, there has been no systematic appraisal of the Co-operative Movement's aims and achievements for its cultural and propaganda work in drama, although this brief sketch clearly reveals that extensive practice existed and that drama represented a key component of Co-operation's cultural ambitions.⁶⁸

Music

A closely allied cultural activity was music. Working-class and Labour culture had traditionally been characterised by music-making and singing, which found expression in such popular forms as brass bands and choirs. Mention has already been made of the massed United Co-op Choir, which performed annually at the showcase of the National Co-operative Festival at the Crystal Palace, and choirs were widely encouraged by local retail Societies and clearly occupied a privileged position within Co-operative culture for the Labour highbrows. It was claimed by one critic that:

wherever such music was heard people would cease to grovel after the craze of jazz, and be filled with an ambition to find harmony with a true ring behind it.⁶⁹

Similarly, orchestras and other kinds of musical groups found support from Co-operative Societies, and provided entertainment to various gatherings of Society members, including propaganda meetings that centred on a lecture or address. The potential dryness of such an event was tempered by a programme of entertainment that both drew and held an audience. The function and contribution of entertainment to a propaganda meeting was not lost on organisers and an attempt to improve its provision in the South, where Societies had a less developed tradition of musical groups, was launched in 1921, with the establishment of a Co-operative concert and variety agency. The promoters promised critics, who feared an element of cultural control, that they did not desire "to see a propaganda meeting made dull and unattractive", and acted to preclude an inappropriate performance, entirely out of sympathy with Co-operation:

For example, how many times have we heard a singer glorifying war and the fighting man in a Jingo ballad as a prelude to an address extolling the advantages of international co-operation as a peace preserver.⁷⁰

The Southern Co-operative Entertainment Agency aimed to encourage the formation of more choral and orchestral societies and to reduce Societies' reliance on outsiders for their entertainment. The Movement's entertainment should be supportive of its ideals, and as a supporter of the new agency argued:

As co-operators we do not believe that all the best songs should be utilised to praise war and jingo imperialism. We hope that the time is not far distant when our co-operative gatherings will be brightened by songs and choruses infused with the true co-operative spirit.⁷¹

The Co-operative Movement maintained an alliance with the Workers' Music Association (WMA), which had been formed in 1936 by existing workers' choirs under the stewardship of Alan Bush, conductor of the London Labour Choral Union. The objects of the Association were:

First, to provide music which reflected the world outlook of the people who were to perform it, and secondly, to bring the working-class music organisations and members of the musical profession into closer contact with one another, thus developing the technique of the former and the general education of the latter.⁷²

The Co-operative Union had previously encouraged the singing of political lyrics and in the early 1920s published a book and pamphlet, *Songs For Co-operators*, which included such rousing hymns as *Forward, all ye Workers, Sons of Labour, God Save the People*, and what unofficially became the Movement's hymn, *These Things Shall Be*.⁷³ The Union also

published in 1923 a pamphlet of songs for the Co-operative Party, for singing at demonstrations and festivals.⁷⁴

During the Popular Front period, Bush worked particularly closely with the London Joint Co-operative Societies' Education Committee and contributed to the staging of the Wembley Pageant and the proscenium performance of *Belshazzar*, both in 1938. As we have seen, Co-op Choirs made significant contributions to Popular Front productions and concerts. In a presentation to the RACS in 1936, Bush argued for musical activity that had a "real relation" to Co-operative ideals. He warned against replicating the culture of the ruling-class, and advocated its subversion: "Workers should grasp what the ruling-class had to offer and then use it against them".⁷⁵ In a further presentation three years later, Bush outlined a "policy" for music in the Co-operative Movement. Music could perform three important functions for Co-operators: it might attract people interested in making music; it might attract people interested in listening to music; and music could make members more active. In particular, music:

Could make people understand more about their position in the world to-day, and it was not an exaggeration to say that music could do a great deal to increase the understanding of people about themselves and the world in which they lived.⁷⁶

Bush, although impressed by the Movement's musical achievement in the production of *Belshazzar*⁷⁷, advised against attempting music that was too technical and difficult. One source that the Labour Movement had virtually neglected was the songs of the Levellers and Chartists, and these he recommended for their historical value connected with a tradition of struggle. The Movement should also avoid the traditional practice of musical contests, which he considered unproductive and unsound.

By 1940, the Educational Executive of the Co-operative Union, under the prompting of the London Joint Co-operative Societies' Education Committee, had entered into discussions with the Workers' Music Association on such matters as the Union suggesting songs for inclusion in a WMA song book, the preparation of a children's song book, the promotion of recordings and the Executive subscribing to the Association. In view of the wartime emergency the Executive postponed any decision.⁷⁸ The WMA continued to ingratiate itself with the Co-operative Movement through such actions as its London branch becoming a Co-operative Society in 1943, and through the national body working with the Watford Co-operative Society in the compilation of a special Rochdale centenary song book.⁷⁹

Some disappointment was voiced after the war that only forty Co-operative Societies were directly supporting the WMA, although one critic complained that the Association's repertoire was unsuitable for the Co-operative Movement, considering it too political.⁸⁰ Another problem lay in the WMA's rigid Marxian demarcation between popular and people's music: the former being damned and tainted by its association with the commercial market. The narrow emphasis on choral, folk and Soviet-style classical forms, promoted as oppositional in character, greatly limited the appeal of the Association's activities.⁸¹ Despite Bush's enormous energies and unflagging ideals his advocacy of austere and sophisticated musics failed to completely counter the attractions of more melodic, accessible and generally popular forms, which found greater favour at social gatherings within the Co-operative Movement.

Sport

As numerous cultural historians on the Left have revealed, there was extensive provision made by the Labour Movement for workers and their families to participate in sporting activities and events. While some hardline Marxist critics denigrated sport as simply another facet of the Capitalist system, inculcating values such as competitiveness, nationalism and chauvinism, and preached against it as yet another part of Capitalist commodity production further enhancing commercialism and extracting surplus from workers. Other commentators, more sympathetic to the recreative needs of an alienated and fatigued proletariat, espoused the values of healthiness, fitness, freedom and happiness, which were promoted through sport.⁸² Whatever the virtues of each argument, sport and recreative exercise were readily promoted by Labour organisations, and significant early examples being the myriad of ramblers groups and cycling clubs - the most famous being the Clarion Clubs - which appeared in the later nineteenth century. By the inter-war period, sport was one of the most widely pursued leisure activities by the working-class, and the Labour Movement, through such organisations as the British Workers' Sports Federation and the National Workers' Sports Association, attempted to organise sporting activity to promote its own ideals and ends.⁸³

The Co-operative Movement made its contribution to the general provision of sport on the Left; and it did so in essentially two ways. Sporting contests and activities were a

feature of Co-op galas and fetes, and allowed for participation by members in a largely *casual* manner. A more *formal* arrangement held for Society and federal employees, where competitive sports, often organised into leagues and challenge cups, were characteristic of the provision. Large regional Societies invariably controlled sports grounds, as, for example, with the London Co-operative Society, which bought land for the purpose in 1928 and 1933, providing twenty-one acres of recreational space. Over 9,000 of the Society's employees made use of the grounds.⁸⁴ The metropolitan Societies organised mini-Olympiads, while a national Co-operative sports meeting was held in conjunction with the International Congress held at Crystal Palace in 1934, and from which emerged the British Co-operative Employees' Sports Association. Later national meetings were organised in Newcastle (1936) and Manchester (1937).

The CWS contributed greatly to the Movement's provision of sport for its employees. By the mid-1930s, considerably over 25,000 of the Wholesale's staff were members of its sports clubs, and more than £80,000 had been expended to promote outdoor recreation. Sports grounds had been laid at Manchester, London, Bristol, Enfield, Worksop, Leicester, Liverpool, Desborough, Irlam, Huthwaite, Northampton and Cardiff, and as many as forty-five CWS centres competed in an annual inter-depot football cup competition, which was claimed to be the largest of its kind in the industrial sector. Sports of all kinds were supported and practised: football, hockey, netball, tennis, cricket, athletics, cycling, hiking, boxing, golf, angling, camping, badminton, table-tennis, gymnastics and darts among many. The Movement was proud of its most successful sporting son, professional tennis player Fred Perry, who had once been employed by the English and Scottish CWS Tea Depot, Leman Street, London.⁸⁵

There appeared comparatively little critical discussion of sport and its ideological dimensions in the Movement's press, and there was seemingly limited concern over reconciling the inherent competitive nature of much sport with Co-operative ideals and practices. One defender had this to say in its support:

There is, perhaps, no better way of encouraging sportsmanship than by inviting friendly rivalry on the sports fields, and in this direction the officials of the Co-operative Movement have done much.⁸⁶

The Family

As a mass organisation of consumers, Co-operation placed particular emphasis on the family, and as a result women and children featured prominently in the cultural outlook of the Movement. The 'woman with the basket' was an iconic figure commanding considerable ideological status, and the support of cultural organisations and activities for women and young people assumed a central place in the social agenda of Co-operation. One of the most remarkable groups thrown-up by the Consumers' Movement was the Women's Co-operative Guild founded in 1883 (renamed the Co-operative Women's Guild in 1963), and which became the leading organisation for working-class women. As its most recent historian has claimed, the Guild should properly be understood as representative of working-class housewives, and it was on issues directly connected with the married woman and her family that the Guild campaigned most ardently.⁸⁷ In the decades leading up to the First World War, the Women's Co-operative Guild represented the most radical group within the Co-operative Movement and maintained a broad solidarity with militant sections of the working-class.⁸⁸ A number of hard-fought social campaigns were mounted around equal pay, female trade unionism, Co-operation and the poor, and maternity and divorce law reform, and as Gill Scott has recognised, the Guild became "the organisational expression of a wide-ranging working-class feminist agenda", and campaigned, where necessary, "in defiance of Co-operative officials, on the grounds that working women needed their own organisations, autonomous but affiliated to the wider working-class movement".⁸⁹ Although few women reached managerial positions in local Societies, many more served on Educational Committees and brought to bear their viewpoints and interests as housewives, mothers and organisers of the family's consumption. Experience from such representative activity, but much more importantly from the routine of Guild branch meetings, gave numerous women an enhanced confidence in their social and domestic life, and the contribution of Co-operative women to the fabric of Associational culture should not be undervalued. As Bill Lancaster has recently asserted:

To find the authentic voice of working-class women's politics during the late Victorian and Edwardian period [historians should] look not to socialist or even trades union archives but the records of the Women's Co-operative Guild.⁹⁰

Although it has been argued that the radicalism of the Guild was eroded following the First World War and the consequent assumption of a more centralised structure with an adherence to Labour parliamentarianism, the Guild continued to expand, reaching its high point in 1939, with nearly 88,000 members. Crucially, Guildswomen were essential participants in many of the cultural activities sponsored by local retail Societies, attending

meetings and lectures, serving teas, joining in parades and processions, and looking after children at galas and outings. The national Guild also made a significant contribution to the pacifist Movement of the 1930s, and on the issue of peace remained militant despite the tendency to lose members.⁹¹

Co-operative children and youth were also absorbed into an extensive Movement culture; a process which was often referred to as 'the making of Co-operators'. Family-based forms of pleasure included sports days and galas, as well as outings, which often represented the only holidays a working-class child might expect. Special texts, classes and lectures introduced youngsters to the history and practise of Co-operation, while youth groups such as Comrades Circles (1922), The British Federation of Co-operative Youth (1924) and the Woodcraft Folk (1925), provided the structure for nurturing young Co-operators through to adolescence and responsibility.⁹² The emergence of formal youth provision in the 1920s was the consequence of social and economic changes in leisure and employment experienced by this age group. As Selina Todd has argued:

The conviction that consumption could be a site of class solidarity and identity, which had been influential in dictating the form of the British co-operative movement, was shaken by such developments.

Co-operators shared with other sections of the British labour movement the conviction that failure to provide political and social education for the young would not only jeopardise the future of working class social and political association but also possibly democracy itself ... The fragility of European democracy in the early 1920s and the 1930s suggested that a generation of independent minded young people would be needed to defend civil liberties. Co-operators therefore sought to provide an attractive and distinctively co-operative form of youth provision.⁹³

The extent and achievements of Co-operative youth policy and practise far out-stripped anything the rest of the Labour Movement could muster and was in stark contrast to the repeated failures and disappointments of the Labour Party's youth work.⁹⁴

Holidays

As well as the local provision of leisure and educational activities, Co-operative Societies sometimes made provision for members' holidays and worked closely with such organisations as the Co-operative Holiday Association (CHA) and the Workers' Travel Association (WTA). The CHA had been established in 1893 by T A Leonard, a Church of England curate and member of the Socialist Democratic Federation, and was of a distinctly

improving nature, set in contrast to the hedonistic consumption associated with such popular resorts as Blackpool.⁹⁵ A local survey of leisure in Rochdale has revealed that the local Co-operative Society was a major provider of excursions and holidays for the populace, and the CHA was one outlet for the Society. However, the Society was capable and willing to handle its own provision, and in 1900, 10,000 customers booked excursions/holidays through the Co-op, and in 1901, 11,000 trippers travelled in special trains organised by the Society.⁹⁶ The WTA was formed in the early 1920s, largely under trade union auspices, but was quickly established as a Co-operative under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act. The Association advertised widely across the Co-operative Movement's press and Co-operators represented a significant constituency of its clientele.⁹⁷

By 1938, the year of the introduction of holidays with pay for workers, the CHA and the WTA had 28,872 and 39,439 members respectively, while the WTA operated 300 provincial agents who organised holidays for over 60,000 in 1937.⁹⁸ The CWS had organised excursions since the early 1920s, when it had established an Excursion Department offering motor tours, railway and charabanc trips.⁹⁹ Business proved brisk, and by the early 1930s, the Department was claimed to be the biggest agency in the world for rail and motor tours, and was publishing a popular *Wheatsheaf Holiday Guide*, which ran to nearly 500 pages.¹⁰⁰ Foreign travel was pioneered within the Movement at the RACS, with the formation of a Travel Guild in 1919¹⁰¹; the first overseas trips were organised in 1920 with tours to Belgium and Holland, the impetus coming from the desire to foster international understanding among workers. A guiding figure in the activities was the Society's education secretary, Joe Reeves, a towering figure in Co-operative education in the inter-war period. He had played a considerable part in the formation of the WTA in 1921, and under Reeves' guidance, Society tours were made to the Soviet Union, and ran every year from 1929 to the outbreak of the Second World War.¹⁰²

At another level, local Societies and Co-operative bodies supported holiday camps and residences. In 1901, the CWS opened a Convalescence and Holiday Home on its estate at Roden, Shropshire, and this was available at low charges to all members of retail Societies federated with the CWS.¹⁰³ Furthermore, some Co-operative Societies made provision for holiday camps, a practice that had a lineage on the Left as far back as 1906 and the establishment of the Caister Socialist Holiday Camp. The first permanent Co-operative camp was established at Rothesay in Scotland in 1911, by the United Co-operative Baking Society,

and operated until 1974.¹⁰⁴ In addition, a number of individual Societies also established camps, with possibly the first under the control of the Education Department of the Parkstone and Bournemouth Society, situated on the southern edge of the New Forest, and first reported on in the summer of 1924.¹⁰⁵ Following a trial camp at Matlock, Derbyshire, in 1929, the Coventry and District Society bought land at Rhyl, North Wales, and started a permanent camp in 1930-31. The August Bank Holiday week was reserved for Coventry Society members; other weeks being available for Co-operators from around the country. The Education Department promoted the facilities for the goodwill and fellowship such holidays fostered, and sought to make provision for the family man "on the lower wage level, the person who has in the main done more to make the Co-operative Movement what it is today than any other".¹⁰⁶ Also in 1930, the Birmingham Society founded a camp at Dunston, Warwickshire, which was largely made available for the Society's auxiliaries, such as its youth groups.¹⁰⁷

The Movement's most ambitious investment in the holiday camp idea was realised in 1938, with the opening of the Rogerson Hall facilities at Corton, Suffolk. In the previous year, one senior official had called for greater Co-operative enterprise in the provision of holidays for members, and felt that the contemporary popularity in camps was an ideal opportunity for the Movement to make an investment. The bulk of the present provision, it was argued, was made by Capitalism on behalf of "our members", and it was "money that would ordinarily have been spent within the Movement". The moment was made more propitious as a result of the "holidays with pay for all" agitation.¹⁰⁸ In the event, the CWS, in alliance with the WTA, took up the idea of a federated approach to establishing Co-operative holiday camps, and Rogerson Hall welcomed its first customers in August 1938.¹⁰⁹ The joint venture led to the formation of Travco Camps Limited, and an undertaking to open more camps in the near future. Only one further camp appeared before the War, at Westwood Ho!, North Devon, but it was not possible to bring it into use until May 1947.¹¹⁰

There was much discussion within the Movement regarding increased provision of services for holiday-making with the rapid expansion of demand following the War. In particular, holiday camps were high on the agenda as the demand for such facilities underwent something of a boom, and correspondingly, the Movement inspected some service camps for possible conversion.¹¹¹ In view of the possible expansion, Co-operative Congress debated the desirability of forming a special Society to handle the Movement's business in holidays, hotels

and catering, although finally, it was left to the CWS and its alliance with the WTA to continue to oversee the provision.¹¹² Holiday business was channelled through the Travco arrangement, and as well as the camps, numerous Co-operators and their families enjoyed holidays, breaks and excursions with the service, and in the expanding number of Travco hotels. As late as 1963, Travco was investing in new camps with the acquisition of the Seafield Holiday Centre, Suffolk.¹¹³

Into the 1950s, the rapidly expanding holiday business led to the establishment of Co-operative Travel Services, a subsidiary of the CWS, and which quickly became one of the five largest agencies. This was a significant break with the past, and was in conformity with the general trends within the Movement that saw greater emphasis on trade and commerce, to the detriment of social and cultural concerns, which had underpinned much previous policy. The Service was an efficient provider of holidays and travel arrangements, and proved to be a commercial success story in a period that saw considerable difficulties and retrenchment for some traditional sectors of operation. However, it was stripped of the ideals of Association which had been the rationale of earlier provision; like much of the leisure and recreational activity of Co-operation in the post-war decades it represented a retreat from the values and outlook of the previous generation, which had sought a 'mental independence' for the Movement, a necessary discipline for the attainment of the Co-operative Commonwealth. Increasingly, the trading and cultural activities of the Movement were beginning to lack the alternative characteristics of an independent formation with its own social, economic and cultural ideals and traditions, and was being drawn into greater integration with the dominant commercial networks and values of the overseeing society.

Two important recent studies of Movement culture have argued that Co-operation began to lose any radical tendencies following the First World War, and attendant upon the alliance with Parliamentary Labourism.¹¹⁴ This revisionist perspective, dragging back attention from the 1950s as it does, offers an important new perspective on certain trading and cultural trends within the Movement across the twentieth century, although as Stephen Jones has observed in connection with a similar view for the broader Labour Movement, Left-political activity in the arts, travel and sports actually increased in the inter-war period.¹¹⁵ The Co-operative Movement certainly conformed to that trend, identified by Jones, and the 1930s should be appreciated as a high-point of political-cultural activity, especially when linked with

agitation for a People's Front, and such commitment did not drastically diminish until the period of affluence, which preceded the majority Labour Administration of 1945-51.¹¹⁶ The mechanisms of containment identified by Drs. Gurney and Scott certainly took some decades to impact on the Movement and its radical visions for a new society. In this interim a vital culture of Association was maintained and developed, and cinema proved a crucial consideration and component of that culture. The second part of this chapter will closely inspect Co-operators' aspirations regarding the new medium of film, and consider its activities within the context of the burgeoning Workers' Film Movement of the inter-war years.

2.2 The Workers' Movement and Film Culture

It should be the aim, however, to develop in time the production of a series of films which will convey direct labour propaganda. They should be films without stars or spectacle, films showing the people and life for which the Labour Movement stands, and films of what this country might be like under different circumstances.

(Paul Rotha, *Films and the Labour Party*, 1936)

Let us have our own cinema and show the big feature films as they are released. Here is a chance for the co-operative movement to contribute to the amusement of the tired worker. Note that, amusement. We are not asking you to join a class. We are not asking you to read a book. We are inviting you to see in your own comfortable super cinema "The Girl Who Slipped on the Soap", featuring Lilian Gish. Ay, and to draw dividend on the purchase money of your ticket.

(G. Curtis, quoted in *Comradeship and the Wheatsheaf*, October 1922: vii)

The psychologist has taught us how little we grow up in our basic nature and if we are anxious to interest the adult in the message of co-operative citizenship, we must not neglect the greatest interest of today - the cinema.

(Leslie Button, 'Films for Co-operators', *The Bulletin: A Quarterly Journal for Co-operative Educationists*, August 1946)

During the last two decades there has emerged a substantial historical literature on Left political film-making. It has been shaped by a number of factors: it is part of a broader trend among historians to excavate and assess working-class culture; it has followed in the wake of detailed studies of the dominant commercial cinema in the leading producing countries, whereby scholars have investigated a range of alternative formal approaches and ideological practices; and in some instances, it has been motivated by the desire to inform current radical film activity amongst a new generation of politically inspired film-makers thrown-up by the events of May 1968, with a corresponding re-examination of the complex relationship between political and cultural struggle.¹¹⁷ Until quite recently, worker film activity was essentially appreciated as an interwar phenomenon, something that emerged in the Western democracies following the inspirational deployment of cinema to propaganda work in the new Soviet Republic following the Revolution of 1917. Thus, according to Bert Hogenkamp:

The organised working-class movement was comparatively late to realise the value of the film as a medium of propaganda and education. For a long time the working-class movement stuck to its traditional means of propaganda, the written and spoken word. In the first years of the cinema the trade unions and the socialist parties rejected films

even though the workers were the most frequent visitors of the cinemas.¹¹⁸

Another commentator has acknowledged only the "sporadic attempts" on the Left "to develop filmmaking practices in the 1910s and 1920s". Observing that:

[w]ithout question it was the stunning impact of Soviet filmmaking that mobilized concerted left interest in film in the West. In all the major Western countries - Germany, France, England, the United States - groups organized around the exhibition of *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and other Soviet films.¹¹⁹

The impact of the Russian Revolution on workers' struggle and cultural agitation in the West in the period between the wars has been a significant focus of attention among Labour historians in general. There can be no denying the rich cultural activity that was practiced on the Left in a period characterised by economic dislocation and political extremism. In particular, attention has been devoted to the ten years following the Wall Street Crash in 1929; a decade that commenced with the agitation for workers' revolution as embodied in the Communist International's call for 'Class Against Class', and ended with the considerably broader struggle incorporating workers and intellectuals for a 'Popular Front' against Fascism.¹²⁰ This substantially explains the pronounced focus on this period of Labour cinema and those film activists promoting Marxist and Socialist politics.¹²¹

During this period, initial struggle centred on the exhibition of Soviet films, which inevitably meant confronting the forces of censorship. Alternative institutional structures were established to distribute the films, of which the Workers' International Relief was pre-eminent. The organisation was headed by Willi Munzenberg, whose Prometheus Film Company (Berlin, 1926) acted as distributor in the West for such Soviet classics as *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), *Mother* (1926), *October* (1928) and *The General Line* (1929). As Trevor Ryan has noted of the circumstances in Britain:

There was, above all, a priority given to screening Soviet films, both as a cultural necessity and political strategy, and as a requisite of a cinema which consciously posed itself in opposition to the bourgeois media, destroying the veil of manipulated truth which they had constructed.¹²²

Distinct from privileged intellectual forums where the main interest was aesthetics, workers' film societies sprang up to screen the films to the industrial classes and this activity was spearheaded in Britain by the Federation of Workers' Film Societies (FOWFS, 1929), founded by the Communist led Minority Movement.¹²³ Its leading

activist was Ralph Bond, who was also behind the London Workers' Film Society (LWFS), and the origins of such cultural activity can be traced back to Moscow where the call had been issued to form workers' clubs for education and recreation to support agitational activity. Following the intervention of the London County Council, which forced the original venue to withdraw, the first two programmes of the LWFS were screened in a hall owned by the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society (RACS), a typical example of harassment experienced by the nascent Workers' Film Movement (WFM) in Britain.¹²⁴

The years 1928-29, saw the appearance of numerous workers' film clubs for production and exhibition, in Germany, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Japan, the USA and Britain.¹²⁵ The typical film form adopted by the worker film-makers was the newsreel, which was relatively inexpensive and technically undemanding to produce. Additionally, it was an ideal format to record and present the working-class in struggle, and to counter the commercial newsreels with their ideological bias promoting imperialism, militarism and monarchism. The oppositional potential of the worker newsreels was recognised by the film critic of *The New Leader*:

We could have a newsreel showing the industrial and political demonstrations; the social causes leading up to strikes; co-operative activities; the effects of the miners' eight-hour day on the miners and their families; the contrast of nine-in-a-room in workers' homes with one-in-nine-rooms in homes of the upper-class, etc.¹²⁶

The first British workers' newsreel was issued by the FOWFS as *Workers' Topical News* (1930), the Society having established its own film company, Atlas, to import and distribute foreign films of interest to British workers (its main source of films was Prometheus) and to produce its own films. Undertaken on professional 35mm to only three editions, it largely reported on the activities of communist groups and was an early attempt by Bond at 'making films with a purpose'. Two documentary films followed, *Glimpses of Modern Russia* (1930) and *1931 - The Charter Film* (1931), and in an article published subsequently, Bond explained his approach:

the documentary type is ... the one most suited to our aims ... We can take our cameras out into the streets, and at the expense of little more than filmstock, patience and infinite capacity for taking trouble, photograph our material as it actually exists.¹²⁷

An important stimulus to progress came with the adoption of the cheaper sub-

standard 16mm gauge, which allowed for participation by cine enthusiasts and worker film groups around the country. It also had the additional advantage of being outside the legal provisions of the Cinematograph Act (1909), the basis of film censorship in Britain, and was therefore equally important in facilitating film distribution.¹²⁸ An early success on 16mm came with the release of *Soviet Russia: Past and Present* (1933) by Atlas, which led to a resurgence of exhibition. A principal centre of activity with the format was Kino, an outgrowth of the London section of the Workers' Theatre Movement and active from December 1933. It eventually operated a national film service based on a large library of Soviet films, which by 1937 included sound film equipment. While Kino concentrated on 16mm film distribution, an auxiliary organisation, the Workers' Film and Photo League (WFPL) formed in 1934, attended to film production. About thirty films were prepared before the war, many of them being distributed by Kino.¹²⁹ The WFPL encouraged the formation of local production groups, such as the North London Film Society Cine Unit, which co-produced with the League the anti-war film *Jubilee* (1935), supported classes and instruction in film production and criticism, and generally promoted the WFM. As Victoria Wegg-Prosser has pointed out, the WFPL represented a kind of Socialist counter-part to the essentially middle-class amateur film movement of the 1930s, and quotes an editorial comment from the last issue of *The Camera Forward*, the bulletin of the League:

Sub-standard is the only way out. But it must be taken seriously, built up into an organised working form, not left as a hobby. Baby playing in the garden is not the only subject for a cine camera.¹³⁰

Elsewhere, Bert Hogenkamp has effectively summarised the aims of the WFPL:

Members of the League believed that film was of particular value in political work because, through the careful construction of images, it could provide powerful and evocative insights regarding the nature of capitalist society. By exposing the contradictions of capitalism, it was argued, film could be used as an important agitational weapon in the class struggle.¹³¹

Another group that concerned itself with 16mm film production was the Socialist Film Council, which had been formed by a group of intellectuals on the Left wing of the Labour Party. It had initially sought local film material to be included in an alternative news film, *What the Newsreel Does Not Show*; but in the event had to

content itself with two productions it completed on its own part: *The Road to Hell* (1933) and *Blow Bugles Blow* (1938). The film work of the Council was completely independent of the Labour Party.¹³²

Meanwhile, Kino retained a close relationship with the Progressive Film Institute (PFI), a body formed in 1935 as the principal distributor of Soviet films on standard 35mm, and undertook some production in Spain under the guidance of the influential Ivor Montagu. Screenings of films like *Defence of Madrid* (1936) and *Spanish ABC* (1938) were significant in promoting the Republican cause during the civil war and were used to raise funds for relief organisations like the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief and Spanish Medical Aid.¹³³ Trevor Ryan has viewed Kino and the PFI as two of the most important cultural organisations on the Left in this period, comparable with, and closely linked to, the Left Book Clubs:

Their status and accessibility within the labour movement were impressive. They were the principal oppositional sources of visual news of events in Spain; the main sources of material of Soviet origin, and of films of a left-wing nature from other countries. Their films were used by the broad spectrum of organisations which subscribed to anti-Fascist or anti-National Government perspectives, and enabled audiences of plumbers and politicians alike to *visualise* what was happening in Abyssinia, Spain, China, France and Czechoslovakia.¹³⁴

Although the film groups were to a great degree autonomous and not under the formal control of the Communist Party, their work "was consistent with that of an organisation which identified with the party".¹³⁵ Even so, their services were taken advantage of by a broad church of Labour clubs, Left political groups and progressive gatherings, and Kino in particular sought to develop a social dimension to its activities, wherein film could fulfil an entertainment role as part of its contribution to the political struggle. So, in many cases, film exhibition was the carrot to attract audiences to meetings and the screenings did not necessarily have any particular relevance to the subject at hand.

A third important film outfit, the Workers' Film Association (WFA), was established in 1938, but was distinct in being the film body serving the democratic Labour organisations. The TUC and the Labour Party had previously shown little interest in film for propaganda and education, and the real driving force behind the WFA was Joseph Reeves, formerly of the RACS and secretary of the film committee

of the National Association of Co-operative Education Committees.¹³⁶ Reeves used his connections with the Co-operative Movement to commence a programme of film production, and three resulting films, *Advance Democracy* (1938) [NCFC 070], *Voice of the People* (1939) [NCFC 085] and *People with a Purpose* (1939) [NCFC 083], were among the most expensive and polished productions of the interwar WFM.

Labour film activists, as well as showing concern over the worst 'excesses' of the commercial cinema and its treatment of class issues, kept a watchful eye on the more directly political cinema work of the Conservative and Unionist Film Association. The Conservative Party had assumed a new interest in propaganda and mass persuasion following the extension of the franchise (1918, 1928) and the post-First World War rise of the Labour Party, and film was put to Party use. The first daylight cinema van was touring by 1925, and Central Office began commissioning films in 1926. In 1930, the former Film Department was constituted as the Conservative and Unionist Film Association, and according to Timothy Hollins, "film was believed to be one of the most potent and effective methods of publicity at the party's disposal".¹³⁷ The service was well-resourced and the dozen mobile daylight cinema vans put the feeble efforts of the Labour Party to shame.¹³⁸ Voices were raised by Co-operators over the dangers of this propaganda if left unchallenged, and the cinema activities of the Conservative Party and National Government were a spur to film work within the Movement. As one Movement film activist warned:

Politically, the Movement is faced with formidable competition in the film world. The Conservative Party spends huge sums annually on their films. They have a large fleet of daylight projection vans touring the country, particularly the rural districts, showing such films as "Our Heritage", "Empire Trade", "Great Endeavour", "National Cine Magazine", and many others.

Anyone who has seen these films will realise how potent they are for the job they do. In these films this party claims credit for everything good which has happened during the last ten years, and in addition, has made the smart move of including them in the regular film libraries, to be lent free of charge when ordered with other films.¹³⁹

The work of Labour film activists was restricted by the outbreak of war in 1939. The WFA was greatly hampered by the new conditions, but did struggle on despite losing Reeves for a period to the Ministry of Information¹⁴⁰; Kino merely served the WFA through the provision of its film library; and the PFI suspended operations never

to see them resumed.¹⁴¹ The experiences of postwar workers' cinema has for long remained largely unknown, no doubt as the Cold War period caused so much turmoil for the Left that agitation and cultural activity were circumscribed and has correspondingly attracted far less interest from Labour historians. Similarly, radical historians and activists have been more interested in the cultural eruptions of post-1968, and only recently has the work of excavation begun for the immediate postwar years revealing a period of limited ambition and achievement. Examining the film work of the Communist Party, Bert Hogenkamp concludes:

By the late 1940s however, nothing demonstrated more clearly the Party's estrangement from British society than the failure of its film culture, a failure which both represented and confirmed the party's isolation, partly self-imposed, in the early years of the Cold War.¹⁴²

Into the 1950s, the Party's film culture consisted of little more than the traditional activities of film societies and distribution organisations, such as New Era (1950), Plato Films (1950), Contemporary Films (1951), and Bond Films (c.1951). Some production was attempted and there appeared a few May Day newsreels and records of youth festivals in Berlin (1951), Sheffield (1952) and Bucharest (1953).¹⁴³ Substantial activity was hampered by the lack of access to equipment and the Party relied heavily on the contributions of sympathetic professional film technicians. Such participation was evident in the campaigns for nuclear disarmament, which began in the late 1950s and the preparation of the Aldermaston films.¹⁴⁴

The democratic Labour organisations focused their activity in the National Film Association (NFA), which replaced the Workers' Film Association in 1946. The NFA undertook film production, centred on the Co-operative Wholesale Society's film unit, with commissions completed for the Labour Party and some trade unions, organised film schools with classes in film production and appreciation, and published a *Journal* (1948-1953) containing technical and critical articles. Of course, in the political climate, the Association was some distance from the CPGB and was disinclined to distribute those films from the Eastern Bloc countries which interested the Marxists.¹⁴⁵ The NFA was without the direct services of the energetic Joseph Reeves and lacked the former fervour of the WFA, possibly a consequence of the hesitation the new Labour Administration

demonstrated towards matters of propaganda now that it was in power. The Association was wound-up in 1953.¹⁴⁶

A significant new phase of radical film commenced in the mid-1960s, and Sylvia Harvey has summarised the character of these activists:

[T]he independent film-makers of the post-1968 generation were radicalised within the framework of the politics of the 'New Left': the politics of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, of opposition to the war in Vietnam and to the policies of the Heath, Wilson and Callaghan governments (as well as to Stalinism and its legacy); a policy of support for national liberation struggles in Asia and Africa, and for the new women's, black and gay movement's and the ecology movement.¹⁴⁷

This new independent cinema of the 1960s and 1970s developed from a distinctive social base of the highly educated new middle-class and was politically non-aligned, being "apart from any involvement in labour movement organisations".¹⁴⁸ Seeking a sense of historical tradition, the independent film movement consciously engaged with the earlier struggles of Labour cinema, and this 'return to the 30s' offered both inspiration to a new generation of radical film-makers and the recovery of the Workers' Film Movement of the interwar period.¹⁴⁹ As we will see, the Co-operative Movement's film work ended about the time of the emergence of the new independent cinema and the Movement carried no influence with the new generation of radical film-makers.

A different chronological orientation is apparent in the recent studies of Steven Ross in America and have indicated that film historians interested in workers' cinema should bring some attention to the period before the interwar decades. Previous studies of American circumstances have predictably concentrated on radical film in the thirties¹⁵⁰, yet, Ross has revealed appreciable film activity on the American Left in the first decade of the new century and fervent concern with regard to the new medium of cinema in the years before the Great War. As Ross demonstrates: "Films emerged as class weapons from the start and not, as some have argued, in the late 1920s and 1930s".¹⁵¹ Labour groups were part of a broader Progressive movement that put film to work for reform¹⁵², and a particularly contested area "revolved around the bitter struggles between labour and capital":

The rise of monopolies, oligopolies, trusts, and massive corporations during the late

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, hailed as symbols of progress and efficiency by the nation's business elite, was greeted by massive strikes and sharp upsurges in labor and radical organising among workers. Despite national claims of being a classless society, few countries of the time experienced more labour related violence and deaths than the United States. As the war between labor and capital grew more intense, film emerged as a new weapon which both sides employed to present their cause before a mass public. Attacks and defences of corporate paternalism, factory safety records, unionisation, socialism, and government benevolence were waged not only in workplace and political campaigns, but in cinemas throughout the country.¹⁵³

In contest with the numerous industrial films sponsored by such manufacturers as International Harvester, the National Cash Register Company and Bethlehem Steel, Labour and radical groups engaged in film production and exhibition to promote their interests, and did so from a surprisingly early date:

As early as 1907 - when a Cleveland union man shot and exhibited films of the strike-ravaged Cripple Creek area to enthusiastic audiences - workers, union members, and radicals began making and using movies as a means of reaching millions of Americans with *their* political visions of past, present and future struggles. "We are going to make the projecting lens a weapon for labor", pledged one working-class filmmaker. These films were used for publicizing union battles, raising funds, attracting greater turnouts of meetings and rallies, promoting the candidacy of radical politicians, and educating an undifferentiated mass public about unions as a necessary part of American life.¹⁵⁴

Several feature films were produced by Labour and radical activists in the period leading up to the First World War, including *A Martyr to His Cause* (1911), *From Dusk to Dawn* (1913) and *What Is to Be Done?* (1914); something rarely attempted or achieved by any of the interwar workers' film movements when the barriers to entry to film-making were so much greater.¹⁵⁵

The studies by Steven Ross have significantly revised assumptions regarding periodisation and workers' cinema, and the perspective he offers substantially supplements the celebrated cultural achievements of the pre-First World War German Labour Movement for which cinema was an acknowledged concern.¹⁵⁶ For Britain, the origins of Labour cinema are conventionally thought to be located in the formation of the Film Propaganda sub-committee of the Labour Party in 1919 and the subsequent issue of a *Circular on Labour Cinema Propaganda* (1920).¹⁵⁷ The scheme elicited little response from the local parties and no real progress was made by the Labour Party or the TUC until after 1936 and the sequence of events that led to the formation of the

Workers' Film Association in 1938.¹⁵⁸ This is one reason, as we have seen, why attention has been placed on worker film activity significantly to the Left of those bodies and dating from the late 1920s. Labour film historians have acknowledged the Co-operative Movement's role in workers' cinema largely through its participation in the WFA, a period that coincided with the direct political agitation for a Popular Front. They have consequently seriously undervalued Co-operation's contribution to Labour film, the very organisation which in fact pioneered film on the Left in Britain.

The Co-operative Movement and Film Culture

Many national Co-operative Movements were supporting film propaganda by the late 1920s. A survey of cinema activity was undertaken by the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) following its Congress at Stockholm in 1927, which had included a special session on 'Methods of Co-operative Propaganda and Education'. There, a discussion paper had been read by Mr Onni Toivonen of the Central Union, Finland, which included a section on 'The Preparation of Films'. He advocated the sharing of knowledge and experiences with the aim of compiling a list of films suitable for screening across national contexts. Previously, such information had only been made available imperfectly through the International Labour Office.¹⁵⁹ The whole matter of film propaganda aroused debate across the International Movement as Co-operators sought ways of putting their practices and ideals before the larger public. One Swedish commentator, while acknowledging the individual achievements of some national Societies with film propaganda, wished to see the scope of the work broaden, and asked, "Why not international propaganda films?":

So much has already been accomplished of sterling value in co-operative film propaganda that the time is surely ripe for *concerted* effort towards the production of *international* films for such propaganda. Along with music, the film is recognised as the only form of art which, in one and the same form, can be understood the wide world over. Quite naturally, therefore, Co-operation, itself an international phenomenon of civilisation, with principles that might with advantage be universally applied, may be expected to avail itself of this means of propaganda to a far greater extent than hitherto. In this, as in other directions, the International Co-operative Alliance might well take an initiative which assuredly would prove singularly fruitful, possibly by the institution

of a central international agency for the collection and distribution of national films, or by direct preparation of films ideal rather than practical in character, and of universal appeal and interest.¹⁶⁰

The Director of the Propaganda and Publicity Department of the 'Handelskammer' Co-operative in Holland reported in 1928 that, "[i]n nearly every country the Union and Wholesale Societies [had] made films of co-operative enterprises in order to bring home to the general consumer the real meaning of Co-operation".¹⁶¹ This achievement was made evident in 1930 with the publication of the first *Catalogue of National Co-operative Films* by the ICA. The *Catalogue* listed 135 films from seventeen countries, giving clear evidence of the substantial level of cinema propaganda by Co-operative bodies in the silent period.¹⁶² Films were screened by national organisations to give insight into Co-operative experiences and practices in foreign countries, and, given the record of the British press, developments in film propaganda were closely followed by other national Movements.¹⁶³

Investment in film propaganda was maintained into the postwar period and the subject was raised at a number of congresses. In 1953, the ICA established a Working Party on Films, which led to the resumption of the Alliance's *Film Catalogue*, the first in the new series appearing in 1954.¹⁶⁴ That same year, at an international Co-operative educational conference in Paris, attended by delegates from eighteen countries, particular emphasis was placed on "the use of films and picture strips for the instruction and enlightenment of co-operative members".¹⁶⁵ As well as resurrecting its film catalogue and establishing a film library of national Co-operative titles, the ICA sought to promote Co-operation in the developing world through the film medium. Mobile cinema vans were despatched to the Gold Coast, Burma and Nigeria, and some film production was commenced, with *The Garden of Gujerat* (1958, made in collaboration with U.N.I.C.E.F.), and a film on the developing Co-operative sector in Sarawak (1961).¹⁶⁶

Little of the substantial international activity by Co-operative organisations with film propaganda has made it into the surveys of workers' cinema. Most make no mention of the contribution to Labour cinema by the Co-ops, a situation which is paralleled, very often, in the omission of Co-operation from surveys of Labour history. Recent detailed studies of Left political film in France, Germany and the United States

for the interwar period, fail to encompass the film work of Co-operative Societies, which were active in the decade before World War Two.¹⁶⁷ In some countries, it is possible that Co-operative film propaganda represented the sum total of, or at least dominated, workers' cinema in the interwar period, and this might have been the case in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Finland, India, Latvia, the Malay States and Switzerland, among others.¹⁶⁸ There has been an acknowledgement of Co-operative film activity in Norway and Holland¹⁶⁹; and, as previously suggested, a recognition of the Co-operative Movement's contribution to the WFA in Britain. In a conference paper, Bert Hogenkamp suggested two main reasons for the lack of attention to Co-operation in studies of national workers' cinemas:

First, that generation which made serious study of labour film production between the wars - I would call them post-May-68ers, and I consider myself to be one of them - considered the co-op movement as something that was tainted, because it was commercial, because some of the films were outright advertising films, rather than the political films that we were looking for. My own book *Deadly Parallels* is a good example: it does not cover the CWS advertising films, but only the serious political ones like ADVANCE DEMOCRACY. Secondly, unlike this country [Britain], in many cases the co-op movement is as dead as a doornail; so the encouragement that might have come from those quarters was simply lacking.¹⁷⁰

For Britain, Stephen Jones devotes a small section to the Co-operative Movement in his discussion of Labour and film between the wars, and at least acknowledges the publicity films of the CWS; although, let down by his secondary sources, he erroneously dates the production of the first Movement films as 1904.¹⁷¹ Other Labour film historians have been less generous and fail to mention the publicity films of the CWS completely, and, furthermore, offer scant regard for the Movement's film propaganda in general. The commercial nature of the Consumers' Movement, and the advertising imperatives of some of its films, must be held responsible for this, and demonstrates a lack of sympathy with the aims and ideals of Co-operation. Co-operators wished a radical alteration of society, but sought this not through contest in the political arena - of prime interest to politically motivated historians - but rather in the market place, where it was believed that Co-operation could defeat Capitalism. Advertising and publicity films thus played their part in confronting the dominant economic system, by drawing consumers into Co-op stores where their purchases would be a contribution to

the making of the Co-operative Commonwealth. Even if the theory was suspect, then it is no reason why Labour scholars should dismiss the contribution Co-operation made to the Workers' Film Movement.

While Labour organisations sought to develop an alternative and oppositional film culture through production, distribution and exhibition, they also had to maintain a relationship with the practices and structures of the dominant commercial cinema. This was necessarily a complex relationship, with significant economic, political and moral dimensions, and covered such issues as employment and conditions in the cinema industry, censorship and social control, cultural imperialism, and the impact and influence of movies on mass society. Returning to Stephen Jones' distinctions regarding Left cultural perspectives introduced in the previous chapter, a number of attitudes can be identified.¹⁷² The Labour highbrows saw cinema-going as another hedonistic and wasteful pursuit to be put alongside gambling and drinking, and further tainted by the dominance of Hollywood with its appropriation of typical American 'low' cultural forms like dancing and jazz. Marxists, on the other hand, were inclined to damn the movies as a deliberate attempt by Capitalism to 'dope' the workers into acquiescence, and the cinema was straight-forwardly perceived as 'an instrument of class rule':

There is no such thing as non-political cinema. The cinema is a propagandist organ, a weapon of class war. Class war is expressed through politics and political supremacy is maintained through the cinema. That is why, in those countries where class alignments and antagonisms are most direct, the cinema is most obviously a battleground.¹⁷³

Libertarian Socialists were more relaxed in their prescriptions for workers' leisure and recreation, believing it the right of individuals to decide how to spend their spare time. While this did not preclude the desire to reform popular taste, it did mean that many local activists recognised the enjoyment and relaxation that movies offered to working-class audiences. As Stephen Jones has observed, "there was surely some form of dialogue and correspondence between working-class culture and the sub-culture of the Labour movement", and this was apparent in the exhibition of popular movies by some Labour groups such as the miners' institutes.¹⁷⁴

Unsurprisingly, a diversity of cultural perspectives towards cinema was apparent in the Co-operative Movement and which shifted in intensity and influence as the century wore on. As the principal organisation representing working-class consumers, the Movement had sufficient authority to be invited, on occasion, to participate in official forums and debates on matters relating to cinema. If no invitation was forthcoming then the issues were invariably debated in the Movement's publications and members were kept abreast of events and developments. The Co-operative Union was a member of the British Film Institute (BFI) and retained an interest in cinema and education. During the postwar Labour Administration, CWS director and Chairman of the National Film Association, J.M. Peddie, was invited onto the Institute's Board of Governors.¹⁷⁵ Also in the late 1940s, representatives of the Co-operative Union were invited to give evidence to the Home Office Committee on Children and the Cinema, the influence of movies on young people having long been a concern of the Movement.¹⁷⁶ For example, the concern for children's safety had been behind the Co-operative Congress resolution in 1930 demanding the use of non-inflammable film for all public film exhibitions involving children.¹⁷⁷ The potential for moral corruption presented by the movies was a passionate subject for some Co-operators from time to time. An early expression of this appeared in 1913, when a 'Special Commissioner' for the *Co-operative News* reported on a visit to a picture palace in a Northern town:

But when I left the palace in the manufacturing town the other evening, I felt it was about time something was done to save the children from witnessing some of the abominable sights. This is not a matter that is confined to the manufacturing towns; it has, under the picture palace company promoters, become a national danger. The picture palace has endless openings without being in any way degrading and descending to hysterical absurdities that are tending to make us into an unbalanced people.¹⁷⁸

The views were immediately challenged by a Co-operator from Blackburn who accused the reporter of bias and prejudice, and argued that "it does not necessarily follow that because this class of entertainment is cheaper than the legitimate stage theatre that its morals and ideals are not so high".¹⁷⁹

The general debate regarding the moral impact of the movies continued within the Movement for many decades and one of the more prominent campaigns to combat the pernicious influence of films was raised by the Women's Co-operative Guild (WCG)

against war films in the late 1920s. The Guild was prompted by the Women's International League, which convened a conference to debate a topic that accorded closely with the pacifist sympathies of the women's section of the Co-operative Movement.¹⁸⁰ In March of 1928, the Central Committee of the WCG passed a resolution condemning war pictures, stressing their grave concern against:

the large number of films glorifying war that are now being encouraged by the naval and military departments of the Government; they protest against the showing of these films as entirely incompatible with the progress towards disarmament; and they suggest that in the place of these the Government might finance films showing the work of the League of Nations, and depicting the home life and industries of other countries, as this would tend to foster the spirit of international goodwill.¹⁸¹

A Guildswoman from Sunderland, a lady who had clearly been called upon to make a sacrifice in the Great War, put the issues in even starker terms:

War pictures, in my opinion, ought not to be shown either in this or any other country. The memory of our lost loved ones is buried in our own hearts, and will be until we ourselves go to join them in the Great Beyond. If authors of pictures wish to show anything in relation to war, let them show to the rising generation the following: After-war broken-hearted mothers and wives and canny bairns; let them show cripples walking about our streets begging; let them show slums of homes that heroes have to live in; let them show the hospitals full of dejected, broken bodies lying on their beds; and lastly, let them show the asylums where hundreds of our gallant men are, and probably will be for the rest of their lives; let them show the broken-hearted mother looking into the face of her son, a face that was once beautiful and full of laughter, but which is now most awful to gaze upon, and saddest of all, does not know his own mother. These are the pictures to show to those people who look upon war as something noble and great.¹⁸²

The Women's Guild retained a keen interest in the moral influence of films in the decades to come and alongside other constituencies in the Movement maintained a vigilance over corrupting forms of leisure. Voices were raised against the 'Bad Influence of Amusement Palaces' in the 1940s, protest was joined in the moral crusade against American-style horror comics in the 1950s, and educational gatherings entertained the notion that 'Film "glamour" leads to unhappy marriages'.¹⁸³ Once again though, most attention in the postwar decade was devoted to the matter of children and the cinema. Unease was shown following the findings of the Social Survey Division of the Central Office of Information and its report on children's leisure, and observers were left with the impression that some out-of-school activities like the popular cinema

clubs "would be better suppressed, not developed". In particular, concern was shown over the popularity of 'thriller', 'mystery' and 'murder' films with younger audiences.¹⁸⁴ The social responsibility of the organisers of cinema clubs was the topic introduced for debate by film critic Miss E. Arnot Robertson at a day school held by the Birmingham Society in 1952¹⁸⁵; a theme developed in a presentation by Mary Field, executive officer of the Children's Film Foundation, in a presentation at the National Film Theatre to a crowded gathering of members of the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society's film societies. Here, supporting the call for better films for children's film shows, she claimed that: "You cannot hope to have an intelligent film-going public until you first have an intelligent child film-going public".¹⁸⁶ In 1956, a gathering of Co-operative educationalists declared their strong concern "about the part played by the cinema in the formation of character and ideas among the young". While echoing reservations about the suitability of films shown at cinema clubs, a specifically Co-operative dimension was brought to the discussion with the recommendation that the Co-operative Union, through the CWS, "take steps to fill the need for children's co-operative films" and to encourage the formation of local Children's Cinema Councils. Such measures being aimed to ensure the screening of films "not harmful to children's minds", and to combat "the films made by large capitalist firms", which "put over their ideas and their products".¹⁸⁷

By the late 1950s, attention was shifting away from the pernicious influence traditionally attributed to the cinema and onto emergent forms of mass media, namely television. In a presentation to the Northern Sectional Youth Clubs Council in the mid-1960s, the member education officer of the Co-operative Union gave vent to some of these apprehensions: "In a synthetic age when popularity, idols and demands were created for us by mass communication methods, comradeship and fellowship were practically non-existent".¹⁸⁸ A decade earlier, in a lecture to the Enfield Co-operative Film Society, Roger Manvell of the BFI had warned that "TV will be more powerful than films", a view arrived at following a study tour of the United States.¹⁸⁹ The proceeding week, Dr Manvell informed a conference convened by the Education Committee of the London Society that cinema attendances were already on the decline under the impact of television, and clearly Co-operators were turning their minds towards the social impact of the new medium.¹⁹⁰ Concern was substantially tempered

by the perceived increase of member apathy, something that attracted much attention and analysis from the mid-1950s onwards. In a rather desperate presidential address to the Scottish WCG Congress in 1962, Mrs Isa Moyles pleaded, "Surely there are more important things in life than bingo or TV".¹⁹¹

As a trading organisation of considerable size and diversity, the Co-operative Movement entertained other, less puritanical, relationships with film and the cinema, beyond the concerns of moral influence and social impact. For example, its commercial interests sought advantage from the use of film or from the glamour attached to cinema and film stars. Advertising, a complex and controversial matter for Co-operation, brought the Movement into close contact with the media, and film was of considerable significance before the advent of commercial television in the mid-1950s.¹⁹² A principal strategy adopted by Co-operative publicists was the engagement of movie stars to participate in promotions and store visits, and numerous such occasions were reported in the Movement's press. Silent screen star, Carl Brisson, was photographed as a customer of a Co-operative travelling butcher's shop, while the tailoring department of the Horwich Society proudly claimed to have fitted stars of stage, screen and radio, including George Formby, Naughton and Gold, Norman Evans, the Western Brothers, the Two Leslies, among others.¹⁹³ Of particular note was an empathetic relationship developed with the hugely popular Gracie Fields, who, like the Co-op, was a celebrated native of Rochdale. In 1929, 'Our Gracie' had recorded the novelty song, 'Shopping at the Co-op Shop', confirming her appreciation of the Movement.¹⁹⁴ The star was often in the habit of visiting the Co-op store when playing a local theatre, such as at Newcastle and Birmingham in 1930-31¹⁹⁵; or advantageously photographed at an exhibition of Co-operative trade.¹⁹⁶ Even following her emigration to Capri in the postwar years, Gracie made it a habit to call in on the Co-op on her returns home, entertaining mill workers and members at the Co-operative Hall, Chorley in 1949, and officially opening Pioneer House, the new emporium of the Rochdale Society, in 1956.¹⁹⁷ Another well-known personality around Co-op exhibitions was film actor Richard Attenborough who featured regularly in promotions for 'Defiant' radios and televisions, and was possibly under contract to the CWS.¹⁹⁸ The star claimed Movement connections through a grandfather, a pioneer of a Midland Society, and made numerous

contributions to Co-op Days, Beauty Pageants and lectures in the postwar decade.¹⁹⁹ Into the 1950s, the demand in film stars for trade and member promotions began to decline in favour of the new generation of celebrities created by television, or if younger customers were sought, the pop music business.²⁰⁰ This, of course, was reflective of a significant reorientation in the media and leisure, which came with new technologies and markets.

The Co-operative Movement maintained a further relationship with film stars and movie celebrities: in a few instances, former employees found success in the world of film. Much pride was taken in their achievement and their connection with the Co-op, as with Janet Brown, previously with the St. Cuthbert's Association, Edinburgh, who, working up through stage and radio, landed a contract with the Rank Organisation and a part in *Floodtide* (1949).²⁰¹ A Hollywood screen test was the reward for Alan Powell Hunter, who, after leaving the Mid-Rhondda Society, played numerous bit parts in British films.²⁰² The most famous old-Co-op-boy made good in Hollywood was a compatriot of Mr Hunter's, Richard Burton, destined to be the biggest film star of his generation, and who first started to earn a living as an assistant at the Taibach and Port Talbot Society.²⁰³ In some cases, reports were circulated internationally, as in the case of Greta Garbo, who had worked at the Stockholm department store of the Kooperativa forbundet and first appeared before the cameras in a publicity film for the Society.²⁰⁴

As the principal leisure activity for working people in the period up to the 1950s, it is not surprising that the Movement's press kept members abreast of events and developments in the world of cinema. As we have seen, this might comprise of reports assessing new legislation or the recommendations of cinema enquiries.²⁰⁵ Much more prevalent, though, were film reviews, star profiles and popular reports on the doings of Hollywood and Elstree, which were regular features of Co-op magazines and newspapers. Much of the material was freely sourced from the studios and production companies in the conventional form of press handouts and publicity packs, and appeared mainly in the Movement's popular home journals like *The Wheatsheaf*. Thus, readers of that magazine in the 1920s and 1930s were apprised of 'How a Film Play is Written', learned of the role of the 'Extra', were informed of 'How the Newsreel goes to Press!', and enjoyed 'An Intimate View of Merle Oberon's Home'.²⁰⁶ Such reporting was a

fundamental part of the popular discourse of the movies as reflected in the huge success of fan magazines like *Film Pictorial*, *Film Weekly* and *Picturegoer Weekly*, and with its participation the Co-operative Movement contributed to the members' simple enjoyment of going to the pictures. A more considered approach to the art of the cinema was the preserve of Movement publications like *The Millgate* (subtitled: *A Monthly Magazine of Art, Co-operative Culture, Social Progress and Internationalism*), which carried longer, critical articles examining commercial, technical and aesthetic aspects of film. Although falling well short of the intellectualism of contemporary film journals like *Close-Up* (a significant publication of the cultural Left in the late 1920s and early 1930s), *The Millgate* presented a serious consideration of film matters for an educated readership.²⁰⁷

The Co-operative press, as would be expected, was keen to report on the Movement's own interaction with the cinema industry, as well as on matters of Co-operative organisation and ideals as they presented themselves in the film world. Particular pride was taken in the Movement's participation in commercial feature films, as when Co-op stores and personnel made appearances in dramatic scenes. One of the most appropriate such occasions came in the northern mill town drama *Hindle Wakes* (1931), for which a replica Co-op store was built and stocked with CWS goods.²⁰⁸ In the 1940s, the London Society was engaged for two film productions: a Society delivery van (and driver Arthur Martin) featured in a street chase sequence for Ealing Studio's *Hue and Cry* (1946), and a replica store was supervised at Twickenham Studios for Cromwell Films' production of *Dancing With Crime* (1947). As *The Co-operative News* proudly pointed out:

Producers are evidently beginning to realise that the "co-op" shop and its appurtenances are now as much a part of the English scene as village greens, cricket, and darts in the "local".²⁰⁹

On other occasions, a Society's premises might simply be hired for the purposes of shooting, as when the central premises of the Folkstone Society were transformed into 'Chanter's Stores' for the London Films' production of *Lady Godiva Rides Again* (1951), and during which twenty staff assisted in the scenes.²¹⁰

Although a rare occurrence, the prospect of Co-operative themes or Movement

history in commercial feature films created great excitement and expectation. One notable incidence of this coalescence of Movement culture with the mainstream cinema industry was the postscript provided by Co-operative Parliamentarian, A.V. Alexander, to John Baxter's celebrated adaptation of *Love on the Dole* (1940). Alexander's message was an early manifestation of the wartime consensus promoting social reconstruction. It read:

Our working men and women have responded magnificently to any and every call made upon them. Their reward must be a new Britain. Never again must the unemployed become forgotten men of the peace.

Alexander's contribution was entirely appropriate as the novel's author (and scriptwriter), Walter Greenwood, was a former employee of the Pendleton Co-operative Society and claimed to have drawn on his experiences "for the poignant descriptive work of the book".²¹¹ Later, in 1944, two films were announced that surprisingly proposed to deal with notables who had served Co-operation. Ealing Studios, which was concurrently working on J.B. Priestley's, *They Came to a City*, the first play of the People's Entertainment Society, developed the idea for a biopic on activist and historian Beatrice Webb, for which Sydney Webb granted consent and Left historian Margaret Cole was hired to advise. *The Co-operative News* helpfully suggested to the producers that Webb's contemporary, J.T.W. Mitchell, long-time president of the CWS, also offered a life story which would make "admirable film material".²¹² An even stranger saga developed around the tale of 'Paddy the Cope' (Patrick Gallagher), the colourful manager and originator of the Templecrone Co-operative Society, Donegal. His biography, *My Story*, had caught the popular imagination in both Britain and the United States, and it was reported that Hollywood had "its eye on the story for a first-rate film".²¹³ No further mention of interest was forthcoming from California, but the tale attracted British film producers and it was improbably announced that maverick film director Michael Powell had entered into contract with Patrick Gallagher for the film rights of *My Story*, with a proposed budget of up to £150,000. In the event, the Movement was disappointed and no film materialised.²¹⁴ One eagerly awaited film that did reach completion was *Green Grow the Rushes* (1950), "the first co-operative film made by a trade union", and which was granted some production finance by the CWS

bank.²¹⁵ ACT Films Ltd had been formed "to offset the slump in production", which had hit the British film industry in the late 1940s, and the Co-operative Movement remained attentive to its progress and completion.²¹⁶ Similar moral support had been shown two decades earlier, when a 'Film War' had erupted in cinema exhibition and the independents had sought to organise against "the evils of trusts and combines", which sought to dominate the industry.²¹⁷ The result of the long term grievance was the Film Industries Co-operative Society, whose rules were modelled on those of the Co-operative Union, while one of the Society's directors was an ex-MP of the Co-operative Party.²¹⁸

Interest was also taken in the treatment of Co-operation in factual cinema, as with the report on the achievements of the Finnish Co-operatives in a *March of Time* newsreel, which, it was believed, "ought to delight millions of British co-operators".²¹⁹ Readers were similarly alerted to the invention of Mr Foulkes, a CWS departmental manager, whose Mobile Storage Unit system was featured in a *Pathe Gazette* newsreel and screened in 3,000 cinemas.²²⁰ While following the Second World War, the self-service idea was sufficiently newsworthy for Universal to cover the opening of the first such store in Manchester, by the local Co-operative Society, in 1949.²²¹ Details were also given of Co-operative subjects that were included in films for the Ministry of Information (youth schools), the Mechanical Handling Association (CWS flour mills) and the Children's Television Newsreel Film Unit (RACS crockery demonstration).²²² In these areas of Co-operative participation and pride in the achievements of the mainstream cinema industry are clear examples of supportive interaction between the Movement and commercial filmmakers. Although Co-operators at times attacked and critiqued the British film industry, it also accepted that it could on occasion serve the interests of Co-operation.

One area of film work clearly demonstrates a libertarian approach to workers' leisure, that being the acquisition and operation of cinemas by a number of Co-operative Societies.²²³ The promotion of this activity was invariably appreciated in terms of the Movement's responsibility to its members' leisure demands, something additional to the conventional concern to meet members' material needs. Co-operative propagandist, W.H. Brown, writing in the middle-1930s, identified some of the aims and benefits of organising Co-op cinemas: firstly, they would counter the commercial cinema industry

and its extraction of "profits in the leisure hours of the workers"; secondly, Co-operatively run cinemas "could do much to influence the taste and form the habits of the people ... They come to the stores for their daily fare; why not supply their evening pleasures?"; thirdly, the evangelical legacy of self-improvement was apparent in the desire to "save the souls and minds, as well as the shillings and pence of their members".²²⁴

Co-operative Society halls had been regular venues for film shows, hired to showmen from about the turn of the century. The Movement's first permanent cinemas began to appear in the middle-teens, with examples in the North East at Meadowfields (1915) and Birtley (1916). These were both conversions of existing premises, and the Movement's first purpose-built cinema was claimed to be the Co-operative Cinema of the Horbury Society. The Horbury Co-op Hall had been let for silent films from 1915, with the Society taking it over in 1927 and running it as a service department. It did so well that a new cinema was planned when it became necessary to convert to sound.²²⁵ The experience of the Co-operative Cinema at Horbury was indicative of the use and value of a cinema to a local Co-operative Society. In 1934, the Horbury cinema seated 520 and achieved a weekly attendance of 2,500 out of a membership of 2,700 and a local community of 8,000. The community spirit of the Society was evident when tax relief afforded by the 1936 budget was generously passed on to patrons in the form of reduced ticket prices. In addition, pensioners of the Society were invited to enjoy two free evening shows a week in their own cinema as guests of their fellow members.²²⁶

As the only provider of cinema entertainment in the district, the Society valued its cinema for the benefit it brought in terms of Co-operative publicity and propaganda. During each winter, monthly lecture concerts were arranged for members in the cinema. In October 1936, the lecturer was Mr D. Davies of the CWS Publicity Department, who showed films in support of that year's publicity campaign for the CWS preserve works at Middleton, Reading, Stockport and Acton. In keeping with the practice of these campaigns, organised by the CWS film service, product samples and a souvenir booklet were distributed at the show to encourage future purchases of CWS products at local Society stores.²²⁷ In the winter of 1935, W.H. Brown lectured in the Horbury cinema; enthused by the experience he subsequently expended much energy promoting the

benefit to a Society of operating a Co-operative cinema.²²⁸

In January 1939, all members were invited to a special free afternoon show, which included a lecture on the principles of Co-operation. The management were proud to announce that "the pleasure of the pictures is thus reflected in the dividend. And that for the past year was half a crown".²²⁹ The commercial trade were antagonistic towards the Co-op's venture into film exhibition and dividend on purchases was among their chief grievances. The North West branch of the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association declared the Co-op an "insidious menace to the exhibiting industry", following the initiative of the Blackpool Society in launching its Jubilee News Theatre in 1938.²³⁰ *The Co-operative News* had caught the spirit of the action when it declared the News Theatre the "latest challenge to capitalist monopoly"²³¹; and the sentiments were maintained into the postwar period with the acquisition of the Alhambra by the Meltham and Meltham Mills Society in 1949, and the boast that "the Alhambra will now be a people's cinema ... the profits from it will go towards our dividend".²³² Co-operative cinemas were most in evidence in the North of England, with particular concentrations in the mining districts of the North East and the West Riding and Lancashire areas.²³³ The cinema of the Long Buckby Self-Assistance Industrial Society in Northamptonshire was seemingly the most Southerly located Co-operative cinema of the sound period. The last remaining cinema operated by a retail Co-operative Society, the Co-operative Cinema, Horbury, closed its doors to the public in 1967.

The Mass Media and Popular Culture

The expansiveness and complexity of the Co-operative Movement brought it into contact with various mass media and popular cultural forms. There was a long and hostile engagement with the Capitalist press, for instance, especially over democratic freedoms, fair accounting and the concentration of ownership. During the entrenched Labour strife of the immediate post-First World War period, the Movement took to branding the powerful Lord Northcliffe the 'Press Napoleon' and his ambitions a "malignant evil".²³⁴ A watchful eye was kept on the press and the spate of acquisitions leading to further concentration in the late 1920s, which aroused considerable concern:

Recent developments in the rapid concentration of newspaper ownership in the hands of a few men have brought into sight far more serious dangers. They offer a grave warning to all who realise what it must mean to democracy to leave the control of public opinion and the discussion of public affairs in the grip of a small group of business men who have made the publishing of newspapers and periodicals a profit-making exercise. The newspaper as an independent organ of opinion, conducted with the object of instructing the popular mind on questions of public policy, has practically disappeared. The press has become merely another instrument in the possession of the great capitalistic groups, used mainly for commercial ends as an integral part of the selling machinery of modern business, and having for its unavowed object the stifling of all opinion that does not accord with the views these newspaper owners take of their own interests, political aims, and the significance of popular movements.²³⁵

Concern was such that the Co-operative Movement actively intervened in newspaper publishing with the acquisition of *Reynolds Illustrated News* in 1929. This was put under the control of the National Co-operative Publishing Society and issued well into the 1960s. The action was praised in the Co-operative press:

It has been the practice for co-operators to expose and denounce the menace of a Syndicated Press, and it is to be sincerely hoped that this enterprise on the part of the Publishing Society to arrest or correct this menace in the only practical and effective way possible, will receive the whole-hearted backing of the co-operative societies up and down the country. The transfer has created considerable interest in the newspaper world. We wish the venture every success and sincerely trust that it may prove to be the stepping stone to the even greater control of the daily press, which has for years past been the expressed desire of active co-operators.²³⁶

The most concerted press attack on the Co-operative Movement occurred in the early 1930s and was led by Lords Beaverbrook and Rothermere, although the former was the more tenacious. In 1931, the *Daily Express* issued a "Warning to Co-ops!", and felt "compelled to expose a monstrous and malicious feature of co-operative propaganda which does not concern the *Daily Express* at all, but the whole structure of our national life!". This poisonous propaganda allegedly went on "week by week, in every part of the country, fouling the public mind towards all industrial, financial, and political leaders who are not co-operatives, inflaming the ignorant and corrupting the credulous. It is the most subversive propaganda in any country to-day, save Russia!".²³⁷ There were a number of concerns within this general attack: the tax status of the dividend, excessive pricing to maintain dividend, and the viability of the small private trader. The Movement was pressed to declare an 'anti-Co-operative crusade' and feared the influence of the press in a period of intense hostility to the principle of mutual trading.²³⁸

Beaverbrook resorted to underhand tactics, and, in the fashion of Lord Leverhulme some decades earlier, organised errand boys to surreptitiously purchase from Co-operative stores in an attempt to prove over-pricing.²³⁹ The Press Baron also mischievously took out individual membership with the London Co-operative Society with the possible view to seek election to the management committee.²⁴⁰ Another traditional method of hurting the Movement was invoked when pressure was put on employees of private traders not to shop with the Co-op.²⁴¹ Despite its alleged influence the popular press was unable to stem the march of the Co-ops, which continued to expand and attract member-customers in the interwar period. The episode of the anti-Co-operative crusade in the middle-1930s and the generally perceived enmity between the Capitalist press and the Co-operative Movement were therefore clear expressions of the ideological contest that reigned between private individualistic trade and its supporters, and the Co-operative Movement with its traditions of mutuality and collectivism.

The antagonism also manifested itself in broadcasting when late in 1931 the Co-operative Movement was dismayed to find that the BBC had removed all reference to Co-operation from a series of history broadcasts. This had apparently arisen following a prompt from private traders' associations and was warmly applauded by the *Daily Express*. The General Secretary of the Co-operative Union immediately demanded restitution of the programme, but without success.²⁴² Delegates to Co-operative Congress, concerned about the impartiality of the BBC, adopted the following resolution:

That this Congress, representing six and a half millions of British co-operators, protests against the action of the BBC in cancelling, under pressure from trading interests, an educational broadcast on the Co-operative Movement. It urges upon the BBC the desirability of reversing this decision, and, further, emphasises its opinion that a regular series of national instructional talks on Co-operation is long overdue, both for the benefit of its members and their families, who, together, constitute at least half the population, and, therefore, in all reasonable probability, more than half the holders of wireless receiving licences.²⁴³

The following year the Co-operative Union kept pressure on the BBC to maintain an impartial position, mainly through its representative on the Adult Educational Talks Council, Joseph Reeves, an activist with a keen interest in communications and propaganda, and requested broadcast coverage of the annual Co-operative Congress. The BBC declined, although the privilege had been afforded the National Federation of

Women's Institutes.²⁴⁴ In 1934, a deputation of senior Co-operative officials met with the Chairman and Director General of the BBC to raise "the whole question of the continued exclusion of the Co-operative Movement from broadcasting facilities". It was accepted that a more "reasonable view" would prevail in the future and the Movement looked forward to fairer treatment in broadcasting.²⁴⁵

In some areas the Movement was in sympathy with the aims and constitution of the BBC. In particular, the ideal of public service broadcasting conformed with the prominent legacy of self-improvement and Co-operation's belief in education to fit people for responsible citizenship. It was just that from time to time the Movement did not feel that BBC policy accorded with the ideal and that Co-operation was not afforded an opportunity to serve the public through the microphone. Such concerns surfaced again, later in the 1930s, with the adoption of the following resolution at the National Conference of the Men's Guild:

This conference of the National Co-operative Men's Guild is of the opinion that the BBC is not operating in the interests of the general public; that the officer class, with their well-known narrowed outlook, continue to dominate policy, which tends to be more and more reactionary. For example: The treatment of the abdication of King Edward VIII; the dreary Sunday programmes; the broadcast of the Hitler Youth Folk Songs; the anti-Bolshevik propaganda of the "Red Sarafan"; and general boycott of Labour and working-class organisations, particularly the Co-operative Movement. It calls upon the Government to appoint a more democratically-minded board of governors with working-class representation thereon.²⁴⁶

The Co-operative Union was brought back into conflict with the BBC over the Corporation's failure to adequately feature the Movement's centenary in 1944. There was already some tension over Co-operative subjects appearing in Foreign Services but being excluded from the Home Service.²⁴⁷ However, substantial dissatisfaction was expressed when the BBC declined to broadcast a recorded version of the Centenary Pageant or a talk by Mr Thompson of the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Society, a stance that was interpreted as "political rather than technical".²⁴⁸ The whole issue was brought to Congress, where a member of the Central Board, in classic oppositional style, condemned the BBC for its failure in public service:

The truth is that our gospel, our creed, is not acceptable to the rulers of this country today. The truth is that the working class in this country and other countries has accomplished something, and it is going to in the future, if you and I use the power we possess, to break down the barriers and to relieve poverty, misery, and oppression, and

because of that, those who control such organisations as the BBC would not have it: it was too dangerous.²⁴⁹

Voices of criticism and condemnation were raised against the BBC periodically after the war, such as the accusation of anti-Co-operative bias alleged by the Secretary of the Co-operative Party in 1956.²⁵⁰ However, attention began to switch to American-style commercial television and its moral and economic impact on the nation, against which the State-subsidised BBC was judged as positively virtuous.²⁵¹

The public service element to the British Documentary Film Movement also disposed film-minded activists within the Co-operative Movement to offer their support and encouragement to the documentarists. Leading documentary film-maker and film historian Paul Rotha has been explicit as to the role of documentary: "The Documentary Film, quite simply, aims to bring about an awareness in every person of their place in everyday life and of the responsibilities of good citizenship implied by that membership".²⁵² Co-operative education had an equal interest in the "teaching of citizenship" and in the creation of "a will toward civic participation"²⁵³; and both Co-operation and the Griersonian Documentary contained a strong social-democratic dimension and held the belief that education or education through film could promote responsible citizenship and enhance democratic potential.²⁵⁴

Co-operative educationalists who sought to use film to aid their work in the middle-1930s readily drew on the films of the Documentary Movement. The films merited a high critical cachet within intellectual film culture in Britain, and in a number of cases demonstrated a progressive sense of social awareness through the will to depict working-class men and women on the screen. As an educational and propaganda film policy was being worked-up within the Co-operative Movement there was an urgent need to secure suitable films for exhibition, and the Griersonian Documentary, along with some educational titles from specialist libraries, helped meet the demand. In the crucial debate about Labour's film propaganda, and which led to the formation of the Workers' Film Association (WFA), one Socialist journalist heaped praise on the British documentary film as the approach best suited to the needs of the democratic Left:

The essential films will be what are called by some, "Documentary" and by others, "Realist" (which will serve if we agree that ideals can be made realities). They represent a movement which I consider to be the fulfilment of the cinema.

They are concerned with living actualities, with the Other Fellow's job, with *How the Other Half Lives*, with the real drama of life, with faithful reporting and honest screen journalism. They strip away hypocrisy, cant and sophistry from the cinema, without sacrificing its deeper appeal. They are Art, without being arty and truth without being stark and ugly.²⁵⁵

Both the Film Committee of the National Association of Co-operative Education Committees (NACEC) and its replacement, the WFA, distributed documentary films to Co-operative Societies and other progressive organisations throughout the later 1930s and the war years.²⁵⁶ In some ways the WFA was modelled on Film Centre, the brainchild of John Grierson, and which acted as a 'film consultancy' mediating between film-makers and sponsors.

There was a further dynamic within documentary film production that brought the realist film-makers into correspondence with Co-op film activists and publicists: film sponsorship and public relations. While this commercial aspect of the Documentary Film Movement has attracted criticism and tainted the integrity of some films, it was a necessary facet of an expanded documentary film sector. The two most well-known production units were subsumed within official bodies, the Empire Marketing Board (1927-1933) and the General Post Office (1933-1940), and contributed to the promotion of Empire trade and the postal services. Out of these two units, led by John Grierson, there emerged several 'independent' documentary film units, which serviced commissions for public relations films from private enterprise. In addition, there were a number of firms, such as Publicity Films, Revelation Films and Steuart Films, which made more straight-forward advertising and industrial films. In a very few instances an industrial concern provided for its own film unit, most famously at Shell Oil.²⁵⁷ Grierson was generally critical of the sponsored film work outside of the documentary units, as they tended, as he saw it, to replace aesthetic discernment and social responsibility with visual tedium or the base pleasures of the commercial cinema.²⁵⁸

A similar tension developed between the Co-operative Movement's publicists and educationalists in the mid-1930s. The CWS established a long relationship with Publicity Films and sponsored popular entertaining films, promoting trade and services, suitable for general audiences. In contrast, the Film Committee of the NACEC and the later WFA sought films to promote Co-operative ideals or to teach Movement history

and practices, and relations over cinema work became quite acrimonious.²⁵⁹ Once funds had been secured in 1938, the WFA placed production of its 'documentary' films in the hands of the Realist Film Unit, a leading independent documentary film unit headed by Basil Wright.

Film publicity and propaganda was attracting significant attention within the Co-operative Movement by the 1930s, and this reflected a wider trend across business, education and politics. The issues were complex ones for Co-operators who traditionally were suspicious and critical of advertising in all its forms, and denounced it as manipulative, anti-democratic and serving the interests of the powerful classes. As with many on the Left, the Movement was critical of a process that seemingly created false wants in consumers, exploited their sense of vanity or ignorance and was an additional cost on distribution, which, if not increasing the price of commodities, was passed on in the form of reduced quality. The Movement's traditional moral approach to advertising came under scrutiny in the first decade of the twentieth century. While many of the objections remained, it was becoming increasingly apparent that Co-operators were being required to trade in national markets against popular branded goods. As one correspondent to *The Co-operative News* pithily expressed it: "There is no use sitting down and waiting for the trade to come; we must get the public interested".²⁶⁰ The first decade of the new century witnessed a significant debate within the Movement regarding its position and options with respect to advertising, and the consequent partial acceptance of the necessity of publicity and promotion. A defence of advertising was offered in the argument that the increased trade would result in greater employment in the model factories of the Movement, and, additionally, it was necessary to defend the huge amount of capital invested by working-class members in productive and distributive concerns.²⁶¹ Advertising would remain a contentious issue for Co-operators and would continue to attract considerable analysis and debate as the century progressed. Film would be one element in the wider concern to promote member-customer loyalty and to boost sales.

Commencing in the late nineteenth century, the Co-operative Movement began supporting film work. In some areas, such as Labour and industrial cinema, it could

justifiably count itself a pioneer, and a commendable participation with film was maintained well into the 1960s. Co-operation's engagement with the moving image, for propaganda, education and entertainment, is examined in detail in the following three chapters.

NOTES - Chapter 2

1. Heerma van Voss, L. and van Holthoon, F., 'Popular Culture, Local Culture, Working Class Culture. Problems of Definition and Comparison' in Heerma van Voss, L. and van Holthoon, F. (eds), *Working Class and Popular Culture* (Amsterdam: Stichting Beheer IISG, 1988); Allen, D., '"Culture" and the Scottish Labour Movement' in *Scottish Labour History Society Journal*, 14 (May 1980).
2. Voss and Holthoon: 11.
3. Yeo, E., 'Phases in the History of Popular Culture and Power Relations in Britain, 1789 to the Present' in *ibid.*: 135-136.
4. Jones, S.G., *The British Labour Movement and Film, 1918-1939* (London: Routledge, 1987): 40-58. For some perspectives on Socialist and Marxist cultural activity in the inter-war period, see, Clark, J. et al (eds), *Culture and Crisis in Britain in the 1930s* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1979).
5. Waters, C., *British Socialists and the Politics of Popular Culture 1884-1914* (Manchester: MUP, 1990).
6. *Ibid.*: 188.
7. 'Wholesome Leisure for Co-operators', *The Co-operative News* (5 September 1936): 6.
8. 'Plea for Cultural Education. Raising the Standard of Demand', *The Co-operative News* (13 June 1931): 3.
9. Ardath, F., 'Why Not a Cultured Co-operative Movement?', *The Co-operative Educator* (April 1937): 41.
10. 'The Co-operative Organisation of Leisure', *Review of International Co-operation* (1929): 255.
11. Gurney, P., *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870-1930* (Manchester: MUP, 1996): 7; Gurney, P., 'Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Working Class Consumption in England, 1870-1940', unpublished paper presented at the Social History Society Conference (January 1993): 12.
12. Gurney, P., *The Making of Co-operative Culture in England, 1870-1918*, unpublished D.Phil thesis (University of Sussex, 1989): 10.
13. *Ibid.*: 14.
14. Waters, C., *op.cit.*: 121-130.
15. The sweep of Labour Movement cultural provision in the inter-war period is covered in Jones, S.G., *Workers At Play. A Social and Economic History of Leisure 1918-1929* (London: RKP, 1986): Chapter 6. The author argues here against the view that Socialist forms of leisure were eroded in the twentieth century, that indeed, the inter-war years witnessed the zenith of Labour's cultural and recreational activity.
16. Gurney, P., 'Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Working Class Consumption', *op.cit.*: 12-13.
17. *Ibid.*: 14.
18. To take one pointed example of the omission of the Co-operative Movement from local studies of working-class leisure, see the two studies on Manchester and Salford, Davies, A., *Leisure, Gender and Poverty. Working-class Culture in Salford and Manchester, 1900-1939* (Buckingham: OU, 1992); Davies, A. and Fielding, S. (eds), *Workers' Worlds. Cultures and Communities in Manchester and Salford 1880-1939* (Manchester: MUP, 1992). In 1939, the Manchester and Salford Society had achieved a membership of 93, 507.
19. 'May Day in London', *The Co-operative News* (7 May 1910): 583.
20. 'First of May. Processions in Bolton and Stratford', *The Co-operative News* (12 May 1906): 525.
21. 'The SCWS. Opening of New Premises in Glasgow', *The Co-operative News* (9 January 1897): 28-29. See the advert for the demonstration, *The Co-operative News* (2 January 1897): 12.
22. 'Co-operative Fetes', *The Co-operative News* (3 August 1907): 957.
23. 'Great Field Day at Preston', *The Co-operative News* (30 July 1910): 989. See the photograph of Preston's 1908 gala with an estimated attendance of 50,000, *The Co-operative News* (18 July 1908): 874.
24. 'Blackley's Day', *The Co-operative News* (26 June 1909): 833.
25. See the reports in *The Co-operative News* (19 July 1924): 6, and (23 August 1924): 11.
26. A special occasion which was celebrated with the full panoply of processions, exhibitions and festivals was a Society's jubilee, and many were reached in the period around the Great War. For two comprehensive accounts of local jubilees, see, 'Bradford's Jubilee Procession', *The Co-operative News* (18 June 1910): 794-796; Hampton, E., 'Birmingham's Jubilee Exhibition. The Most Comprehensive Co-operative Show Ever Held in England', *The Producer* (September 1931): 257-259. A film record was

taken of this latter jubilee.

27. 'Our First "Co-operators' Day". Significance of a New Festival', *The Co-operative News* (7 July 1923): 1; Pawlowska, A., 'Origins of the Rainbow Flag and the International Co-operative Day', *Review of International Co-operation*, 88, 1 (1995); Bonner, A., *British Co-operation* (Manchester: Co-op Union, 1961): 455-456.
28. Gurney, P., *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870-1930*, op.cit.: Ch. 4. For two representative examples of contemporary international surveys of Co-operation, see: 'The Movement Abroad. Co-operation Throughout Europe', *The Co-operative News* (25 October 1902): 1290-1291; Muller, Dr H., 'A Wholesale Survey. In View of the Forthcoming Conference on International Trading. The Position on the Continent', *The Co-operative News* (2 May 1908): 501-502, (9 May 1908): 534 and (23 May 1908): 608.
29. Hobsbawm, E., 'Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe 1870-1914' in Hobsbawm, E. and Ranger, T., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983): 283-287; Wrigley, C., 'May Days and After', *History Today* (June 1990); Harvey, K.A., 'What May Day Means', *The Millgate* (May 1938).
30. Quoted from *The Co-operative News* in Gurney, P., *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870-1930*, op. cit.: 86.
31. On the Clarion Vocal Union, see, Waters, C., op. cit.: 2. For details of the National Co-operative Festivals, see, Magnanie, L., 'An Event in the Culture of Co-operation: National Co-operative Festivals at Crystal Palace' in Yeo, S.(ed), *New Views of Co-operation* (London: Routledge, 1988).
32. Richards, T., *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England. Advertising and Spectacle 1851-1914* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1990) 17-72.
33. Quoted in Gurney, P., *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870-1930*, op.cit.: 67.
34. Ibid.: 80.
35. Bonner, A., op.cit.: Ch.12. For an account of the Rochdale Pioneers and education, see, Hall, F. and Watkins, W.P., *Co-operation. A Survey of the History, Principles and Organisation of the Co-operative Movement in Great Britain and Ireland* (Manchester: Co-op Union, 1937): 165-168. A definition of Co-operative education offered by the Co-operative Union in 1909, clearly encompassed the twin concerns of both the Co-operative enterprise and the wider civic culture: "The objects of Co-operative Education are, primarily, the formation of co-operative character and opinions by teaching the history, theory, and principles of the movement, with economics and industrial and constitutional history in so far as they have bearing on Co-operation; and, secondarily, though not necessarily of less import, the training of men and women to take part in industrial and social reforms and civic life generally". *Co-operative Union, Educational Programme* (1908-1909): 3.
36. Gurney, P., *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870-1930*, op.cit.: 33; Hall, F. and Watkins, W.P., op.cit.: 174-178.
37. Twigg, H.J., *An Outline History of Co-operative Education* (Manchester: Co-op Union, 1924): 25.
38. Gurney, P., *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Co-operation in England, 1870-1930*, op.cit.: 33-34; Bonner, A., op.cit.: 523-525, provides a listing of Co-op publications. Also important were the annual *Educational Programmes* published by the Co-operative Union. These contained practical information and insight concerning a range of cultural activities, ie., Co-operative Choirs and Orchestras, Song Books for Co-operators, Co-operative Plays and Sketches, Lantern Slides, Gramophone Records, Dramatic Societies, and from the later 1930s, details of the new CWS National Film Service.
39. Twigg, H.J., op.cit.: 18-19, 29-30. For an account of the eventual schisms within the Independent Working-Class Education Movement, see, Miles, A., 'Workers' Education: The Communist Party and the Plebs League in the 1920s', *History Workshop Journal* 18 (Autumn 1984).
40. Quoted in Twigg, H.J., op.cit.: 30. For the notification of Albert Mansbridge's resignation from the Co-operative Building Society to lead the WEA, see, *The Co-operative News* (16 December 1905): 1519. An assessment of the Movement's role in adult educational provision is presented in Rhodes, R., 'The Contribution of Consumer Co-operatives to British Adult Education', *Journal of Co-operative Studies* (May 1999).
41. Hall, F. and Watkins, W.P., op.cit.: 172-173. For accounts of the Education Department at Stanford Hall, see, Marshall, R.L., 'Co-operative College and Education Department, 1946-1977', and Burch, L., 'Reflections on the Co-operative College, Co-operative Education and Stanford Hall, 1977-1994', both in *Journal of Co-operative Studies* 85 (January 1996).

42. Gurney, P., *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870-1930*, op.cit.: 136.
43. Ibid.: 127.; for a review of the first edition, see, 'Our Story.A Book for the Young of all Ages', *The Co-operative News* (31 October 1903): 1317.
44. Todd, S., 'Pleasure, Politics and Co-operative Youth: the interwar Co-operative Comrades' Circles', *Journal of Co-operative Studies* (September 1999): 133.
45. This is elaborated in proceeding chapters.
46. Wallis, M., 'Pageantry and the Popular Front: Ideological Production in the Thirties', *New Theatre Quarterly* 38 (May 1994); 'The Popular Front Pageant: Its Emergence and Decline', *New Theatre Quarterly* 41 (February 1995); 'Hiers to the Pageant: Mass Spectacle and the Popular Front' in Croft, A. (ed), *A Weapon in the Struggle. The Cultural History of the Communist Party in Britain* (London: Pluto, 1998).
47. Wallis, M., 'The Popular Front Pageant', op.cit.: 32; van Gyseghem, A., 'British Theatre in the Thirties: An Autobiographical Record' in Clark, J. et al (eds), op.cit. Van Gyseghem was pageant master for the Co-op's *Towards Tomorrow* pageant in 1938. In 1948, he hit out at cinema-goers, suggesting that "many films were made for people of the mental age of eleven", while defending theatre-goers as "the best type of audience". See, 'Playwright Hits Cinema Audiences', *The Co-operative News* (24 April 1948): 6.
48. 'The Workers to Produce Their Own Plays', *The Co-operative News* (20 June 1925): 2; 'A People's Theatre', *The Co-operative News* (21 March 1925): 11. Huntly Carter had recently published his study of theatre and film in the Soviet Union, *The New Theatre and Cinema of Soviet Russia* (London: Chapman and Dodd, 1924).
49. 'German Co-operative Theatre', *The Co-operative News* (18 October 1913): 137.
50. 'Co-operation in the Theatre', *The Co-operative News* (16 December 1922): 2.
51. 'Co-operative Opera House', *The Co-operative News* (15 January 1921): 2.
52. 'The Workers to Produce Their Own Plays', op.cit.
53. Attfield, J., *With Light of Knowledge. A Hundred Years of Education in the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society, 1877-1977* (London and West Nyack: Racs/Journeyman Press, 1981): 46. This remains the single most important study of local Society educational provision yet attempted.
54. 'The Dramatic Federation', *The Co-operative News* (2 June 1928): 10.
55. Wallis, M., op.cits.; Attfield, J., op.cit.: 48.
56. Etheridge, F., 'Amateur Dramatic Societies', *Co-operative Educator* (October 1933): 2.
57. *Co-operative Union Annual Congress Report 1943*: 64.
58. *Co-operative Union Annual Congress Report 1944*: 78; *Co-operative Union Annual Congress Report 1946*: 79-80. On the pageant, see, '"Co-operative Century": A Pageant of the People', *The Wheatsheaf* (June 1944): 3.
59. 'Co-op Society Buys a Theatre', *The Co-operative News* (21 January 1933): 1; 'The First Co-op Repertory Theatre', *The Co-operative News* (6 May 1933): 2.
60. 'A National Co-op Theatre', *The Co-operative News* (10 October 1936): 6.
61. Van Gyseghem, A., 'A Great People's Play Project', *The Co-operative News* (10 June 1939): 2. For an approving response to the scheme, see, 'People's Theatre Scheme', *The Co-operative News* (24 June 1939): 2; while for criticism of the details, see, Statham, A.J., 'A Co-operative Theatre', *The Co-operative Productive Review* (September 1939): 6-7.
The proposal for a National Co-operative People's Theatre clearly drew inspiration from the TUC's flirtations with drama in the mid-1930s and its sponsorship of a play to commemorate the Tolpuddle Martyrs. Miles Malleson's 'The Six Men of Dorset' attracted considerable discussion within the Co-operative Movement concerning the propaganda value of the drama, and numerous Co-op Societies sponsored receptions for the play and players when it featured in their town. See, 'Stage Aid to Democratic Culture. Famous Acors At Co-operative Dance', *The Co-operative News* (6 March 1937): 2; 'Hope of the Working-Class Theatre', *The Co-operative News* (1 May 1937): 13.
62. 'Ambitious Plan to Stage a Big Cavalcade of Democracy', *The Co-operative News* (31 January 1942): 1.
63. Ibid.
64. 'Entertainments Society', *The Co-operative News* (28 March 1942): 1. The WFA is considered in Chapter 4.
65. 'Entertainments Society', *The Co-operative News* (4 April 1942): 1; 'Entertainments Society', *Scottish Co-operator* (4 April 1942): 194. By the following year donations of over £10,000 was reported, see,

- 'Plays for the People', *The Labour Organiser* (February 1943): 15.
66. 'Priestley Play in Glasgow', *Scottish Co-operator* (27 February 1943): 131; 'People's Entertainment Society - First AGM', *Scottish Co-operator* (16 February 1943): 84. *They Came to a City* was filmed by Ealing in 1944 with some of its original performers and became a classic expression of the wartime consensus for a better post-war society.
67. 'Co-op Extending In Entertainment Field', *Today's Cinema* (14 September 1945): 3, 16; 'Co-operators Expand Entertainment Plans', *Today's Cinema* (27 November 1945): 3, 10. The activities of Pioneer Films are taken up in Chapter 4.
68. On workers' theatre in Britain, see, Samuel, R., MacColl, E., and Cosgrove, S., *Theatres of the Left 1880-1935: Workers' Theatre Movements in Britain and America* (London: RKP, 1985); Stourac, R. and McCreery, K., *Theatre As A Weapon. Workers' Theatre in the Soviet Union, Germany and Britain 1917-1934* (London: RKP, 1986). This latter study reveals that important workers' theatre groups such as the Red Players relied fundamentally on Co-op halls for venues: 215. A collection of Co-operative plays and sketches are held at the Co-operative Union Archive, Loughborough. At least one Movement commentator linked drama with film activities, seeing in the myriad dramatic groups a pool of talent and enthusiasm to appear before the cameras of the budding amateur cine enthusiasts who were beginning to produce films at the local level. See, Lamming, N., 'Co-operators As Film Actors!', *The Millgate* (September 1933).
69. 'An Antidote For Jazz', *The Co-operative News* (17 October 1925): 15.
70. 'Plea For Better Music', *The Co-operative News* (4 June 1921): 2.
71. Ibid.
72. 'Only "Musical Co-operative" Plans Centenary Songbook', *The Co-operative News* (23 October 1943): 7. Composers Vaughan Williams, Benjamin Britten and Elizabeth McConchy, and musicians Geraldo and Lew Stone, supported the Association.
73. Details taken from the pamphlet, *Songs For Co-operators* (Manchester: Co-op Union, 1924).
74. *The Co-operative Party. Songs and Hymns* (Manchester: Co-op Union, 1923).
75. 'Music With a Social Purpose. What Can Co-operative Groups Do?', *Comradeship and the Wheatsheaf* (May 1936): x.
76. 'Music in the Co-operative Movement', *Comradeship and the Wheatsheaf* (March 1939): xi.
77. The choruses were sung from memory rather than notation, possibly the first occasion of such an approach, 'Co-Opera!. The Triumph of *Belshazzar*', *Comradeship and the Wheatsheaf* (July 1938).
78. *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (17 August 1940): 5. In the area of classical music the Movement applauded the London Philharmonic Orchestra's re-emergence as a Co-operative following its financial collapse in 1939, see, 'Famous Orchestra Runs on Co-operative Basis', *The Co-operative News* (19 September 1942): 7.
79. 'Only "Musical Co-operative" Plans Centenary Songbook', op.cit.; 'WMA Concert at Watford', *The Co-operative News* (20 January 1945): 8.
80. 'Films, Music, Drama', *The Co-operative News* (12 April 1947): 5.
81. See Bush's advocations delivered to the Birmingham Society's one-day music school, 'Movement's Chance to Foster "People's Music"', *The Co-operative News* (13 March 1948): 6. Also his 'Music in the British Co-operative Movement', *The Bulletin: A Quarterly Journal for Co-operative Educationists* (July 1952): 3-5; and 'Music Important to Working Classes', *The Co-operative News* (21 January 1956): 11.
82. For the fullest treatment of these issues, see, Jones, S.G., *Sport, politics and the working class. Organised labour and sport in interwar Britain* (Manchester: MUP, 1988).
83. For an outline of the Clarion Clubs and other recreational organisations, see, Prynne, D., 'The Clarion Clubs, Rambling and the Holiday Associations in Britain since the 1890s', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 11 (1976); Jones, S., *Sport, politics and the working class*, op.cit: 73-104. The BWSF was communist influenced, while the NWSA was a rival body developed by the social democratic organisations.
84. Marshall, L.H., 'Co-operative Employees and the Fitter Britain Movement', *The Co-operative Official* (February 1938): 84.
85. Ibid.: 85; Jones briefly treats the Co-operative Movement in op.cit.: 112.
86. Marshall, L.H., op.cit.: 84.
87. Scott, G., *Feminism and the Politics of Working Women. The Women's Co-operative Guild, 1880s to the Second World War* (London: UCL, 1998).

88. Ibid.: Ch.4; Gaffin, J. and Thoms, D., *Caring and Sharing. The Centenary History of the Co-operative Women's Guild* (Manchester: Co-op Union, 2nd edition, 1993): Ch.3.
89. Scott, G., op.cit.: 4.
90. Lancaster, B., *The Department Store. A Social History* (London: Leicester UP, 1995): 192.
91. Morrison, C., 'The Women's Co-operative Guild: Campaigns For Peace, 1918-1939' in Lancaster, B. and Maguire, P. (eds), *Towards The Co-operative Commonwealth. Essays in the History of Co-operation* (Manchester: HWT, 1996).
92. By 1939, over 39,000 youngsters were participating in over 1,000 classes, Bonner, A., op.cit.: 187. The objects of the Comrades' Circles were declared to be:

1. To promote the co-operative life of the members.
2. To enable them to become more useful in the Co-operative Movement, locally, nationally and internationally.
3. To develop Co-operative Education in all its aspects.
4. To oppose imperialist wars and work for International Peace.

Hall, F. and Watkins, W.P., op.cit.:325. See also, Todd, S., op.cit.

The Woodcraft Folk had evolved out of the Baden-Powell Scouts, and was organised by a dissenting group close to the RACS, who voiced disquiet at the militaristic and jingoistic nature of the parent organisation. See, Prynne, D., 'The Woodcraft Folk and the Labour Movement 1925-1970', *Journal of Contemporary History* 18 (1983).

93. Todd, S., op.cit.: 132.
94. Layton-Henry, Z., 'Labour's Lost Youth', *Journal of Contemporary History* 11 (1976). It must be acknowledged, though, that the membership of the Co-operative youth groups fell well short of the figures commanded by the dominant organisations of the Scouts, Guides and Boys' Brigades. In 1937, for instance, the Comrades' Circles possessed just 8,000 members, Todd, S., op.cit.: 129.
95. Prynne, D., 'The Clarion Clubs, Rambling and the Holiday Associations in Britain since the 1890s', op.cit.: 71-75; Waters, C., op.cit.: 75-76. For an early report of the CHA's activities for Co-operators, see, 'Co-operative Holidays', *The Co-operative News* (19 April 1902): 457.
96. Wild, P., 'Recreation in Rochdale, 1900-40' in Clarke, J. et al (eds), *Working-Class Culture. Studies in history and theory* (London: Hutchinson, 1979).
97. Twigg, H.J., op.cit.: 41. For an example of the WTA's advertising in the Co-op press, see, 'A Complete Travel Service for the Co-operative Movement', *The Co-operative News* (15 June 1935): 17.
98. Jones, S.G., *Workers at Play*, op.cit.: 64; Wimble, E., 'The Story of the W.T.A.', *Co-operators' Year Book* (Leicester: CPF, 1938).
99. See the advertisement for the service in *The Co-operative News* (28 May 1921): 16.
100. 'Why Not Co-operative Holidays?', *The Co-operative News* (3 December 1932): 3.
101. Attfield, J., op.cit..
102. Reports of these trips appeared regularly in the Society's journal *Comradeship*.
103. Redfern, P., *The New History of the CWS* (Manchester: JM Dent, 1938): 54.
104. Ward, C., 'Colin Ward provides an alternative account of holiday camps', *New Statesman and Society* (26 August 1994): 27. The camp was extended in 1947 with the acquisition of a neighbouring camp, 'The Heatheries', see, *The Co-operative News* (18 January 1947):1.
105. 'A Co-operative Holiday Camp', *The Co-operative News* (30 July 1924): 5.
106. Burt, R., 'Co-operative Holiday Camp. The Story of an Experiment', *The Co-operative Productive Review* (August 1947): 185. See also, 'Co-operative Camp', *The Producer* (March 1931): 96, and 'By the Sea: Co-operative Camp at Rhyl', *The Co-operative News Congress Special* (12 May 1934): vii. In 1938, the Coventry Society had proposed a resolution at the annual conference of the National Co-operative Men's Guild to the effect that the CWS should establish and run holiday camps, Rudge, AR, 'Co-operative Holiday Camps' in *The Co-operative Guildsman* (November 1938): 119.
107. 'Woodland Camp Near the City', *The Co-operative News* (30 August 1947): 3.
108. Corina, J., 'Co-operative Holiday Camps', *The Co-operative News* (11 September 1937): 2. His detailed arguments are laid out in *Co-operative Holiday Camps* (London: NCMG, 1937). John Corina was a member of the Management Committee of RACS. Corina's ideas are given consideration in 'Holiday Camps. A Venture the Co-operative Movement Could Tackle', *The Co-operative Official* (June 1938):

- 304-305.
109. 'WTA and CWS to Open Holiday Camps', *The Co-operative News* (23 July 1938): 3; 'Co-operators' Holiday Camp', *The Co-operative News* (13 August 1938): 11; 'The New Holiday Camps', *The Producer* (August 1938): 208; 'A Holiday Camp for Families', *The Co-operative Official* (July 1939): 425-426.
 110. Advertisement, *The Co-operative News* (8 March 1947): 7; 'Holiday Camps', *The Co-operative News* (17 May 1947): 1.
 111. 'Seeking Sites for Holiday Camps', *The Co-operative News* (22 March 1947): 1.
 112. 'Hotels and Holiday Camps', *The Co-operative News* (26 April 1947): 1; 'Delegates Discuss Separate Society for Holiday Camps and Hotels', *The Co-operative News* (31 May 1947): 4.
 113. For details on the Travco hotels, see, 'Still Time For An Autumn Holiday. Stay at a Co-operative Hotel', *The Co-operative News* (28 August 1948): 7; 'Presenting Your June Holiday', *The Co-operative News* (21 May 1949): 11. On the Seafield camp, see, 'Travco starts new holiday centre chain', *The Co-operative News* (2 March 1963): 8. As well as the dozen or so Travco Hotels, several Societies offered provision such as RACS, London, Colchester, Oxford and Bristol, as well as federated provision by the Kent District Society and the Thames Valley Co-operative Holiday Services.
 114. Gurney, P., *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption, 1870-1930*, op.cit.: Part II; Scott, G., *Feminism and the Politics of Working-Class Women*, op.cit: Ch.8.
 115. Jones, S.G., *Workers at Play*, op.cit.: 143.
 116. The issue of member apathy was seen as a problem for Co-operative education and numerous articles appeared which were critical of the Movement's educational organisation and provision. See, for instance, Loveridge, B.E., 'The Problem of Co-operative education', *The Co-operative News* (12 January 1952): 10; Durham, G., 'The Problem of Co-operative Education' in *Co-operators' Yearbook* (Leicester: CPF, 1952); Rhodes, B., 'Co-operative Education. Problems and Remedies', *Co-operative Productive Review* (March 1953).
 117. The notion of a 'critical return' to the thirties underpinned the search in Britain in the 1970s by the Independent Film Makers Association for its precursors, "the only time when film makers had presented an organised challenge to the dominant prejudices of the industry in directly political and ideological terms as well as in economic ones", Willemen, P., 'Presentation' in MacPherson, D., (ed), *British Cinema. Traditions of Independence* (London: BFI, 1980): 2.
 118. Hogenkamp, B., 'Worker's Newsreels in the 1920's and 1930's', *Our History* 68 (London: History Group of the Communist Party, 1977): 1.
 119. Buchsbaum, J., 'Left Political Filmmaking in the West: The Interwar Years' in Sklar, R., and Musser, C. (eds), *Resisting Images. Essays on Cinema and History* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1990).
 120. Some representative studies of Left culture and concerns in the period include: Clark, J., Heinemann, M., Margolies, D., and Snee, C. (eds) *Culture and Crisis in Britain in the 1930s* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1979); Gloversmith, F. (ed), *Class, Culture and Social Change. A New View of the 1930s* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980); Jackson, J., *The Popular Front in France. Defending Democracy, 1934-38* (Cambridge: CUP, 1988); Stott, W., *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (Oxford, NY: OUP, 1973). Of course, the experience in Germany was quite distinct, and the rich cultural life of the Left in the Weimar period has been well-documented, see, Willett, J., *Art and Politics in the Weimar Period* (NY: Pantheon, 1978); Hirschbach, F. et al (eds), *Germany in the Twenties. The Artist as Social Critic* (NY: Holmes and Meier, 1982). Trevor Ryan has noted the impact on workers' cinema of the shift from 'Class Against Class' to 'Popular Front': "In this context, the political function of the films changed from agitation and recruitment for communist campaigns, to fund-raising for non-communist groups and gathering expressions of ideological support for the more broadly based liberal campaigns", 'Film and Political Organisations in Britain 1929-39' in MacPherson, D. (ed), op.cit. : 63.
 121. The principal studies of workers' cinema in Britain in the interwar period, and from which I have compiled this survey, are: Bond, R., 'Workers' Films: Past and Future', *Labour Monthly* (January 1976); Hogenkamp, B., 'Film and the Workers' Movement in Britain 1929-39', *Sight and Sound* (Spring 1976); Hogenkamp, B., '"Making Films With a Purpose": Film-making and the Working Class' in Clark, J. et al, op cit.; Hogenkamp, B., 'The workers' film movement in Britain, 1929-39' in Pronay, N. and Spring, D. (eds), *Propaganda, Politics and Film, 1918-45* (London: MacMillan, 1982); Hogenkamp, B., *Deadly Parallels. Film and the Left in Britain 1929-39* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1986); MacPherson, D. (ed), op.cit.; Ryan, T., 'The New Road To Progress: the Use and Production of Films by the Labour

- Movement, 1929-39' in Curran, J. and Porter, V. (eds), *British Cinema History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983); Jones, S.G., *The British Labour Movement and Film*, op.cit.
- For an incidence of the Communists' critique of the Co-operative Movement during the 'Class Against Class' period, see, 'Communists Attack Co-operators', *The Co-operative News* (13 July 1929): 9.
122. Ryan, T., 'Film and Political Organisations in Britain 1929-39', in MacPherson, D., (ed), op.cit.: 58. Honora Enfield of the Women's Co-operative Guild was a member of the English and French delegation of the WIR which visited the Soviet Union in 1926, *The Co-operative News* (16 January 1926): 10.
123. Hogenkamp, B., *Deadly Parallels*. op.cit.: 35-36. The FOWS supported film societies in Bradford, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool and Salford.
124. Co-operative Societies were important venues for some of the initial screenings of workers' film societies, and in addition to the RACS, the local Co-operative Society rescued the Merseyside Workers' Film Society when it found itself without a hall following an intervention by the local council, Roberts, M.R., 'Towards a Workers' Cinema in England', *Experimental Cinema* 4 (1932): 28.
125. Hogenkamp, B., 'The workers' film movement in Britain, 1929-39' op.cit: 145.
126. Quoted in Hogenkamp, B., 'Worker's Newsreels', op.cit.: 4.
127. Bond, R., 'Making Films with a Purpose' (1935), quoted in Hogenkamp, B., 'Making Films With a Purpose', op.cit.: 262. As Trevor Ryan has pointed out, the British Left failed to develop any sustained theory about the relationship between aesthetics and politics, and derived a rather simplistic notion of realism from Soviet cinema and the more diagnostic techniques of the indigenous Documentary Film Movement, Ryan, T., 'New Roads to Progress', op.cit.: 126-127.
128. Both the Co-operative Union and the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society spoke out against the proposals in the mid-1930s to bring non-inflammable (ie. 16mm) film within the provisions of the Cinematograph Act, thus threatening worker groups in their freedom to exhibit political films, 'The Cinema Act. Co-operative Attitude', *The Co-operative News* (3 November 1934): 1. A freedom which was further defended in 1952 by the National Film Association and the Education Committee of the London Society following recommendations by the Magistrates Association to licence and censor 16mm films, 'Co-operative Film Shows Threatened', *The Co-operative News* (3 May 1952): 7; 'To Keep an Eye on Film Censorship', *The Co-operative News* (8 March 1952): 1.
129. Hogenkamp, B., 'The workers' film movement', op.cit.: 150; Trevor Ryan gives the production total of "at least twenty-four 16mm silent films", 'The New Road To Progress' op.cit.: 117. The WFPL partly drifted away from the context of the CPGB in 1936-38, and some of its more politically motivated members left to form a new production outfit with Kino, named the British Film Unit. The shift was symbolically recorded in the League's transfer of accounts from the Moscow Narodny Bank to the banking department of the Co-operative Wholesale Society.
130. Wegg-Prosser, V., 'The Archive of the Film and Photo League', *Sight and Sound* (Autumn 1977): 246.
131. Hogenkamp, B., 'The workers' film movement in Britain, 1929-39', op.cit.: 150.
132. Hogenkamp, B., 'Film and the Workers' Movement in Britain 1929-39' op.cit.: 71-72.
133. Two trips to Spain resulted in about a dozen news films and documentaries, Ryan, T., 'The New Road To Progress', op.cit: 120; for accounts of the trips to Spain, see, Cole, S., 'Shooting in Spain', *The Cine-Technician* 4 (1938); Dickinson, T., 'Spanish ABC', *Sight and Sound* (Spring 1938); Dickinson, T., 'Experiences in the Spanish Civil War', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 4 (1984); Richards, J., *Thorold Dickinson. The Man and His Films* (London: Croom Helm, 1986): 55-59. Kino acquired the rights of Soviet films for distribution on 16mm.
134. Ryan, T., 'New Roads to Progress', op.cit.: 127-128.
135. Ibid.: 120. Elsewhere, Ryan notes the prominence of CPGB members in executive positions within the LWFS, Kino, WFPL and PFI, 'Film and Political Organisations in Britain', op.cit.: 60.
136. The WFA is examined in detail in Chapter 4.
137. Hollins, T.J., 'The conservative party and film propaganda between the wars', *English Historical Review* (April 1981): 360; Hollins, T.J., *The Presentation of Politics: The Place of party publicity, Broadcasting and Film in British Politics, 1918-1939* (Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Leeds, 1981); Ramsden, J.A., 'Baldwin and film' in Pronay, N. and Spring, D.W., op.cit.; 'Politics and the Film', *Sight and Sound* (Summer 1932).
138. The Labour Party refused the present of a cinema van from the *Daily Herald* due to the high running costs, see, Hogenkamp, B., *Deadly Parallels*, op.cit.: 176-177.
139. Cox, F.H.W., Co-operative Film Production, *The Millgate* (November 1939): 91.

140. Burton, A., 'Projecting the New Jerusalem: The Workers' Film Association, 1938-46' in Kirkham, P. and Thoms, D., *War Culture: Social Change and Changing Experience in World War Two* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995).
141. The PFI film library was acquired by Plato Films (1950) and kept in distribution by its founder Stanley Forman.
142. Hogenkamp, B., 'The Sunshine of Socialism: the CPGB and film in the 1950s' in Croft, A. (ed), *A Weapon in the Struggle. The Cultural History of the Communist Party in Britain* (London: Pluto, 1998): 192. For examinations of the radical film groups thrown-up by May 1968, see, Harvey, S., 'The "Other Cinema" in Britain. Unfinished Business in Oppositional and Independent Film, 1929-1984' in Barr, C. (ed), *All Our Yesterdays. 90 Years of British Cinema* (London: BFI, 1986); Blanchard, S. and Harvey, S., 'The Post-war Independent Cinema - Structure and Organisation' in Curran, J. and Porter, V. (eds), *British Cinema History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983). Margaret Dickinson's recent work departs from this orthodoxy and attributes more importance to the preceding decades, although her overall assessment is quite in keeping, "The sudden flowering of oppositional film culture at the end of the 60s made the preceding era appear, by contrast, something of a desert", *Rogue Reels. Oppositional Film in Britain, 1945-90* (London: BFI, 1999): 17.
143. Hogenkamp, B., 'The Sunshine of Socialism', op.cit: 200; Dickinson, M., op.cit.: 26. See also here, the interviews with Charles Cooper and Stanley Forman of Contemporary Films and Plato Films respectively, which Dickinson sees as preparing the ground for the radical filmmakers of the late 1960s.
144. Hogenkamp, B., 'Marching to Aldermaston - but not much further! The (New) Left and the documentary film, 1958-1963' in Burton, A., *Beyond Grierson: Studies in the British Non-Fiction Film* (Trowbridge: Flicks, forthcoming); Dickinson, M., op.cit.: 31.
145. In this respect, though, it is interesting to note that in 1949, the CWS film department was in negotiation with SovExport film, presumably regarding Soviet prints for distribution through the NFA. It appears that no progress was made in the discussions, *Minutes of the National Film Association* (16 February 1949): 4.
146. The National Film Association is examined in closer detail in Chapter 5.
147. Harvey, S., 'The "Other Cinema" in Britain, op.cit.: 231.
148. Ibid.
149. This is clearly articulated in McPherson, D., op.cit, a project involving many activists within the Independent Filmmakers Association. More recently, Margaret Dickinson in her history of oppositional film in Britain since 1945, has made a similar confession: "The initial impetus for putting together this material was to make the experience of the past more easily available to those carrying on the oppositional tradition in the present", op.cit: 8.
150. Fishbein, L., 'A Lost Legacy of Labor Films', *Film and History* (May 1979); Alexander, W., *Film on the Left. American Documentary Film From 1931 to 1942* (Princeton, NJ: PUP, 1981); Campbell, R., *Cinema Strikes Back. Radical Filmmaking in the United States 1930-1942* (Michigan: UMI, 1982). A brief comparison between the American and European workers' film movements is made by Bert Hogenkamp and Russell Campbell in 'Critical Dialogue. Workers' film in Europe', *Jump Cut* 19 (December 1978): 36-37.
151. Ross, S., 'Cinema and Class Conflict: Labor, Capital, the State, and American Silent Film' in Sklar, R. and Musser, C. (eds), op.cit.: 69.
152. Sloan, K., *The Loud Silents. Origins of the Social Problem Film* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1988); Brownlow, K., *Behind the Mask of Innocence. Sex, Violence, Prejudice, Crime: Films of Social Conscience in the Silent Era* (London: J. Cape, 1990).
153. Ross, S., 'The Unknown Hollywood', *History Today* (April 1990): 44.
154. Ross, S., 'Cinema and Class Conflict', op.cit.: 77. For an examination of corporate and industrial films in the period, see, Slide, A., *Before Video. A History of the Non-Theatrical Film* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992): 1-32.
155. Foner, P.S., 'A Martyr To His Cause: The Scenario of the First Labor Film in the United States', *Labor History* 24 (1983); Ross S., *Working-Class Hollywood. Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America* (Princeton, NJ: PUP, 1998): Ch.4.; while undoubtedly the most celebrated achievement was in France where the renowned cinema artist Jean Renoir made films both with workerist themes and in collaboration with the Labour Movement, see, Fofi, G., 'The Cinema of the Popular Front in France (1934-38)', *Screen* (Winter 1972/73); Ory, P., 'De "Cine-Liberte" a "La Marseillaise", hopes and

- limitations of a liberated cinema (1936-1938)'; Reader, K., 'Renoir's Popular Front films, texts in context', both in Vincendeau, G. and Reader, K., *La Vie est A Nous. French Cinema of the Popular Front 1935-1938* (London: BFI, 1986); Faulkner, C., *The Social Cinema of Jean Renoir* (Princeton, NJ: PUP, 1986): Ch.2; Buchsbaum, J., *Cinema Engage. Film in the Popular Front* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1988).
156. Murray, B., *Film and the German Left in the Weimar Republic. From Caligari to Kuhle Wampe* (Austin: University of Texas, 1990): Ch.1; Plummer, T.G., et al (eds), *Film and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (NY: Holmes and Meier, 1982). The German Labour Movement was capable of producing narrative feature films in the period before National Socialism, for example, with *Kuhle Wampe* (1932), see, Murray, B., op.cit.: 218-224
157. Hogenkamp, B., *Deadly Parallels*, op.cit.: 13, 18-20; Hollins, T.J., *The Place of Party Publicity, Broadcasting and Film in British Politics, 1918-1939*, unpublished Ph.d thesis, University of Leeds (1981): 185-188.
158. A particular stimulus to film propaganda within the Party came from Paul Rotha's address at a 'Special Labour Party Conference on Film Propaganda', Edinburgh, 1936, reprinted as 'Films and the Labour Party' in Marris, P. (ed), *Paul Rotha, BFI Dossier 16* (London: BFI, 1982).
159. Toivonen, O., 'The Promotion of Co-operative Advertising and Propaganda', *Report of the Proceedings of the Twelfth International Co-operative Congress at Stockholm* (London: ICA, 1927): 249-257. A film detailing the work of the ILO was commissioned in 1929, *Labour Magazine* (October 1929): 286.
160. Stolpe, H., 'The Film in Co-operative Service', *The Co-operative Review* (November 1928): 220.
161. Dijkstra, W., 'Film Propaganda', *Review of International Co-operation* (1929): 410.
162. In all, the ICA issued six film catalogues, 1930, 1933, 1938 (unlocated), 1954, 1957 and 1960. Copies are held at the ICA archive in Geneva. The catalogues contained those films the national Societies thought suitable for screening abroad and hence should not be considered a complete listing of Co-operative titles from each country. The industrial and sponsored film sector did not essentially convert to sound until 1930.
163. Illustrated lectures on other national Societies and Movements had long been a practice of Co-operative education, and in 1921 a set of lantern slides were prepared of the tenth International Co-operative Congress at Basle, *Comradeship and the Wheatsheaf* (January 1922): x. An earlier report in Britain, intriguingly refers to a series of cinematograph lectures which partly dealt with "Co-operation abroad", with "several pictures being shown depicting the life of the people of Switzerland", *The Co-operative News* (10 October 1908): 1248. These may have been conventional travelogue scenes adapted to the purpose, but in the least indicate the desire to offer visual representation of Co-operation in other lands. For an example of cross-national influence in film propaganda, see, "Our English Friends". Presenting CWS Films to Co-operators Abroad. An Interesting Example of Swedish Enterprise', *The Producer* (February 1936): 43.
- Attempts by other Labour organisations at international collaboration in film did not seem to meet with the same success. In 1936, worker educationalists met in London under the auspices of the International Trades Union Congress to consider film propaganda across national Movements, but I have encountered no evidence that anything came of this, 'Labour and Films. Propaganda and Education', *Manchester Guardian* (13 July 1936). I would like to thank Bert Hogenkamp for supplying me with this clipping.
164. 'Film Experts Meet in London', *Review of International Co-operation* (January 1954).
165. 'Emphasis on Education. Visual Aid Value', *The Co-operative News* (11 September 1954): 5. The conference was the occasion of an international collaboration in Co-operative film work, whereby a French film crew headed by Andre Dolmaire completed a production for the L'Union des Co-operateurs de Lorraine. A simultaneous English language version was produced with the narration provided by the English delegate of the Co-operative Union, Mr Dennis Hollos. A new technique was claimed "which enables any existing film to be transposed into another language quickly and cheaply. It will thus enable co-operative films to be shown throughout the world in all possible languages at very little extra cost", 'French Film Experiment', *The Co-operative News* (11 September 1954): 10.
166. 'New Film Unit Will Serve Gold Coast', *The Co-operative News* (13 October 1956): 8; 'Helping Burmese Co-ops', *The Co-operative News* (17 January 1959): 1, 20; 'Film Unit for Nigeria', *The Co-operative News* (23 June 1962): 13. For comments on the ICA's film productions, see, *Co-operative Union Annual Co-operative Congress Report* (1961): 97, 302.
167. Buchsbaum, J., *Cinema Engage*, op.cit.; Murray, B., *Film and the Left in the Weimar Republic*, op.cit.;

- Alexander, W., *Film and the Left*, op.cit.; Campbell, R., *Cinema Strikes Back*, op.cit. Germany and the USA have entries in the 1930 ICA *Film Catalogue*, while French, German and American films are listed in the 1933 *Catalogue*. For examples of French Co-operative film work, see, *Co-operative Educator* (October 1936): 116, (January 1938): 18; for the German Labour Movement, see, Lens, F., 'Experiences with Films in the German Labour Movement', *The Millgate* (April 1937), which includes some discussion of the Co-operative Movement's contribution; the articles by Bennett, CD., Miller, MG., Hoag, WG., and Wieting, CM., in *American Co-operation* (Washington: American Institute of Co-operation, 1946) give some coverage of circumstances in the States.
168. Each of these regions had significant listings in the first ICA *Film Catalogue* (1930), Austria - 10, Czechoslovakia - 13, Finland - 4, India - 4, Latvia - 11, Switzerland - 10; while the Malay States are reported in 'Films in Malay States', *The Producer* (November 1932): 324.
169. Sorensen, B., "*Gryr I Norden*". *Norsk Arbeiderfilm 1928-1940 I Internasjonalt Perspektiv*, unpublished Ph.d thesis, University of Trondheim (1980): 535-541.; Hogenkamp, B., 'Co-operative Film Production on the Continent', unpublished paper delivered at the *Towards Tomorrow: Co-operative History Workshop*, Loughborough (July 1994).
170. Hogenkamp, B., *ibid.*
171. Jones, S.G., op.cit.: 150-153. The matter of the Movement's first film productions is more fully explored in Chapter 3.
172. *Ibid.*: Chapter 2.
173. Benn, 'The Cinema: An Instrument of Class Rule', *Plebs* (April 1931), reprinted in MacPherson, D., op.cit.: 138
174. Jones, S.G., op.cit.: 52. On the miners' cinemas, see, Hogenkamp, B. 'Miners' Cinemas in south Wales in the 1920s and 1930s' in *Llafur, The Journal of the Society for the Study of Welsh Labour* 4 (1985).
175. 'CWS Director Joins New Film Institute Board', *The Co-operative News* (20 November 1948): 12. The Movement had taken interest in the formation of the Film Institute in 1933, see, '"Culture" and Commerce in the Cinema. What are the Functions of the Film Institute? "Educational" Tendencies That Must be Watched', *The Co-operative News* (18 February 1933): 2. The Central Education Committee of the Co-operative Union had been invited onto the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films (1930), the body which recommended the establishment of a national film institute, but somewhat surprisingly declined, *Minutes of the Central Educational Committee* (20 september 1930): 9.
176. *Co-operative Union Annual Co-operative Congress Report* (1949): 205. The Union are not listed in the subsequent *Report of the Departmental Committee on Children and the Cinema* (London: HMSO, 1950) and it is possible the invitation came to nothing.
177. *Annual Report of the Co-operative Congress* (1930): 462, 466; (1931): 16. The resolution had been prompted by the terrible conflagration at the Glen Cinema, Paisley on 31 December 1929 which killed seventy children. For a discussion of the disaster, see, Staples, T., *All Pals Together. The Story of Children's Cinema* (Edinburgh: EUP, 1997): 25-28.
178. 'The "Picture" Age. Latest Palace Entertainments for the People. Child Corrupting Scenes', *The Co-operative News* (8 February 1913): 169.
179. 'The "Picture" Age', *The Co-operative News* (15 February 1913): 206.
180. 'Danger of War Films. Things We Women Should Watch. How Peace Work is Thwarted', *The Co-operative News* (14 January 1928): 12; 'War Films. Commission Asked For', *The Co-operative News* (24 March 1928): 12; 'The Menace of the War Films', *The Co-operative News* (24 March 1928): 13.
181. 'War Films. 58,000 Wives and Mothers Protest', *The Co-operative News* (3 March 1928): 12. In 1926, The Co-operative Union had affiliated to the National Society for Prevention of War, *Co-operative Union, Minutes of the United Board* (15 January 1926): 9.
182. 'War Films. Pictures Which Should Be Shown', *The Co-operative News* (10 March 1928): 12. However, women Co-operators did see a virtue to some films; in 1926 an editorial in the Women's Pages of *The Co-operative News* praised the potential of the picture house as a 'popular college', and drew attention to such titles as *Wages for Wives* and *The Girl Who Wouldn't Work*. The author suggested that:
 Women co-operators will find much to interest them if they "see the pictures" in the light of the economic facts their titles reveal, and they should be quick to point the moral and draw fitting lessons from each film. Some day, perhaps every co-operative society will have a picture house, and then every film will be part of co-operative propaganda.
- 'The Housewife and the Cinema. Going to the Pictures?', *The Co-operative News* (25 September 1926):

- 12.
183. 'Bad Influence of Amusement Palaces', *The Co-operative News* (14 March 1942): 12; horror comics are condemned in Landsborough, S.H., 'How the American comics reached Britain', *The Co-operative News* (21 June 1952): 2, and 'Horror Comics', *The Co-operative Productive Review* (January 1955): 19; 'Film "glamour" leads to unhappy marriages', *The Co-operative News* (29 November 1952): 12
184. 'Film-going is children's chief out-of-school occupation', *The Co-operative News* (21 July 1951): 12. Similarly, Co-operators' attention had earlier been drawn to the report issued by the Birmingham Cinema Inquiry Committee (1933) and its dissatisfaction with the type of film children were watching. A Co-operative correspondent made the following assessment:
- But what is wrong with the cinema that the pictures shown make such unwholesome impressions on the mind of the younger generation? Once educationists hoped that the pictures would be a great instrument of education and democratic culture. Not many can share that hope to-day with the light of facts now common knowledge. Has lust for gold corrupted a majority of the film producers, or is it still true that when "private enterprise" is out for profit everything that could be beautiful has to be degraded?
- Mercer, T.W., 'Films and the Younger Generation. What Children Think of the Pictures', *The Co-operative Official* (August 1933): 332.
185. 'Film Critic hits kiddies cinema clubs', *The Co-operative News* (9 February 1952): 11.
186. 'Creating an intelligent child film going public', *The Co-operative News* (28 January 1956): 6. Co-op film societies are examined more fully in Chapter 5.
187. 'Educationalists urge that better films are needed for children', *The Co-operative News* (24 March 1956): 6. A resolution was passed at the 1956 Co-operative Education Convention to encourage the formation of local Children's Cinema Councils, "whose purpose will be to see that films which are not harmful to children's minds are shown to them", 'Children's Cinema Councils', *The Co-operative Educational Bulletin* (December 1956): 13. For the experiences of the Junior Film Club of the Chatham and District Co-operative Society, see, Button, L., 'Films for Co-operators', *The Bulletin: A Quarterly Journal for Co-operative Educationists* (August 1946). Here the author proposed, ideally, a 'Co-operative Film Industry':
- A great future awaits the co-operative production of children's films, and with a little enterprise we could make the movies a great medium for social knowledge and training for citizenship. But a production unit presupposes adequate outlets and if every co-operative education committee took its proper place in the world of children's films we should be creating a demand which could be filled competently within our own movement (21).
- The Chatham Society also experimented with Youth Film Rallies and Film Guilds, see, Button, L., 'Towards a Co-operative Cinema Industry', *The Bulletin: A Quarterly Journal for Co-operative Educationists* (December 1946).
188. 'Youngsters Must Fight Effects of Mass-Media', *The Co-operative News* (17 April 1965): 7.
189. 'TV will be more powerful than films', *The Co-operative News* (14 November 1953): 6.
190. 'TV Cuts Cinema-Goers By 5,000,000: Expert', *The Co-operative News* (21 November 1953): 6.
191. '"More important things in life than bingo and TV"', *The Co-operative News* (19 May 1962): 12. The Movement's relationship with television is further examined in Chapter 5.
192. The Movement's film publicity is considered in Chapters 3 and 5.
193. 'Screen Artist and Co-operation', *The Co-operative News* (14 November 1931): 8; 'Stage and Film Stars Shop at the "Co-op"', *The Co-operative News* (25 November 1944): 1.
194. The song's lyrics are reproduced in 'The "Co-op Shop"', *Ourselves* (February 1930): 32.
195. '"Like a Little Bit of Home". Gracie Fields Visits Newcastle "Co-op"', *The Co-operative News* (27 December 1930): 5; 'A Lovely "Co-op". Miss Gracie Fields Visits Birmingham's Emporium', *The Co-operative News* (17 January 1931): 5.
196. 'Gracie Has a Nice Cup of Tea', *The Co-operative News* (20 August 1938): 1.
197. 'Gracie Sings for the Mill Girls', *The Co-operative News* (29 October 1949): 1; 'Gracie goes home to a brand new co-op and a royal welcome', *The Co-operative News* (10 November 1956): 3. It is claimed here that Fields made one of her first appearances as a child singer in the original central premises of the Society.
198. 'One Bright Spot in Radiolympia Chaos', *The Co-operative News* (8 October 1949): 1; 'Film Stars Well Pleased', *The Co-operative News* (15 October 1949): 1; 'Star Gazers', *The Producer* (November 1949):

- n.p.
199. 'Film Stars Attend Ball', *The Co-operative News* (20 March 1948): 4; 'Co-op. Co-partnership Reunion ... present Reynolds News awards for Co-operative Co-partnership Queen', *The Co-operative Productive Review* (September 1949): 221; 'Film star describes his job', *The Co-operative News* (1 April 1950): 6; '"Reynolds" glamour girls in the money', *The Co-operative News* (10 March 1951): 1.
 200. Actress Pat Phoenix, who played Elsie Tanner in the hit series *Coronation Street*, was prominent among TV stars who participated in Co-op promotions, see, 'Crowds made way for Elsie', *The Co-operative News* (10 November 1962): 4; 'Elsie Tanner opens Sheffield supermarket', *The Co-operative News* (25 January 1964): 4. Idols from the pop world were usually called upon to facilitate in signings in the new record bars which began to appear in Co-op stores from the late 1950s, see, for example, 'Marty sends them Wilde', *The Co-operative News* (25 November 1961): 11. One of the more exotic endorsements of Co-operation came from Liberace, who opined, "If I were staying in London longer I'm sure Mom and I would join", 'Liberace thinks the co-op is a "just wun'erful" idea', *The Co-operative News* (22 October 1956): 13.
 201. 'Screen Star Once Sold Linen in Local "Co-op"', *The Co-operative News* (23 July 1949): 11.
 202. 'Hollywood Screen Test for Former Shop Man', *The Co-operative News* (29 December 1951): 4.
 203. 'When Richard Burton worked for the co-op', *The Co-operative News* (17 August 1963): 8.
 204. 'Swedish Co-operation's New Enterprise', *The Producer* (July 1935): 226. This article includes a scene still featuring garbo from her publicity film, *Our Daily Bread* (1922). See also, Paris, B., *Garbo. A Biography* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1996): 28.
 205. As well as the reports previously mentioned, consider: 'The Influence of the Cinema', *The Producer* (January 1936): 10 - on the statistics concerning British cinemas and their audiences prepared for the Royal Statistical Society (1934); 'Trends in Cinemas', *The Producer* (December 1951) - on postwar concerns with ownership.
 206. Kay, 'How a Film Play is Written', *The Wheatsheaf* (March 1922): 37; Kay, 'The Beginning and the End of an "Extra"', *The Wheatsheaf* (February 1933): 19; Kay 'How the Newsreel goes to Press!', *The Wheatsheaf* (June 1937): 12; Jervis, F.R.J., 'An Intimate View of Merle Oberon's Home', *The Wheatsheaf* (March 1939): 10. Populist film articles also appeared in other Movement journals from time to time, see, '£600 a Week. A Son Who is Not a burden to His Parents' (on Jackie Coogan), *The Co-operative Productive Review* (October 1929): 55; 'How Films are Made. A Peep Behind the Scenes', *Our Circle* (January 1938).
 207. Stone, F.G., 'V.I. Pudovkin. A Genius of the Cinema', *The Millgate* (November 1929); Carter, B.R., 'The Revolution in Filmland. Electrician Now the Master of the Movies' (on the impact of sound), *The Millgate* (January 1930); Asquith, A., 'The Technique of the Talking Film', *The Millgate* (February 1932); Waring, H., 'The Problem of Film Censorship', *The Millgate* (May 1932).
 208. 'A Store in a Film', *The Producer* (June 1931): 190. A production still is reproduced in *The Producer* (July 1931): 208.
 209. 'Another Film Appearance', *The Co-operative News* (19 April 1947): 8; '"Hue and Cry"', *The Co-operative News* (11 May 1946): 1. A relevant scene still is reproduced here.
 210. 'Filmed', *The Co-operative News* (12 May 1951): 1.
 211. 'Bride-To-Be of Famous Novelist. Romance as Fellow Co-operative Employees', *The Co-operative News* (9 February 1935): 1.
 212. 'Life Story of Beatrice Webb to be Filmed', *The Co-operative News* (28 October 1944): 1. The film was never completed.
 213. 'Paddy the Cope's Story May be Used for a Film', *The Co-operative News* (5 August 1944): 5.
 214. '"Paddy the Cope" A Film Star', *The Co-operative News* (2 March 1946): 1; '"Paddy's" Story as a Basis for Film', *The Co-operative News* (10 August 1946): 7. This latter report features a photograph of Powell with Paddy in County Donegal, indicating that some progress was made with the project. It is intriguing to speculate how Powell, recognised as a purveyor of 'High Tory' sensibilities in such contemporary films as *A Canterbury Tale* (1944), would have treated the tale of Co-operative struggle. No doubt he would have found a sufficiently appealing Romantic angle. Brief details of the director's visit to Ireland and Paddy the Cope are given in Powell, M., *A Life in Movies. An Autobiography* (London: Methuen, 1987): 565-6, 570-71.
 215. 'Labour and Co-op. Will Boost "The Rushes"', *Kine Weekly* (9 November 1950): 11.
 216. 'Co-operative film unit plan to offset slump', *The Co-operative News* (22 April 1950): 3; 'Film

- technicians co-operate', *The Co-operative News* (11 November 1950): 5; Dickinson, M., op.cit.: 25-26; Bond, R., 'ACT Films Limited' in *Action. Fifty Years in the Life of a Union* (London: ACTT, 1983). It had originally been announced that Laurence Olivier would participate in the first production, but in the event the lead was taken by Roger Livesey, see, *Co-operative Home Magazine* (June 1950). I would like to thank Ron Bill for bringing this report to my attention. Surprisingly, there was only brief mention in the Movement's press of the contemporary dramatic film *Chance of a Lifetime*, with its controversial theme of workers taking over a factory and running it as a Co-op. The reluctance of the exhibitors to handle the film was taken as a "warning" for the Labour Movement, see, 'A Note on Co-operative Film Production in Great Britain', *The Co-operative Productive Review* ((October 1951): 226.
217. 'A Film War', *The Co-operative Productive Review* (November 1927): 105.
218. 'Film Co-operative Society', *Labour Magazine* (December 1931): 382. The scheme foundered on the opposition of the Kinematograph Renters' Society, see, Low, R., *Film Making in 1930s Britain* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1985): 5.
219. '"March of Time" Pays Tribute to Co-operation', *The Co-operative News* (12 March 1938): 4.
220. 'An Inventor Filmed', *The Co-operative News* (23 December 1939): 6; 'In Newsreel', *The Co-operative News* (13 January 1940): 1. A selection of playdates are listed here.
221. 'News Reel Men "Shot" Self-Service Store', *The Co-operative News* (5 February 1949): 16.
222. 'Youth School Film', *The Co-operative News* (24 July 1943): 1; 'New Film', *The Co-operative News* (11 October 1947): 7; 'TV Spotlights Potter', *The Co-operative News* (7 May 1955): 16.
223. For a detailed examination of the Movement's cinemas, see, Burton, A., 'The People's Cinemas: The Picture Houses of the Co-operative Movement', *North West Labour History* 19 (1994/1995).
224. Brown, W.H., 'A Co-operative Cinema. A New Field of Enterprise', *The Co-operative Official* (1936): 139.
225. *The Co-operative News* (13 December 1930): 11.
226. 'Co-operative Cinemas', *The Producer* (October 1934): 284; *The Co-operative Official* (1936): 139.
227. *The Co-operative News* (31 October 1936): 6.
228. Brown, W.H., op.cit.; *The Co-operative News* (21 December 1935): 11.
229. *The Co-operative News* (4 February 1939): 9.
230. *The Co-operative News* (3 September 1938): 1, 10.
231. *The Co-operative News* (30 July 1938): 1.
232. *The Co-operative News* (10 December 1949): 6. The clash between the exhibitors' trade and the Movement was at its most severe in the immediate post-World War two period, and is more fully explored in Chapter 5.
233. For a more detailed survey, see, Burton, A., op.cit.
234. 'Northcliffe's Peaceful Persuasion. Methods of a Press Dictator and His Imitators', *The Co-operative News* (11 December 1920): 4. See also in this respect, 'The "Gentle Art" of the Northcliffe Press. Campaign Against the CWS', *The Co-operative News* (30 September 1916): 1008.
235. Tracey, H., 'Growth of the Octopus. The Newspaper Trust and Freedom of the Press', *The Millgate* (April 1927): 441. See also, Mercer, T.W., 'The Power of the Press: An Analysis and Some Comments', *The Co-operative Productive Review* (May 1928).
236. 'The Co-operative Movement and the Press. Famous Paper under Co-operative Control', *The Co-operative Productive Review* (April 1929): 213.
237. Quoted in Mercer, T.W., 'The Peer Who Means to Crush Us!', *The Co-operative Official* (July 1931): 254.
238. Killingback, N., 'Limits to Mutuality: Economic and Political Attacks on Co-operation During the 1920s and 1930s' in Yeo, S., *New Views of Co-operation* (London: Routledge, 1988). See the montage of anti-Co-operative headlines gathered together in *The Co-operative News* (17 February 1934): 5. The Movement's refutation of the accusations is presented in 'Our Reply to the Press Lords', *Comradeship and the Wheatsheaf* (March 1934).
239. 'Damp Squibs from Fleet Street. Futile Attempts to Compare Co-operative Prices with Traders', *The Co-operative News* (10 February 1934): 2. See also, 'Parliament at Work. "Co-operative Societies Enjoy No Privilege"', *Ibid.*: 5; 'Reflections on the Anti-Co-operative Crusade', *The Co-operative News* (17 February 1934): 2.
240. 'Beaverbrook's Latest. Becomes a Member of London Co-operative Society', *The Co-operative News* (17 February 1934): 9. The Co-op Press by this time had taken to calling Beaverbrook the "Newspaper

- Mussolini", see, *The Co-operative News* (3 February 1934): 2.
241. 'Dastardly Private Trade Campaign', *The Co-operative News* (29 December 1934): 1.
242. 'The Traders Score. BBC Listeners Must Not Hear About Co-operation', *The Co-operative News* (24 October 1931): 1; 'The BBC and Co-operation', *The Co-operative News* (9 January 1932): 9; 'BBC and Co-operation. Question of Postponed Broadcast Raised at United Board Meeting', *The Co-operative News* (16 January 1932): 1. The broadcast had been scheduled for 6 November 1931, and was entitled 'Co-operation as a Way of Life and a Method of Conducting Business', and some of the text of the programme is presented in 'Broadcasting Co-operation', *The Co-operative Official* (January 1931): 57. Objections were initially raised by the Drapers' Chamber of Trade, the Greater London Council of Grocers' Associations and the National Association of Trade Protection Societies. Movement officials were further incensed when in the last week of October the BBC Manchester station broadcast "a dissertation on the growth of the multiple shop system, the development of the great departmental stores ... and the economies that small traders are able to effect for their exacting public by combining for buying", 'BBC Scandal. Talk on Co-operation Barred', *The Co-operative News* (31 October 1931): 1.
243. *Co-operative Union, Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1932*: 145. As late as 1948, the BBC was still defending its policy of restricting discussion of Co-operation for fear of "giving offence to other forms of trading enterprise", *Co-operative Union, Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1948*: 127.
244. *Co-operative Union, Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1933*: 58-59, 415-416; 'Convincing the BBC', *The Wheatsheaf* (September 1933): iii.
245. 'Co-operation's Political Watchdogs. Will the BBC Relent?', *The Co-operative News* (21 April 1934): 5; *Co-operative Union, Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1934*: 108. Private traders continued to protest to the BBC whenever the Co-op featured in programmes, see, 'Private Traders Riled At Co-operative Broadcast', *The Co-operative News* (27 April 1940): 7; 'BBC Answer to Traders Protests', *The Co-operative News* (4 May 1940): 1.
246. *National Co-operative Men's Guild, Proceedings of the National Conference 1937*: 12.
247. *Co-operative Union, Executive Committee Minutes* (20 April 1944): 14; 'Centenary Broadcasts', *The Co-operative News* (29 April 1944): 3. During the war the Co-operative Movement had been amongst those critical of the BBC for banning sympathisers of the Communist Party and the People's Convention from the microphone. See, 'Protest at BBC's Ban on Choir', *The Co-operative News* (11 January 1941): 8; 'Radio Artistes' Protest Has Guild Support', *The Co-operative News* (15 March 1941): 8; 'BBC Censors', *The Co-operative Productive Review* (April 1941): 75; Nally, W., 'Battle of the Postscripts', *The Co-operative Productive Review* (May 1941): 108; 'Protest Against Broadcast Ban', *The Co-operative News* (17 May 1941): 5.
248. 'BBC Abandon Centenary Broadcasts', *The Co-operative News* (25 November 1944): 5.
249. *Co-operative Union, Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1945*: 292. It was suggested in the debate that the reason for the BBC's withdrawal had been pressure from the *Evening Standard* (a Beaverbrook paper), *ibid.*: 63.
250. 'Party Official Alleges BBC Anti-Co-op Bias', *The Co-operative News* (18 February 1956): 1.
251. The Movement's relations with commercial TV are examined in Chapter 5.
252. Quoted in Higson, A., *Waving the Flag. Constructing a National Cinema in Britain* (Oxford: OUP, 1995): 184.
253. The first quote is Rotha's, the second John Grierson's. Both taken from *ibid.*:184, 183.
254. The two best scholarly studies of the Documentary Film Movement are: Swann, P., *The British Documentary Film Movement, 1926-1946* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989); Aitken, I., *Film and Reform. John Grierson and the Documentary Film Movement* (London: Routledge, 1990).
255. Calder, R., 'We Must Learn to Shoot ... The Film as a Powerful Propaganda Medium', *Labour* (October 1936): 36. For a promotion of British documentary films in a Co-operative journal, see, Waring, H., '"Documents" of Democracy. Films Which Are Putting The British Worker On The Map', *The Millgate* (September 1935).
256. These Co-operative and Labour film bodies are examined in detail in Chapter 4, but see the positive comments put on the documentary films by Joe Reeves, principal activist with the NACECS and the WFA, 'The Co-operative Movement and the Film', *Co-operators' Yearbook* (Leicester: CPF, 1938): 68. For the educational film, see, Low, R., *Documentary and Educational Films of the 1930s* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1979): Chapter 2; Lally, W.L., *A National Encyclopaedia of Educational Films and 16mm.. Apparatus Available in Great Britain 1936* (London: The Central Information Bureau for

- Educational Films, 1937). Internationally, the Labour Movement assessed the value of the educational film and the relationship was discussed from time to time in the *International Review of Educational Cinematography*. See for example, 'The Educational Film in the World of Labour', *International Review of Educational Cinematography* 6 (November 1934).
257. The whole area of film sponsorship and the industrial-advertising film is under-researched. Invaluable contemporary insight is provided in Box, S., *Film Publicity. A Handbook on the Production and Distribution of Propaganda Films* (London: Lovat Dickson, 1937). More recent discussion can be found in Swann, P., op.cit.: Chapter 5; Aitken, I., op.cit.: Chapter 6.
258. See the unfavourable comments from Grierson and Rotha quoted in Swann, P., op.cit.: 98-99.
259. The whole saga is examined in Chapter 4.
260. 'Letters to the Editor: Should We Advertise?', *The Co-operative News* (28 September 1907): 1207.
261. These issues are more fully explored in Burton, A., '"To gain the whole world and lose our soul": Visual Spectacle and the Politics of Working-Class Consumption before 1914' in Popple, S. and Toulmin, V. (eds), *Visual Delights: The Projected Image before 1914* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, forthcoming).

Chapter 3. The Formative Decades: Film and Co-operation, 1896-1926

The Picture Age

An incident typical and representative of the age occurred at the entrance to the palatial premises of the CWS in Manchester the other day. An observant child was passing in the company of its father, and, noticing a stream of delegates entering the building, the mite enquired, "Daddy, is this a picture palace?".

(The Co-operative News, 28 October 1916)

Introduction

The following three chapters present a detailed chronological examination of the Co-operative Movement's engagement with cinema. In this chapter, dealing with the period 1896-1926, the Movement's pioneering excursion into film is charted and considered within the established and widespread visual culture of late Victorian Britain; a period which witnessed a considerable rise in advertising and promotion. It proceeds to consider the specific practices and tactics adopted at this formative stage by Co-operation, which sought to address members and audiences through visual apparatus, and reveals how cinema quickly became a significant cultural technology in the Movement's propaganda activities. Histories of Labour cinema in Britain have paid little attention to the period before the 1930s, but an examination of the Co-operative Movement's visual propaganda and publicity in the first three decades of cinema confirms a widespread and significant engagement with film. An involvement which spanned all three principal aspects of cinema: production, distribution and exhibition. The chapter charts the initiatives which emerged and developed at both the local and national level, when some Co-operative Societies, such as the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society, and federals, like the Co-operative Wholesale Society, commenced what would prove to be a long and extensive involvement with cinema work. Moving pictures emerged as a significant technology of information, education and recreation in its first three decades of existence; it is revealed here that the British Consumer Co-operative Movement was quick to explore its potential to inform and educate members, to entertain audiences, and to participate in the vital task of producing and reproducing Co-operators.

The Chapter begins with a consideration of the visual culture of Co-operation in the late nineteenth century and examines how film extended and developed the visual

technology and representations as practiced through the established magic lantern. It proceeds to assess the pioneering film work of Co-operators and the rapid expansion, both at the local and national level, in cinema activities. Of particular significance was the emerging debate within the Co-operative Movement concerning the educational value of film. This became apparent from about 1908 and was clearly related to wider concerns across British society regarding the potentially harmful effects of moving pictures. That some activists within the Movement acknowledged benefits from cinema was far sighted at this early stage, and the provisional arguments as they were presented in the 1900s are considered here. The varied progress with film, in production, distribution and exhibition, is accounted for up to the middle-1920s. As we will see, an increasingly professional approach was adopted by the central federal, the Co-operative Wholesale Society, but local initiatives were also notable, as they would continue to be through the history of the Co-operative Movement's involvement with film.

The Visual Culture of Late Victorian Britain

In the last two decades film historians have been particularly interested in the early years of cinema. That scholarship has attended, largely, to issues of film style, technology, economics and audiences.¹ In Britain, attention has been lavished on the 'Brighton School' of film-makers, which still holds a legendary position in British film history; while the pre-history of British cinema has also had its share of scholars.² The use of film by educational, commercial and political formations before the mid-1920s has attracted few detailed investigations and represents a significant gap in the historiography. Even before the advent of moving pictures in Britain in 1896³, a fairly elaborate presentation of visual education, propaganda and publicity was being practised through the medium of the magic lantern. Since at the least the eighteenth century the lantern had provided popular entertainments, often emphasising phantasmagorical elements and appealing to the morbid interests of the audience. By the mid-nineteenth century the more utilitarian minded Victorian middle-class, with their keen interest in self-improvement and rational recreation, had appropriated the technology for education

and instruction. Scripture and temperance subjects at first predominated, but soon visual presentation was adopted for the popularisation of science and was widely incorporated into travel lectures, which underwent something of a mania in the latter quarter of the century.⁴ As late as 1906, a leading trade journal could maintain that:

As an educator, entertainer or hobby, the Optical Lantern holds a unique position. At the Board and Technical schools, colleges, and at meetings of learned societies, we find its utility indispensable for thrusting home most complex and sometimes uninteresting details necessary for the student to grasp. The readiness with which both young and old are better able to fix on their minds facts pertaining to history and life when the lantern is used, has gained for this method of instruction permanent and practical success.⁵

It is unsurprising that commercial, political and interest groups should approach the lantern with a view to enhancing their publicity and propaganda. In a form of prototypical public relations, industrial concerns made available slides representative of their trade and business. Thus, the Dunlop Tyre Company prepared a set of fifty lantern slides illustrative of cycling subjects, which was available for loan by approved clubs and organisations.⁶ The railway companies were perhaps the most active with respect to that kind of promotional work. For the 1905-06 season (the lantern season ran October to March), the London and North-Western Railway Company was offering a series of four hundred views showing places of interest on the route; while the Midland Railway Company issued a list of slides, which included prepared descriptive readings, of the principal attractions available to passengers on its services.⁷ Such practices were not advertising as such in that specific products or services were not the subject of presentation. Rather, a favourable impression of the organisation was sought, which might ultimately dispose audience members to become actual customers. In a similar vein, the progress and attainment of British industry in general was the subject of a series of lectures designed for colonial and foreign markets in 1906, presumably to aid in international trade.⁸ Holiday resorts also sought to promote tourism through the lantern, as was the case when the Advertising Committee of Falmouth appropriated five pounds to purchase lantern slide views of the town for lecturing purposes.⁹

The direct application of the magic lantern for advertising had emerged as a standard practice by the turn of the century. Music hall shows and theatre performances

regularly allowed advertisements to be thrown on the fireproof curtain between acts. This practice was received in some quarters as a vulgar distraction but the lantern trade defended it, as long as a certain level of decorum was observed:

There is no doubt at all but that the tedious waits both in front of a play and between the acts are a great drawback to theatre going, and many have found the striking slides almost as amusing as the real performance. As advertisements they are unique in as much as they impress hundreds of people with certain facts in an interesting manner that is likely to be retained by them. We cannot see any objection to their use as long as the pictures used are of a high order, in fact, some of the pictorial advertisements, such as Pears Possessive, not only have the value from their advertisement point of view, but also may be treated as art exhibits.¹⁰

Advertisement by lantern slide was sometimes taken to elaborate, even spectacular, limits. Rail travellers in Scotland were attracted to a display on the roof of a new Train Information Office in the Central Station, Glasgow. The Caledonian Railway Company had arranged for the erection of a large screen onto which were thrown "a series of splendid views, advertising their tourist traffic".¹¹ It was even claimed that a contraption called the aerial graphoscope, invented by Eric Bruce, allowed for pictorial advertisements to be cast onto clouds.¹² It is evident that a wide range of commercial organisations brought their products, services and reputation before a large audience in a variety of settings using the technology of the projecting lantern.

Politicians were also alive to the potential of pictorial propaganda, and historians of political film have underplayed this important precursor to film propaganda.¹³ Various political groups and individuals brought the lantern to bear in their campaigns. Bert Hogenkamp cites an illustrated lecture entitled 'Socialism on the Screen', delivered in April 1892 to the Peckham branch of the Social Democratic Federation. He also brings attention to a lanternist bizarrely named Whiffly Puncto (William Palmer) and his visual presentation of Robert Blatchford's best-selling book, *Merrie England*. Puncto was widely popular in Labour circles.¹⁴ In December 1902, Will Crookes brought off a successful campaign in Woolwich with the aid of a lantern. His illustrated 'Scenes from London Life' sufficiently aroused his audiences to help elect him as Labour parliamentary candidate for the ward.¹⁵ By the time of the 1906 Election, visual propaganda was firmly established as an element of campaigning and the commercial

firms engaged in the business of lanterns and moving pictures were promoting their services to the politicians:

Those who are responsible for the successful engineering of meetings of electors, whether held in or out of doors, are reminded that a splendid auxiliary to the party speaker is at their disposal in the form of the lantern slide. In those long and weary intervals which are frequently unavoidable, photos of popular leaders projected by the limelight lantern afford immense satisfaction. Other subjects which are hardly less acceptable are slides which depict large and impressive party meetings or photographs displaying the material importance and wealth of our Colonies. Skits and cartoons of all kinds may by this means be brought to the notice of thousands, as also extracts from stirring speeches, election results, telegrams of support, and many other words or pictures which make for enthusiasm.¹⁶

The techniques of political persuasion were seemingly adopted with some enthusiasm (and profit) as it was reported that:

In all parts of the United Kingdom - both indoor and outdoor - screens had been erected, and firms who let apparatus on hire have had a sensational and profitable increase of business, and were justified in raising their charges above the ordinary rates.¹⁷

Directly following the poll, the lantern was once again put to novel use. Sponsored by the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Chronicle*, special arrangements were made to present the Election results, immediately upon their receipt, on giant screens erected on the walls of the Waldorf Theatre, Aldwych, with subsequent displays at Denmark Hill, Mile End Road and Islington.¹⁸

It is not generally appreciated that cinematograph films were put to use in the course of party politics from early in the century. A correspondent to a trade magazine recounted how, since the turn of the century, he had toured political meetings of the Unionist Association with his Walturdaw Bioscope. He was satisfied that he had "proved it of great value, not only in the way of entertainment, but also for imparting instruction in political questions of the day".¹⁹ Another Unionist candidate, W.E. Horne at Barnstaple, adopted the cinematograph, and an account of his campaign provides some indication of the type of film at his disposal:

The cinematograph [is used] to convince the electors of the effects of the Liberal policy

in allowing alien immigration in England. The contrast between the films of aliens arriving in East London and English workmen leaving Liverpool to seek work overseas needed few words to enforce their truths.²⁰

The source of the film was probably the Pictorial Politics Association established by Lewin Fitzshamon who had previously directed the phenomenally popular *Rescued by Rover* (1905) for the Hepworth Company. The new firm retained some connection with Hepworth as the films were shot at that company's studios at Walton-on-Thames.²¹ Several titles were listed: *Fair Trade versus Free Trade*; *Wake up, John Bull*; *Back to the Land*; and *The Unemployed Question Must Be Solved*.²² Whether subjects were commissioned or produced speculatively is not revealed, but from the scant evidence they do appear to have been suited to conservative sensibilities and are reported to have been screened by both the Unionist Association and the Primrose League.²³ That the sense of such films could be influenced by the accompanying lecture(r), is evident from the inclusion of one of the films, *Wake up, John Bull*, into Co-operative programmes.²⁴

In assessing the approach to visual propaganda during the 1906 Election, the lantern and film trade was confident that it had revealed a new and lucrative area of business, and in its comments, especially in regard to the public's demand for entertainment, anticipated a key political debate of the twentieth century:

The film maker who looked sufficiently ahead during the bright days, and who can now produce suitable subjects for election purposes, should reap a rich harvest. In many instances politicians have experienced the greatest difficulty in getting electors to their meetings. Dry speeches from more or less able orators are not the class of entertainment the present working man desires after his day's task, but give him living pictures, or even commonplace slides, and he takes his political medicine with occasional spoonfuls of jam, and what is more, the truths depicted on the screen have more effect than much of the platform twaddle.²⁵

A whole range of educational and interest groups were wise to the need to enliven their platforms with popular visual presentations. Most prominent among them were probably the various temperance and religious organisations, which widely put the projecting lens to use. A measure of the investment in that kind of propaganda is apparent from the materials offered for sale or hire by the Church Army Lantern Department. As well as handling the hardware of complete lantern outfits, they offered

a choice of 175,000 sacred slides, deemed suitable for Church, Temperance and Mission Services.²⁶ As is well-known, the *Passion Play* was an important early dramatic subject for moving pictures, and Bible stories were readily adapted to the screen.²⁷ For instance, the Salvation Army organised a 'Kinematograph Exhibition' at the Empire, Wolverhampton in 1906, wherein a dramatic depiction of 'Moses in the Bulrushes' and other religious subjects were presented.²⁸ Film shows began to spring up in churches, which no doubt helped to boost the size of congregations, and organisations such as the Church Missionary Society toured with films depicting their work, and in the process raised money for Mission purposes.²⁹ Religious films were widely applauded for guaranteeing a wholesome entertainment and were regularly presented at Pleasant Sunday Afternoons, Bands of Hope gatherings and Sunday Schools.

The Visual Culture of Co-operation

Amidst such a general appreciation of visual propaganda it would have been surprising if a large-scale commercial and ideological formation such as the Co-operative Movement had remained unseduced by the promise of lantern and cinematograph technology. Indeed, the Movement traditionally put much store in the advantage to be gained from the actual placement of its achievements and ideals in the view of the public. To that effect local and national Co-operative bodies organised exhibitions of Co-operative productions, as well as parades (revealingly called 'demonstrations'), which often involved many thousands of participants. The greatest ever annual assembly of Co-operators was held at the Crystal Palace between 1888 and 1910.³⁰ By the mid-1890s, the Festival covered a period of five days; Festival Sunday attracted over 40,000 visitors alone, while the United Choir combined 10,000 Co-operative voices.³¹ The opportunity such an event offered for propaganda was indicated in a report of the 1896 Festival, where it was claimed that "in the Palace we have products on show, at the outdoor 'demonstration' we have principles on show".³² A typical conflation of publicity and propaganda: of trade with ideals. Movement publicists and propagandists maintained an appreciation of "ocular demonstration as a means of convincing people

as to the 'sweet reasonableness' of hard argument and stern fact"³³, while the promotion of exhibitions and the adoption of visual propaganda in the form of magic lantern displays were encouraged "to show what progress [had] been made by Co-operation", and were, in addition, "an opportunity for the official Co-operative organisations to secure a national publicity for our movement".³⁴

Numerous Co-operative Societies sponsored magic lantern shows for members' educational evenings and socials, and by the mid-1890s the CWS was preparing sets of slides illustrative of the various productive factories and workshops of the Co-operative Movement so as to demonstrate the part Co-operation was playing in the industrial world. A lecture to Co-operators in Durham towards the end of 1896 took as its subject 'Co-operation and its Possibilities', and was illustrated by about 60 limelight views.³⁵ Lantern slides belonging to the CWS were in evidence at the Delph Industrial Co-operative Society a couple of months later, to illustrate a lecture on 'The Co-operative Methods of Improving Industry and Agriculture'. It was reported that the Society's president "gave an interesting sketch of the Wholesale Society's creamery factories in Ireland, and showed how they were benefitting Irish agriculture. The various productive works of the Wholesale Society were also graphically sketched and their rapid development described".³⁶ A well-appointed and successful Society such as the Bolton Co-operative Society made available two thousand pounds a year to support educational activities and for the 1896-97 season sponsored four limelight lectures.³⁷ Comparable provision was being made in Scotland with slides provided by the SCWS, as was instanced by a Co-operative propagandist meeting at Arbroath in the winter of 1896 under the auspices of the Scottish Section of the Co-operative Union in collaboration with the SCWS. An audience of over 2,000 persons were treated to a lecture on 'Co-operation and its Progress and the SCWS', illustrated with numerous limelight views showing Co-operative central and branch stores and the Shieldhall factories of the SCWS at Glasgow.³⁸

In addition to the Wholesale Societies, slide sets were made available for loan from the Co-operative Union in Manchester, and also from some of the sectional associations of the Co-operative Union, which represented regional groupings of retail Societies. For example, the Educational Council of the Southern Section of the Central

Co-operative Board was prepared to provide a lantern and slides for the benefit of Education Committees in its area.³⁹ To extract maximum value out of the provision a Society often arranged a programme of displays throughout its district. Early in 1897, the Peterborough Society, utilising slides belonging to the CWS and projected on its own lantern, organised three lantern exhibitions throughout a single week to its branches in outlying villages.⁴⁰ Similarly, the Wellingborough Midland Society attracted large audiences to a series of lantern lectures that took place in Wellingborough, Wilby and Doddington, on equipment supplied by the Co-operative Union.⁴¹ Both the Wholesale Societies and the Co-operative Union provided experienced lecturers to accompany lantern exhibitions, and an approved list of lecturers comprised of senior figures within the Movement such as representatives of federal committees or prominent figures in retail Societies.

There also emerged a professional cadre of lantern lecturers who toured the country sponsored by the national federal Co-operative organisations. Initially, the lantern lecture was adopted as part of the repertoire of the CWS's commercial travellers who sought to promote trade of specific products. Before long a broader approach to publicity and propaganda emerged and figures like Patrick Ryan and Bert Williams of the CWS regularly visited Co-operative Societies to give lantern lectures. The photographs of factories and manufacturing processes that illustrated the CWS's magazine, *The Wheatsheaf* (commenced 1896), and were reproduced as lantern slides, were the work of T.P. Crowther, who was one of three brothers who eventually worked in publicity for the CWS.⁴² An early advertisement for the lantern-lecture service appeared in *The Wheatsheaf* in 1898 and indicated the wide-ranging nature of the subjects that were covered:

We are prepared to arrange lectures on the CWS and its various productive works, illustrated by a powerful lantern for any societies who are willing to try this attractive method of propaganda. Our slides include views of the Manchester premises and the various home and foreign branches and depots. Complete sets to illustrate the processes and manufactures carried on at Crumpsall Biscuit and Sweets Factory, Irlam Soap and Candle Works, Leicester Boot and Shoe Works, Heckmondwike Boot and Shoe Works, Middleton Jam and Pickle Factory, Batley Woollen Factory, Leeds and Broughton Ready-Mades and Tailoring Factories, Broughton Cabinet Works, Dunston Flour Mill, and the Irish Creameries of the CWS.⁴³

A contemporary show in Scotland, held at Radnor Park, included views of the premises of the SCWS, the United Baking Society and the Paisley Manufacturing Society.⁴⁴ Such displays were organised to familiarise the members of retail Co-operative Societies with the ramifications of *their* business and were an element in a wider discourse of instruction and information, which included periodicals such as *The Wheatsheaf*, *The Co-operative News* and the *CWS Annuals*. The Co-operative Union also called on a pool of lecturers who could expand on the impressive work of the CWS, such as Arthur Field, whose illustrated talk, 'Co-operation: Its Distributive Agencies and its Productive Works', was presented to the Maidstone Society in 1898.⁴⁵ However, lectures offered by the Co-operative Union sometimes satisfied different objectives. A series of illustrated lectures were produced specifically for children, introducing them to the ideals of Co-operation. One of the first was entitled 'Jenny Jago's Dream', and one report comments how it was enthusiastically received by 1,200 children being entertained by the Stafford Society.⁴⁶ A new children's lecture was introduced for the 1900-01 season called 'Jack Reddaway's visit to England, and what he saw on his Journey from Liverpool to Rochdale'.⁴⁷ The lecture, which featured prominent places of Co-operative interest, was reported to have been "in frequent demand", and was, for example, enjoyed by about a thousand youngsters at a seasonal presentation on New Year's Day 1901, in Walsall.⁴⁸ It is possible to gauge the extent of the Co-operative Union's provision from figures presented each year at Co-operative Congress. For the season under review here, 1900-01, the Union responded to 343 applications for lectures and issued 26,680 individual slides.⁴⁹ Other Co-operative bodies sponsored illustrated lectures, although they were more modest in their aspirations: *The Co-operative News* offered a lantern lecture on the paper's history, present position and method of production, commencing in 1900 and comprising of 50 slides⁵⁰; while individuals with the Women's Guild made presentations to numerous Co-op groups and included such able lecturers as Miss C. Mayo.⁵¹ In addition, local retail Societies commissioned lectures illustrative of their own enterprise.⁵²

Co-operation and Early Cinema

Co-operators had, then, shown themselves favourably disposed towards the possibilities of visual propaganda and education, and the lantern lecture was widely adopted as an informative and entertaining activity. From an early date moving pictures were incorporated into the lecture services offered by Co-operative Societies. Only one historian of Left political film in Britain has acknowledged the Co-operative Movement's early venture into cinema, but, reproducing details from an unreliable source, Stephen Jones presents only a partial and largely erroneous picture.⁵³ Moving pictures were quickly and widely adopted within the Movement, and their use paralleled the service to which the magic lantern was put: to attract people to meetings; to educate and inform about the Movement, concerning its trade and activities; and to excite and entertain. In this last respect, its appeal was particularly directed towards children whom the Societies were keen to interest in Co-operation. Following a film show organised for children at the Stockton Society, the Education Committee announced itself "highly satisfied with the result of their efforts to interest the children, and look forward to similar gatherings with great hopes for the Co-operators of the future".⁵⁴

The first mention of the new medium in the Movement's literature came in the winter of 1897, the year following the introduction of cinema into Britain.⁵⁵ It took the form of an advertisement, wherein an operator, Marcroft, offered to Education Committees the wonder of living pictures by the use of a cinematograph machine.⁵⁶ Bert Hogenkamp has suggested that the first film show to be sponsored by a Left organisation in Britain was that organised by the Manchester, Salford and District Independent Labour Party on 25th February 1898.⁵⁷ In fact, coincidentally, a cinematograph entertainment had comprised part of the proceedings at the annual reunion of the members of the Carlisle Co-operative Society in Scotland on the very same evening. It is interesting to note that the film demonstration followed a jubilant meeting wherein a defiant president announced that the Society had successfully confronted a boycott by local businessmen and trade was expanding.⁵⁸ However, the first record of a Co-operative film show had appeared the previous year with the

announcement of a cinematograph exhibition to the Hollingworth Co-operative Society on the 7th December 1897.⁵⁹ That was possibly the first film show, anywhere in the world, connected with a Labour organisation. It is not possible to determine from the available evidence if the show was provided by Marcroft, but considering that he advertised his service out of Rochdale, it is entirely possible that he was in attendance at Hollingworth near Manchester.

The Movement's press records a growing number of moving picture shows across 1898 and 1899. Initially, the presentations acted as a novelty to attract members to meetings, or, alternatively, to provide entertainment at social gatherings of Co-operators. The former function was satisfied at Norwich, when a cinematograph exhibition, interspersed with songs, followed the Annual General Meeting of the Society in 1898.⁶⁰ Moreover, the cinematograph could be mobilised to aid in propaganda as occurred at Wolverhampton in 1902, when meetings were organised in connection with new branch stores.⁶¹ More usually, moving pictures figured as a popular presentation on a programme of entertainment, as was the case when a cinematograph, in conjunction with a gramophone, provided amusement at the annual soiree and concert of the Bonnybridge Society, Scotland, in February 1899.⁶² The previous month both technologies had provided a similar service at the Clydebank Society when the Education Committee had entertained over 1,000 children.⁶³ An interesting example of the integration of film entertainment into Movement culture was evident at Woolwich towards the end of 1899, when 2,000 youngsters enjoyed a cinematograph display as part of a wider programme of activities to celebrate the opening of a new branch store.⁶⁴

As the novelty of animated pictures wore off, more care had to be invested in the preparation of an interesting and enjoyable film show and a conventional approach to the programme began to emerge, which, in important ways, drew on the model offered by the lantern show. Topical and travel subjects were regularly a feature of the presentation and were easily sourced from the emerging commercial trade in moving pictures. The big news event early in the new century was the Boer War, and war pictures found their way into presentations at Co-operative Societies. A magic lantern demonstration at Haywards Heath, taking as its topic 'The History of the Transvaal War', concluded with a cinematograph exhibition, "in which were included scenes at the

front, etc."⁶⁵ Similarly, "recent war pictures" gave Co-operators at Clay Cross a new perspective on events in South Africa.⁶⁶ The death of Queen Victoria and the State funeral proceedings were also events of sufficient stature to attract widespread coverage and individual mention in the brief reports of film shows at local Co-operative Societies. A lecture at Bedminster on 'The Record Reign of the Queen' was illustrated by "limelight views and animated photographs": "Several of these depicted scenes in connection with the funeral procession of her late Majesty, and the photographs of the procession passing through Hyde Park and the blue jackets at Windsor drawing the gun carriage were very fine".⁶⁷ Travelogues had represented a popular type of lantern lecture, appealing to a Victorian fascination with travel and exploration. Cinema readily adopted that subject with its capability of integrating religious (the Holy Land), patriotic (the Empire), ethnographic (tribal subjects), cultural (the European Grand Tour) and commercial (excursions) topics into a desirable combination of instruction and rational recreation. Again, such films found popular appeal with Co-operative Education Committees keen to provide instruction with relaxation. Members of the Vale of Leven Society were invited on a vicarious 'Trip to South Africa' by use of the cinematograph late in 1899⁶⁸, while Leeds Co-operators faced the less taxing demands of an imaginary visit to 'The Sunny Side of Ireland, with its Lakes, Mountains, and Glens'. The latter lecture was provided by a representative of the Irish Railway Companies, with:

The lecture being rendered more interesting by means of animated pictures thrown on a screen by limelight. Several pictures taken during the visit of her late Majesty Queen Victoria to Dublin last year were also shown.⁶⁹

The inclusion of humorous, topical and travel films at Co-operative Society meetings and socials was widespread by the turn of the century, and clearly made a popular contribution to a programme that might also include recitations, variety artistes and glee parties. Initially, the cinematograph entertainments were provided by commercial showmen hired for the presentation(s), but commencing in 1898 the CWS lantern lecturers had been supplied with the new technology, and drawing on films from commercial suppliers, were available to provide moving picture displays, usually in conjunction with the traditional lantern lecture.⁷⁰ A significant development came with

the production of films with Co-operative subjects, and representative of an actual intervention by the Movement into the business of moving pictures. The first editorial commentary to discuss moving pictures in the Movement's press lauded the potential of the 'rapid photographic film-machine', and judged it to be:

A great aid to science in many of her fields, and the obtaining and preservation of records of priceless value to the present and to coming generations. Before long we doubtless shall be having the biograph applied to Co-operative productive operations, and the films used to illustrate lectures in Co-operative halls, while to Co-operative national festivals the biograph can now be applied to bring them home to Co-operators everywhere.⁷¹

It has been claimed that the first Co-operative films appeared in 1899, which, according to Sydney Box, were Britain's first advertising films:

So far as my information goes, the first in the field with advertising films were the Co-operative Wholesale Society who between 1899 and 1902 toured a road-show which included a number of short films. These showed views of their soap, starch and candleworks at Irlam, their biscuit factory at Crumsall (sic) and the tea warehouses of the English and Scottish Joint CWS in London.⁷²

Alternatively, Percy Redfern (and subsequently Stephen Jones) has suggested that films of actual CWS activities were not available until 1904.⁷³ Box was undoubtedly nearer the truth and T.P. Crowther (whom Box maintains shot the first CWS films), although imprecise with respect to an actual date, clearly implies that CWS film production occurred before the new century.⁷⁴ The first report of a Co-op film show which included films of CWS operatives and manufacturing activities came in December 1900 at a lecture to Walsall Co-operators. The lecturer, Mr Raney of the CWS, delivered a presentation on 'The Co-operative Wholesale Society: Its Origins and Work', in which:

A large number of ordinary lantern slides were shown, illustrating the primitive way in which the Wholesale began, the difficulties with which it had to contend, and the gigantic strides the Society had made. He concluded with the cinematograph showing the operatives at work at the great Wheatsheaf Boot Factory at Leicester, tea weighing at the London warehouse, and various other processes.⁷⁵

The following year, the Walsall Society was once again host to a CWS lecturer, this time Paddy Ryan, who gave presentations over three evenings and included films illustrating "the great CWS warehouses and most of the productive works, such as Leicester Boot Factory, Irlam Soap Works, and many other places of interest".⁷⁶ Sydney Box claims that these first CWS films were the work of T.P. Crowther, yet Crowther himself praises the initiative of a Mr Green of the Irlam Soap Works. A technical expert and chemist, Mr Green was an enthusiastic photographer whose work often appeared as illustrations in the CWS journal *The Wheatsheaf*. Other contributors included Paddy Ryan, who Crowther claims took most of the early films at Crumpsall and Irlam, and also a Mr Gill.⁷⁷ The first films were very short at 25-50 feet and would have provided little more than brief views of CWS factories and workers. In 1903-04 (the period Redfern claims as the start of Co-operative film-making), a combined Gaumont camera and projector was purchased and the length of film it was possible to show increased to 150 feet. A running commentary accompanied the screenings, and this was often the responsibility of the projectionist who was already busily engaged manipulating the lantern. As well as taking place in premises owned or hired by Co-operative Societies, some film shows were given in the open air.⁷⁸ It was claimed that by 1914, almost all of the factories operated by the CWS had been filmed and a collection of nearly forty films had been built up. The average length of the films by that time had reached 1,000 feet and the films were being provided with titles.⁷⁹ Over the next six years, 1915-20, Mr Crowther claimed he filmed a further twenty of the CWS works.⁸⁰

Film work was also readily adopted by the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society and the cinematograph became a regular attraction at the annual Scottish Co-operative Festival and Industrial Exhibition, making its first appearance in 1903.⁸¹ From the early months of that year Scottish retail Societies were taking advantage of a cinematograph provided by the recently established photographic and optical department of the SCWS, and a local commentator, following a display at Cowlairs, optimistically observed: "If the SCWS who provided the cinematograph part of the entertainment keep their films up-to-date ... much success may be predicted".⁸² The assessment was proved shrewd, and a meeting of the Scottish Co-operative Educational Committees' Association

could report in 1905 that the Wholesale Bioscope was regularly being taken advantage of by local committees.⁸³ By 1906, the SCWS was operating a popular service to retail Societies in Scotland that desired to enhance their concerts or propaganda meetings. Each season the SCWS replaced its collection of films to keep its programme up-to-date and offered users three programmes: fifteen minutes duration; thirty minutes duration; or forty-five minutes duration. The Society's Royal Bioscope also provided two illustrated songs to finish off an evening.⁸⁴ Due to the success of the film service that operated out of the SCWS's headquarters in Glasgow, comparable arrangements were instituted in Edinburgh for the benefit of Societies in the East of Scotland.⁸⁵ At the commencement of the 1908-09 season, it was reported that seventy engagements had already been booked for the Royal Bioscope and there was evidently much demand for the apparatus at Co-operative festivals, concerts, propaganda meetings and children's entertainments. A number of engagements had also been received from municipal bodies - which the organisers took as evidence of the excellence of their machine and films - and these offered a useful opportunity of achieving publicity and propaganda outside the Movement. The SCWS had secured films of its own activities by that time, and the following report provides some information on the subject and purpose of such films:

One of the most interesting reels showed the fish-curing station owned by the SCWS at Aberdeen. The boats were seen going out over the water with their sails spread; the process of sinking the nets was seen, then the hauling in of the nets, the landing of the fish at the quay, the treatment of the fish at the curing station, the packing of the boxes etc. Here was an everyday scene which not only interested the people, but demonstrated the everyday life of the fishermen, and at the same time took Co-operators, as it were, on a visit to their own establishment to see how their food was prepared ... Hundreds and thousands of Co-operators have never seen the inside of a big boot factory or cabinet factory. This would be a means of showing them how the work is done.⁸⁶

Already by 1908, Co-operative educationalists and propagandists were discerning the unique qualities of moving pictures as an aid to their work. The educational programmes of local Societies reflected the appreciation of the 'Cinematograph as Educator', as was evidenced at the Leeds Society where the 1908-09 programme, which proposed four cinematograph lectures, was prepared "with an eye to making every

member a Co-operator".⁸⁷ At the close of the 1906 season, the Bolton Society had arranged eleven cinematograph displays "of an instructive character". Upwards of 5,000 children had attended the shows, wherein "every opportunity [had] been used to impress upon their minds the principles of the Movement, and the growth and extent of the Bolton Society".⁸⁸ A local Society's purpose in sponsoring film shows for children is apparent in the following report of an entertainment provided by the Education Committee of the Eccles Provident Industrial Society:

The children's share includes cinematograph entertainments, and though bored by dry discourse, they are briefly imbued with the idea that the evening's delight is associated with the co-op store, and thus taught by a striking object-lesson to expect good things from co-operation.⁸⁹

The need to attract members to meetings was a problem which many Education Committees confronted, and some Societies experienced acute embarrassment after bringing a lecturer many miles only to face a mere sprinkling of people. Indeed, as one commentator concluded: "Unless he lectures with a cinematograph he is used to taking what comes".⁹⁰ Thus, the attraction of moving pictures was a considerable inducement to members to attend meetings. That was certainly the advice of the Co-operative Union in concluding its *Review of the Co-operative Educational Programme for 1908/09*.⁹¹ The manner in which moving pictures acted as a popular element in an educational context is apparent from this report of a propaganda meeting in Scotland:

[The films] comprise spectacular effects and exciting and humorous scenes which amuse the audiences, and the announcement that a bioscope display will be given usually attracts a greater audience to a Co-operative meeting than would otherwise attend. When such displays are given at propaganda meetings held under the auspices of the Kinning Park Society, slides are introduced between the scenes showing the progress of the society, the financial advantage to members who allow their profits to accumulate, the first shops owned by the society, the present premises (outside and inside), the workrooms in the dressmaking and tailoring departments, etc. All this serves a useful purpose.⁹²

Putting the cinematograph to direct use in educational work became a subject of extended discussion by 1908. Films of Co-operative factories, production and workers had been around for several years and had served to inform and instruct members of local retail Societies about the extent and potential of their Movement. Other topics of

contemporary interest to Co-operators were also presented for consideration and discussion, such as the garden cities movement and Co-opartnership housing schemes.⁹³ However, a more elaborate and systematic prescription began to develop, and a debate regarding the advantages of moving pictures for a specifically Co-operative education emerged in the Movement's press in the latter half of 1908. The limitation of the Movement's previous involvement with cinema was apparent when one advocate questioned:

Why do not Co-operators use the cinematograph as a means of education, and why do they not open theatres and halls where their members could receive this education?⁹⁴

Educationalists were becoming concerned with the possible detrimental effects of conventional pictures and sought to counter their harmful influence. From the Movement's perspective, it was deemed desirable to combat the overtly commercial picture houses, which:

Were managed by vulgar showmen, who make the manufacturers believe that the most popular pieces are the vulgar kind of dramas. So unwholesome stories are represented, the music is bad, and the whole surroundings are deplorable. This is the type of the bad shop, for which the society would substitute the good shop.⁹⁵

In the place of 'vulgar' pictures it was thought desirable to put before audiences films of educational and Co-operative subjects; films dealing with crafts and manufacturing, English history, travel and ethnography, the history and constitution of the Co-operative Movement, Robert Owen and the Rochdale Pioneers, and national and international Co-operative congresses - films that "educate the eye". In a striking innovation, the author proposed the production of narrative films on contemporary social themes and which revealed the inequity in modern industrial society.⁹⁶ Such an impression should be quickly followed up with films depicting the model conditions of Co-operative factories and work practices as:

The spectators would not for a long time be able to understand the advantages of the Co-operative system, but what they saw with their eyes would be impressed upon them, and that impression would be indelible.⁹⁷

A correspondent to *The Co-operative News* claimed to have proposed a similar scheme to the Co-operative Union and the CWS eighteen months earlier, one which drew upon economies of scale through the regional collaboration of Societies. The plan presented, involved the establishment of six centres in England equipped with projection technology and films. Each centre would serve approximately sixty Societies and the cost of an individual show would work out at only about 9s. 6d., plus the operator's expenses. It was concluded that "the educational and advertising benefit would be immense, and out of all proportion to cost".⁹⁸ Nothing more was heard of this particular scheme, although the idea of sharing costs amongst Societies was a recommendation that surfaced from time to time, and by the late 1930s was in practical application.

The next important debate regarding the Movement's approach to the cinema came in the spring of 1914, when an article appeared in *The Co-operative News* detailing how moving pictures could be adopted for Co-operative purposes and the Movement's message brought before the masses. A central argument was universal provision: the ideal whereby the Co-operative Movement provided all the goods and services required by members (consumers) for their daily needs. Such an ideal ensured that the public were not exploited by capitalist enterprises and were served in a fair and equitable manner with any surplus (profit) returned to them. The establishment and development of the CWS was predicated on this ideal, as was the entry of local Societies into production and manufacture. It was the author's view that the Movement should be responsible for the members' leisure and education as well as their material needs:

The ultimate object of our activities should be that we should not be dependent upon anybody except ourselves. We should have our own colleges, our own educational institutions of every character. We should provide our own amusements, our own forms of social enjoyment and our amusements and social enjoyments should be as pure as should be the food and the clothes we supply for our material needs.

Here, the moving picture was appreciated as a great force for propaganda and education, especially as it held such a tremendous appeal for the public:

The great advantage to us would be its spread of a knowledge of Co-operative activities

in a way that the rank and file of the Movement would come to see and learn. We are always talking about the necessity of reaching the masses and bringing the masses together. The cinema would do this for us.

A centralised scheme was proposed involving the two Wholesale Societies who could combine to organise production and distribution. The type of films envisaged were conventional topical and educational subjects attending to Co-operative manufacturing activities, although, the need for humorous and entertaining films was conceded: "We should not keep out humour in the Co-operative Movement; it would certainly not make us any less human, nor any less divine, nor less serious."

Importantly, the suggestion did not include the preparation of narrative films as Benoit-Levy had advocated six years earlier, however, the immense vista of Co-operative operations was acknowledged as an endless source of suitable film material, to inform and inspire member audiences and the public:

[T]he Co-operative Movement is now so big, the operations of the two Wholesale Societies so wide, that we could carry living pictures, directly and indirectly associated with our co-operative enterprise, from most parts of the world, in addition to sights of human interest from our own islands - England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales.⁹⁹

The momentum was maintained, and the following month a lecture at Holyoake House, Manchester (the HQ of the Co-operative Union) took as its subject 'The Camera as an Educator'. The lecturer advocated the extension of educational activities through the camera and cinematograph. He demonstrated the educational potential of cinema by screening CWS films, while "at the same time appealing to his audience to support productions of these factories *and thus aim a decisive blow at the sweated industries*".¹⁰⁰

With such ideas and proposals regarding the appropriation of cinema for Co-operative education and propaganda achieving wide circulation before the First World War, and a degree of practical attainment in the film work undertaken by the CWS, the Co-operative Movement was far in advance of other Labour organisations, such as the Trade Unions and the political bodies, in regard to film. Admittedly, the Co-operative Union, the body responsible for the federal organisation of Co-operative education, had yet to directly involve itself with film, and that would have to wait until after the War; and the programme of film propaganda and education provided by the CWS, although

clearly serving a useful function, was far from being a considered educational strategy, systematically addressing the Movement's history, ideas and economic philosophy. In terms of typical content, members were made aware of the model conditions enjoyed by CWS workers in the Movement's factories, of the vast possessions and operations of the two Wholesales, and the processes involved in bringing popular Co-operative products to the consumer. Noticeably, a central concern of the cinema activities was publicity, and correspondingly CWS film shows were linked closely with interests of trade. Lectures were prepared with particular products and trades as their themes, such as: 'Ceylon' (tea - illustrated by lantern and cinematograph)¹⁰¹; 'soap' (cinematograph)¹⁰²; 'The Sun Flour Mills' (cinematograph)¹⁰³; 'Factory Land Folk and Crumpsall Biscuit and Sweet Land' (lantern and cinematograph)¹⁰⁴; Untitled (tobacco - cinematograph)¹⁰⁵; and 'The Orchards and Fruit Farms and Works of the CWS' (jam - cinematograph).¹⁰⁶ To ensure audience participation and engagement with the actual products, activities such as washing, polishing and baking competitions became a feature of the programme and audience members were often supplied with samples of CWS chocolate, tobacco, biscuits etc., according to the theme of the lecture. It was recommended that the preparation of film subjects and screenings be co-ordinated with 'push sales' campaigns, and Education Committees were advised to arrange their concerts:

As to bring into prominence the CWS productions - this is done by suggesting subjects for the addressors, which are generally accepted by the various speakers; and also by giving out samples of co-operatively produced goods at each concert.¹⁰⁷

That the sales push could be effective was confirmed by a report following a CWS lecture on 'Soap and Tobacco from the Co-operators Point of View', held at Wirksworth in 1912. The result was that the Society decided to stock only CWS soaps in the future.¹⁰⁸ CWS film shows were not confined to local Society meetings and socials. Provision also extended to other Co-op constituencies, such as the Guilds, employees and children's outdoor gala events, when, for the latter, films were screened in tents.¹⁰⁹

The availability of cinema provision does not appear to have been even across the country. In the autumn of 1912, the letters page of *The Co-operative News* carried a series of correspondence from representatives of local distributive Societies who were

seemingly unfamiliar with the cinema lecture service of the CWS. 'A Plea for the Cinematograph' was entered, and it was deemed imperative that:

The Co-operative Movement ... offer some counter-attraction to the magnetic picture shows by bringing in the aid of the cinematograph and enabling educational committees to put before those they desire to draw into the Movement real, living illustrations of our great productive and distributive works.¹¹⁰

Letters of support were forthcoming in the succeeding weeks in which it was ignorantly recommended that the CWS should be responsible for the provision of the films.¹¹¹ The correspondence all came from London (Catford and Walworth) and it is possible that Co-operative Societies outside of the heartlands of Co-operation were less well-informed (and served?) than their more established counter-parts in the North. Surprisingly, the CWS did not offer a reply in *The Co-operative News*, putting the record straight, and therefore the effectiveness of the provision must be cast in some doubt.

Local Film Initiatives

The position of the Wholesale Societies, as national organisations within the Co-operative Movement controlling huge capital resources and great financial wealth, meant that they were best suited to undertake the expensive arrangements associated with film production and distribution. They were among the first to engage in Co-operative film work and commanded the resources and facilities to ensure that their investment remained the major contribution in the decades to come. However, local initiatives in film quickly emerged and continued to perform a valuable function in a Movement in which regional activity and identity played an important role. The earliest recorded Co-operative Society film was shot in the summer of 1902, the subject being the children's demonstration on the occasion of the Cowlair Society's twenty-first anniversary.¹¹² Such films and subjects were typical of early cinema, wherein audiences were keen to see themselves on the screen, and travelling showmen regularly included local scenes in their programmes. Films of Co-operative subjects also offered a certain validation, in that the Movement's activities were granted a measure of authority and legitimisation,

being screened alongside 'official' subjects such as the Monarchy, the Military and the Empire, subjects conventional to early cinema. In this way, films of local Co-operative activities were clearly associated with other Movement activities like processions, exhibitions and displays of various sorts, indicating the desire to place before the community a visual demonstration of Co-operative vitality and strength. Most local Co-op films were simple records of Society events and activities and served as both a useful record for posterity, and the means of sharing the original event vicariously with members in outlying districts or potential members who might become inspired by the images. A number of Societies were readily alerted to the value of this new form of visual propaganda. In 1904, the procession of horses and vans in connection with Co-operative Congress was filmed at Stratford.¹¹³ The two oldest surviving Co-op films were simple records of Co-op galas and processions at Wishaw and Wrexham [NCFC 001, NCFC 002], and reveal the elaborate arrangements that Societies were prepared to undertake to 'demonstrate' to the local community the efficacy of Co-operation. The Lowestoft Society showed some enterprise in its approach to film, when, in connection with the opening of a new branch store, a film advertising the Society's services was commissioned:

Striking films have been obtained of the central premises showing the movements of members in and out of the buildings, and also being served in the grocery department; the processes of bread-baking and dispatching also have been filmed.¹¹⁴

The resulting film was screened three times daily at the local cinema, the Picture Palace.

Some Co-operative Societies had quickly recognised the lure of the pictures and noticed the large queues of eager film-goers congregating outside local picture houses. Permanent cinemas first began to appear in Britain in the period around 1904-05 and had become well-established by the end of that decade.¹¹⁵ The warm and conveniently appointed cinemas were attractive places to meet, and most importantly, offered superior facilities for screening films. The local cinema, as in the case at Lowestoft, was an effective place for a Society to present advertising and propaganda. Co-operative Societies also hired local cinemas as meeting places in which to hold socials. A cinematograph in such sumptuous surroundings (often literally so, nearly always in

relation to a Co-operative Hall) would undoubtedly have been a popular attraction. In 1907, Blackpool Co-operators enjoyed their annual tea in the Pavilion and were entertained by films and a concert.¹¹⁶ The local cinema could also serve as ideal venue for an educational meeting. In February 1911, the Tonbridge Society hired the Star Picture Hall and presented two cinematograph entertainments to a combined audience of 1,200. A Co-operative Union lecturer accompanied the screenings and made an address on 'The Principles and Benefits of Co-operation', and films of Co-operative subjects were included in the presentation.¹¹⁷

Numerous Co-operative Societies would take advantage of the facilities offered by a neighbourhood picture house and screen publicity films to the local community and/or hold educational and propaganda meetings at which films would be screened. A small number of Societies demonstrated an even greater willingness to involve themselves in film exhibition and established commercial cinemas as part of the trading activities of the Society. Indeed, the local Co-op Hall had proved a convenient site for early film exhibition. Importantly, these were not restricted to the illustrated lectures of the CWS but also regularly hired to local showmen. An early reference to such a use of a hall was in April 1898, with an engagement of Mr Woodhouse's Longbow Entertainment, which featured 'chronoscope' pictures, at the Co-operative Hall, Jarrow.¹¹⁸ Likewise, Henry Hibbert held a display at the Co-op Hall, Bingley on 22nd February 1900.¹¹⁹ Hibbert was a regular exhibitor in the North and North-West, from his base in Bradford. He was, no doubt, a frequent visitor to Co-operative Societies, and for that purpose secured films of Co-operative subjects to screen amidst his conventional programme of travel, topical and humorous subjects.¹²⁰ At a show for the Warrington Co-operative Society, Hibbert screened pictures illustrative of the Co-operative quarries at Bethesda¹²¹; while at Oldham he excited local Co-operators with scenes he had recently secured in the locality. Also included were pictures of the recent Franco-British Exhibition, which featured an impressive CWS exhibit.¹²² The hiring of a Society's hall to travelling showmen could be a lucrative activity (as well as a recreational service to the members), as was the case at the Finedon Industrial Co-operative Society, whereby receipts from cinematograph entertainments were used to subsidise other social activities such as flower shows and fetes.¹²³ The researches of G.J. Mellor into pioneer cinema

operators in the North of England has revealed numerous instances of showmen relying on Co-op Halls as venues for their animated pictures. The Weisker Brothers who by 1914 operated a circuit of twenty-two halls in the North had begun with shows at the St. Helens Co-op Hall in 1907.¹²⁴ In 1909, A.O. Andrews from Batley utilised the nearby Industrial Hall of the Dewsbury Pioneers Co-operative Society for his exhibition of 'Andrews Pictures'.¹²⁵ Similarly, before the Great War the Co-op Hall at Crewe became a regular venue for Arthur Hand and son, and was known as 'Hand's Kino'.¹²⁶ As early as 1908, there had appeared advocates for Co-operatively owned and managed cinemas. Benoit-Levy had wondered:

Why not a Co-operative cinematograph theatre where the members could be amused and entertained at the same time? If such enterprises have paid individualistic societies, why cannot Co-operative Societies get the same benefits from them? Even if the members do not increase their profits by the establishment of a Co-operative cinematographic hall, I believe it would be good policy to start a special education fund for the subsidising of such a theatre, for I am convinced that the cinematograph will be, before very long, the real educator of democracy.¹²⁷

The public safety provisions of the Cinematograph Act (1909) ensured that film exhibition became a less haphazard affair and the Act was an important stimulus in the move to erect permanent purpose-built cinemas. Consequent upon the Act, several Co-operative Societies licensed their premises for cinema exhibition and a step nearer Benoit-Levy's ideal was realised. Frank Manders' research in the North-East has revealed the following local Societies seeking such provision: Burnopfield Co-op (1912); Seaham (1912); West Stanley (1912); Tantobie (1911); Birtley (1912); Winlaton (1913); and Chopwell (1914).¹²⁸ Furthermore, the 1914 edition of the *Kine Year Book* lists the following in its directory of Kinemas: Co-operative Hall Cinema, Fleetwood; Co-operative Hall, Crewe; Co-operative Picture Hall, Batley; Co-operative Hall, Leigh; Co-operative Hall, Ashton-in-Makerfield; Co-operative Hall, Bacup; Co-operative Hall, Bradford; and Co-operative Hall, St. Helens, amongst others.¹²⁹ In the decades that followed, approximately a couple of dozen retail Societies established cinemas to help cater for the leisure needs of their members, and to add substantially to their revenue accounts.¹³⁰

Wartime and Postwar Developments

The war years brought substantial challenges for the Co-operative Movement and significant issues such as food supply and control, and the participation of Co-operators in politics, occupied the Movement across those years.¹³¹ In such conditions, further development in film work was unlikely, although the shooting of CWS factories, a film lecture service, and local cinema activities did continue. New subjects added to the cinema lecture programme included 'Sugar and Spice, and What the CWS is Doing to Provide All That's Nice', which seemingly included scenes of the CWS jam and marmalade factories, tobacco factories, and cake and biscuit factory.¹³² At least on one occasion a war subject was obtained and screened amongst the Co-operative and general films,¹³³ and many Societies made efforts to entertain wounded troops for which illustrated lectures and entertainments were provided.¹³⁴ Official films made available under a lecture service sponsored by the National War Lecture Committee were advertised to Co-operative Societies, and no doubt some Co-ops availed themselves of the opportunity.¹³⁵ The practice of hiring local picture halls continued, with the Lowestoft Society following-up its innovative arrangements with the local Picture Palace in 1914 with two children's entertainments held over Easter 1915 at that venue, where over 2,000 youngsters enjoyed a cinema entertainment, including CWS films.¹³⁶ The Penzance Society embarked on what it considered "a bold venture", when it hired the local Picture Drome to screen CWS films to members in an effort to improve loyalty to CWS productions.¹³⁷ While, in the summer of 1917, 800 children of Plymouth Co-operators enjoyed a morning film show at the Premier Picture Palace. A special feature of the treat was the presentation of a film descriptive of the operations of the Devon Society. The children were also filmed upon leaving the cinema for inclusion in future pictures.¹³⁸

Despite difficult circumstances and restrictions, the Movement was clearly able to maintain some film activities during the War, though no obvious advances were made. The advantages that cinema offered the Movement continued to be discussed, and it is entirely possible that opinion leaders within the Movement had their

appreciation of cinema and propaganda sharpened during the war due to the intensification of government activity with regard to film propaganda, and the tremendous exposure that official films like *Battle of the Somme* (1916) achieved.¹³⁹ At a conference in Derbyshire in 1917, the problems the Movement was confronting in wartime were discussed, and in particular the contemporary requirements of propaganda, education and advertising. In a wide-ranging discussion, the cinema was proposed "as a great help to education".¹⁴⁰ The debate continued and intensified after the war, and, in apparent emulation of the successful scheme of cinema propaganda organised by the Government, a centralised approach to film work was advocated in the form of a Co-operative "film producing agency":

[The] films could be of an educational character portraying what is possible under democratic conditions as compared to the conditions prevailing today. These films could be distributed to local societies week by week, especially where societies have halls adaptable to the purpose.¹⁴¹

A more detailed proposal was laid out in *The Co-operative News* the following year, when it was argued that the Co-operative Movement should have "the strongest possible interest in the cinema world". The need for centralised co-ordination was again stressed, and that should be provided by the CWS, which should be equipped with a central film-producing department. Great store was put on the possession of cinemas and it was strongly urged that:

Every society in Britain should certainly possess its own movie-house for the pleasure, profit, and education of its members ... If our Movement is alive to its opportunities we shall be able, by the aid of our local cinema-houses, to carry out splendid propaganda work for Co-operation. The time to do it all is now. The need was never more urgent than it is at present. We possess both the capital and the people to make our scheme a splendid success. Let us take our courage in both hands and start building our flicker palaces at once.¹⁴²

The full measure of the recommendation would never come into being, although a small number of Societies in the 1920s did acquire picture houses of a grander nature than hitherto, to operate on a commercial basis. In 1922, the citizens of Dewsbury were introduced to 'Pioneer Pictures' by the local Co-operative Society. The Pioneer Cinema

boasted an ornate auditorium seating 1,400, a two-manual organ and a full orchestra.¹⁴³ A year later, the Ripley Society purchased the Victory Theatre, a combined cinema, cafe and dance hall, with additional assembly and billiard rooms, and began to offer an extensive range of leisure facilities for the membership and community.¹⁴⁴ Towards the end of the decade the Scunthorpe and Horbury Societies were operating successful commercial cinemas with the latter's premises, put up in 1930, claiming to be the first purpose-built Co-operative cinema, following many years provision in the Co-op Hall.¹⁴⁵

Certain measures were attempted in the post-war period which were reflective of the concern for a more centralised film strategy. Importantly, the Co-operative Union made its first venture into cinema work when it was announced at Co-operative Congress in 1921 that the Central Education Committee of the Union was preparing estimates on a film representative of the history of the Co-operative Movement. The actual source materials for the proposed film were two narratives that had been specially prepared for children: *Sunnyside* and *Our Story*. The production was predicated on the support of local Societies who were asked to make provisional bookings for the proposed film.¹⁴⁶ The response from Societies was reported as "inadequate to justify the committee in proceeding with the preparation of the film", and a further call for support was issued.¹⁴⁷ Some of the deficiencies in the scheme had emerged in the initial debate regarding the film at Congress. Delegates had pointed out that relatively few Societies possessed the independent means to show the film, and that commercial exhibitors could not be expected to book the film unless it offered certain production values.¹⁴⁸ By the time of the next Congress direct financial commitment by local Societies for the project had not increased and the proposed 'Co-operative Film' production was postponed, with the announcement that:

The present financial position of the Union and of educational committees of societies would not permit of the expenditure of the initial outlay in the preparation of this film. We are of the opinion a film of this character would be of great service to the Movement for propaganda purposes, and we trust that when the time is opportune societies will give sufficient support to enable us to go forward with this project.¹⁴⁹

Despite the optimistic forecast the Union would never undertake a proposed historical film. In its educational work the Union would remain tied to a reliance on written texts

and would rarely be drawn into investment in film to further its educational aims. The lack of active support from member Societies on this occasion - a commitment that the Co-operative Union deemed necessary to progress the expensive work of film production - would prove a continual stumbling block to the federal body as it re-visited the potential of cinema in future decades.¹⁵⁰

The national Co-operative organisations that did possess the independent financial resources to invest in film work were the Wholesale Societies, and both the CWS and SCWS maintained their cinema-lecture services following the war. In a review of the work of the CWS lecture department it was concluded that, "Lectures to members are now being considered by some societies as essential features of the Co-operative organisation - like dividend and share capital".¹⁵¹ Moreover, the traditional lecture season, which occupied the autumn and winter months of each year, was being extended into the summer as demands were made on lecturers to attend open-air propaganda meetings at Co-operative galas and demonstrations. For the 1923 season, it was estimated that the three lecturers attached to the CWS Manchester department contributed to 381 meetings attended by 115,000 people. In addition, the CWS Newcastle department delivered 129 lectures to an audience of 10,250.¹⁵² New lecture subjects illustrated with cinema films, which made their appearance after the war, included 'The CWS at Home and Abroad', 'Production For Use' and 'The Orchards and Preserve Works of the CWS'.¹⁵³ The CWS lecture provision was clearly a flexible service and could be called upon to participate in quite novel ventures, as was the case when a Lancashire Society organised a trade push in the autumn of 1922:

Burnley residents will next week have a special treat in the form of a free cinema show. This is to be given at the central premises. Pictures showing the process of flour milling will be thrown on the window of the furnishing department ... and the general public will be able to enjoy an interesting film from the street.

The activity was repeated over five days, and CWS projectionist/lecturer, F.C. Crowther, was also called upon:

To give a lecture on the CWS flour mills, and with the object of encouraging members to give the CWS flour, which is exclusively used in the society's bakery, a fair trial.¹⁵⁴

A significant development in Co-operative film production was realised in 1921, when the newly formed National Joint Committee for Co-operative Capital embarked on a programme of propaganda and adopted "a novel and attractive scheme of educational cinema films". The experience of the CWS cinema-lecture service evidently inspired the scheme of 'Pictorial Propaganda' that emerged, and the existing provision was saluted in having "demonstrated the value of first-class films in attracting audiences and in securing their interested attention when they have been assembled". The films dealing with capital propaganda were to be financed by the Committee, with local Societies required to meet the cost of their exhibition at local cinemas:

The great advantage of the scheme is that through the medium of moving pictures the gospel of Co-operation will be prominently brought before the unconverted. The local distributive society's name will appear on the film, thus affording a splendid advertisement for the particular store in the district where the pictures are exhibited.

The films were promised to be of an "high-class character" and suitable for inclusion in the main cinema programme. Six titles were proposed: *Money in the Wrong Place*; *Manufacturing Goods for Use, not for Making Profit*; *Marrying Money*; *Clothing a Statue*; *The Penny: What Can be Done With It?*; and *Economic Power: The Power of Possession*. According to one commentator:

The project appear[ed] to offer a unique method of spreading Co-operative principles and advertising local Co-operative activities. The committee's enterprise should receive the complete support of the societies in order that the scheme may be carried out in its entirety, and the full advantage obtained from this valuable form of pictorial propaganda.¹⁵⁵

The films were ready for exhibition in September 1921, and the scheme of film propaganda incorporated some significant innovations. The most striking feature was the adoption of narrative form, which, it was judged, would increase their appeal to general audiences. To facilitate the films' acceptance in the cinema programme, each title was short and not overloaded with facts. The patience of the cinema patron was not to be tested and it was deemed "essential that they should not be wearied by too big a dose of co-operation at one sitting".¹⁵⁶

The success of the scheme, while not totally dependent on the support of local

Societies (the films were produced independent of local commitment, unlike the prior case of the Co-operative Union in the early 1920s), did rely on their involvement for local exhibition. It was estimated that 400 Societies were required to participate for the level of charges to be incurred by the retail Society to be reasonable, although a lower limit of fifty Societies was feasible.¹⁵⁷ Reports of local screenings were not forthcoming and it must be concluded that take-up by distributive Societies was limited. It was, seemingly, the case, once again, that many local Co-operative Societies were unwilling to appropriate a certain level of funding for cinema work at that time. Future strategies regarding the central co-ordination of Co-operative film work would have to be cognizant with that attitude if they were to prove effective. The capital propaganda films apparently did make an appearance though at a special CWS film display presented at the Wembley Exhibition of 1925. They were part of a programme that included conventional CWS subjects like the Sun Mills, the Middleton jam works and the Yarmouth canning works, screened for visitors at a special picture palace erected in the Palace of Industry.¹⁵⁸

The Further Development of Local Film Propaganda

Several films depicting manufacturing, trading and cultural activities undertaken by Co-operative Societies in the period survive, testifying to a measure of film activity at the local level (NCFC 004, NCFC 005). The most important of those Societies was the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society (RACS), whose film work and propaganda would prove highly influential on the whole of the Movement. Instrumental in the development of cinema activities at the RACS was Joseph Reeves who was appointed education secretary for the Society in 1918.¹⁵⁹ Early in 1920, the Education Committee had purchased a De Vry Portable Cinematograph Projector and offered to screen educational, CWS and entertainment films for local Co-operative guilds and trade union branches.¹⁶⁰ Within a few weeks educational film shows were a regular activity of the Committee and Joe Reeves often provided the accompanying lecture.¹⁶¹ A survey of these initial film lectures reported that "the message of co-operation has been delivered in an entirely new and interesting fashion"¹⁶²; while a *Quarterly Report of the*

Educational Committee was compelled "to state that the portable cinematograph recently purchased by [the Committee] has proved entirely satisfactory".¹⁶³

A new set of films were purchased for the projector at the beginning of the New Year, 1921.¹⁶⁴ Also that year, the Society began to organise Saturday morning 'Kinema Shows for Children', which were screened in the Co-operative Institute, Parsons Hill, specially for the children of members.¹⁶⁵ That was the start of a long-term practice of supporting children's film shows, which were designed to combat the deleterious effects of conventional commercial cinema programmes. A full two hours performance offered selective entertainment films (in the inaugural season the emphasis was on literary adaptations such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Pickwick Papers* and *Vanity Fair*) and educational pictures.¹⁶⁶ In the summer of 1922, the Society's ability to continue with the exhibition of the 'better-class film' was curtailed when the supply of suitable titles on non-flam film stock, which was required for use in the Co-operative Institute, dried-up. The Education Committee announced itself desirous of securing a properly licensed hall in which all film stocks could be utilized and sought the Society's support.¹⁶⁷ That provision was not finally available until after the granting of a cinematograph licence by the London County Council for the Society's new hall in Tooting, late in 1925.¹⁶⁸ The hall, situated above an impressive departmental store, had seating for 500, and a cinema display followed the grand opening of the premises in 1926.¹⁶⁹ Saturday morning picture shows were quickly re-instated on the Society's educational agenda and offered at the Tooting premises. Members were urged to support the provision, which was reported as being a substantial financial drain on the Committee, the children only being charged 2d.¹⁷⁰ The stated purpose of the film shows was "to counteract the harmful effect of the ordinary film by presenting to children a clean type of programme".¹⁷¹ Accordingly, parents were advised to "Send Your Children to see Clean Pictures"¹⁷², and were "assured that the Films displayed [would] educate as well as interest and amuse the Children", and that the shows had the full support of the Education Department of the London County Council.¹⁷³ The Society's campaign to 'Popularise Clean Films' met with only partial success as it was reported that "the children [had] not been sufficiently educated as yet in appreciating educational and semi-educational films", which presumably meant that attendances were poor.¹⁷⁴ The

Committee was forced into reassuring their prospective patrons against "any fear that the displays might be used for propagandist or avowedly educational purposes", and trumped up the populist charms of featured stars such as Tom Mix and Mabel Normand, and animated characters like Felix the Cat. On analysis, though, the actual balance of the programme remained unaltered, only the manner of its presentation and promotion being re-drawn.¹⁷⁵ The children's film shows were discontinued later in the decade when the arrival of sound required a substantial investment in new equipment which the Society decided not to meet.¹⁷⁶

The Education Committee of the RACS was also innovative in the area of film production. Joe Reeves was one of the earliest advocates of 'scientific advertising' to bring nearer the realisation of the Co-operative Commonwealth, and was quite expansive in his consideration of the means to bring forth the ideal:

He would appeal to people through all legitimate agencies to see the value of Co-operation - through the capitalist press, by posters and show cards, by electric sign and tram ticket, by suggestion and direct appeal, by press notices and by the printers. He would have the Co-operative message on the breakfast table with the morning paper; he would have it on the cinematograph screen.¹⁷⁷

Reeves had sufficient faith in the medium of film as an element in modern 'scientific advertising' to press for the Committee's support of a programme of film commissions. The first film was, seemingly, a record of the operations of the Society's model bakery at Brixton in 1920 [NCFC 003], supplied by Gaumont, but mention of which, surprisingly, does not appear in the Society's literature. The first report appeared early in 1921, when it was announced that "the General Committee [had] arranged to prepare a 2,000 feet film of the operations of the Society".¹⁷⁸ The budget appears to have been improved, for when a film was announced later in the year it was stated as being 4,000 feet in length.¹⁷⁹ The film offered a record of RACS's trading and cultural operations, including the bakery, education centre at Shornells and employee sports,¹⁸⁰ and was reported as being enjoyed by big audiences in districts covered by the Society, such as Peckham, Wimbledon, Bexley Heath and Woolwich.¹⁸¹ Attempts were also made to put the film before trade union branches and Labour clubs, "so as to give them an opportunity of showing their members the little known departments of a retail Co-

operative organisation".¹⁸² A further film detailing the varied ramifications of the Society was commissioned from Gaumont in 1922 [NCFC 006], and the RACS films were widely screened across the trading area of the Society as part of the general strategy of Co-operative education and propaganda. Importantly, they were screened at the inaugural programme of the Co-operative Hall, Tooting when it opened its doors to the membership in the summer of 1926.

A growing number of retail Co-operative Societies began to experiment with cinema in the 1920s and local film production continued to develop. Typically, the subjects were 'record' films of Society events and activities and no doubt performed a useful function in informing current members and propagandising potential members [NCFC 007, NCFC 010]. Some film work demonstrated a degree of innovation and far-sightedness; for example, in 1923, the publicity manager of the Manchester and Salford Society, Charles Smethurst, arranged for a short two minute film to tour local cinema houses in the Manchester area. Interestingly, the film contained narrative sequences dispersed amongst more conventional shots of Society premises and ended with an exhortation to join the Society: "Money waiting for someone. Be wise! Join the nearest "M & S" Store to your home, and take your place in this Capital Queue".¹⁸³

Co-operators had demonstrated remarkable prescience and faith in bringing the cinema to the aid of the Movement. Throughout its first few decades, moving pictures had been integrated into Co-operative education and publicity, and the Movement became a major industrial user of film. It had proved itself far in advance of other wings of the Labour Movement, and the trade unions and Labour Party had barely begun to appreciate the potential of cinema for propaganda and promotion. Film had quickly become adopted into the Movement's established lantern lecture provision, and for many Societies film shows were regular events that attracted members to meetings where they were informed about the Movement's trade, history and ideals. The Movement's journals regularly carried news and debate on cinema and a quite sophisticated dialogue emerged regarding good practice and aimed to encourage the further take-up of cinema work. Thought was also being given to the best uses film might be put to promote Co-operation, and in particular how the Movement's

educationalists might be best served by the technology of moving pictures. As the next chapter documents, film's role in Co-operative education was a dominant issue for discussion and practice in the following couple of decades and significantly impacted on the new structures and strategies which emerged around cinema in the pre-World War Two decade. As early as 1908, Co-operative educationalists had staked a claim for cinema as a powerful tool to aid their role and they were concerned that traders and publicists would be granted the lion's share of resources for cinema work. That contest would inform the arrangements and policies regarding film in the Movement for several decades to come, but had particularly powerful consequences for Labour cinema in the year's leading up to World War Two.

NOTES - Chapter 3

1. The following studies have been influential: Burch, N., *Life to those Shadows* (London: BFI, 1990); Elsaesser, T., (ed), *Early Cinema. Space: Frame: Narrative* (London: BFI: 1990); Salt, B., *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis* (London: Starword, 2nd Edn., 1992); and Bordwell, D., Staiger, J. and Thompson, K., *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (London: Routledge, 1985). Historians usually treat early cinema as that period up to 1908, that is before the arrival of American film director D. W. Griffith. This chronological structuring is explicit to John Fell's anthology *Film Before Griffith* (Berkeley: University of California, 1983).
2. Chanan, M., *The Dream that Kicks: The Prehistory and Early Years of Cinema in Britain* (London: RKP, 1980); Barnes, J., *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England, 1894-1901*, 5 vols (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1996-97). A commendable broader view has been taken by Rachel Low in her monumental history of the British film before 1939. The first three volumes covering the period up to 1918 even allows for a separate treatment of the factual film, yet interestingly, the subject is not taken up again until the period of 1930s, when, under the influence of John Grierson, the non-fiction film is conventionally thought to have reached its 'golden age'. The seven volumes, originally published between 1948 and 1985, have been republished as a set by Routledge (London: 1997).
3. An extremely detailed chronology of the cinema 1889-1896 is presented in *Film History: An International Journal* (Summer 1995).
4. The magic lantern and the educational discourse awaits its historian. Information presented here is taken from a near contemporary source, Waterston, J.A., 'The Optical Magic Lantern As An Aid To Education', *The Optical Lantern and Cinematograph Journal* (February-April 1906): 71-73, 89-91, 107-108. The author states that the London Polytechnic was the pioneer of visual education from the 1880s onwards.
5. *The Optical Lantern and Cinematograph Journal* (November 1904): 1.
6. *The Optical Magic Lantern Journal* (February 1899): 1.
7. *The Optical Lantern and Cinematograph Journal* (November 1906): 18. By 1906, the Great Eastern were even offering films descriptive of their steamer services and the boat express leaving for London.
8. *The Optical Lantern and Cinematograph Journal* (February 1905): 92.
9. *The Optical Magic Lantern Journal* (January 1902): 1; *The Optical Lantern and Cinematograph Journal* (December 1905): 43.
10. *The Optical Lantern and Cinematograph Journal* (May 1905): 147. See also, *The Optical Lantern and Cinematograph Journal* (November 1906): 27. The most acclaimed advertisement for Pear's soap used the painting *Bubbles* by the eminent Victorian artist J.E. Millais.
11. *The Optical Lantern and Kinematograph Journal* (September 1906): 212.
12. *The Optical Lantern and Cinematograph Journal* (June 1905): 175.
13. Hollins, T.J., *The Presentation of Politics: The Place of Party Publicity, Broadcasting and Film in British Politics, 1918-39* (Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Leeds, 1981); Hogenkamp, B., *Deadly Parallels: Film and the Left in Britain, 1929-39* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1986); and Jones, S.G., *The British Labour Movement and Film, 1918-1939* (London: RKP, 1987). Only Hogenkamp gives a partial treatment to the visual propaganda of the lantern in this period: 13-17.
14. Hogenkamp: 14. A handbill for the lecture (1896) is presented on page 15. Whiffly Puncto provided a lantern show for the Manchester and Salford Co-operative Society early in the new century, his subject being 'Newspaper Art and Artists', during which he included views of the departments of the Co-operative Newspaper Society. See, *The Co-operative News* (20 January 1900): 71. Puncto was no doubt widely booked by Co-operative Societies.
15. *The Optical Magic Lantern Journal* (April 1903): 72. Prior to his candidature, Crooks had participated in events sponsored by the Education Committee of the Royal Arsenal Co-operative

- Society. See, Attfield, J.M., *With Light of Knowledge. A Hundred Years of Education in the RACS, 1877-1977* (London: RACS and Journeyman Press, 1981): 24, 26.
16. *The Optical Lantern and Cinematograph Journal* (December 1905): 49.
 17. *Ibid.*: 68.
 18. *Ibid.*: 78. This practice seemingly continued for some years, and local Co-operative Societies were not ignorant to its advantages, as is apparent from the following report of the Liverpool 'At Home Week', 1924:

Liverpool Society created quite a sensation by showing the election results outside of Walton-Road premises. Thousands of people congregated, and slides of co-operative shops, departments, and factories, and other matters relating to the society, along with CWS slides and films, were exhibited. The society scored a distinct success in creating public opinion that the society is up-to-date.
 19. 'How Publicity Pays', *The Co-operative News* (20 December 1924): 7.
 20. Pyne, F., 'Living Pictures and Politics', *The Optical Lantern and Cinematograph Journal* (March 1905): 104.
 21. *Ibid.*: 167
 22. 'Picture Politics', *The Optical Lantern and Cinematograph Journal* (1906): 47.
 23. *Ibid.*; *The Optical Lantern and Cinematograph Journal* (December 1905): 41.
 24. *The Optical Lantern and Cinematograph Journal* (December 1905): 41, 49. The latter item also reported that several animated cartoons were in the possession of The Primrose League.
 25. *The Co-operative News* (1 April 1905): 394. Here, the film was used to point out the comparison between the factory system of industrial capitalism and the favourable conditions offered workers by Co-operation.
 26. *Ibid.*: 50.
 27. *The Optical Lantern and Kinematograph Journal* (October 1906): 238. The information is taken from an advertisement reproduced on that page.
 28. On nineteenth century recordings and presentations of the *Passion Play*, see, Musser, C., *The Emergence of Cinema. The American Screen to 1907* (New York: Scribner's, 1990): 208-221.
 29. *The Optical Lantern and Kinematograph Journal* (December 1906): 52.
 30. *The Optical Magic Lantern Journal* (October 1902): 3.; *The Optical Lantern and Kinematograph Journal* (September 1906): 215.
 31. Magnanie, L., 'An Event in the Culture of Co-operation: National Co-operative Festivals at Crystal Palace' in Yeo, S. (ed), *New Views of Co-operation* (London: Routledge, 1988). An attempt to revive the spirit of the Festival was pursued by the metropolitan Societies in the 1920s, see, 'Crystal Palace Festival Revived', *The Co-operative News* (23 July 1921): 5.
 32. *Ibid.*: 179. The programme for the 1896 Festival is reproduced in *The Co-operative News* (15 August 1896): 860, and interestingly, Edison's phonograph was listed as a special attraction.
 33. *The Co-operative News* (29 August 1896): 898.
 34. Brown, W.H., 'Ocular Demonstration to Point the Practice of Co-operation', *The Co-operative News* (31 October 1896): 1152.
 35. *Ibid.* The CWS participated in 467 exhibitions between 1900 and 1915, Redfern, P., *The New History of the CWS* (Manchester: CWS, 1938): 430.
 36. *The Co-operative News* (17 October 1896): 1106. The source of these slides is unspecified.
 37. *The Co-operative News* (5 December 1896): 1287.
 38. *The Co-operative News* (24 October 1896): 1123.
 39. *The Co-operative News* (28 November 1896): 1245.
 40. *The Co-operative News* (9 January 1897): 45.
 41. *The Co-operative News* (20 February 1897): 179.
 42. *The Co-operative News* (22 January 1898): 110.
 43. Holden, H., 'Magic Lanterns Publicised CWS Productions', *The Producer* (April 1960): 33-34.
 44. *The Wheatshaf* (December 1898): 94. Examples of the contemporary illustrations comprising the slide sets are included in the *CWS Annuals* for the period. It was proposed that "[n]ext to

visiting the actual factories and workshops, nothing brings home the existence of the different co-operative productions so well as lantern lectures", *The Co-operative News* (12 August 1899): 890. An interesting article on the visual resources at the disposal of the Movement and a suggested integrated approach to their use can be found in 'A Co-operative Lectureship', *The Co-operative News* (22 March 1902): 335-336.

44. *The Co-operative News* (12 February 1898): 165.
45. *The Co-operative News* (12 November 1898): 1254.
46. *The Co-operative News* (22 October 1898): 1184. I have been unable to determine the actual subject of this narrative series.
47. *The Co-operative News* (1 June 1901): 651. The two adult lectures introduced that year were 'Robert Owen and his Work' and 'London and its People'.
48. *The Co-operative News* (12 January 1901): 56.
49. *The Co-operative News* (1 June 1901): 651.
50. *The Co-operative News* (20 October 1900); 1177; *The Co-operative News* (22 December 1900): 1480.
51. A biographical sketch of Miss Mayo is presented in *The Co-operative News* (10 August 1901): 975. The profession was beginning to take note of female lanternists and was seemingly quite supportive of their technical abilities. See, *The Optical Magic Lantern Journal* (May 1900): 1. Interestingly, from the accounts available, the female lecturers engaged in some of the more politically inspired subjects, as is evident from a report of a lecture presented by Miss Mayo at the Co-operative Hall, Chester-le-Street:

The Lecturer reviewed the conditions under which work in many of our large industries is carried on, showing the many hardships and dangers to which factory and home workers, male and female, are subjected. She condemned the conditions of industrial life which permitted and even encouraged the dark horrors of the sweating system, and the regulation of wages by the poverty of the employed; and quoted verified instances of the abject poverty of the workers under the most favourable circumstances ... The lecture concluded with an earnest appeal to the audience to support the co-operative factories, which were equipped on the most humane and modern methods, and whose work was carried on under trade union conditions as to hours of labour and rate of pay, and who were thus enabled to turn out products of enhanced value.

The Co-operative News (20 October 1900): 1187. This lecture was probably 'The White Slaves of England', which Miss Mayo had delivered to the Huddersfield Society in the winter of 1898 and proved to be a staple subject for several years, *The Co-operative News* (16 December 1898): 1379.

52. A lecture at Burton-on-Trent included over 150 views showing the rise and progress of the Society, *The Co-operative News* (25 February 1899): 185; See also, *The Co-operative News* (17 February 1900): 174, where the lecture was combined with 'living pictures' produced by a Cinematograph. A regional approach was adopted by a lecture compiled in the same year, 'Some Distributive Societies', wherein twenty-one slides illustrated 'The history and present doings of three great distributive societies - Lincoln, Leeds and Dewsbury', *The Co-operative News* (12 August 1899): 890.
53. Jones, S.G., op. cit.: 151. The author draws on the brief details offered in Redfern, P., op. cit., an otherwise indispensable source on the CWS. It is surprising that Redfern should get his details so wrong in 1938 as contemporary articles in the Movement's press provided fairly accurate and more expansive accounts of the early use of film, as we shall see.
54. *The Co-operative News* (26 January 1901): 112. Education Committees were conscious of their responsibilities for the leisure of their members. At a concert sponsored by the New Mills Society, the President proclaimed that:

The object of the society was not only to provide for its members in the way of clothing, food, etc., but also to give them opportunities of spending pleasant and instructive evenings during the winter months.

- He then announced the syllabus compiled by the Education Committee, which included a number of proposed cinematograph entertainments, *The Co-operative News* (2 November 1901): 1325.
55. For the early years of cinema in Britain see: Low, R., and Manvell, R., *The History of the British Film* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1948); and Barnes, J., op.cit.
 56. *The Co-operative News* (6 November 1897): 1244. The entrepreneur advertised for three successive weeks, 6, 13 and 20 November 1897. The Cinematograph was the machine invented in France by the Lumiere brothers and was first used by their British representative Felicien Trewey at the Marlborough Hall, Regent St. on 20 February 1896.
 57. Hogenkamp, op. cit.: 13.
 58. *The Co-operative News* (19 March 1898): 307.
 59. *The Co-operative News* (4 December 1897): 1339.
 60. *The Co-operative News* (23 April 1898): 453.
 61. *The Co-operative News* (24 May 1902): 591.
 62. *The Co-operative News* (18 February 1899): 149.
 63. Ibid. Interestingly, a proportionally high number of reports of film shows in Scotland appear in this early period, and enterprising showmen were finding lucrative business among the Co-operative Societies. Records of shows at the Vale of Leven and at Norton Park can be found in *The Co-operative News* (11 March 1899): 221, (1 April 1899): 324.
 64. *The Co-operative News* (7 October 1899): 1113.
 65. *The Co-operative News* (24 February 1900): 191. A few weeks earlier a series of "good war views" had been shown by magic lantern at the Burton-on-Trent Society, *The Co-operative News* (17 February 1900): 174.
 66. *The Co-operative News* (24 March 1900): 318. For further details on film coverage of the Boer War, see Barnes, J., *Filming the Boer War: 1899* (London: Bishopgate Press, 1992).
 67. *The Co-operative News* (2 March 1901): 235. It is evident that the Co-operative Movement accepted much of the discourse of Monarchy and Imperialism at this time. Characteristically, the standard work on the Labour Movement's relationship to Imperialism does not make consideration of the Co-operative Movement. See, Gupta, P. S., *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement 1914-1964* (London: Macmillan, 1975).
 68. *The Co-operative News* (9 December 1899): 1327. This subject also managed some topicality as the Boer War had broken out only two months earlier in October.
 69. *The Co-operative News* (23 February 1901): 224. It is evident from this that the railway companies speedily adapted their magic lantern lectures to include moving pictures.
 70. An illuminating account of the early film activities of the CWS can be found in *The Co-operative Official* (November 1938): 600-602, which reports a lecture on film publicity given by T.P. Crowther, an important participant in the original work. See also, 'Services Provided by the CWS Film Department', *The Co-operative Education Bulletin* (March 1952): 14-16.
 71. *The Co-operative News* (1 April 1899): 334.
 72. Box, S., 'Britain's First Advertising Films Were Shown in 1899', *The Commercial Film* (March 1936): 6. At the time Box worked for Publicity Films Ltd and was involved in film commissions for the CWS. It is likely that he was supplied with the information by T.P. Crowther. The article is digested in *The Producer* (March 1936): 88. Although Box describes them as advertising films, they are better understood as industrials, concerned as they are with manufacturing processes rather than brand products. He was later to produce the Movement's most famous film, *Men of Rochdale* (1944) [NCFC 104].
The first industrial concerns to draw on moving pictures in Britain are thought to be Mellin's Food, and Nestle and Lever, which sponsored film shows in 1897 and introduced the practice of handing out samples; with possibly the first advertising film being produced for the Rae Brothers in the Autumn of 1898. See, Barnes, J., *The Rise of the Cinema in Britain*: 197; Barnes, J., *Pioneers of the British Film* (London: Bishopgate Press, 1983): 40.
 73. Redfern, op. cit. A line also taken by Holden, op. cit.: 33; and stated in 'From magic lantern to modern talkie', *The Producer* (September 1944): 2. Jones does not acknowledge an alleged 'single exception', while Redfern fails to indicate its subject.

74. *The Co-operative Official*, (November 1938): 601.
75. *The Co-operative News* (15 December 1900): 1440. The event is not presented in any way as novel and as such was, seemingly, a fairly typical occurrence. The combination of lantern slides and moving pictures was a regular practice until the 1920s and, indeed, the lantern slide made an apparent return to popularity with Education Committees in the late 1920s, see, Thompson, T., 'The Lantern Slide', *The Co-operative News* (29 June 1929): 9. A report of the following year details a different selection of films with views of employees leaving the Irlam soap works and the London tea works, *The Co-operative News* (21 December 1901): 1544. The inspiration for these subjects is evident and they were quite conventional scenes in early cinema. For the first announcement of the new CWS lecture service including films, see *The Wheatsheaf* (February 1902): 114.
76. *The Co-operative News* (6 April 1901): 408.
77. Box, S., op. cit.; *The Co-operative Official*, (November 1938); Holden, H. op. cit.: 33-34.
78. Box, *ibid.* It was proudly claimed that these early Co-op film shows introduced many people, particularly in the north of England, to moving pictures.
79. *Ibid.*
80. *The Co-operative Official*, (November 1938): 602.
81. *The Co-operative News* (20 December 1902): 1506.
82. *The Co-operative News* (3 January 1903): 28. See also, *The Scottish Co-operator* (23 January 1903): 77, for a report of an early SCWS film show at Johnstone. A Mr Hunter was regularly named as the operator of the projector.
83. *The Scottish Co-operator* (12 May 1905): 442.
84. 'SCWS Bioscope', *The Scottish Co-operator* (14 December 1906): 1210. The SCWS machine began to be referred to as the Royal Bioscope around 1904. The adoption of a majestic or imperial title to suggest the grandeur of a particular model was typical, as in Butcher's 'Empire Kinematograph' and W.F. Jury's 'Imperial Bioscope'. The illustrated song (and hymn) was a popular component of lantern shows and short films were readily put to that service. See, *The Optical Lantern and Kinematograph Journal* (November 1905): 27. The practice was also a feature at some Co-op film shows in England, such as at Salisbury in January 1908, when upwards of 1,000 children enjoyed illustrated songs, *The Co-operative News* (8 February 1908): 145.
85. *The Scottish Co-operator* (14 December 1906): 1210. Initially, the organisers of the service were disappointed at the lack of response from eastern Societies. Some Scottish Societies also owned a projector, as was the case with Stirling Co-operative Society, *The Scottish Co-operator* (11 January 1907): 43.
86. 'The Cinematograph as Educator. A Use for the SCWS Bioscope', *The Co-operative News - Educational Supplement*, (3 October 1908): 50.
87. *The Co-operative News - Educational Supplement* (5 September 1908): 47.
88. *The Co-operative News* (31 March 1906): 357.
89. 'Some Co-operative Societies and their Educational Work. II. Eccles Provident Industrial Society', *The Co-operative News* (30 November 1907): 12.
90. *The Co-operative News - Educational Supplement* (8 August 1908): 34.
91. *The Co-operative News* (4 July 1908): 831. The Union's recommendation attracted some comment, and it was pointed out that the cost of providing cinematograph exhibitions was prohibitive on small Societies. A correspondent to the Co-op press suggested collaboration by groups of local Societies to share the expenses. See, *The Co-operative News* (11 July 1908): 858.
92. 'The Cinematograph as Educator', op. cit.
93. See, for example, the cinematograph entertainment mounted by the CWS at Worcester in 1908, *The Co-operative News* (29 February 1908): 260.
94. Benoit-Levy, J., 'The Cinematograph as a Means of Education', *The Co-operative News - Educational Supplement* (5 September 1908): 47. The intervention of a M. Benoit-Levy in this debate is particularly interesting, as it may be the future realist filmmaker of international reputation. It is not apparent what connection the Frenchman had with the Co-operative

- Movement, although he clearly felt a concern for wider issues of social progress as is evidenced by his own film-making decades later in such films as *La Maternelle* (1933), with its call for state nursery education. The author was only twenty years old when he wrote this article for the *Co-op News* and it represents a remarkably early contribution to the literature on the social potential of cinema, by a future film-maker who would be a contemporary of Epstein and Vigo.
95. Ibid. It is interesting to note the evocation of retailing terminology here, wherein the 'good shop' of the Co-operative Movement drives out the exploitative system of the 'bad' purveyor. A suspicion of the improper moral influence of picture palaces abounded in Co-operative educational circles, although cinema's potential as a useful educational medium was usually conceded. A lecturer at Rochdale in 1912 felt that "[s]ome of the pictures and other entertainments of today were of anything but an elevating character and were doing more to undermine education than anything else he knew of", 'Education and Amusement', *The Co-operative News* (6 April 1912): 430.
96. The author's suggestion of a suitable scenario is worth quoting at length:
 A dirty room in which a young girl, exhausted at the sewing machine, is making by lamplight, a bundle of cheap dresses, which she throws on the bed of her mother, whom one can see is growing visibly thinner, the face having become emaciated, the whole frail form shaking with the effects of coughing. Then the girl could be shown delivering the cheap dresses to the traders, who refuse a part of the wages on the ground that the work is faulty. Afterwards, the shops could be shown, where fashionable ladies buy these dresses, which are sold very cheaply under the title of "bonnes occasions". And later one of the buyers could be shown lying in bed in a rich apartment, suffering from tuberculosis, which she has contracted by wearing the dress made in the slums, and sold as "bonne occasion". Last, there might be the picture of the unfortunate workwoman, who quite feeble, has fallen upon her sewing machine. Benoit-Levy, J., op.cit.
- Benoit-Levy's scenario is interesting as an example of social urban realism, which was becoming conventionalised across the arts by 1908, especially in America with such authors as Upton Sinclair and dramatists like Edward Sheldon. In the month following Benoit-Levy's article, D.W. Griffith, only four months into his directorial career, began filming *Song of the Shirt*, which bore remarkable resemblance to the Frenchman's storyline. See, Simmon, S., *The Films of D.W. Griffith* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993): 31-36.
97. Benoit-Levy, J., op. cit. By following such a scenario with images of the healthy conditions prevailing in Co-operative factories, the presentation would establish what Bert Hogenkamp has discerned as a 'deadly parallel': the cruel, inhumane and exploitative sweating system operated by Capitalism, juxtaposed with the wholesome, fair and just work practices of Co-operation. See, Hogenkamp, B., op. cit.: 16-17. The strategy was already well-established in the Movement's lantern presentations and was a feature of such lectures as: 'Aims and Benefits of Co-operation', *The Co-operative News* (9 May 1903): 533; 'The Present Position of the Co-operative Movement' *The Co-operative News* (6 December 1902): 1475; and 'The White Slaves of England' *The Optical Magic Lantern Journal* (March 1903): 60. In a lecture at Rawdon in 1909, it was explained that the letters CWS also meant "Cheapness Without Sweating", *The Co-operative News* (6 March 1909): 269.
98. Clegg, T., 'The Cinematograph as a Means of Education', *The Co-operative News - Educational Supplement* (3 October 1908): 52-53. Thomas Clegg was a representative of the Charles Urban Company, which specialised in educational motion pictures. See details of his appointment at Urban in *The Optical Lantern and Kinematograph Journal* (1906): 230. In his letter he claimed to be descended from a Co-op pioneer, and it is possible his father was Isaac Clegg who joined the Rochdale Equitable Society in 1844. See, Cole, G.D.H., *A Century of Co-operation* (Manchester: Co-op Union, 1944): 408.
99. 'The Cinema. Should It be Used for Co-operative Purposes?', *The Co-operative News* (28

- February 1914): 268.
100. 'Co-operators and the Cinema', *The Co-operative News* (21 March 1914): 358. Emphasis in the original.
 101. *The Co-operative News* (23 March 1907): 369; *The Co-operative News* (6 April 1907): 429. The lecture was presented by Mr Ciappessoni, a CWS director, who had recently returned from a business trip to Ceylon, overseeing the Society's tea estates. He had seemingly been accompanied by a cinematographer who secured "many really beautiful and original views".
 102. *The Co-operative News* (9 December 1911): 1568.
 103. *The Co-operative News* (15 March 1913): 348. The scenes depicted included wheat fields in Canada, the original source of the grain.
 104. *The Co-operative News* (11 October 1913): 1364.
 105. *The Co-operative News* (25 October 1913): 1421.
 106. *The Co-operative News* (21 November 1914): 1418. From the brief account, it is apparent that the scenes depicted were only of the manufacture of jam, and would likely have been secured at the CWS Middleton Jam Factory. Films of the Movement's ships were also taken, see, *The Co-operative News* (21 January 1905): 77.
 107. 'Educational Work at Bolton', *The Co-operative News* (10 January 1914): 41.
 108. *The Co-operative News* (24 February 1912): 226. A series of CWS lantern lectures promoting soap and allied products, given in Alcester in 1910, led to an increase in sales of 400 per cent, *The Co-operative News* (25 March 1911): 378.
 109. For the Women's Co-operative Guild, see, *The Co-operative News* (10 April 1909): 462; for CWS employees, see, *The Co-operative News* (19 March 1910): 375, (14 February 1914): 223; for the children's gala, see, *The Co-operative News* (9 September 1911): 1159.
 110. 'A Plea For The Cinematograph', *The Co-operative News* (26 October 1912): 1339. The letter was prompted by a dissatisfaction in the quality and effectiveness of the Movement's lantern slides.
 111. 'Wake Up, CWS', *The Co-operative News* (2 November 1912): 1369; 'Cinematograph and the CWS', *The Co-operative News* (30 November 1912): 1503.
 112. *The Scottish Co-operator* (2 January 1903): 19; *The Co-operative News* (3 January 1903): 28.
 113. *The Co-operative News* (25 February 1905): 231.
 114. 'Lowestoft's Enterprise', *The Co-operative News* (1 August 1914): 984.
 115. Gray, R., *Cinemas in Britain. One Hundred Years of Cinema Architecture* (London: Lund Humphries, 1996): 14-21.
 116. *The Co-operative News* (7 December 1907): 1507.
 117. *The Co-operative News* (4 March 1911): 267.
 118. Quoted in Johnson, D., *The Cinemas of South Tyneside* (1992): 57. *Longbow* was a magazine and this entertainment is an interesting early example of a publicity venture tied to a film.
 119. Mellor, G.J., *Picture Pioneers* (Newcastle: F. Graham, 1971): 22.
 120. A typical selection of travel and comedy films is reported for a Hibbert show at Oldham in 1908. See, *The Wheatsheaf*, local pages for the Oldham Industrial Co-operative Society (January 1908): ii-iii.
 121. *The Co-operative News* (1 February 1908): 117.
 122. *The Wheatsheaf*, local pages for the Oldham Industrial Co-operative Society (December 1908): iii-iv. The Franco-British Exhibition was held at the White City throughout the summer of 1908. For details of the CWS exhibit, see, Rockwell, F., 'Co-operators at the Franco-British Exhibition', *The Wheatsheaf* (August 1908): 22-23.
 123. Amey, W.M., *Jubilee History of the Finedon Industrial Co-operative Society. 1868-1918*. (Manchester: CWS, 1918): 27. I would like to thank Alec Harlow for this reference.
 124. Mellor, G.J., op. cit.: 48.
 125. Ibid.: 29. In the 1920s, the hall was converted to a permanent cinema operated by the Society.
 126. Ibid.: 41.
 127. Benoit-Levy, op. cit. In his association of mass communications with democracy, Benoit-Levy was anticipating John Grierson, figure-head of the influential Documentary Film Movement of

- the 1930s.
128. Information supplied by Frank Manders in correspondence to author, 23 June 1993. Advice as to how the 1909 Cinematograph Act would affect Societies in Scotland that proposed to continue with film shows can be found in *The Scottish Co-operator* (31 December 1909): 1124.
 129. Burton, A., 'The People's Cinemas: The Picture Houses of the Co-operative Movement', *Picture House* (Winter 1993/94): 3-13.
 130. For details of the operations of the Billington and Whalley Society and the Belfast Society picture palaces, both early examples, see, 'Picture Palaces. Co-operative Societies Find Them Profitable', *The Co-operative News* (7 August 1915): 1052. Commercial film exhibition was also undertaken at Long Buckby, see, *The Co-operative News* (30 October 1915): 1443; at Cymmer, see, *The Co-operative News* (3 April 1915): 449; at Ripley, see, *The Co-operative News* (21 April 1923): 5; at RACS, see, *The Co-operative News* (28 November 1925): 6; and according to Frank Manders' research: Craghead, Meadowfield, Sherburn Hill and Blaydon, op. cit.
 131. For details of the Movement in the First World War, see, Cole, G.D.H., op. cit.: 264-271.
 132. 'CWS Productions. Lecturing Tour at Leeds', *The Co-operative News* (23 January 1915): 89; 'Co-operative Pictures at Hackney', *The Co-operative News* (3 April 1915): 431; and 'Working Propaganda', *ibid.*: 435.
 133. *The Co-operative News* (6 March 1915): 315. Whether the screening of official war films was a widespread practice is open to doubt as only this single report of topical war films appears in the Movement's press, detailing a lecture at Burton-on-Trent on 'The Soldier of Yesterday and To-day'.
 134. 'A Bullet's Career. CWS Pictures at a Military Hospital', *The Co-operative News* (23 January 1915): 100.
 135. 'Educational Travel Talks' (advertisement), *The Co-operative News* (21 October 1916): 1100. Two lectures were offered by the journalist John Fraser, 'What I Saw in Russia' and 'My Wanderings in the Balkans'. See note 133.
 136. 'Lowestoft Children Entertained', *The Co-operative News* (24 April 1915): 545.
 137. *The Co-operative News* (1 May 1915): 590.
 138. 'Co-operative Children Filmed', *The Co-operative News* (23 June 1917): 616. This is the only record of a local Society film recorded during the War I have been able to locate.
 139. For details of film propaganda in World War One, see, 'Special Issue: Britain and the Cinema in the First World War', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and TV*, 13, 2, (1993).
 140. 'Needs of the Times. Propaganda, Education and Advertising', *The Co-operative News* (5 May 1917): 432.
 141. 'Newspapers and Films', *The Co-operative News* (15 March 1919): 193. The correspondent bemoaned the fact that his Society (Huddersfield) possessed a hall fitted for cinematograph shows, but which was let out to private enterprise for the making of private profits.
 142. Fyfe, R., 'Co-operation and the Cinema. Why not our own Picture Houses as a means to Splendid Propaganda Work?', *The Co-operative News* (17 January 1920): 4.
 143. 'In The Limelight. Co-operative Cinema For Dewsbury', *The Co-operative News* (30 September 1922): 6. For the previous four years the Society's central hall had been leased to a private showman, but it was eventually decided to modernise the facility and for the Society to take over the operation itself.
 144. 'Ripley's Big Purchase', *The Co-operative News* (21 April 1923): 5.
 145. Burton, A., op. cit.: 7-8. In their postwar study of the Movement, the Webbs also identify the following Societies as operating cinema theatres: Walkden, Whalley, Clitheroe, Derby, Grimsby, Shanklin, Lake and Bramstone. Webb, S. and B., *The Consumers Co-operative Movement* (London: Longmans, 1921): 88.
 146. *Co-operative Union Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1921*: 49. *Our Story*, in particular, had proved a hugely successful introductory text for children. By 1911, it had sold 61,000 copies, and was introduced as a penny illustrated edition in that year which ran to 250,000 copies, see, Gurney, P., *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870-1930* (Manchester: MUP, 1996): 127-128. Much educational activity was centred on *Our Story*, which

- provided the focus for educational evenings for children, and coloured lantern slides depicting the historical narrative were specially prepared. See, 'Stockport's Educational Work', *The Co-operative News* (17 October 1908): 1261; *The Co-operative News* (7 January 1911): 27.
147. Wood, C.E., 'Educational Film', *The Co-operative News* (1 October 1921): 9. Wood was secretary to the Educational Committee of the Co-operative Union.
148. *The Co-operative News* (21 May 1921): 7.
149. *Co-operative Union Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1922*: 41. The reference here to financial retrenchment was in connection with the economic difficulties following the war, which hit Co-operative Societies hard.
150. The Union continued to advise Societies of the value of sponsoring film-lectures, see, Hall, F., *Handbook for Members of Co-operative Committees* (Manchester: Co-op Union, 1924 et seq): 342-343.
151. 'The Movement's Missionaries. CWS Lecturers' Work', *The Co-operative News* (17 May 1924): 7. The three CWS lecturers attached to Manchester at that time were F.C. Crowther, F. Alcock and H. Williams.
152. *Ibid.* The data supplied in this article does not indicate how many of the lectures were illustrated by films, although from reports of individual lectures it is evident that films were a regular accompaniment.
153. *The Wheatsheaf*, local pages of the Oldham Industrial Co-operative Society (November 1920): i, and (January 1922): ii; *The Co-operative News* (25 November 1922): 11; *The Co-operative News* (27 January 1923): 6. Stills from a festive CWS film detailing the preparation of Christmas puddings at the Middleton factory are reproduced in *The Wheatsheaf* (December 1926): 184.
154. 'Burnley's Trade Campaign', *The Co-operative News* (28 October 1922): 6.
155. 'Pictorial Propaganda. Capital Raising By The Cinema', *The Co-operative News* (9 April 1921): 5. The CWS Advertising Department were quick to respond that it had been involved in film propaganda for two decades, should the impression be given that the new scheme represented a pioneering venture on behalf of the Movement. It was pointed out that "the committee of the Wholesale [had] long been fully aware of the usefulness of the film as an educational medium and its demonstration in connection with financial propaganda [was] simply a further adaptation to the exigencies of the time". See, 'Pictorial Propaganda', *The Co-operative News* (16 April 1921): 10.
156. 'A Silent Teacher. The New Co-operative Films', *The Co-operative News* (10 September 1921): 9. The scenarios of two of the films, *Money in the Wrong Place* and *Clothing a Statue*, are presented in this article.
157. If 400 Societies accepted bookings, the terms for one film in one picture house for a single week was £3. 15s. The cost rose to £4. 15s if only the lower limit of fifty Societies was attained. The full series of six films for one picture house was rated at £22. 10s (the period being unspecified for this provision). 'Pictorial Propaganda...', *op. cit.*
158. 'CWS Wembley Display', *The Co-operative News* (23 May 1925): 3; 'Wembley and Beyond Wembley', *The Wheatsheaf* (July 1925): 103. A series of films described as "several little domestic dramas each with a co-operative moral" comprised part of the programme, and were presumedly the capital propaganda films from 1921.
159. For an examination of Reeves' influential tenure as education secretary at the RACS, see, Attfield, J., *op. cit.*: 38-59. In the 1920s, Reeves was referred to as the 'livewire' of Co-op educationalists, see, *The Co-operative Productive Review* (May 1929): 279. There is evidence that before 1918, the Society had modestly involved itself in film work, as for instance in the sponsoring of a film show for the inmates of the Woolwich Workhouse in 1916, see, 'How An Education Committee Can Popularise A Society', *The Co-operative News - Supplement* (4 March 1916): v.
160. *Comradeship* (February 1920): 44. An advertisement stating the terms and conditions for the provision of a film show is presented in *Comradeship* (September 1920): 231.
161. *Comradeship* (April 1920): 84, 95.
162. 'Our New Cinematograph', *Comradeship* (May 1920): 106.

163. *Comradeship* (July 1920): 153.
164. *Comradeship* (January 1921): 16.
165. *The Co-operative News* (15 October 1921): 10; *Comradeship* (November 1921): 207.
166. 'Educational Films for Children', *Comradeship* (December 1921): 221; *Comradeship and Wheatsheaf* (January 1922): viii. An advertisement for the Saturday morning film shows appeared in *Comradeship and Wheatsheaf* (March 1922): 1.
167. 'Cinematograph Shows for Children', *Comradeship and Wheatsheaf* (July 1922): vi.
168. *The Co-operative News* (28 November 1925): 6. In the interim period the Society had supported conventional film-lectures held in various halls and premises owned by the Society. See, *Comradeship and Wheatsheaf* (January 1925): v.; 'Co-operative Propaganda at the Amalgamated Engineering Institute', *Comradeship and Wheatsheaf* (February 1925): ii; 'Grand Free Cinema Displays', *Comradeship and Wheatsheaf* (February 1925): xii; 'Education Committee's Programme', *Comradeship and Wheatsheaf* (February 1926): xii. The Society was also host to film propaganda provided by outside organisations. In 1922, members were informed of the terrible famine in Russia through the auspices of a film show offered by the Save the Children Fund. See, 'Russia's Terrible Plight', *The Co-operative News* (25 March 1922): 6. For details of the Fund's campaign and the film, see, 'A Pleading Film', *The Co-operative News* (11 February 1922): 2. The various film campaigns in the West to support the victims of the famine are covered in Cosandy, R., 'Eloquence du Visible. La famine en Russie 1921. Une filmographe documente', *Archives 75/76* (Perpignon: Institute Jean Vigo, June 1988). Through a travel club the Society later established relations with Soviet Russia and tours commenced in 1929.
169. 'Opening of the New Co-operative Hall at Tooting', *Comradeship and Wheatsheaf* (June 1926): xiii. Here, it was reported that the provision represented "another tangible sign of the Society's desire to cater for the social as well as the material needs of the increasing roll of members". Further, it was acknowledged that "the cinema [had] for some years taken a prominent part in the Society's propaganda work".
170. 'The Tooting Hall', *Comradeship and Wheatsheaf* (November 1926): 1.
171. *Comradeship and Wheatsheaf* (January 1927): v.
172. *Comradeship and Wheatsheaf* (February 1927): ix. This item includes the four programmes for that month, which were a carefully chosen balance of worthy entertainment (*Tom Brown's Schooldays* - 5 reels), education (*Construction of a Locomotive*), information (*Eve's Film Review*) and children's entertainment (*Krazy Kat*).
173. 'Cinematograph Pictures for Children' (advertisement), *Comradeship and Wheatsheaf* (October 1927): ix.
174. *Comradeship and Wheatsheaf* (July 1927): viii.
175. 'A Co-operative Cinema', *Comradeship and Wheatsheaf* (October 1927): xviii. For a programme of the new 1927 season, see, *Comradeship and Wheatsheaf* (November 1927): xiv.
176. Reeves, J., *The Film and Education* (NACECS, 1936): 6-7.
177. 'How To Reach The People' [report of an address by Joe Reeves], *The Co-operative News* (5 November 1921): 10.
178. *Comradeship* (January 1921): 16.
179. *Comradeship* (October 1921): 196.
180. 'Lessons By Cinema', *The Co-operative News* (5 November 1921): 10.
181. *Comradeship* (November 1921): 207.
182. *Comradeship and Wheatsheaf* (January 1922): viii.
183. 'Film Flashes', *The Co-operative News* (28 July 1923): 1. The report indicates shots of dividend pay-out, seemingly the first such recorded scenes.

Chapter 4. A Cinema for Social Change: Film and Co-operation, 1927-1945

Films are a part of twentieth century life - Let us do our best to make them a part of our life in the Co-operative Movement, increasing our own Co-operative knowledge, and bringing Co-operation to the notice of other people.

('The Co-operative Film Service. Propaganda Through Pictures', *Co-operative Youth*, October, 1937)

It is hardly surprising that of all the publicity media at the disposal of the modern business concern, the CWS should have chosen the screen as its most powerful means of propaganda. The advertising virtues of the talking film are peculiarly suited to the Co-operative Movement ... a democratic organisation like the CWS with its principles to propagate as well as commodities to sell needs the talking film.

('Advertising and Display. Co-operative Screen Publicity', *The Producer*, January, 1938)

Introduction

The late 1920s and 1930s saw a considerable expansion in cinema work by the Co-operative Movement, a circumstance which paralleled the continued prosperity and vitality of Co-operation in the commercial field. This chapter examines the new initiatives which emerged from proposals to distribute Co-operative films internationally, and the subsequent CWS publicity films that were distributed to an extended audience through commercial cinemas. While accepting that such practice served the interest of the trading wing, Co-operative educationalists sought resources to bring film to support their role. This extended and developed the concerns within the Movement regarding the educational potential of film, which first emerged around 1908, and was introduced in the last chapter. In some important respects the two sides failed to find agreement and this led to a schism and, to a degree, separate structures of provision. This chapter considers that departure in detail and demonstrates how the emerging film plans of the Labour Party and Trade Union Congress were absorbed into the proposals of the Co-op educationalists and a combined film organisation, the Workers' Film Association (WFA) established in 1938, was the result. The collaboration was indicative of a more direct concern with politics, during the period of the Popular Front, by some members of the Co-operative film lobby. Film-making in other areas of the Co-operative Movement, such as the Political Committee of the London Co-operative Society, was also highly

politicised at this time and the ideas and achievements of this important group are considered in relation to other cinema practices across the Co-operative Movement. The London Society film unit, headed by Frank Cox, was also illustrative of progress made with the sub-standard film format, which was itself the subject of debate regarding the most suitable gauge for production. 16mm brought the prospect of film production and exhibition to the less wealthy and technically experienced, and some local Co-operative Societies made significant use of the new format. That experience and achievement with non-professional film is surveyed and considered within the discourses of democracy and localism, two active determinants in Co-operative Society policy and endeavour.

Traditional histories of Labour film in Britain have culminated their surveys in 1939. However, this examination of the Co-operative Movement's cinema work reveals a significant continuation into the wartime period with the activities of the WFA and progressive films sponsored by the two Wholesale Societies. This chapter outlines the wartime film work on the Left and acknowledges its contribution to the articulation of a 'People's War' being fought for democracy and social justice. Wartime social change has been an important theme for contemporary historical enquiry, but so far there has been no detailed account of Labour film's contribution to the bringing about of any social change.

New Horizons and New Opportunities

By the mid-1920s, cinema had become a well-established medium for publicity and propaganda. Film was widely adopted by industrial firms, interest groups, political parties and governments, which sought an advantage in the altered commercial and political circumstances of the post-war world.¹ In Britain, concerns with mass persuasion were galvanised by the extensions in the franchise (1918, 1928), which created, for the first time, a mass electorate. Timothy Hollins has shown how the two leading political parties of the time, the Conservatives and Labour, re-organised their party publicity in line with the demands of the new electorate and the availability of the new technologies of film and broadcasting.² In industry, too, the moving picture

assumed an ever greater presence, and was applied to manufacturing and commerce in a variety of ways: training and instruction, accident prevention, publicity and public relations, and research.³ The connection between trade and movies was becoming widely commented upon, and the commercial success of American industry was readily attributed to the popularity of Hollywood films.⁴ Such concern directly fed the appreciation of cinema as a commercial aid to manufacturers and the industrial use of film expanded accordingly.

In such a positive climate surrounding the commercial and political applications of film, there were calls for the Co-operative Movement to take a more expansive approach to its film work, and there was criticism of the Movement's failure, by and large, to engage whole-heartedly in the commercial activities of the cinema business:

In several towns the first cinematograph displays were given in Co-operative halls, but since then Co-operators have been content to leave this great and profitable business in the hands of individual enterprise, although it is common knowledge that a very large proportion of the people who go to "the pictures" once or twice a week are members of co-operative households. Had Co-operators been more enterprising the money that is paid in admission fees might easily be diverted into co-operative channels.

The quota stipulations attached to the Cinematograph Bill (1927) were proposed as an ideal "opportunity for the Co-operative Movement to get into the picture business", and, furthermore, the action against "second-rate competitors would ensure that the picture-going public were provided with 'good pictures'".⁵

It was reckoned that between 500-600 big Co-operative halls were suitable for conversion into commercial cinemas and that the CWS should commence to manufacture pictures for display in them. That the Movement had a responsibility towards the leisure requirements of its members was a long-standing argument, and the place of the cinema in that provision had emerged as a recommendation before the First World War, and was periodically re-stated:

Are Co-operators content that a very profitable business, which provides amusement for the public, should be in the hands of private traders? Should they not rather look forward to the time when theatres and picture houses alike will be controlled by co-operative organisations?⁶

The advantages offered by other mass media were widely debated, such as the prospects of a national daily Co-operative newspaper and the Movement's participation in broadcasting. In 1929, the Co-operative press acquired *Reynolds News*, a national Sunday newspaper with long-standing democratic credentials, and new journals were launched such as the *Co-operative Review* (1926) and the *Co-operative Educator* (1918).⁷ Film, though, remained central to the prescription for national propaganda, and a Co-operatively organised cinema provision was vigorously promoted as a possible counter-attraction to the contemporary popularity of "the Dirt Track, Greyhound Racing and Wireless Concerts". The old lantern slide method of visual propaganda was declared "as dead as New Zealand mutton" and ambitious plans for Co-operative cinema propaganda were discussed at conferences and laid out in journal articles.⁸ It was suggested that Co-op halls could act as news-reel theatres screening films of topical Co-operative interest; the programme and policy of the Co-operative Party could be presented by film; as could the work of Co-operative officials in government service. There should be films depicting the history of the Movement, in particular the Rochdale Pioneers; film records of the Movement's conferences and congresses would, in the spirit of democracy, bring the arenas of debate before the widest possible audience; and the Movement's productive activities at home and abroad offered innumerable interesting subjects for filming. Such films "could not fail to make the average member politically and Movement conscious in a shorter time than almost anything else", and film was considered to be the best weapon to banish Co-operation's greatest enemy, 'ignorance'.⁹ It was argued that Co-operators should call on the services of the best film artists and equip their own studio to ensure suitable resources for film production. It was soberly put that:

Co-operative studios producing films for every purpose are not a dream. They can be made into a fact as soon as the Movement is prepared to get down to the job.¹⁰

The Movement's propensity for vertical integration was evident in a call for the CWS to engage in the manufacture of film stock, reflective of the ideal of 'Universal Provision' central to the Movement's productive philosophy.¹¹

Unsurprisingly, the full extent of such an ambitious cinema scheme never occupied the Movement's managers, although creditable achievement was realised. The 1930s witnessed a commendable expansion in the Movement's film work, such that it could be argued that "the Movement, retail as well as wholesale, [was] probably the principle film maker and buyer outside the trade itself".¹² Two important stimuli to film work occurred in 1927. Commencing in the spring of that year, a National Propaganda Campaign was inaugurated under the auspices of the Co-operative Union. Initially a week-long activity, it was later extended to a fortnight with the object of improving Co-operative trade and membership.¹³ Coincidental, and of more direct impact on film activity, was the inclusion of a 'Special Conference on Methods of Co-operative Propaganda and Education' at the Twelfth International Co-operative Congress held at Stockholm in August, 1927. Special emphasis was placed on the preparation of films as a valuable aid to propaganda, and international co-operation was sought in the production and distribution of films promoting the Co-operative ideal. A resolution was accepted, which called:

[F]or the promotion of Co-operative film propaganda, the National Organisations who are preparing films should make an effort to prepare them in such a way that they could easily be shown in any country. The ICA should in its publications explain those demands that would have to be observed during the preparation of Co-operative films. The ICA should also proceed to prepare films for the National Organisations as well as to draw up a list of films already prepared by National Organisations.¹⁴

The British Movement had kept itself informed of the various experiments in Co-operative film propaganda that had occurred on the continent, in such regions as Bavaria, Finland and Holland.¹⁵ The recommendations offered at the ICA Congress seemingly had an impact and one authority concluded that:

In the Co-operative Movement the world over there seems now, however, to be growing a clear perception of the remarkable possibilities of portraying on the cinema screen both what had already been accomplished by co-operating consumers and what Co-operation means and intends as a social and economic movement.¹⁶

One film in particular came in for praise in its scope and ambition. *Susie Kerkstraten* was produced for the Reichsverband deutscher Konsumvereine (the National Union of

Consumers' Societies), Germany. The film was recognised as a great advance on the factual films descriptive of Co-operative factories, which had proved the staple of Co-operative film subjects. The narrative approach adopted by the film was seen as serving "the great concrete idea of Co-operation", and in advance of previous films "which, while bearing Co-operative titles, might just as well be about factories under the control of capitalists so far as any teaching of real co-operative spirit is concerned".¹⁷ The film was also notable for introducing to the screen the figures of the Rochdale Pioneers.¹⁸ Concern had been expressed at Stockholm regarding the "tiresome nature of conventional Movement films which laboriously attended to manufacturing and industrial processes". It was judged that:

People get tired of looking at such films. They demand some excitement from the films; development of some story or event, and this, indeed, belongs to the very nature of the film and at the end a powerful climax must be reached, pressing home upon the audience the truth which the film is designed to express. The film writer should thus invent some suitable story, adventure, or idea, which he [sic] pictures on the screen. The old practice of only showing institutions had already outlived its time.¹⁹

The Film Work of the CWS

The English CWS was quite rapid in its adoption of the recommendations, and amidst calls for the preparation of "a really first-class Co-operative film via our Central Institution"²⁰, a new approach to cinema propaganda was unveiled towards the end of 1927. The scheme involved the preparation of films blending narrative and factual sequences for screening in commercial picture houses. Production was handled by Publicity Films Limited, a leading company in the commercial and industrial film sector, with distribution the responsibility of the Co-operative Press Agency. The first film in the series was *The Magic Basket* [NCFC 015] which was released in February 1928 to coincide with the annual National Propaganda Campaign, and appeared at selected cinemas for week-long engagements.²¹ Publicity Films were also engaged to produce a series of industrial films of CWS works for use in the conventional CWS lectures. Overall, it was concluded that:

[The] development [was] one that should prove of great interest to the Movement,

bringing it into line with the most modern advertising methods and pictorial presentations. The productive and distributive side of co-operation will thus be introduced to a large section of the public at present unfamiliar with its great resources.²²

To make the industrial subjects palatable to the general audience, narrative sequences were integrated with the documentary scenes, and that approach was standard for the series of CWS publicity films spanning several years. The productions remained the responsibility of Publicity Films, who had experience with fictional subjects and who could guarantee the 'gloss' deemed necessary to hold the general audience. Film units were dispatched to a host of CWS factories to obtain the necessary industrial scenes - Northampton Boot Works, Irlam Soap Works, Middleton Preserve Works, Avonmouth Flour Mill, Crumpsall Biscuit Works and Radcliffe Weaving Sheds²³ - and gradually there appeared the finished films: *Bubbles* (soap) [NCFC 012], which was first screened at seaside resorts in August, 1928 and later booked into 1,500 picture houses²⁴; *The Cup That Cheers* (tea) [NCFC 013], released in October, 1928²⁵; *Footsteps* (shoes), released March, 1929²⁶; *A Matter of Form* (corsets) [NCFC 018], released August, 1929²⁷; *What The Diary Told* (soap), released November, 1929²⁸; *Work and Play* (CWS Welfare) [NCFC 024] and *The Bright Side of Things* (polishes) [NCFC 020], both released January, 1930²⁹; and *Round The Clock* (biscuits) [NCFC 023] and *The King and the Cakes* (flour) [NCFC 022], both released December, 1930.³⁰ A further film, *Jammy* (preserves), never appeared in the weekly listings of play dates published in *The Co-operative News*, but was available some time late in 1928.³¹

The production and distribution of the new series of films represented a significant investment for the CWS, which single-handedly met the cost of the venture. The professional quality of the films was considered an important factor in their general usefulness, and they were judged, in rather grandiloquent terms, to be:

More than pictures of ordinary work. They tell a story of romance and achievement as wonderful as any turned out from Hollywood or Elstree. It is a story of poor folk's dreams come true; great factories built with small savings and working under the people's control to produce the things they need.³²

The only negative comment to appear in connection with the series related to the short

notice Societies received in terms of local screenings.³³ As well as domestic distribution the films helped to promote the CWS abroad. During the late 1920s, trading relations were established with El Hagar Obrero, an emergent consumers Co-operative Society in Argentina, and to help cement business relations copies of *The Magic Basket* and *Bubbles* were made available to the South American Society.³⁴

The films also became part of the repertoire of the conventional CWS film-lecture service. It was expected that the new titles would "materially assist" the advance that would result from the National Propaganda Campaign, although emphasis was also placed on the "domestic story with a co-operative leaning", which would "prove a substantial aid to retail societies seeking to develop the Co-operative spirit within their membership".³⁵ The cost to a Society was thirty-five shillings, which included the services of a lecturer and operator, with all equipment provided. The films were supplied on non-inflammable stock and so no special arrangements were required with regard to exhibition.³⁶ With respect to the possible trading benefits, efforts were made to arrange promotions around specific films. For instance, in connection with *A Matter of Form*, it was recommended that:

Co-operative drapery managers should arrange for good stocks of Desbeau corsets, in readiness for the demand which this new film will raise. Drapery managers will be advised by the CWS eight or nine days before the film is due to appear in their districts, and they are recommended to make special window displays of Desbeau corsets and show the posters announcing the film in their shops in the neighbourhood of the cinema.³⁷

The CWS Publicity Department also arranged special lectures for employees of retail Societies to familiarise them with the CWS products and their manufacture: a process that aimed to improve salesmanship.³⁸ Other target audiences were sought, and it was queried in the Labour press whether the films might not "be extended to Labour gatherings where some knowledge of co-operative productive activities would be useful, and, as a matter of fact, is needed".³⁹

The Wholesale Societies put much store in the value of trade exhibitions where the public could attend to actual demonstrations of Co-operative manufacturing and a whole range of products could be made available to view. As we have seen, the CWS

had arranged for special film displays at the British Empire Exhibition as far back as 1925, and cinema shows became a regular feature at (S)CWS exhibits. The new publicity films made their contribution to the CWS display at the Ideal Home Exhibition in the spring of 1930, where it was reported that:

At various points in the exhibition, automatic cinemas [were] installed, which continually show[ed] films dealing with CWS productions. This form of advertising [was] probably more attractive than the usual type of exhibit and as the attendance at the exhibition has been estimated to total 600,000, such advertising should be very effective.⁴⁰

The new and expensive initiative undertaken by the CWS in its film publicity work was widely applauded. The tremendous publicity and propaganda potential of cinema was becoming widely acknowledged throughout the Movement, and support for the CWS film programme was invariably accompanied with observations "that everyone is fully persuaded that [cinema] is a very powerful influence", and it was further appreciated that "one of the most powerful factors of present-day education is the cinema".⁴¹ Advocates of film propaganda and publicity sought even greater investment from Co-operators in their use of the medium, and valuable opportunities were thought to await the ambitious publicist. While the current CWS films were proudly felt to be "the finest group of advertising films of an industrial character in the country"⁴², further scope was necessary to help maintain the forward march to the Co-operative Commonwealth:

Surely, it is not too much to hope that in not so many years from now every cinema theatre in the land will be glad and eager to show films depicting the rise and progress of the Co-operative Movement in Great Britain and the world. After all, Co-operative activity, by reason of its cultural and educational many-sidedness, and its obvious material results in factories, buildings, lands, machinery, and commodities of every sort and kind, lends itself as well or better than any other form of collective human action to the skilled attentions of the film producer and the camera man. Some of the epic films of the future are going to tell the story of the people's march to prosperity through co-operation.⁴³

The CWS publicists showed a willingness to improve the service as opportunities presented themselves. Late in 1930, the new technology of sound motion pictures was adopted for film publicity with the production of *Her Dress Allowance* (drapery) [NCFC

021], released December, 1930.⁴⁴ Arrangements were made to screen the 'CWS Talkie' in 750 cinemas recently wired for sound, while a further 250 bookings were secured for a silent version.⁴⁵ Special screenings were also arranged at cinemas, out of business hours, for retail managers and departmental buyers and coincided with CWS market days to facilitate stock purchases.⁴⁶ An interesting insight into the contemporary cinema audience was demonstrated in the producer's regard for the large proportion of women who were known to frequent picture houses and the film was specifically tailored for their 'interest'.⁴⁷ The new drapery film was quickly followed with a further soap subject, *Teaching Him A Lesson*, also released in sound and silent versions in January, 1931.⁴⁸ These were the last two films to appear in weekly listings in the Movement's press, although the practice of arranging theatrical screenings for CWS trade films continued well into the 1940s. Indeed, there appears to have been a short hiatus in film production as subsequent titles in the publicity series did not appear until early 1933. That was possibly a consequence of financial retrenchment during the period of the country's deepest economic gloom. In that regard it is interesting to note that a new CWS film-lecture, which appeared in 1931, detailing the CWS canning operations at Lowestoft, presented the industry as a contemporary economic success story, and "one which is making some show of liveliness and doing its level best to improve the chances of balanced budgets by increased home production and the consequent necessity for the restriction of imports". Audiences for the illustrated lecture featuring *Harvest of Sea and Field* were reminded that:

By continued and increased support to CWS canned products from Middleton, Reading, Acton and Lowestoft, *assistance will not only be given to British industry, but to co-operative employment within our own movement.*⁴⁹

Films that were provided with a cinema release recommenced with *From Back To Back* (men's fashions) [NCFC 029], released January, 1933⁵⁰; and was quickly followed by *Song of the Shirt* (men's shirts), released in the summer of 1933⁵¹; and *Partners* [NCFC 031], which adopted a less product-oriented approach with its indication of "how all members of Co-operative Societies are partners in a great concern". The latter film was released in October, 1933.⁵² Two of the films paid

attention to male fashions and local retail Societies integrated them into a coordinated sales push for menswear. For example, the Great Yarmouth Society presented *From Back To Back* for five consecutive evenings in its hall in conjunction with a special display provided by the London office of the CWS, and supported by a male mannequin parade. The trade promotion improved the returns of the outfitting department by thirty-three pounds during the week of screening.⁵³ As the decade progressed the link between screenings and trading opportunities were further developed and consolidated.

The Scottish CWS also put out a series of industrial films commencing in 1927 with a film depicting the Society's factory complex at Shieldhall, Glasgow. Further titles were produced illustrating the operations at Bladnoch Creamery [NCFC 011], the Grangemouth Soapworks [NCFC 016]⁵⁴, and the Aberdeen fish-curing station.⁵⁵ Out of the 100 Scottish Societies promoting propaganda meetings in the 1928-29 season, thirty included one or more of the new films in their activities.⁵⁶

The prime motivation of the Wholesale Societies in their use of film was undoubtedly trade, but that did not preclude their publicity films from integrating into their address broader concerns such as economic equity and industrial ownership, and the film *Work and Play* had dealt with industrial welfare and the responsibilities of the employer. Commencing in the mid-1930s, a range of cultural and other activities supported by the CWS became the subject of sound films and camera crews were charged with capturing principal events associated with the CWS. Performances by the two main musical groups were recorded and the films of the CWS Manchester Tobacco Factory Prize Band and the CWS Manchester Male Voice Choir were released in 1934. A series of interesting scenes were combined into a "newsreel of CWS records on land, sea, air and water", while *Co-operation in Industry* allowed Board members and departmental heads to introduce and comment on their sections and responsibilities.⁵⁷ Such films obviously functioned as a useful form of corporate communication, and, essentially democratic in character, would have substantially aided in the sense of a Co-operative business culture. The films were principally produced for the benefit of employees and members and were enthusiastically received by the CWS employees' journal:

The latest CWS talkies give us a better idea than was possible before of the vastness of our wonderful organisation ... As well as peeps into our works and departments, we also have the pride and pleasure of hearing and seeing the Tobacco Factory Band and the Male Voice Choir.⁵⁸

An interesting example of a Co-operative trade film appeared in the summer of 1935 with *Rose of the Orient*, released in a long and short version [NCFC 041, NCFC 042], with the longer film including dramatic historical scenes typical of the Publicity Films productions for the CWS. The long version was presented as a general cinema release, while the short version was deemed more suitable for the transient audiences attracted to the film programme of the English and Scottish CWS Tea Demonstration Van which came into commission during the summer months of 1935.⁵⁹

Regional and Local Co-operative Film Work

Other Co-operative bodies also commissioned films to help promote themselves to the public and their members. In 1934, the Co-operative Co-partnership Propaganda Committee sponsored *The Elevation of Labour*, a sound film produced by Pathe, which revealed "the life of the worker under slavery conditions, and follows his [sic] progress to ideal co-partnership".⁶⁰ Two years earlier the Midland Section of the Co-operative Milk Trade Association had secured £150 from the National Association and commissioned the Gaumont Company to produce a five minute film, *Better Health: The Story of Co-operative Milk*. The 'Milk Talkie Film' was very popular with member Societies and local cinemas were booked around the country to screen the film.⁶¹ Milk films were also produced for the Birmingham Society in 1929, with *Seeing is Believing* [NCFC 019]; and the Stockport Society in 1931, with *Milk: The Life of a Nation*.⁶² A number of local Societies began investing in films in the 1920s, depicting their activities and operations, usually for screening in local cinemas. As already reported, the RACS was among the first Societies to commission film records for education and propaganda following the First World War. It was closely followed in 1921 by the Burslem Society with a film of its model bakery [NCFC 004], and the Colchester Society, which recorded its Jubilee celebrations in the early 1920s [NCFC 005]. The Birmingham

Society weighed in again with its own Jubilee film to mark its half-century in 1931, with scenes depicting the exhibitions, children's gala, members garden party and the vehicle parade.⁶³

Societies in Scotland also tested the potential of cinema with commissions by the Cowdenbeath [NCFC 007], Lochgelly [NCFC 010] and Kinning Park Societies.⁶⁴ An interesting example of local Co-operative film work occurred with the Leeds Society, commencing in 1928. A trade propaganda film, *Delivering the Goods*, was commissioned from the Gaumont Company and included scenes of many of the Society's trading departments, including flour mills and coal delivery.⁶⁵ The film proved valuable only a few years later when it was used to inform Selby Co-operators of the operations at Leeds, when they were in the process of amalgamating with the larger Society. An extended run had to be put on at the Selby Hippodrome to accommodate the demand to see the film.⁶⁶ A further trade film, *Shopping at the Co-op Shop*, appeared in 1931, and seemingly influenced by the recent CWS publicity films, adopted a partial narrative approach.⁶⁷ A tremendous boost to local Co-op film work was provided in the later thirties with the widespread availability of the sub-standard 16mm format and will be examined later in the chapter.

Non-Fiction Cinema in the 1930s

Although the CWS exhibited a diverse approach to cinema, the value of film as trade propaganda remained paramount. By the mid-1930s, the sponsored film sector was well-established in Britain and a wide variety of organisations - governmental, industrial, commercial, religious, military and political - sought to bring their message to the screen. The nature and potential of cinema as propaganda was widely discussed and information and advice about film sponsorship and publicity flooded the market.⁶⁸ Advocates heralded the emergence of a new audience that attended the non-theatrical film shows and sensed "a golden field of opportunity".⁶⁹ Film scholars have considered this form of exhibition only in its relation to the Documentary Film Movement, however, it is clear its existence was predicated on a much broader market of films than

the relatively few 'documentary' films celebrated by historians.⁷⁰ In effect, historians have taken their lead from John Grierson and his evidently elitist approach to the non-fiction film within which he discerned a set of conflicting discourses apparent to the sponsored film. His preference for public relations drew a distinction between "background education" and "foreground advertisement". He warned an audience of educationalists and librarians that examinations of the film in industry:

So often turn into a narrow consideration of what the film can do for marketing the products of industry. I do not suppose many of us are finally interested in who sells the most soap or markets the biggest films. You can turn the film into a grocer's assistance, and very easily, but the other larger function is more exacting. It is on the community aspect of industry films I believe you should concentrate.

Grierson observed a normative approach to the non-fiction film, which he promoted as a medium of education. He was unimpressed by the publicity film's tendency to seek to amuse and he showed little personal preference for the commercial cinema with its "moronic forms of fiction".⁷¹

An alternative conception of film publicity was more sensitive to the values of entertainment. Whereas supporters of the documentary film warned against "attempts ... to mix direct selling with a popular programme of entertainment"⁷², contrary opinion advised that it was desirable for the "openly propagandist film" to be entertaining and of interest. The more populist approach was less critical of the mainstream film industry and accepted that the sponsored film:

If it is to serve its sponsors successfully ... must have sufficient entertainment value and technical quality to bear comparison with the average feature film.⁷³

The British cinema of non-fiction in the 1930s was, then, a site of considerable debate regarding the social and aesthetic characteristics of the sponsored film. Griersonian documentary derived much influence from notions of civic responsibility and pronounced avant-garde formal models. A concurrent approach drew much closer to the pleasures inherent in the commercial fiction film and a discourse structured around stars-celebrities, popular musical comedy, amusement and entertainment. The publicity films sponsored by the Co-operative Movement, stewarded by the CWS and produced by

Publicity Films, were geared more towards the latter model and organised according to the demands of the popular audience. One authority within the Movement advised that "it cannot be too strongly emphasised that trade films must not take artistic licence". No doubt aware of the exhortations of the documentarists he further observed that "film experts can theorise; but they have not sat among co-operative audiences".⁷⁴

In 1936, the CWS publicity department proudly announced that *only* sound films were used in connection with trade propaganda.⁷⁵ The recent and new series of films, produced by Publicity Films, closely accorded to the 'popular' model of the sponsored film. Titles such as "*Postman's Knock*" [NCFC 040], *Merry Mondays* and *Radio Favourites* contained much that was considered amusing and entertaining by contemporary standards. Music hall comedians, dancing girls, adaptations of popular songs and simple stories were a staple of these short films: ingredients that were thought to 'hold' the attention of the popular audience.⁷⁶ The CWS continually sought "to improve the appeal and entertainment value" of their publicity films and in 1937 colour and animation were adopted for the first time. It was dubiously claimed that the Movement was "the only organisation in the country using colour cartoons along the lines of 'Mickey Mouse' for film propaganda".⁷⁷ The first colour cartoon was *Sweets of Victory*, which promoted Lutona chocolates on behalf of the English and Scottish CWS; it achieved a cinema release and secured 6,000 playdates before the end of January 1937.⁷⁸ At 500 feet (5½ minutes), the film represented the ideal length, as proposed by Sydney Box, for film publicity presented in the commercial cinema.⁷⁹ A further animated short, *Magic Letters*, appeared later in the year and was produced in the German Gaspar process.⁸⁰ Assessing the innovation, *The Co-operative News* observed that "phantasy comes to the aid of the advertiser in each of two charming colour cartoons, each of which succeed in thoroughly arousing the interest of the audience before introducing the commentary which it is desired 'to get over'".⁸¹ The use of colour was evidently equated with the pleasures offered by the best quality commercial features and a CWS film release of 1937, *Gallons of Goodness*, was assessed as "the sort of picture the most rabid film fans could sit through and enjoy".⁸² The appropriation of the popular cinematic discourse was most evident in the exemplary *Co-operette* [NCFC 071]: "an all-colour musical publicity film", which was presented

theatrically in 1939.⁸³ The film was appreciated as reaching "the highest professional standards in conception, acting and technical production" and would be "accepted by picture-goers as a film which is not only part of the cinema's programme but a feature which offers something extra for the admission money".⁸⁴ The film's popularity was clearly predicated on its casting and innovative colour technology. In Stanley Holloway, Debroy Somers and His Band, CB Cochran's 'Young Ladies' and screen comedian Hal Walters, the film boasted "stars of national fame". Its adoption of British Dufaycolor was deemed not only patriotic, but artistically successful, through which "the charming shades are beautifully and faithfully rendered".⁸⁵

The concern of the CWS publicity department to maintain the popularity of its films through style and subject was understandable with respect to general audiences and public cinemas: the aim was to present the Co-operative message in a palatable fashion. However, the resulting films also made a significant contribution to the conventional film-lecture displays. The sponsors of the films and shows clearly appreciated that member audiences were not averse to a measure of levity and entertainment and that the presentation of information regarding Co-operative trade and principles might be more effective if made pleasurable. The CWS film-lecture service continued to be a well-resourced and popular provision in the 1930s, and from the available evidence was widely drawn upon by retail Societies. The displays remained closely allied with trade concerns, as was demonstrated at the RACS in the autumn of 1936, when the Society sponsored thirty shows across its district relating to the various soap productions of the CWS. The Education Committee's report indicated that "[the] demonstrations [had] been most effective and it [was] hoped that considerably increased sales of CWS soap productions [would] result".⁸⁶ The films were available free of charge to Societies that possessed projection facilities (35mm, 16mm or 9.5mm), otherwise a modest fee of 35 shillings (a figure that remained unchanged throughout the decade) secured the services of a lecturer, operator, equipment and film programme. By the mid-1930s, the CWS Publicity Department operated eleven portable sound projectors, which continuously toured the country; while the CWS film library dispatched 160 films per month to local Societies, as well as to schools and associations.⁸⁷ The service operated from a number of regional bases in Manchester, Newcastle, London and Bristol, and was praised for its

efficiency and flexibility:

No other form of propaganda provides such a scope with the same convenience. A complete programme of talking films can be shown at Newcastle one night, Leeds the next night, and Manchester, Leicester or Birmingham the day after. The modern 'talkie' outfit, as used by the CWS Publicity Department, is carried in a medium-sized car, and can be erected in almost any premises, from a village Sunday school to a super-cinema.⁸⁸

The film-lecture service was reported as being more popular than ever during the 1937 season, with the greatest ever aggregate audience of over 250,000.⁸⁹ The connection of film propaganda with trade remained prominent and a range of commercial activities were allied with local film shows. A "chain of propaganda and trade" was effected through the alliance of coupons, window displays and publicity films, and included a systematic visitation of Societies by CWS travellers prior to each event. The 1,196 cinema lectures of the 1937-8 season, visited by a reported 237,000 people, attended principally to the trade of the CWS pure food factories at Lowestoft. A new talking film was prepared, *Kitchen Capers* [NCFC 059], 4,000 special window displays were accepted by Societies and coupons entitling holders to a reduced purchase price for CWS Waveney cheese were presented to audience members. It was stressed that Societies would greatly benefit not only in the trade for the promoted products, but also in increased trade through the number of irregular customers who could be expected to visit the stores with coupons, and who could be persuaded to buy other articles as well. The 1938-39 season was devoted to the soap trade, for which *Postman's Knock* or *Merry Mondays* would be the featured trade film and a subject it was suggested that appealed primarily to women and for which special afternoon shows were recommended.⁹⁰

The distribution of samples and literature at sponsored film shows was a conventional procedure⁹¹, but the issuing of coupons was clearly a refinement on the practice, requiring the recipient to visit the store for actual remuneration and with the added potential of more extensive purchases. The CWS, in preparing the support materials, ably assisted retail Societies in their endeavours to expand trade, and evidence shows that enterprising officials at local Societies were diligent in their efforts to extract

the maximum sales potential from the film shows, with demonstrations, tie-ups and displays being presented in alliance with the film propaganda. For example, a Co-operative Outfitting Department organised dress stands and male mannequin parades in conjunction with a week of CWS men's wear film shows.⁹²

The CWS National Film Service

In 1938, the film publicity provision by the CWS for member Societies was re-organised and extended into a National Film Service. The origins of the service emerged from deliberations between the Co-operative Union and the CWS in 1937. Under the provisions of the 'Ten Year Plan for Co-operative Education' (1936), the Union was responsible for advancing the use of film for Co-operative education and propaganda, and a film sub-committee of the Educational Executive was established to make recommendations.⁹³ The resources available to the Union were insufficient for it to sponsor a national scheme of film propaganda (the Union's approach to film in the period is addressed shortly) and overtures were made to the CWS with a view to developing the necessary provision.⁹⁴ The views of local distributive Societies were canvassed through circulars issued by the CWS film section and a series of conferences were organised around the country at which cinema provision was debated.⁹⁵ The new CWS National Film Service was considerably more comprehensive than the film-lecture service that it replaced. The conventional arrangements relating to the loan of CWS advertising films and the provision of the entire human and technological apparatus for a trade show remained. However, the influence of the Co-operative Union was evident in the supplementary arrangements for providing a "purely educational programme", sufficient "to meet all educational requirements".⁹⁶ The cost to Societies of the educational programme (at which a single CWS publicity film had to be featured) was five to six pounds. Societies were advised that they should form themselves into circuits and share the cost. The CWS also undertook to negotiate production on behalf of retail Societies and to advise users regarding suitable technology and supply apparatus where required. Central to the new arrangements was the publication of a *CWS National Film*

Service Catalogue, which was supplied to Societies and listed the titles available for loan and presentation. The former lecture-service had operated on a little over 20 CWS publicity films⁹⁷, whereas the new provision offered "[a] wide selection of Russian, Spanish, German and American films ... as well as documentary and educational films produced in [Britain]".⁹⁸ The catalogue was circulated in advance of the 1938-39 lecture season⁹⁹, and it was reckoned that the new enterprise "should take a foremost place in the Ten Year Plan objective of popularising the co-operative idea and ideals".¹⁰⁰ A well-balanced two hour display, wider in its appeal than the conventional publicity programme, was typically constructed as follows: 1 Travel Talk (2 reels), 1 Comedy (2 reels), 2 Educational (2 reels), 1 Cartoon (2 reels), 1 Feature (4 reels), 1 Publicity (1 reel).¹⁰¹

The first supplement to the *CWS National Film Service Catalogue* was issued late in 1938 and incorporated titles more representative of the concerns of Co-operative educationalists. In addition to films produced under the auspices of the Joint Education Committees of the London Co-operative Societies, like *Advance Democracy* [NCFC 070], and films produced for the Political Committee of the London Co-operative Society such as *Towards Tomorrow: Pageant of Co-operation* [NCFC 078] and *Utopia*, films commissioned by the Co-operative Union were also included.¹⁰² In its interpretation of the proposals for film propaganda under the Ten Year Plan, the film sub-committee of the Co-operative Union had recommended an improved service of information and advice to Societies on film matters, the formation of regional and district film groups to stimulate interest in, and the development of, film work, and "when conditions are favourable ... the production of films suitable for co-operative class purposes and other films of general co-operative interest".¹⁰³ The Union's alliance with the CWS National Film Service satisfied many of the requirements, but the expense of supporting educational film production was a considerable problem. An initial suggestion was to sponsor a film of the Co-operative Congress and Exhibition at Bath in 1937¹⁰⁴, and the General Secretary and the CWS were approached by the Educational Executive for their support.¹⁰⁵ The governing body of the Union proved unwilling to meet the high cost¹⁰⁶, but the Educational Executive stressed the importance of such a film to educational work and moved to securing consent for a film of the Congress at

Scarborough in 1938.¹⁰⁷ In the event, a film was commissioned with production the responsibility of Alfred Booth of the Bolton Society and member of the National Co-operative Manager's Association. On its release, *The Co-operative News* felt the film "serve[d] an excellent purpose in providing a more widespread perception and understanding of the Co-operative Movement's annual Parliament".¹⁰⁸ However, there was evidently some disappointment in the finished film, which was usually referred to as *The Congress Film*; it had been shot silent, considerably saving on expense, but late in the day, the Executive sent it away to be fitted with a sound track. The final version was also edited down to twenty minutes running time, which one critic considered reduced the film's effectiveness.¹⁰⁹

A further film was commissioned, *The Play Way to Co-operative Knowledge*, detailing the Union's youth work, and was produced by Reginald Denny who had successfully produced films for the Leicester Co-operative Society and Portsea Island Mutual Co-operative Society (PIMCO).¹¹⁰ The two films were the Co-operative Union's direct contribution to the CWS National Film Service library. A complementary film of the 1939 Education Convention of the Co-operative Union was commissioned by the CWS on its own initiative and became available through the CWS National Film Service early in the summer of that year¹¹¹, further emphasising the close relationship of the Co-operative Union and the CWS on film matters. Towards the end of the first season the sponsors declared themselves satisfied with the new service and reported that 1,620 CWS publicity films had been hired by Societies, schools and associations, and in addition, 300 educational and entertainment films had been hired by Co-operative Societies.¹¹²

Collaboration over film work was also on the agenda of other committees bringing together representatives of the Co-operative Union and the CWS. Early in 1939, plans were unveiled whereby the film would be used to aid in employee training. The proposal originated with the Joint Committee on Technical Education, wherein three films would be produced: one would show an outline of the Movement; a second would deal with salesmanship in the Drapery and Boot and Shoe Departments; and the third with problems in Grocery and Provision. The scheme was budgeted at one thousand pounds and would involve sound films produced on professional 35mm stock. In

arguing the purpose of the films, it was noted that:

Sales staff would be shown how their efficiency influences the Movement's development. The science of salesmanship in particular departments will be explained in detail, and employees will be encouraged to take greater interest in training schemes.¹¹³

However, senior committees within the Union considered the proposal "altogether too costly"¹¹⁴, and the Technical Committee was asked to reconsider the matter on the grounds of expense and utility.¹¹⁵ Negotiations proceeded on the assumption that the bulk of the cost could be met by the CWS, and the Executive of the Union declared themselves willing to provide one third of the budget.¹¹⁶ It was reported in the summer of 1939, that the bulk of a script was completed but international events ensured that a finished film would be a while in coming.¹¹⁷ In the event, the Movement's first national training film, *Behind the Counter* [NCFC 093], appeared in 1941, and evidently had its genesis in the deliberations of the Joint Committee on Technical Education before the war.¹¹⁸

Another Union Committee, the Joint Propaganda and Trade Committee, had been occupied throughout 1939 with deliberations regarding the acquisition of daylight cinema equipment. Specially constructed vans fitted with projection facilities and broadcast equipment were inspected with a view to enhancing Co-operative propaganda, especially at outdoor meetings and events.¹¹⁹ The officials declared themselves "very favourably impressed with the possibilities of utilising this means of propaganda in the Movement"¹²⁰, but when the matter was deferred until the autumn of 1939 for a final decision, the immediate possibility of securing this "new and attractive" method of propaganda was effectively postponed for an indefinite period.¹²¹

In the late 1930s, a further federal Co-operative organisation pondered whether to engage in cinema activities. The directors of the Co-operative Press Limited, who among other things had responsibility for the Movement's national Sunday newspaper, *Reynolds News*, sought a rules alteration that would allow the Society to involve itself in the production of films. Ultimately, support was not forthcoming from either its own members¹²², nor the Co-operative Union¹²³, but the incident was indicative of impatience

within sectors of the Movement with the progress of film work.¹²⁴ In the event, leading Co-operative officials clearly considered the CWS to be the suitable organisation for film work, and that was certainly the position of the Co-operative Union, which had recently allied itself with the National Film Service. Moreover, the member Societies of the Co-operative Press were concerned to raise the circulation of the *Reynolds News* as a priority, and did not desire expensive distractions.

A 'Films Dispute': Cinema and Co-operative Education

The issue of securing, supplying and exhibiting suitable educational films for Co-operators exercised various constituencies within the Movement, and, indeed, came to implicate trade unionists and political representatives in the wider Labour Movement. The gradual involvement of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) and Labour Party in cinema propaganda by the mid-1930s is well-known, and a detailed examination of the emergence of the Workers' Film Association (WFA) in 1938 need not detain us here.¹²⁵ Each of its historians has acknowledged the contribution of Co-operators to the formation of the WFA, yet certain fundamental problems and tensions between different Co-operative constituencies have remained unexamined, and which are key for understanding the actual form the organisation eventually assumed, and how it developed as the Labour Movement's film service into the war years and beyond.

First, it is necessary to account for the Co-operative Union's particular attitude to cinema work, and its responsibility to distributive Societies with respect to film. As the national federal organisation responsible for education, the Union had periodically examined film as a potential educational medium. By the late 1920s, the Movement's growing interest in film for education purposes paralleled a more general trend, wherein teachers, government and local authority officials were investigating film for use in the classroom.¹²⁶ The establishment of the British Film Institute in 1933, was partly in response to the need to facilitate the film in education, and the Institute's periodical, *Sight and Sound*, had originally appeared under the auspices of the British Institute of Adult Education and devoted appreciable attention to matters of education and visual

learning for some time.¹²⁷

The Co-operative Union's concern with cinema and education was manifest in a scheme unveiled by Central Education Committee (CEC) at Co-operative Congress in 1929. There:

The possibilities of utilising the cinema films for education purposes by means of a national scheme for co-operative societies was discussed, and it was revealed that the CEC had arranged, in association with British Film Services, for the organisation of cinema displays. Programmes would be largely compiled from existing educational film libraries and include science, travel and industrial films, although one Co-operative film would be made available for each display. Mr George Kerr, speaking on behalf of British Film Services, hoped that within a year of its commencement at least a hundred halls throughout the country to be filled with 500 people enjoying the service. He informed his audience that "by means of the film and by means of the gramophone you can take the University to every village".¹²⁸

In order to encourage support for the scheme, Mr Kerr lectured and demonstrated at numerous Co-operative educational meetings, and he was careful to point out that "instruction and entertainment [would] be pleasingly combined".¹²⁹ The actual arrangements relating to the film service were announced in the summer of 1929 and displays would accommodate approximately seven films, and last 90-120 minutes.¹³⁰ An important producer of educational films, British Instructional Films, were also incorporated into the scheme to ensure the essential supply of suitable titles.¹³¹ The crucial condition for the adoption of the service was that sufficient Societies agree to arrange twenty displays each, guaranteeing an attendance of 500 at every show. At the various demonstrations held around the country, committee members had proved weary of the potential cost of the service and there is little evidence that Education Committees were prepared to meet the rather stiff demands imposed by British Film Services.

The Co-operative Union continued in its relations with the firm and further plans were formed with respect to sound film displays. In what was billed as "the first demonstration in Europe of sound-films with a portable projector", Co-operative educationalists were provided "an opportunity to judge of the importance of sound films in their application as one of the most modern methods of education".¹³² British Film Services were prepared to arrange individual sound film displays at twelve pounds and ten shillings and a series of regional demonstrations of the equipment were effected.¹³³

Reports on the Movement's further involvement with British Film Services dries up at that point, and it must be concluded that the willingness of local Societies to subscribe to the scheme was lacking. After-all, the CWS film-lecture service demanded far less onerous terms and a greater degree of flexibility. The Co-operative Union's attempt to promote a more specifically educational form of film exhibition had seemingly been lost to a financial stringency at the local level, and the episode offered a further lesson to the Union, after the similar failure to secure support for modest film production in the early 1920s, that cinema work for education and propaganda was an expensive enterprise and that the majority of retail Societies were not prepared to directly meet the cost. It was evident that it was only with subsidised schemes, such as that operated by the CWS, that progress was possible.

It is within the context of such experiences that the Movement's attitudes towards a proposed Labour film service should be appreciated. The essential catalyst for what would become the Workers' Film Association was the adoption within the Co-operative Union's 'Ten Year Plan for Co-operative Education', reported in 1935, of the need to bring cinema to the task of educational work.¹³⁴ An important lobby for the promotion of Co-operative education through film was the National Association of Co-operative Education Committees (NACEC), and that group announced its intention to raise debate on the matter by tabling a resolution on cinema and Co-operative education at the Union's Annual Education Convention in 1936.¹³⁵ The Association had emerged in the early 1930s when disgruntled representatives of Education Committees responded to a perceived lack of democratic process for educationalists within the Co-operative Union. To some extent the NACEC was denounced as a 'rebel' body, and, as the organisation's official history records, its relationship with the Union "fluctuated considerably" with many "conflicting incidents".¹³⁶ The Association was quick to offer criticism of the Union's 'Ten Year Plan for Co-operative Education' and amongst other things requested Joseph Reeves of RACS to investigate the general state of educational cinema.¹³⁷ While the Education Executive of the Union rather lethargically undertook their responsibility to promote Co-operative Education through film (the sub-committee on film was not finally proposed until August 1936), the Association pushed on with its own plans and it secured adoption of a proposal at Education Convention, "that it is desirable in the

interest of education by film for the Movement to go extensively into the production of films and the creation of a film library".¹³⁸

At that moment the Association was acting merely to 'ginger' up the Union, and a series of schools and seminars were arranged, from which the film lobby began to secure more widespread support.¹³⁹ The most important of these meetings was a national conference held at Swanwick in September, 1936, "with the object of securing a national expression of the opinion of education committees regarding the future place which will be taken by films in the development of co-operative education".¹⁴⁰ The Educational Executive of the Co-operative Union was represented at the conference.¹⁴¹ The centre-piece was a presentation by Joe Reeves, an executive member of the Association, who proposed a national scheme for Co-operative education by film. In a veiled criticism of the Union, he demanded proaction rather than inertia:

It is because the educationists of the Movement realise the important part which the film has to play in the days to come in vitalising the leisure hours of the workers that we are here this afternoon. We have to consider, and having considered, to act in the provision of the means whereby the Movement may use the film as an instrument of educational policy, as a medium for gaining new recruits, and as a popular means of arousing interest in the social possibilities of human co-operation. There is no more effective medium.¹⁴²

The conference passed a resolution "declaring that educational films were essential in the teaching methods of the Movement", and an expanded version of Reeve's address was widely circulated as a pamphlet.¹⁴³ The main proposal presented at Swanwick was the formation of a National Film Society to which local retail Societies would pledge modest financial support (£10-£20) and agree to take programmes of educational films.¹⁴⁴ Reeve's advocacy of the cinema for educational purposes clearly derived from his experience at RACS where he had been involved in film work for nearly two decades¹⁴⁵; while the actual spur to seek the wider utilisation of the film for Co-op education derived from the availability of sub-standard (16mm) sound film in the mid-1930s. He considered this an "heaven-sent opportunity", substantially enhancing the sensitivity of the medium for persuasion and for the first time, in terms of exhibition, offering an affordable proposition for national film propaganda.¹⁴⁶ Reeves warned the Movement of the dangers of leaving the field free to its competitors, informing a

conference that "The National Government and the Conservative Party had a call on 100 travelling cinemas. They used the 16mm sub-standard film, and were telling the story that co-operators had been trying to contradict for years", and stressing that "We have in our hands, in the 16mm sub-standard film, a mighty propaganda weapon, and I hope the Co-operative Movement will use it to the full".¹⁴⁷

As an experienced propagandist, Reeves immediately set about promoting the cause of the Association. He had accepted the nomination to act as secretary to a film committee set-up by the NACEC¹⁴⁸, and commencing in late 1936, began an extensive lecture programme bringing the details of the National Film Society to a wider audience.¹⁴⁹ Meanwhile, the Co-operative Union was slowly progressing through its own series of discussions involving the CWS and the NACEC regarding a suitable approach to film. In November 1936, the Educational Executive heard the advice of the CWS's publicity representative to the effect "that the formation of a proposed Co-operative Film Society ... was not required".¹⁵⁰ The report of the Union's film sub-committee was cautious in its proposals for film work: it essentially envisaged the Union's role to be advisory, while more substantial action would have to wait until "as and when conditions are favourable and warrant the step".¹⁵¹ The NACEC gently pushed the Educational Executive to adapt the more dynamic proposals contained in its own National Film Society plan, but the Executive simply noted the details and declined to be represented on the films sub-committee of the Association.¹⁵²

In the face of such inactivity and lack of ambition the NACEC launched its proposals for a National Co-operative Film Society in the spring of 1937, an action it described as "probably the most vigorous move associated with Co-operative education" since the inception of the Association. The actual proposals were summarised as follows:

It is envisaged that the film society would, for the larger societies, act as an agency for supplying equipment and provide a weekly change of film programmes; for the medium societies, arrange for the supply of equipment on a hire-purchase basis with a weekly change of programme, and for the smaller societies, provide a road service whereby the society could hire apparatus, operator, and films for single showing at an inclusive price.¹⁵³

To begin with, Societies were only asked to respond to the proposals with offers of support, and pledge themselves to donating ten pounds when the Film Society was launched proper. Those Societies which approached the Executive Committee were informed tartly that the Film Society had not been approved by the Co-operative Union.¹⁵⁴ The 'films question' featured prominently at the Education Convention of the Co-operative Union held at Easter 1937. The NACEC organised cinema demonstrations giving delegates the "opportunity to judge for themselves the efficiency of the sound film".¹⁵⁵ In return, its critics complained that the premature and unilateral action of the Association was bound to lead to confrontation and a wasteful overlapping of responsibility and resources¹⁵⁶, and the educationalists at the Union publicly announced their intention only to work in alliance with the CWS on film matters.¹⁵⁷ Joe Reeves, on behalf of the NACEC, countered the criticisms directed at the National Co-operative Film Society proposals in a speech at Co-operative Congress in the summer of 1937. He defended the Association's actions in terms of the lack of progress in the provision of educational films by the delegated authorities. He denied the accusation of overlapping in that the intentions of the National Co-operative Film Society substantially differed from the cinema activities of the CWS, which merely circulated publicity films, but in any case offered the significant concession that programmes offered by the Association would include one CWS trade film.¹⁵⁸

The response from the Co-operative Union made by Mr Edwards, chairman of the Educational Executive, was revealing in its concern about cost and he felt unable to support any proposal that relied on financial contribution from local Societies. The intention to collaborate with the CWS on film work was reiterated.¹⁵⁹ The Union's strategy was clearly derived from its two previous experiences with educational film in the early 1920s and early 1930s; it proposed to develop film work alongside the established and financially secure CWS film service, and seek to develop a recognisably educational dimension within that framework. The result, as we have seen, was the establishment of the CWS National Film Service, and as the new scheme was in preparation, Societies were informed "that there was no need for separate action on the part of retail societies such as had been proposed".¹⁶⁰

To both the surprise and consternation of the Union, the National Co-operative

Film Society began to progress with evident support from some Societies. Following the appeal for financial commitment, promises totalling five hundred pounds were received, and several Societies were liaising to share costs and forming local circuits on a district basis.¹⁶¹ By the autumn of 1937, the film department of the Association had commenced supplying Societies with film programmes, and more than a hundred exhibitions were arranged on a 'road-show' basis.¹⁶² Despite the proclamations of the Union, Joe Reeves warned Co-operative educationalists that there would evolve competition in the Movement's film work and bemoaned the lack of consultation accorded the Association.¹⁶³

With the emergence of two rival film schemes, a more acrimonious relationship developed between the Union and the NACEC. The schism which had evolved over educational film provision attracted considerable commentary and angry exchanges unbecoming of the Co-operative Movement. The CWS's decision early in 1938 not to supply its publicity films for the National Co-operative Film Society scheme was declared 'dirty work' and the whole episode was now tagged a 'film dispute'.¹⁶⁴ The CWS defended its action in terms of logistics: it simply could not meet the sudden request to supply films for an estimated 400 displays.¹⁶⁵ To supporters of the Association's position, that merely confirmed their suspicion that the CWS/Co-operative Union alliance was uncommitted to the ideal of educational film work and parsimonious to the degree of hinderance.¹⁶⁶

In its turn, the Association and its supporters criticised the provision of the new CWS National Film Service as entirely unsuited to the demands of Co-operative education. The Educational Executive were accused of "lamentable ignorance" in their actions and the CWS an unsuitable body to be concerned with educational films. The attempts to promote the CWS National Film Service at conferences and educational meetings met with some hostility; for example, a Leicester Co-operator complained that the sample films exhibited "reveal a lack of appreciation of the real purpose of co-operative education" and was shocked that "one of them was nothing more or less than a glorification of imperialism".¹⁶⁷ It was evident that CWS trade films struggled to appeal to the more progressively-minded Co-operative educationalist and a Nottingham Co-operator failed to appreciate the social education to be derived from a film which

demonstrated "how to make a dinner entirely out of tins of 'Waveney' products!".¹⁶⁸ A representative to Co-operative Congress from the South Suburban Society, with reference to both the proposed Congress film and the Movement's conventional trade films, remonstrated that:

We want films that will capture the imagination of hundreds of thousands of our members up and down the country. Do you think that our members in the retail societies are interested in a film of Congress which will show us walking about this hall? ... And it is regrettable that the CWS cannot show us a film that is anything better than the advertising film.¹⁶⁹

To the supporters of the Association, the Movement's publicity films were unsuitable for the purpose of Co-operative education, while the Union's efforts to develop educational films were considered incompetent. Most definitely, too little, too late.

Film and the Labour Movement: The Workers' Film Association

The 'films dispute' laboured on throughout 1938, with the Union denouncing the National Co-operative Film Society as "unsound", whereas the film department of the Association countered with the accusation that the film plans of the Co-operative Union lacked "initiative and drive".¹⁷⁰ The film department of the NACEC remained conciliatory and suggested the formation of a national committee to consider film education, on which the Co-operative Union, the CWS and the NACEC would be represented. No such body emerged and it must be concluded that the Union declined the offer. In view of such intransigence, Joe Reeves decided upon an alternative course of development. A cosmopolitan figure, he enjoyed a wide-range of contacts throughout the Labour Movement and was familiar with the emerging interest among trade union and political activists in the propaganda film. The drive and vision of Reeves would be instrumental in the formation of the Workers' Film Association late in 1938, and a 'united front' for Labour film would proceed without the participation of 'official' Co-operative organisations.¹⁷¹

Upon his resignation from the RACS in September 1938, Joe Reeves was honoured as "probably the most outstanding figure in the world of Co-operative

education".¹⁷² His energy and talents were now put to the establishment of a Labour Movement film service, which should be seen as no great departure in his actions in that he had consistently striven to promote the ideals of the wider Workers' Movement and to establish greater unison between the economic, industrial and political wings.¹⁷³ Evidence of successful collaboration was apparent when the film department of the NACEC had enthusiastically supported the Labour Movement's 'Milk for Spain' campaign and 146 film shows were arranged, and a short film prepared in which the Co-op sponsored front bench MP, A. V. Alexander, called for the wide support of Spanish democracy.¹⁷⁴ Reeves was no doubt convinced that the cinema initiatives being pursued at the TUC and Labour Party, the success of the combined action over the 'Milk for Spain' campaign, and the continued support of the National Co-operative Film Society by local Co-operative Societies - 700 film shows were supplied during the first six months of trading¹⁷⁵ - merited a workers' film organisation.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, his involvement with Kino had further demonstrated his commitment to a workers' cinema. Few officials of the established Co-operative Movement were prepared to associate themselves with that film organisation, which had been established in 1933 to distribute left-political films, and which was clearly sympathetic to the radical wing of the Worker's Movement.¹⁷⁷ Unusually, Reeves accepted the position of Council Member with Kino and arranged substantial bookings for its films with the RACS. For example, the Society hired a 16mm print of Eisenstein's *The General Line* (1929) for a whole twelve month period in 1934, and the Soviet classic was shown to 40,000 Co-operators in South London.¹⁷⁸ The launch of the NACEC National Film Society had also been predicated on Kino supplying films and operators, although as Societies acquired their own projectors the contribution of Kino naturally diminished.¹⁷⁹

When the TUC and Labour Party seriously began to consider film propaganda in the mid-1930s, the achievements of the Co-operative Movement were clearly influential on their officers who conceded that "Effective educational and film propaganda organisation" had been established by Co-operators.¹⁸⁰ Reeves was approached for his experience gained as secretary to the film department of the NACEC. He was invited on to the National Joint Film Committee (1937), and he and his organisation were clearly instrumental in the emergence of the Workers' Film

Association in November 1938.¹⁸¹ In explaining his actions to leave the RACS, he declared:

I was convinced that the time had come for the workers' movements to work out ways and means whereby the film could be used to make known our social aims and for the purpose of countering the subtle propaganda for the existing order of society which comes to us from Hollywood and elsewhere.¹⁸²

Unfortunately, the "pettifogging jealousies" had refused to go away, and the WFA did not have the participation of either the Co-operative Union nor the CWS.¹⁸³ In effect, three film services involving Co-operators existed to cater for the demands of the Labour Movement: the CWS National Film Service, the film department of the NACEC and the WFA. In the view of one commentator, this history of Co-operative film development was "reminiscent of Hollywood's internal squabbles".¹⁸⁴ Discussion between the NACEC, representatives of the TUC and Labour Party, and the CWS/Co-operative Union continued after the formation of the WFA, and dragged on across 1939.¹⁸⁵ A level of agreement was achieved in August when final recommendations for joint working were drawn up. Under the plan two representatives from each of the four organisations were to serve on a management committee of a national film body, "with the machinery for the distribution and the production of standard and sub-standard films, and the supply and insurance of all types of film equipment".¹⁸⁶ At the final moment the CWS pulled out, "preferring not to commit itself" in the altered circumstances to be expected if war broke out.¹⁸⁷ Reeves was able to secure a limited involvement by the Co-operative Union when he successfully invited the Educational Executive to be represented on the Advisory Committee of the WFA.¹⁸⁸ Reeves would maintain discussions with the 'official' Co-operative Movement throughout the war years in an attempt to gain more active participation from the CWS/Co-operative Union. In the meantime, Reeves did what he could to promote and develop the film services of the Association. Building on the groundwork of the National Co-operative Film Society, the "rapid distribution of 16mm" was the initial prospect and achievement of the WFA.¹⁸⁹ The immediate problem to confront was the lack of suitable films and one supporter complained that:

We are limited to showing a very, very small proportion of propaganda films and 90 per cent of the films to be shown are of an entertainment character.¹⁹⁰

Reeves had appreciated early on that "the only solution of the problem was for the workers' movements to enter into the field of film production".¹⁹¹ For the time-being the Association was reliant on the film collections of the commercial libraries, and Reeves was clearly a supporter of the best of the Documentary Film Movement productions, especially those which dealt with social issues like *Housing Problems* (1936), *Enough to Eat* (1936) and *Children at School* (1937).¹⁹² Experience indicated that Reeves was most likely to find support for expensive film production from within the Co-operative Movement, as neither the trade unions nor Labour Party had shown much willingness to engage in film production. Those organisations could be convinced of the necessity to finance films only through successful example, and, therefore, Reeves approached a Co-operative body that had demonstrated a progressive attitude to workers' cultural activity, the London Co-operative Societies' Joint Education Committee (LCSJEC).¹⁹³

The sponsorship of films by the combined metropolitan Societies initially supplied the needs of the National Co-operative Film Society for propaganda films to distribute to Co-operative Societies, and the Committee's 'Five Year Plan of Film Production' conveniently realised product in time for the launch of the WFA in the autumn of 1938. The plan had first been presented in the summer of 1937 and involved the four big metropolitan Societies - London, Royal Arsenal, South Suburban and Enfield Highway. The scheme proposed that "five documentary social films on co-operation be produced one per year at a cost of one thousand pounds each".¹⁹⁴ The constituent management committees had agreed the financial appropriation by the New Year and arrangements were commenced for the inaugural film in the series.¹⁹⁵ The broader concern of Reeves and the NACEC was acknowledged in the agreement that all the films would be of a general character making them suitable for screening in the provinces.¹⁹⁶

The premiere of the inaugural film, *Advance Democracy* [NCFE 070], occurred in October 1938 at the summer school of the London Co-operative Societies' Joint

Education Committee held at Bexhill-on-Sea.¹⁹⁷ Joe Reeves had been technical secretary to the production committee and provided the original scenario. It is evident that Reeves was instrumental in motivating the LJSEC to undertake film sponsorship and consequently controlled and directed the Five Year Plan of Film Production. He arranged for the films to be produced by the Realist Film Unit under the supervision of Film Centre. In that way the project was closely associated with the Documentary Film Movement and correspondingly granted a certain credibility within intellectual film culture.¹⁹⁸

Only one further film was realised in the Five Year Plan as war intervened into the production schedule. The Realist Film Unit was again commissioned to produce *The Voice of the People* [NCFC 085], a film "which expressed in pictorial form the struggles of the workers to obtain their present important place in the State".¹⁹⁹ The influence of the WFA was evident over this production, which was financed by Co-operative Societies but took the broader Labour Movement, its struggles and aspirations, as its theme.²⁰⁰ With the backing of the wealthy Joint London Co-operative Societies, and distribution through the WFA/NACEC, Reeves had developed a system for Labour film production and an embryonic workers' film service. Earlier in 1938, he had been disappointed that "the Co-operative Movement [had] not produced one disinterested social film"²⁰¹, but within a very short space of time he had nurtured the limited opportunities for Labour film and had stewarded "the first two films of a documentary character ever made by the Movement and they represented a break away from the purely advertising films for which the Movement had hitherto been responsible through the Co-operative Wholesale Society".²⁰²

The main problem confronted by Reeves and the WFA was to ensure a supply of relevant films for the democratic Movements. Since its inception, the Association had envisaged the assumption of film production by its more wealthy constituent members, and the London Societies' 'Five Year Film Plan' was reflective of that intention. In introducing the ambitions of the WFA at a conference at Transport House, Reeves had declared that: "The big Trade Unions would be approached with the idea of inducing them to provide an annual film appropriation for the purpose of producing documentary films on subjects of interest to their members".²⁰³ It seems, then, that

Reeves was out to encourage the unions to invest in a long-term film plan for propaganda, and he helpfully provided some ideas for film subjects:

I would like to see the Railway Unions providing a film on the life of a railway man, the Transport Workers Union one on the risks a motor driver takes from day to day providing transport for people and goods; indeed the life of the great army of the workers, builders, miners, seamen, printers, electricians and others should be dramatised because their lives and work are the stuff of which life is made.²⁰⁴

The possibility of film production by the Workers' Movement was seriously hindered by the outbreak of war in September 1939. However, Reeves had made some progress in stimulating Labour and Co-operative organisations to undertake modest commissions. In the summer of 1939, it was reported that:

The Association [had] commissions for the production of documentary films on behalf of Trade Unions and other organisations. It [was] particularly hoped to develop this last branch of activity and, through that, means to provide a supply of first class documentary films visually conveying the message which the Movement has to give to its members and to those who are not yet members.²⁰⁵

The first such film available for distribution by the WFA was an account of the educational activities of Reeves' former Society, the RACS, produced for its Diamond Jubilee Celebrations, and released as *People With A Purpose* [NCFC 083].²⁰⁶ That film was followed by commissions for the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers (*The Builders*); the National Society of Operative Printers and Assistants (*The Jubilee*); the Woodcraft Folk (*The Republic of Children*); and a municipal project for the London Borough of Camberwell demonstrating its ARP activities (*Camberwell is Prepared*).²⁰⁷ A WFA newsreel was also commenced but appears to have run to only a single issue. Reeves had indicated at an early stage that he intended:

The Association should provide a service of news-reels on the sub-standard film. Cameramen would shoot 16mm silent pictures of events of interest to the Workers' Movement. Suitable commentaries would be added and the films would be issued each month during the winter season.²⁰⁸

The WFA had to admit, eventually, that film production had largely failed to materialise given the circumstances of the war. In comparison to the Association's other

activities, the sponsorship of production was considered "our weak section"²⁰⁹, and unsurprisingly the bulk of commissions were taken by Co-operative organisations. A number of films were produced for retail Co-operative Societies, such as Peterborough, Liverpool, Coalville and Nottingham [NCFC 095, NCFC 101], and an important commission undertaken for the SCWS in the *Two Good Fairies* [NCFC 103], to mark the Beveridge Report of 1942.²¹⁰ More substantial progress was made in respect of film distribution and exhibition, and the promotion of workers' film education. Eventually, a library of 900 sound films and 500 silent films was compiled and an impressive roster of film industry sympathisers and Labour Movement officials lectured to budding worker film-makers at schools held across Britain.²¹¹

The contribution of Co-operative bodies proved crucial to the viability of the Association. It had always been the case that the Co-operative Movement had demonstrated greater willingness to engage in cinema work and Reeves was aware that a successful Labour film service needed the participation of wealthy and influential organisations such as the CWS and Co-operative Union. He, therefore, sought to dispel the distrust that had emerged during the formation of the WFA and strove to include as many Co-operative groups as possible in the work of the Association.²¹² Negotiations with the Co-operative Union continued on through the war with the object of making the WFA truly representative of all three Workers' Movements. The Union dragged its feet on this matter and was clearly unwilling to take action independent of the CWS. In the initial stages of the war the Union retained its connections with the Association through membership of the WFA's Advisory Committee (which became the National Joint Film Committee in 1941), but persistently deferred a decision to assume full membership of the organisation.²¹³ In contrast, the Educational Executive of the Union showed a willingness to take-up full membership and were prompted to press the Union Executive on the matter after learning of the WFA's intention to approach Co-operative Societies directly regarding membership.²¹⁴ The Educational Executive was evidently concerned that its legitimacy with regard to educational provision was being usurped, and as far as it was concerned, "the question of linking up with the Workers' Film Association had assumed a more acute form".²¹⁵ As far as the Educational Executive's role was perceived, it was a matter of not being left out in the cold as significant

developments in film education unfurled, and that it maintained relations with the WFA was demonstrated in the Association providing film shows at Co-operative Education Convention in 1940.²¹⁶ The higher authorities at the Union persisted in their loyalty to the CWS and its National Film Service, although representatives of both organisations did meet to deliberate on developments.²¹⁷ Despite difficulties brought on by wartime conditions, the CWS National Film Service contrived to operate, and it was reported to Congress in 1941 that 310 educational and entertainment films, and 2004 publicity films had been hired by retail Societies in the previous twelve months.²¹⁸

A significant re-orientation in relationships came about in the winter of 1941-42, when the CWS unexpectedly revealed that it had entered into an independent agreement with the WFA. Under the new arrangement the recently established CWS film unit would act as the 35mm production unit for the Association, and consequently it waived its previous objection to the Union's membership of the WFA.²¹⁹ While refusing the Association's request for membership of the Union, the Executive Committee at last consented to take-up shareholding membership of the Association.²²⁰ Immediate consent was granted that local Co-operative Societies be approached to assume associate membership of the WFA to facilitate the work of the Association in the regions.²²¹ As an inducement for the Union to adopt full membership of the WFA, it was arranged that a special minimum requirement for shareholding be granted, which in effect allowed for representation on the management committee without the necessity to make the usual two annual payments of two hundred and fifty pounds.²²² Just as the ideal of a film service fully representative of the Workers' Movements was about to be realised, further insurmountable problems presented themselves. In the first case, the rules revision that had derived from the Association's adoption of the provisions of the Industrial and Provident Societies Act after assuming the status of a Co-operative Society, did not allow for any special treatment of shareholders. The Co-operative Union would have to pay the annual subscription of five hundred pounds. The Union's response was to declare the demand as "not at present practicable". Furthermore, the Union was distressed to discover that the NACEC had been granted full membership of the Association. The Educational Executive considered that action as "entirely contrary to the desire originally expressed by the Labour Party, TUC and Co-operative Movement,

that only one national organisation from each side should be accepted as a shareholding member".²²³ In consequence of an action that had "entirely abrogated the spirit of [an] earlier agreement" the Co-operative Union again refused to join the management committee of the WFA.²²⁴

To some extent the Union was swimming against the tide in its intransigence over relations with the WFA. It might have rightly felt aggrieved over its recent treatment with regard to membership (and perhaps a little let down by the CWS), but a democratic organisation Co-operatively constituted like the WFA could hardly refuse full membership to a representative organisation like the NACEC, which had consistently supported the Association in its work. Other Co-operative bodies showed a far greater willingness to participate, and over 100 organisations readily became associate members of the WFA, including many of the leading Co-operative Societies and the National Union of Co-operative Officials.²²⁵ In addition, both the CWS and the SCWS assumed greater responsibility for the work of the Association and consented to distribute films on behalf of the WFA.²²⁶ The CWS, reversing an earlier decision, also now agreed to allow copies of its publicity films to be included in the WFA library and to be distributed along with the social documentaries, educational and propaganda films conventionally handled by the Association.²²⁷

Pioneer Films and Production on 16mm

A further Co-operative body, the London Co-operative Society, was drawn into the orbit of the Association and added considerably to its work. In the summer of 1942, it was announced that the WFA would distribute on behalf of Pioneer Films, the film unit of the London Co-operative Society. In addition, the Association agreed to place the production of 16mm films (with direct sound recording) with the unit.²²⁸ So, in effect, all the production arranged through the WFA was undertaken by Co-operative film units. The CWS handled professional 35mm productions, while Pioneer Films took commissions on the sub-standard 16mm format. It was immediately announced that the London unit was provided with orders for trailers for two Co-operative Societies and a

short film for the Liverpool Co-operative Society.²²⁹

The unit was based around the expertise of Frank Cox, a keen amateur filmmaker and member of the National Co-operative Men's Guild. He had commenced by making films of International Co-operative Day Fetes for the London Society in 1932. His colour films of the various fetes organised across the Society's trading district in 1936, brought him to the attention of the Political Committee, and in September 1937, the Committee appropriated fifteen hundred pounds for the establishment of a film unit.²³⁰ In 1936, Cox had advocated the establishment of a National Co-operative Film Society and his voice was lent to the emerging debate regarding a national film policy for the Movement, and which would shortly bring the NACEC, the Co-operative Union and the CWS into dispute. Cox's views were quite distinct. In tandem with Joe Reeves, he noted that a tremendous opportunity had been thrown up by the advent of the 16mm sound film. However, in contrast, he proposed production of films on this standard, believing the conventional method of professional production on 35mm with subsequent reduction to 16mm to be wasteful. He believed production should be co-ordinated and effort should be directed towards making story films, for which a fully equipped film unit should be created. He made evident his ambition and the means of financing it:

A very modest outlay would suffice to fit up and equip a studio for the production and processing of films. One-tenth of a penny in the pound of sales would provide more than sufficient money for such a studio equipped with cameras, lights and scenery for indoor sets, a laboratory for processing, and workrooms for the editing and production of films, besides the payment of the necessary salaries.²³¹

Such a scheme fell somewhere between the professional methods offered by the commercial industry and adopted by the CWS, and the various amateur film-making activities practised by Co-operators at the local level. Cox maintained that a "professional standard could be realised on the sub-standard format", and sought to progress beyond the voluntary effort conventionally associated with 16mm production. Cox's proposals found some support and one authority endorsed the potential of 16mm, believing that the technology could provide both "vivid 'realist' documentaries" and "dramatised feature films". Ambition was such, it was stressed that:

Nor is it beyond hope that what the Russians achieved *for their own audiences* in the great film "General Line" will be accomplished for, and by, Co-operators in this country. Everything depends upon our own effort.²³²

In the event, Cox found sponsorship for his cinema scheme with the Political Committee of the London Co-operative Society (LCS) and a small unit was established to work on three projects: a newsreel, a documentary and a feature. The total budget being fifteen hundred pounds. The team faced considerable technical problems in their quest to produce sound films on 16mm stock. Cox's professional background in the radio industry was invaluable as some equipment and processes had to be developed by the unit to realise the technology.²³³ Initially, the unit had to rely on technical support from the commercial firm of Pelly and Healey, and the first two films were released simultaneously in October 1937 as *Peace Parade* [NCFC 062] and *People Who Count* [NCFC 063]. The most ambitious film in the programme, a black and white talkie feature, was released the following year as *Utopia* and was "believed to be the first sub-standard film to be made by professional standards".²³⁴ A further fictional film was completed in the summer of 1938, *The Awakening of Mr Cole (Christopher Cole's Dream)*, based on a scenario submitted to a competition in *Reynolds News*.²³⁵

In 1938, Pelly and Healey were absorbed into the Gaumont British Corporation and Cox progressed his desire for independence by recruiting two of its leading technicians, Mr H Dance and Mr J Fergusson, who would make significant technical contributions to the unit's work in 16mm sound recording. The LCS film unit's greatest logistical and technical challenge was confronted in the summer of 1938, when it arranged to film the mass 'Pageant of Co-operation' mounted by the LSJEC at Wembley. At an early date it was planned to shoot the event in colour, and that brought new challenges to the technical team.²³⁶ The film was shot on positive Kodachrome stock with direct sound recording, which the unit achieved with their customised equipment and claimed as an innovation. Both the Pageant and the resultant film, *Towards Tomorrow* [NCFC 078], were remarkable productions and notable achievements of workers' culture in the inter-war period.²³⁷

The interest and quality of the unit's films were demonstrated by their inclusion in the catalogue of the CWS National Film Service and hence received a wide

distribution.²³⁸ In addition, the Pageant film was of such significance, and its record of a distinctive International Co-operators' Day Celebration of such relevance, that copies were sent abroad to Co-operative organisations in Canada, America and Finland.²³⁹ However, Frank Cox's advocacy of 'professional' sound production directly on 16mm failed to win any important adherents throughout the Co-operative 'films dispute' of the mid-late 1930s. As he admitted, "even in London we have two schools of thought in production - our own and one which insists that films must be made on 35mm film and reduced to 16mm".²⁴⁰ He was clearly referring here to Joe Reeves and the Five Year Film Plan, which had selected a commercial documentary film unit to produce the programme. There was certainly much sense in Reeves' decision: his ambitions for the WFA could hardly be predicated on an experimental process and importantly needed to ensure successful distribution, which required multiple copies of each film. The proven convention was to produce the master film on 35mm with subsequent reduction to 16mm for release prints. To be fair to Reeves, he did appreciate the cost effectiveness of Cox's method and his original formulations for film production by workers' bodies proposed the use of the 16mm camera. In his advocacy of film production by the trade unions he had envisaged:

The provision of sub-standard films made by the method of direct recording. This system had been considerably improved and societies which could not afford the heavy cost involved in the making of standard films, could now, for a very much smaller sum of money, order sub-standard pictures.²⁴¹

Furthermore, he proposed that the Association organise a service of newsreels on the sub-standard film; a model that had already been established as a mainstay of worker film-making.²⁴² However, Reeves believed that the Labour Movement's films had to be of sufficient quality to bear comparison with the conventional commercial release if they were to prove effective and attractive to audiences. He had been impressed by the films of social awareness that had emerged from the Documentary Film Movement, which closely conformed with his understanding of the propaganda potential of cinema, and he had approached those film-makers to produce the educational films required by the Movement. More modest projects could be entrusted

to sub-standard production, but they would assume a lesser role in the over-all scheme of film propaganda that the Workers' Film Association would embrace.

Cox's 16mm film unit would, therefore, remain on the fringes of Co-operative film activity in the 1930s and 1940s. It was fortunate to have a generous sponsor in the Political Committee of the London Co-operative Society, yet, the contradictions in film arrangements at the Society were apparent in the sponsorship of a 16mm film unit *and* participation in the Co-operative Five Year Film Plan. A situation that must have vexed Frank Cox and his ambitions for sub-standard film production.

The LCS film unit maintained an impressive production programme and produced several important Labour Movement films, which have subsequently not received the recognition they deserve from historians of Left-political cinema. In 1939, an election film promoting the Co-operative Party was commenced, to be ready for the expected contest in 1939-40. *The New Recruit* was shot at the GB-International Studios at Shepperd's Bush and was the first sub-standard film ever to be produced in a commercial studio.²⁴³ The film was described as "a Propagandist feature film with the Conservative Party in the role of villain".²⁴⁴ An attempt was made to promote the work of the unit to the wider Movement when shows were provided at the Co-operative Congress held at Margate in 1939. Delegates were treated to the 'People's Popular Pictures', which comprised of six of the unit's films and included new titles, *Fashion Parade*, *Each For All* and *Potter's Clay*.²⁴⁵

Into the war years, the LCS film unit produced some striking films of a progressive nature and attracted contributions from some impressive film-makers and artists. The first wartime film was *The Rape of Czechoslovakia*, directed by recent Czech exile Jiri Weiss, a celebrated documentarist previously with A-B Films, Prague. Weiss compiled the film from footage he had spirited out of the country, and commentary was provided and spoken by Basil Wright, a senior member of the British Documentary Film Movement.²⁴⁶ The film's topicality ensured it a wide distribution and some press interest, as well as praise from senior political exiles, Dr. Benes and Jan Masaryk.²⁴⁷ The film was claimed as "the first co-operative film to be shown in public picture houses on the same basis as other documentaries", and ran for two months at the Academy Cinema in Oxford Street.²⁴⁸ The status of the unit was such that it attracted

the attention of other influential figures and potential contributors. In the Spring of 1940, it was announced that J.B. Priestley had agreed to prepare a script and commentary for a proposed film with the working title of 'Britain Reborn'. I have found no evidence that the project was ever completed.²⁴⁹

Further films of topical and progressive themes were undertaken in 1940, one of the most interesting being *The Home Front*. Unusually, the film took a critical look at conditions on the home front, with "shopkeepers doing a little profiteering on the quiet; rich women shoppers doing a bit of private food hoarding during the early days of the war".²⁵⁰ These film-makers, in contrast to the official wartime films promoting unity, continued to articulate 'the deadly parallel' of the haves against the have-nots. As the commentary claimed: "Our aim must be a square deal and a square meal for everybody". A further slogan maintained that, "In wartime people should be making sacrifices - not profits".²⁵¹ In an early expression of the ideal of post-war reconstruction, the film proposed a "heartening message":

There is bound to be an ending to the longest war. Peace will return one day. Then we must demand - and secure! - a life worth living for everybody. No blackout in the streets and no blackout in human life. Real democracy is the end to strive for.²⁵²

It is a pity that a film proclaiming such a distinct and progressive message has been seemingly lost. The unit's endeavour "to bring democratic film propaganda before the general public" was continued with *John Smith Wakes Up*, a film about the political awakening of its eponymous hero to the horrors of Nazism.²⁵³

The film unit of the Political Committee of the LCS was renamed Pioneer Films in the autumn of 1940, reflecting both the increased independence of the unit, which was completing commissions for the wider Co-operative Society and its clearly demonstrated claim to have successfully launched sound production on sub-standard film. The unit also operated from Pioneer House, the HQ of the LCS.²⁵⁴ The unit now came under the control of a joint committee from the London Society's Management, Political and Education Committees. The growing professionalism of Pioneer Films was acknowledged when the film-makers were invited to participate within the WFA. It had been Cox's contention, within his conception of a National Co-operative Film Society,

that a well-resourced film unit working on 16mm film with direct sound recording could produce films on behalf of the whole Movement. In the winter of 1939, he had approached the Educational Executive of the Co-operative Union with the offer to handle production and exhibition on a broader scale, but the film sub-committee was hardly likely to compromise its relationship with the CWS National Film Service at that sensitive juncture.²⁵⁵ In 1942, Cox's aim was partially realised when Pioneer Films assumed all commissions through the WFA for production on sub-standard film. The CWS would undertake all production on 35mm film and the arrangement was negotiated "for the purpose of avoiding competition in the production of films among the democratic bodies".²⁵⁶ For the first time the leading bodies engaged in Co-operative film production and distribution were allied in a single organisation responsible for the cinema propaganda and education of the wider Workers' Movement. Only the Co-operative Union, itself only marginally associated with film work, remained outside the central structures.

As already noted, Pioneer Films immediately took on the modest commissions of two cinema trailers and a more substantial two hundred pound production for the Liverpool Co-operative Society. Unfortunately, contemporary circumstances were hardly conducive to encourage film production, although, one surviving film, *Progress*, for the Coalville Society, demonstrates the quality of the production unit's work, and remains the most complete record put on film of the extensive operations of a local Co-operative Society. A further benefit was that the London unit's library of films was included in the Association's catalogues and would have enjoyed a greatly enhanced distribution around Labour and progressive organisations.

An ambitious plan to produce a film story of the London Society's development and progress as part of the Rochdale Centenary celebrations of 1944, never appears to have come off and actual film production by the unit seems to have declined substantially.²⁵⁷ Wartime restrictions were further exacerbated by the actual loss of personnel through enemy action on the Capital.²⁵⁸ Some resources and energy were channelled into the preparation of recordings on disc of important speeches, and the further development of allied technology to assist sound recording for 16mm documentary films.²⁵⁹ A significant Co-operative film production that was undertaken

during the latter half of the war, and on behalf of the unit's original sponsors, the Political Committee of the LCS, was in connection with the Anglo-Chinese Development Society. The Society had been established in 1941, to promote inter-trading between the Movement and the Chinese Industrial Co-operatives, and two of its leading supporters were Alfred Barnes and Reginald Gosling, officials of the LCS.²⁶⁰ Persistent attempts were made to secure support for the new agency throughout the Movement.²⁶¹ A colour film promoting the work of the Society was commenced in the autumn of 1943, but was not finally premiered until the Spring of 1945, indicating the general difficulties the unit was confronting in production work.²⁶² Two further Co-operative films were delayed due to the lack of printing facilities: *This Precious Stone* for the Guildford Society; and a record of the Centenary Pageant mounted by the Nottingham Society. Unspecified work was also conducted for the military services, the Polish, French, Belgian and Dutch Governments, the Radio Corporation of America, Phillips Radio, the equipment manufacturer BTH, Gainsborough Pictures, Warner Bros., Gaumont British, The Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Fuel.²⁶³

After the war, Pioneer Films transferred to the People's Entertainment Society, a Co-operative theatrical venture with the aim of providing entertainment for the public, and the Co-operative Movement in particular, although there is no evidence that film work continued.²⁶⁴ Meanwhile, Frank Cox became a successful producer in the expanding sponsored film sector, establishing his own company, Chelsea Films.²⁶⁵ The hey-day of the politically motivated in-house production unit was over, and correspondingly the Movement would rarely involve itself with the kind of films that had emerged in the late 1930s and 1940s during the period of the Popular Front.

The CWS and Film Production in Wartime

Meanwhile, there was a People's War to fight and the Movement's film workers made their contribution to the progressive atmosphere of the period. In the early war years, the CWS had established its own film unit working on the professional 35mm format, and, as we have seen, eventually shared production duties with Pioneer Films

on behalf of the WFA. The kind of film-making assumed by the CWS was more typical of the direction adopted by the Movement in the post-war years: films produced to a set of aesthetic and technical criteria derived from the established industrial and sponsored film sector, and reflective of the demands of publicity and public relations.²⁶⁶ The assumption of film production by the CWS was in accordance with the demands of 'universal provision': the ideal state whereby the Movement had no reliance on Capitalist producers and assumed the production and distribution of all goods and services on behalf of consumers.²⁶⁷ As we have seen, in the late 1930s the Co-operative Press Limited had considered the business of film production as a natural extension of its publishing role, but had encountered opposition from the CWS.²⁶⁸ The Board of the Co-operative Press had been disappointed with the tensions that had arisen within the Labour Movement regarding workers' films, and most particularly in respect of the Co-operative Movement's failure to organise an adequate structure for the production of films. It was evident that the CWS felt it should be responsible for the central organisation of the Movement's film work, and prompted by the action of the Co-operative Press, moved, in the summer of 1940, to establish film production facilities as an adjunct to the already functioning film distribution service.²⁶⁹

Details of the new CWS film unit were reported in the autumn of that year, when it was announced that the Wholesale Society had acquired impressive facilities and experienced personnel to staff its film production unit. Plans were also in hand to erect a permanent studio in Manchester to centralise production. To supervise arrangements, the CWS appointed George Wynn, an experienced producer with Publicity Films Limited, who had been involved in film production for the CWS since the early 1930s. Along with Wynn came chief cameraman, Harry Waxman, an exceptional technician who would shortly be lost to the RAF Film Unit.²⁷⁰ The quality of the provision was readily praised, and it was:

definitely claimed that no other commercial trading enterprise in the country [possessed] such up-to-date facilities for making known the value of their own productions.²⁷¹

The rhetoric, apparent here, must be set beside the alternative approach and provision

championed by the LCS film unit, which was concurrently seeking to assume responsibility for the Movement's film production. The CWS patently associated itself with the contemporary discourse of 'professionalism', inherent in the 35mm format and to be achieved by experienced technicians like Wynn and Waxman. Indeed, despite the seeming innovation on behalf of the CWS directors, there was an evident continuity in approach to film work; both in terms of personnel and in the type of productions which the unit would undertake.

The new unit's first production was, ironically, a 16mm film record of the 1940 Co-operative Congress held in Glasgow.²⁷² However, the project was clearly an interim arrangement, and the unit was speedily engaged on more conventional publicity films, the first promoted product being tobacco.²⁷³ The unit also found itself handily placed to record the Manchester blitz of December 1940 and completed a 1,000 foot film, *Manchester Took It, Too* [NCFC 094], which was successfully distributed through the CWS National Film Service.²⁷⁴

The pre-war arrangements for training films were resurrected, and a film examining sales technique was prepared in 1941 and released as *Behind the Counter*.²⁷⁵ Although promised, further training films did not occupy the CWS film producers again until after the war. Also commencing in 1941, the CWS film unit was commissioned by the Government to produce official films to aid the war effort. The first production, *Machines and Men*, was made for the Ministry of Information, and subsequent projects were completed for the Ministry of Labour [*Lifting* (1944)], and the Ministry of Fuel and Power [*Boiler House Practice* (1943), *Furness Practice* (1946) and *Steam* (1944)].²⁷⁶ Film distribution was maintained through the National Film Service and Societies continued to draw on a library of Co-operative and informational subjects. It was estimated that around 2,000 films were applied for by Co-operative, Labour and other progressive organisations, while the CWS also mounted 225 film shows for local ARP units, the YMCA and other bodies. In addition, CWS films were released theatrically (six in 1942), while some titles were included in the expanding arrangements for non-theatrical distribution supported by the Ministry of Information. It was estimated that throughout 1942, CWS films were viewed by 26 million people.²⁷⁷

The SCWS also involved itself in a small number of film productions during the

war years. Late in 1941, the Scottish National Co-operative Propaganda Committee had first begun to consider a sound film to promote the Movement in Scotland.²⁷⁸ *Out of the Box* [NCFC 100] was released the following year and was vaunted as the first of a series of historical pictures to be made for the SCWS at the Merton Park Studios.²⁷⁹ The SCWS had been the first of the national federals to associate with the WFA, and accepted full membership in 1942. A film dealing with the Beveridge Plan, *Two Good Fairies* [NCFC 103] was commissioned under the auspices of the WFA and released late in 1943. The Scottish Society had considered that "the message of the Beveridge Plan was so important that [the] Society felt it should be given to the people by means of that short film".²⁸⁰ The film was provided with a theatrical release, while distribution throughout the Labour Movement was handled by the WFA.²⁸¹ Although isolated productions, these two films were impressive projects and the Scottish Movement's investment in film would expand considerably in the post-war period.

In the later war years, the English CWS embarked on its own expensive films, and completed the two most costly productions undertaken by the Co-operative Movement to that date.²⁸² The occasion of the first film was the centenary of Rochdale Co-operation in 1944. Initial discussion for the celebration of that significant event had begun to surface in the late 1920s²⁸³, but more formal proposals began to be aired towards the end of the 1930s. The Co-operative Union assumed responsibility for the organisation of the celebrations, and the wider Movement was invited to forward proposals in 1937.²⁸⁴ The utilisation of films as part of the activities first became apparent later in 1938, when the Co-operative Union and CWS, under the working arrangements of the new National Film Service, were charged with examining the:

Possibilities for production of two films, one showing the history and progress of the Co-operative Movement and one of general co-operative interest, starring a well-known and popular actress.²⁸⁵

The films sub-committee of the Co-operative Union reported the following year with more detailed proposals. A major film production costing twenty-five thousand pounds was recommended, to dramatically tell the story of the Rochdale Pioneers and suitable for general cinema audiences. A further film, more documentary in character, was

outlined, to be aimed at Co-operative audiences, and seeking to bring the history of the Co-operative Movement up-to-date. That film would cost five thousand pounds.²⁸⁶

The outbreak of war brought the discussion of celebrations to a halt and matters were postponed until the summer of 1943, when the Centenary Celebrations Committee was reconstituted.²⁸⁷ In view of the circumstances, more modest proposals were now entertained, although the Movement was convinced that the significant date should not pass unmarked.²⁸⁸ A memorial film, budgeted at fifteen thousand pounds, was agreed by the CWS Board in January 1944, and *Men of Rochdale* [NCFC 104] was immediately put into production by the CWS film unit in association with Verity Films, a production company run by Sydney Box and whose experience and expertise was required for the extensive narrative sequences.²⁸⁹ The film was completed for distribution in the summer of 1944, and its release was initially restricted to the 35mm format, for which it was estimated that about sixty Societies had suitable facilities for showing the film.²⁹⁰ The producers were quite deliberate in their efforts to widen the appeal of the film through dramatic reconstruction and even succumbed to adding 'glamour', supplied by actress Jill Evans who played the character, Sally. However, there was some concern that the inherent class consciousness of the subject might prevent a wide take-up by the trade. From the perspective of the Documentary Film Movement, it was felt that *Men of Rochdale* was a commendable effort, if weakened by a "predilection for orthodox studio cliches" (the ever-present tension between 'realism and tinsel'), and hoped for further productions on the history and achievement of Labour.²⁹¹

Within the Co-operative Movement the film was not without criticism. A letter to *The Co-operative News* from a Guiseley Co-operator complained of a "timidity and complacency" in the production, and that the film lacked a genuine sense of the struggle experienced by the Pioneers, and a disappointment that the events related were not developed to encompass a national or international dimension.²⁹² Defenders were quick to respond, and the film was favourably compared to other centenary activities, such as the pageant written by L. Du Garde Peach, and it was maintained that the film's construction attained admirable balance, providing "instruction with a commendable degree of historical accuracy, sweetened with just about the right amount of

entertainment".²⁹³ The official organ of the Co-operative Union was strongly supportive of the film, sensing a richness and honesty of characterisation usually associated with the French film.²⁹⁴

In the event, the Movement's centenary production became one of the most widely exhibited Co-operative films. By the Spring of 1945, *Men of Rochdale* had achieved over a thousand exhibitions in public halls and cinemas throughout Britain and prints in the sub-standard format were becoming available, which enabled a significant boost to screenings across the Movement and to other progressive organisations. Furthermore, prints had been despatched abroad where displays were recorded for Canada, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, America and Switzerland. Arrangements were also reported for exhibition in Ceylon, Russia, Sweden and China.²⁹⁵

Song of the People [NCFC 105], the Movement's last film released during the war, was an unusual and equally outstanding production. Financed by the CWS, it involved numerous creative personnel from the commercial industry and forcefully articulated the progressive consensus that had emerged in Britain during the war. Unlike *Men of Rochdale*, the film did not receive a widespread theatrical distribution as its radical content, according to the film trade journal *Kine Weekly*, was too strong for the average showman who would "hardly risk showing a picture with so frank a political flavour". Indeed, the film's declamatory style led the reviewer to an unexpected comparison: "In spirit and drive, it is akin to the sociological subjects formerly put out by the Soviet Union".²⁹⁶ A CWS magazine assessed the film as "a unique interpretation of the meaning of history in an entirely new musical technique" and the reviewer with *Documentary News Letter* was also impressed by the film's fresh approach to its subject matter and its professional handling of the 'hazardous' task of re-enacting history.²⁹⁷ Subsequently, Labour film historian, Bert Hogenkamp, has likened the film's style to that of the "living newspaper", a typical dramatic form of radical theatre in the 1930s.²⁹⁸ Between 1938 and 1945, several Co-operative films took working-class history as their theme and offered a radical articulation of the national past, which stood in stark distinction to the mainstream cinema's vision of Britain's heritage (other examples being: *Advance Democracy*, *Towards Tomorrow: Pageant of Co-operation*, *Voice of the People*, *Men of Rochdale*).²⁹⁹ It was as if Labour was reclaiming a sense of the past in

preparation for assuming control of the future, something which beckoned as the war came towards an end.³⁰⁰

"Co-operators Should Be Shot": Local Society Films

There remains a further area of important activity in Co-operative film and which emerged in the inter-war period. As previously noted, the sub-standard sound film was appreciated for the potential it offered the Movement's film work in terms of production (Cox) and distribution (Reeves). Elsewhere, amateurs and hobbyists adopted the silent (and later the sound) 16mm format and put it to use on behalf of their local Societies.

A discourse regarding 'Local Co-operative Films' began to emerge in the early 1930s, deriving from a small number of pioneer amateur film-makers who sought to propagandise the educational value of the technology. Experimentation with sub-standard equipment spontaneously emerged in a number of locales and articles began to appear in the Co-operative press detailing the successes and progress of this coterie of cine enthusiasts. Discussion was further offered at Co-operative educational conferences where this new cinema initiative was recognised as a particularly 'Co-operative' activity, grounded as it was in a voluntary, non-commercial impulse. Admittedly, tensions remained between advocates of a Co-operative cinema strategy; the 16mm format was recognised by most as an advantageous development for the user of the educational and propaganda film, yet significant opinion was railed against a reliance on what were perceived as the conventional weaknesses of 'amateurism'. While not denying a specific local benefit to individual Societies from the voluntary method, the schools of Cox and Reeves advocated a more 'professionalised' approach to the utilization of 16mm apparatus for national schemes.

While the actual operating criteria for a national Co-operative film policy was being contested, a more modest set of proposals were being simultaneously worked up at the local and regional level. Well away from the realm of professional activity (or professional ambition), Society activists cum cine enthusiasts were impelled by more conventional notions of voluntarism, amateurism and localism.³⁰¹ An important early

practitioner and propagandist was J.H. Poyser, a member of the Long Eaton Co-operative Society in Derbyshire. His amateur film work on behalf of the Education Committee of that Society commenced in 1934, and throughout the decade he maintained a constant flow of letters and articles to the Co-operative press, and made frequent interjections at conferences, claiming cine work as a valuable adjunct to local Co-operative propaganda. His promotional work was influential in developing practices and forms for 'Local Co-operative Films'.

Assessing the lessons of his first season's work in 1934, he readily claimed that "the experiment [had] been a huge success", and recommended 16mm film work as "a method of propaganda and education, well within the powers and financial resources of a fair-sized Co-operative Society".³⁰² Elsewhere, he reiterated those views, adding that: "Subsequent experience has proved convincingly that the sub-standard film is a popular and most fruitful medium of Co-operative propaganda, education and entertainment".³⁰³

An important element of the discourse, in the manner of the conventional home-movie magazines and periodicals, was the practical and logistical advice offered by the film-maker of experience. It is instructive to note how elemental such terms as amateur, hobby, fun, amusing, voluntary, leisure etc., were to the discourse, which aimed to present the activity within the abilities of the average member of the community and to ensure a neat ideological 'fit' with the self-help ideals of Co-operation. Thus, the specific attributes of the 16mm format were detailed: relevance, cheapness, non-inflammability, manageability of the camera and portability of the projector.

In his 'Review of a successful experiment', Poyser suggested suitable subjects for filming available to a Society and the nature of the resources that might be drawn upon. Mr Poyser's first series of films, shot in the summer of 1934, comprised a mix of Co-operative and Municipal topics: *Urban District Council Activities; Long Eaton, 1934; Hospital Carnival;* and *Co-operative Milk* [NCFC 033], were subjects reflective of the integration of a Co-operative Society with its local community. The collection was supplemented the following summer with *Co-operative Bread* [NCFC 038], *Spending the Divi, Educational Facilities in Long Eaton,* and *Hospital Carnival, 1935.* In addition, a film recording the demolition of the Society's old central premises and the erection of a new emporium, *Building Long Eaton's Biggest Shop* [NCFC 039],

remained in preparation.³⁰⁴ Milk and bread readily presented themselves as topics for filming as the production and retailing of those staple products embraced "the Co-operative ideology of 'source of supply to consumer'"; a clear triumph of 'universalism', whereby a Co-operative Society handled a product from field to doorstep.³⁰⁵

In 1936, the Long Eaton amateur film-maker developed a local variant on the conventional newsreel format, with a film incorporating seven months in the life and activities of the local Co-operative Society and the town. 'News' items included a performance in the town by the CWS Tobacco Factory Band, Co-operators' Day festivities, the crowning of the Carnival Queen (a female Co-op clerk), and the opening of a new branch store.³⁰⁶ The film aesthetics practised and advocated in these amateur Co-op films were drawn from established conventions of factual film-making: the newsreel; the expository documentary; and the home-movie; and as ideally constructed in amateur film journals such as *Home Movies and Home Talkies* and *Amateur Cine World*. Workers' cinema in Britain was strongly influenced by the dominant model of social realism exemplified by the Documentary Film Movement, and in particular adopted the form of the newsreel, being typically more comfortable in locating ideology in content rather than technique.³⁰⁷

Poyser's readership were provided with detailed examples of transforming available resources to the requirements of film work. He described how the Society's choir room was converted into a film studio,³⁰⁸ and how members and officials of a Society were valuable assets as actors and extras in the productions. For instance, the story film, *Holidays with Pay* (1938), featured the Education Secretary, a member of the Committee, and a boy and girl from the junior choir.³⁰⁹ Advice extended to the successful mounting of local film shows and the compiling of popular programmes and Poyser claimed over sixty presentations throughout the Society's trading district for the winter of 1934-35, with screenings combining popular films drawn from the commercial libraries (80%) and local films of Co-operative education and propaganda. Mr Poyser himself provided a humorous commentary to the otherwise silent show. It was reported that "the committee declared themselves satisfied with the 20% propaganda reaching people to whom the Society could not otherwise appeal".³¹⁰ The attraction of the Co-op Society films was grounded in the "local touch", it being argued that "the drawing power

of seeing yourself or your friends on the screen can equal if not surpass that of any highly paid film star of Elstree or Hollywood".³¹¹ Furthermore, Poyser boasted of the unfavourable contrast 'professional' films experienced when screened alongside his own productions, wherein "the artificiality and theatricality of the professional films as compared with the homely reality of our local films" was revealed.³¹² With the financial backing of the Education Committee, Mr Poyser kept abreast of technical developments: some colour footage was included in films commencing in 1935, and its usage increased; a sound projector was acquired for the winter screening programme of 1936, at that point used solely for commercial 'talkies'; and colour sound production commenced in 1937 with a mannequin parade film designed to showcase contemporary ladies' fashions.³¹³ Before the outbreak of the Second World War, "the dynamic little film-producing unit sponsored by the Long Eaton Society's Education Committee" had completed 20 films, with at least three ambitious story films to its credit.³¹⁴

Mr Poyser later claimed that his productive and discursive activities had aimed "to make Co-operators film conscious".³¹⁵ He thus accepted local amateur film work as complementary to the nationally co-ordinated cinema efforts of the CWS, Co-operative Union, the National Association of Co-operative Education Committees and the Workers' Film Association.³¹⁶ Significantly, he strove to establish the viability of amateur status and the credibility of local Co-op films. While not denying the instrumental nature of the activity - to make Co-operators - his discursive practice stressed amateur filmmaking as a shared collective experience and natural Co-operative practise:

As voluntary workers for the Movement we put something into it, but we got more in the way of fun, pleasure, and education out of it. Lookers on may see most of the game, but it is the *players who play the game*.³¹⁷

Mr Poyser's outstanding film and promotional activities fitted into a wider framework of local Co-operative film practise. At the Portsea Island Mutual Co-operative Society, Reginald Denny, the publicity manager, commenced film work as a responsibility of his office in 1935, producing a film record of the various trading departments of the Society, *Behind the Scenes* [NCFC 036], and a milk film [NCFC 043], among others. Later in the decade he transferred to the Leicester Co-operative Society where he

successfully completed sound film records of the Society's trading and cultural activities: productions provided with his own commentary. In the first four months of 1938, Denny organised twenty film shows across the Society's trading district, which were attended by 4,500 adults and 5,000 children.³¹⁸ Co-op newsreels were a staple of his film production work at both Societies [NCFC 045, NCFC 060, NCFC 075].³¹⁹ The Bolton Co-operative Society also became renowned for its film work and provided advice and expertise to neighbouring Societies through the services of Mr A Booth, the manager of Bolton Society's Cinematograph Department. Pioneering film work included colour footage of a local football match, the first film recording of Co-operative Congress, a film commission for the ARP (Air Raid Precaution), and celebrated colour films for the Manchester and Salford Society [NCFC 082, NCFC 088], including its Pageant at Belle View in 1939.³²⁰

Both Denny and Booth expended considerable effort promoting the advantages to a Co-op Society of local film propaganda. Through articles, film schools and conferences, technical advice was widely disseminated and specific practices and strategies advocated. In 1938, an open conference on films was held in connection with the Educational Convention of the Co-operative Union, and considerable debate was aroused concerning the "films question".³²¹ That summer, *The Co-operative News* commenced a series of articles titled *Films for Co-operators*. Recognising that "education and political committees are demanding films that will 'put over' ideals and principles", the series catered to the voluntary impulse with advice on "practical aspects of Co-operative film making and projection".³²² Topics included details of costs, information regarding film rental and programming, technical specifications of cameras and projectors, advice on film stock and formats, good practice, readers' queries, use of sound and colour, etc. Cine equipment manufacturers were encouraged to advertise alongside the various articles and accounts of amateur Co-op film-making, whereby enthusiasts and committee treasurers could compare the virtues of the Siemens 16-9, the Bell and Howell Filmosound and the 'Universal' Sprocketless projector.³²³ With the appearance of 'Films for Co-operators - No 9, Best Way of Taking "shots" Of Societies', interested readers were presented with the necessary technical information to consider the planning and execution of their own Co-operative film. The article is worth quoting

at length for the insight it provides into the particular construction of a Co-op Society's image allied to a set of specific aesthetic criteria derived from 'good' film practice:

In previous articles I mentioned that great care should be taken and plans prepared before starting a film of a society's activities. One interesting way of proceeding would be to take a member who has been in the habit of buying her groceries from the society through the other departments - meat, milk, laundry, boot and shoe, tailoring, drapery, etc.

First of all show a happy co-operative staff ready to assist members in buying co-operative productions with "service" before and after sales. Cleanliness of the various departments, particularly the milk and butchery should not be overlooked.

Microscopical shots showing the dangers of impure milk are always interesting, and are very instructive.

The various productive departments should be visited. The bakery and confectionary, including the wrapping of bread, should provide several interesting shots.

The laundry can be made very instructive by taking a particular garment through the whole process, including the ironing.

A synopsis of 200 feet alone could be built up round "Dividend", for thousands of co-operators depend upon their annual holiday out of their "divi", and members enjoying themselves at Blackpool can be incorporated in the film, particularly if the society runs an excursion department.

Imagination is necessary, and repetition should be avoided as far as possible, but do not take it for granted that your prospective audience knows everything you yourself know about the subject filmed, and details should be treated in full.

Link the shots up artistically and avoid dullness.³²⁴

Elements of this 'ideal' scenario were incorporated in local Co-op films around the country with amateur film activity at numerous Societies as well as with member organisations such as the Woodcraft Folk, the adult guilds and the British Federation of Co-operative Youth.

Thus, by the end of the decade there had developed an impressive momentum for local Co-op films, and the virtues of the voluntary impulse were being accepted, whereby, "enthusiasm on the part of amateur producers [was] making up for the lack of professional training".³²⁵ In reviewing the amateur/professional divide, one commentator concluded:

The sincerity of our best co-operative producers is undisputed. Their most recent productions show a great advance in sound effect and colour photography. The day cannot be far distant when those sections of the Movement, which at present patronise private film companies, must seriously consider supporting the production agencies within the Movement. It must not be forgotten that some of the best co-operative films have cost less than one hundred pounds, whereas the average film from a specialist firm

amounts to many times that figure.³²⁶

Of course, the film propaganda debate within the Co-operative Movement was but part of a wider discourse relating to the purposeful use of the sub-standard format. No less an authority than John Grierson argued for a considered and serious use of the new sub-standard technology: "After all, I am only asking amateurs to take themselves seriously as film workers". A strong advocate of the civic responsibility of the community, he maintained a consistent faith in cinema as an educator in citizenship. For him, amateur film-making could be a valuable ally to the professionalised Documentary Film Movement: "the amateurs could be the greatest production group in the country - making as many as a thousand serious films a year - if this alliance with local work and Social Service were effected".³²⁷ A position quite consistent with local Co-op film propagandists. The social value of film was widely debated during the war and non-theatrical film exhibition expanded significantly. Co-operative Society Education Committees were warned that:

The sub-standard film production industry is likely to become extremely important in the near future, for there is little doubt that the exhibition of educational and other serious films to small audiences is shortly coming into its own ... thinking people are realising that the educational and social possibilities of the film are enormous, and that we can no longer afford to let these possibilities remain unexplored and unexploited. There is no doubt that Co-operative education committees throughout the country could take an important part in the development of the 16mm.³²⁸

As it transpired, the 1930s proved the golden age of local Co-operative film-making. In a few areas, such as film records of Woodcraft Folk activities, amateur film production continued, but entirely unsupported by the vigorous discourse that had sustained practice before the war. Consequently, it appears that it was the period of expanding prosperity which witnessed the emasculation of the radical potential of amateur film - and heralded the triumph of 'Home-movies'.³²⁹

The period 1927-1945 saw important developments in Co-operative film work. The British Movement made its contribution to new arrangements for the international distribution of Co-operative films around national Societies, and out of this the CWS

commenced a new and extended system of distribution to commercial cinemas. Such arrangements were expensive and indicated the Movement's willingness to devote resources to film work. However, Co-op educationalists sought to extend their own activities with film and considered the Wholesale Society's publicity films as inadequate to the role of turning members into Co-operators. Consequently, there emerged an alternative set of practices, embodied within the NACEC, which began to rival the 'official' Movement provision made available through the CWS National Film Service. This was the most extreme example of the tension between the traders and the educationalists yet seen with regard to film. Film activists within the NACEC felt greater empathy with the emergent cinema aspirations of other Labour organisations, and in 1938 were instrumental in the formation of the Workers' Film Association in tandem with the Labour Party and TUC. Joseph Reeves, the new Secretary-Organiser of the Association, was determined that film work would be conducted in a professional manner on the 35mm format, and despite the limitations placed on it by the outbreak of war, proceeded to make some progress. Other Co-op film bodies promoted the virtues of the 16mm film and notable achievements were realised at the local level, and in one case significant technical progress was claimed by a Co-op film unit. Eventually, most of these discrete operations were brought into the orbit of the WFA and Co-operators were at the heart of Labour film production, distribution and exhibition during wartime. The Labour Party and the unions made only a nominal contribution to the film work of the WFA, and after the war, during the elation of a Labour election victory, a new Labour film service, even more closely structured around existing Co-operative Movement cinema provision, would seek to involve more fully the Labour Party and trade union branches in film work. The experiences of the National Film Association are examined in the following chapter, which then goes on to consider the impact of commercial television on Co-operative publicity and the increasingly unsupportive climate for educational film work in a period of relative economic decline for the Movement.

NOTES - Chapter 4

1. Low, R., *Films of Comment and Persuasion of the 1930s* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1979), and *Documentary and Educational Films of the 1930s* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1979).
2. Hollins, T.J., *The Presentation of Politics: The Place of Party Publicity, Broadcasting and Film in British Politics, 1918-1939* (Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Leeds, 1981). For a discussion of the general international concern with propaganda, totalitarianism and democracy in the interwar period, see, Taylor, P.M., 'Propaganda in International Politics, 1919-1939' in Short, K.R.M., *Film and Radio Propaganda in World War II* (London: Croom Helm, 1983).
3. Turner, G.E., 'The Moving Picture in Industry', *Proceedings of the Institute of Production Engineers*, part 2 (1922); 'Industrial Films and Their Uses', *Industrial Welfare* (October 1928): 317-319.
4. The concern regarding the promotion of American commerce by Hollywood films was one feature of the debate around the 1927 Cinematograph Films Bill, which sought a measure of protection for the British film industry - and British manufacturers?. See, Richards, J., *The Age of the Dream Palace. Cinema and Society in Britain 1930-1939* (London: Routledge, 1984): 62-63. One of the debates was reported in the Co-op press as 'The Menace of the Movies', *The Co-operative News* (14 February 1925): 8.
5. 'Mancunian', 'Why Not Co-operative Pictures?', *The Co-operative Official* (May 1927): 181-182. The general attitudes of the Labour Movement towards the 1927 film legislation is discussed in Jones, S.G., *The British Labour Movement and Film, 1918-1939* (London: Routledge, 1987): 93-103.
6. 'Mancunian', op. cit.: 181.
7. Cole, G.D.H., op. cit.: 302-303.
8. 'Co-operative Films', *The Co-operative Productive Review* (July 1929): 312.
9. Graham, A.S., 'A Film Plan. Why Not News Reels of Co-operative Events?', *The Millgate* (September 1934): 691-693. See also, 'A Co-operative Film', *The Co-operative Productive Review* (August 1929): 330-331.
10. 'Co-operative Films', *The Co-operative News* (5 November 1938): 10.
11. *The Co-operative News* (25 April 1936): 12.
12. 'Co-operative Films', *The Co-operative News*, op. cit.
13. Hall, F., and Watkins, W., *Co-operation* (Manchester: Co-op Union, 1937): 230-231, 331-332.
14. *Report of the Proceedings of the Twelfth International Co-operative Congress* (London: Co-op Printing Society, 1927): 253-257. There is no indication that in this early period the ICA involved itself in film production and concentrated on the compilation of a catalogue of Co-operative films, the first being issued in 1930.
15. 'Bavarian Film-Story', *The Co-operative News* (11 March 1922): 4; 'Co-operation on the Screen. How Finland Does It', *The Co-operative News* (22 October 1923): 4; 'Propaganda By Train', *The Co-operative News* (11 October 1924): 4; 'Kinema Propaganda. Dutch Enthusiasm', *The Co-operative News* (9 May 1925): 4; 'Cinema Conquers. A Dutch Enterprise', *The Co-operative News* (13 February 1926): 1.
16. Stolpe, H., 'The Film in Co-operative Service', *The Co-operative Review* (November 1928): 216.
17. 'Susie Kerkstraten. A Film with a Co-operative Idea', *Woman's Outlook* (25 August 1928): 686-687.
18. 'Rochdale Pioneers on the Film', *The Producer* (February 1929): 45.
19. *Report of the Proceedings...*, op. cit.: 253-254. The argument is substantially developed in Stolpe, op. cit.; while a brief outline of the Continental response to the ICA's recommendations is presented in Dijkstra, W., 'Film Propaganda', *Review of International Co-operation* (1929): 410-411.
20. 'The Films and Co-operative Propaganda', *The Co-operative Productive Review* (November 1927): 72-73.
21. 'New CWS Films', *The Producer* (December 1927): 32; 'Film Advertising', *The Labour Magazine* (January 1928): 458; 'A Film With A Story Interest', *The Co-operative News* (7

- January 1928): 1; 'The Magic Basket Film', *The Co-operative News* (28 January 1928): 11; 'The Hand of Power. The Story of the Film: *The Magic Basket*', *The Wheatsheaf* (February 1928): 23-24; 'Film Advertising', *The Labour Magazine* (February 1928): 478. The film was widely promoted throughout the Co-op press, and as well as the above, various scene and production stills appeared in: *Ourselves* (January 1928): 7; *The Producer* (February 1928): 99; *The Wheatsheaf* (March 1928): 34; *The Co-operative News* (3 March 1928): 9; *The Co-operative News* (24 March 1928): 9. A regular listing of cinemas including the new CWS films in their programmes commenced in *The Co-operative News* on 11 February 1928. Stephen Jones, taking Percy Redfern's lead, incorrectly ascribes *The Magic Basket* as the Movement's first story film, unaware of the financial propaganda films of the early 1920s.
22. 'New CWS Films', op. cit. On *The Magic Basket* in particular there appeared the following assessment: "There, in a fashion more telling and decisive than could be almost any other (sic) the advantages and the justice of consumers' co-operation are made crystal clear to the man and the woman in the street', 'Co-operation on the Screen', *The Co-operative News* (31 August 1929): 1.
 23. *Ourselves* (March 1928): 29.
 24. *Ourselves* (August 1928): 35; 'Soap In The Limelight', *The Co-operative News* (13 October 1928): 5.
 25. *The Co-operative News* (13 October 1928): 8. A production still for the film appears in *The Wheatsheaf* (March 1929): 34. *The Cup That Cheers* was the first film of the series to be released in Scotland and was followed by *The Magic Basket* in 1929. The CWS publicity films were booked into 250 cinemas in Scotland, see, 'Film Propaganda', *The Producer* (March 1929): 79.
 26. *Ourselves* (March 1928): 29; *The Co-operative News* (2 March 1929): 8. Production stills for the film appear in *The Producer* (September 1928): 285; *The Wheatsheaf* (October 1928): 153; while scene stills appear in *The Wheatsheaf* (October 1928): 152; *Ourselves* (February 1929): 29.
 27. *The Co-operative News* (31 August 1929): 8. Scene stills from the film appear in *The Wheatsheaf* (March 1929): 34; *The Co-operative News* (7 September 1929): 3; *Ourselves* (January 1930): 7.
 28. *The Co-operative News* (23 November 1929): 8. The film was released in two versions: one promoting CWS Congress soap, another promoting CWS Minerva soap. See, *The Co-operative News* (30 November 1929): 8, which gives the playdates for each version that week. A scene still appears in *The Co-operative News* (4 January 1930): 7.
 29. *The Co-operative News* (11 January 1930): 8. A scene still from *The Bright Side of Things* appears in *The Co-operative News* (18 January 1930): 8. The subject of *Work and Play* was unusual and was selected to illustrate "the human side of the CWS", see, *Ourselves* (April 1929): 25.
 30. *The Co-operative News* (29 November 1930): 4. A series of production and scene stills for nine of the films appear in 'Scenes From The Screen. A Pictorial Supplement from the CWS Films', *The Wheatsheaf - Pictorial Supplement* (February 1930): i-iv.
 31. Scene stills from the film appear in *Ourselves* (December 1928): 33.
 32. 'Scenes From The Screen', op. cit.: 1.
 33. *The Co-operative News* (26 July 1930): 8.
 34. 'CWS Films in Argentina', *The Producer* (May 1929): 181-182.
 35. 'CWS Films', *The Producer* (August 1929): 201. A summary of the CWS film-lecture service for 1929-1930 concluded that:

The lecturers for the society have, in many halls of co-operation, guided the audiences to an appreciation of the benefits of co-operation. They have been missionaries whose words have told ... and all who lectured and operated have been animated by the desire to tell the story with a view to the collective welfare. They have, in that, shown a thoroughly co-operative regard; for the society is greater than the individual and the movement larger and wider than the society.
- 'Films and Lectures', *The Producer* (April 1930): 119.

- The CWS Newcastle lecture department had to expand to meet the demand for 140 shows during the 1930 season, with particularly heavy bookings during the Propaganda Fortnight, see, 'CWS Cinema Lectures. Increased Bookings', *The Co-operative News* (10 January 1931): 11.
36. 'The Influence of the Cinema. CWS Offer to Societies', *The Co-operative News* (20 September 1930): 3.
 37. 'New CWS Film', op. cit.
 38. 'Publicity Among Employees', *The Producer* (September 1928): 288. There is little evidence that industrial firms were using films as direct training aids at this time, although it was generally recognised that the industrial film could be used to inform staff and benefit salesmanship: "Apart from the value of the industrial film for publicity propaganda,, it can be used with every advantage to educate the salesman. After seeing the factory film ... even the least experienced could talk intelligently to the likely buyer on the essential points connected with the making of the goods", Turner, G.E., op. cit.: 124.
 39. 'Advertisement Films', *Labour Magazine* (October 1929): 287. The CWS films also found attentive and enthusiastic audiences among CWS employees who enjoyed seeing their colleagues on the screen, see, 'On The Screen', *Ourselves* (February 1930): 30.
 40. 'CWS At Olympia. Film Displays at Ideal Home Exhibition', *The Co-operative News* (29 March 1930): 1.
 41. 'Influence of the Cinema', op. cit.
 42. 'Co-operative Film Advertising', *Labour Magazine* (April 1930): 575.
 43. 'Co-operation on the Screen', op. cit.
 44. *The Co-operative News* (27 December 1930): 4.
 45. *Ourselves* (November 1930): 48. There appears here a selection of scene stills from the film featuring operatives at the CWS mill at Huthwaite.
 46. 'Linking Up "Talkies" To Business', *The Co-operative News* (22 November 1930): 1; 'First CWS "Talkie" Films', *The Producer* (December 1930): 370. It was deemed essential that drapery managers should make exclusive shows of CWS productions during and immediately after the exhibition of the film.
 47. 'Her Dress Allowance', *The Producer* (December 1930): 341.
 48. *The Co-operative News* (17 January 1931): 4. The film was produced in two versions, promoting both Congress and Minerva soaps.
 49. 'Britain's Canning Industry', *The Co-operative News* (24 October 1931): 13. Emphasis added. It was later claimed that the CWS were the first to utilise portable sound projectors for its film lectures, see, 'Services Provided By The CWS Film Dept.', op.cit.:15.
 50. *Ourselves* (September 1932): 29; "'Back To Back'", *The Co-operative News* (31 December 1932): 1; "'Back To Back'", *The Wheatsheaf* (February 1933): 24; "'Back To Back'", *The Co-operative News* (4 February 1933): 1.
 51. 'Film Advertising', *The Labour Magazine* (March 1933): 527.
 52. Ibid. Although the film dealt broadly with the great industrial ramifications of the CWS, its ostensible trade concern was tea and an impressionistic account of the production of the film can be found in 'The New "Tea" Film - Watching It Being Made', *Ourselves* (November 1932): 19. See also, 'General Release of CWS Film "Partners"', *Ourselves* (October 1933): 1.
 53. "'From Back To Back". Film Displays At Yarmouth', *The Co-operative News* (29 April 1933): 13.
 54. 'Propaganda by Film', *The Producer* (January 1928): 74.
 55. 'Film Propaganda', *The Producer* (March 1929): 79.
 56. Ibid.
 57. 'New CWS Film', *Ourselves* (April 1934): 23; 'The Camera Tells Its Story', *The Co-operative News* (5 May 1934): 11. Items in the CWS 'newsreel' included national sporting events such as the Grand National and the Cup Final, the Duke of York visiting a CWS margarine factory, the opening of the Reading Printing Works, the new London branch administrative buildings, the Worksop Glass Works, and recent extensions at Lowestoft. For an account of the filming of the Manchester Tobacco Factory Prize Band, see, 'To London to Be Filmed', *Ourselves* (September

- 1933): 3.
58. 'Our Own Talkies', *Ourselves* (April 1934): 23. There is reference to a further 'newsreel' recording a "cavalcade of CWS events in 1935", see, 'The Cinema and Business', *Ourselves* (February 1936): 67-68. For an account of a film show to employees by a CWS lecturer, see, 'London Belmont Girls Like The Films', *Ourselves* (April 1936): 152.
 59. 'New Tea Film: "The Rose of the Orient"', *The Producer* (December 1935): 359. For the tea demonstration vehicle, see, *The Producer* (June 1935): 169; *The Producer* (August 1935): 232. A brief review of *The Rose of the Orient* appears in *The Commercial Film* (June 1935): 6. The film was judged the biggest project yet undertaken by the Society, see, 'CWS Films', *The Co-operative News* (9 January 1937): 10. The CWS issued a set of coloured trading cards depicting scenes from the film.
 60. 'Film Stars. Productive Workers in New "Talkie"', *The Co-operative Productive Review* (December 1934): 105. For some idea of the content of the film, see, 'Selby "Film Stars"', *The Co-operative Productive Review* (February 1936): 143.
 61. 'Milk "Talkie" Film', *The Co-operative News* (20 August 1932): 1; '"Better Health: Story of Co-operative Milk Supply"', *The Co-operative News* (19 November 1932): 13; *Co-operative Union Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1934*: 206, 227, 270.
 62. 'A Co-operative Milk Film', *The Co-operative News* (12 September 1931): 7.
 63. 'A Jubilee Film', *The Co-operative News* (24 October 1931): 1.
 64. On the Kinning Park film, see, *The Producer* (February 1928): 106, where it reveals that the Society's film was securing good propaganda and helping to overcome recent reversals in fortune.
 65. 'Society As Film Producer. Enterprise At Leeds', *The Co-operative News* (6 October 1928): 4.
 66. 'Film Display at Selby', *The Co-operative News* (3 January 1931): 3; 'Progress At Selby', *The Co-operative News* (10 January 1931): 6.
 67. 'Mr and Mrs Wise. Their Story on the Screen', *The Co-operative News* (7 November 1931): 11.
 68. See, in particular, Box, S., *Film Publicity A Handbook on the Production and Distribution of Propaganda Films* (London: Lovat Dickson, 1937). A trade periodical, *The Commercial Film* appeared in 1935, and *World Film News*, the organ of the Documentary Film Movement, also carried considerable material on film sponsorship.
 69. 'New film public acclaims sponsored pictures', *World Film News* (August 1936): 37.
 70. While critics have recognised that sponsorship was a crucial aspect of documentary in Britain, few have paid much attention to the commercial dimension of the films' production and meaning. The historiography of non-fiction film in Britain is characterised by a narrow approach towards a canon of films and film-makers who coalesced around John Grierson, and the much broader field, which includes the more overtly commercial films typical of production companies like Publicity Films, as well as other 'genres' such as the educational film, the scientific film, the religious film etc., awaits investigation. An honourable exception is Rachael Low who has partially sketched in the picture in her *Documentary and Educational Films of the 1930s* and *Films of Comment and Persuasion of the 1930s*, both (London: Allen and Unwin, 1979). See also, Swann, P., *The British Documentary Film Movement 1926-46* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989): 95-122, who provides some discussion of the 'independent' documentary film sector of the 1930s.
 71. Grierson, J., 'The Film in Industry: The Development of "Non-Theatrical" Cinema', *Proceedings of the Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureaus* (1936): 103-109. See also, Payne, H.R., 'Industry and the Film', *Sight and Sound* (Spring 1932): 21-22. This was the first article on film publicity to appear in *Sight and Sound*, which at that time was devoted to matters of film education.
 72. 'New film public ...', op. cit.
 73. Box, S., *Film Publicity*, op.cit.: 19. The book contains considerable practical detail regarding the ins and outs of industrial film sponsorship in the 1930s, and provides useful information regarding production, distribution and exhibition for the historian.
 74. Ovenden, E., 'The Film as Salesman. Its Part in Trade Propaganda', *The Co-operative Official* (February 1938): 86-87. For an interesting and revealing endorsement of the joining of sponsorship with public service, see, 'Education Replaces Sales-Plugging in Latest Advertising

- Films', which appeared in the Documentary Film Movement's journal, *World Film News* (June 1936): 25, and takes as its focus Publicity Films Ltd., which is commended for a partial accommodation to the ideal of social responsibility.
75. *Co-operative Union Annual Congress Report 1936*: 332.
 76. In his primer for the publicity film, Sydney Box makes distinction between the 'interest' film (primarily educational) and the 'entertainment' film. The latter being characterised by a story, musical elements, and perhaps animation. See, Box, S., *Film Publicity*, op. cit.: 40-51.
 77. 'Millions Spent On Advertising', *The Co-operative News* (23 October 1937): 15. For an excellent example of a contemporary animated publicity film, see, *See How They Won* (1936), produced in Hollywood for Boots the Chemist.
 78. 'Co-operative Cartoon Colour Film', *The Producer* (January 1937): 7. The article includes some 'stills' from the film. The colour process utilised is not indicated.
 79. Box, S., *Film Publicity*, op.cit.: 30. According to Box, "The cartoon film offers the publicist far greater licence than any other type of propaganda picture because it is, by its very nature, divorced from reality. Over-emphasised advertising, which would not be tolerated in a natural photography film, can be presented in an amusing manner by cartoon without giving offence to anyone". Ibid.: 48. The approach to animation within the Documentary Film Movement was quite different, as represented in the work of Len Lye.
 80. Ovenden, E., 'Films in Colour', *The Co-operative Official* (February 1939): 100-101.
 81. 'CWS Colour Films', *The Co-operative News* (4 December 1937): 2.
 82. 'CWS Publicity Films', op. cit. Early in 1938, *Reynold's News* held a competition for its readers to select the most popular Co-operative publicity films of the year. In descending order they were *Fruit On The March*, *Meat For The Millions* [NCFC 061] and *Partners* (despite having been around for several years). Box, S., 'Special Collection', held at BFI library.
 83. '"Co-operettes" will "say CWS"', *The Co-operative News* (15 October 1938): 1; '"Sam Small's" Latest Adventures are in a Co-operative Store', *The Co-operative News* (21 January 1939): 1. The publicity claimed that the film would be seen by five million people during the first week of its release.
 84. '"Telling the World"', *The Wheatsheaf* (January 1939): 11. At nearly fifteen minutes the film was appreciably longer than the conventional promotional film. A sequence from *Co-operette* was used in a recent TV campaign to reintroduce Co-op dividend in Scotland.
 85. 'Films in Colour', op. cit.; 'New Publicity Film', *The Producer* (November 1938): 309. A previous CWS film, *Homes of Britain* [NCFC 072] had been shot in Dufaycolor earlier in 1938. Details of the Dufaycolor process and a complete list of short films using the technology can be found in Huntley, J., *British Technicolor Films* (London: Skelton Robinson, 1948): 202-204. It was claimed by a CWS publicist that the organisation had acquired its first colour films as early as 1910, although no specific details are presented. See, 'The Co-operative Film Service', op. cit.: 25.
 86. *Comradship and Wheatsheaf* (October 1936): xi. A series of advertisements relating to local CWS film shows are presented in *The Wheatsheaf - local supplement to the Oldham Industrial Co-operative Society* (February 1937): i.
 87. 'The Co-operative Film Service', op. cit.: 25-26. The CWS hosted a Publicity Cinema at the annual Co-operative Education Conventions, commencing with the inaugural Co-operative Education Exhibition at the 1936 event. See, *Programme, Co-operative Convention* (1936): 24.
 88. 'Advertising and Display', op. cit.: 12. By the beginning of 1938, the CWS Publicity Dept. had available 50,000 feet of trade film for propaganda purposes, see, 'Film Publicity', *The Co-operative Review* (January 1938): 10.
 89. 'Advertising and Display', op. cit.: 12-13. An undated document in the CWS library (c. 1937-38), detailing the activities of the CWS Publicity Dept., reports the presentation of 1,300 trade lectures attended by 350,000 people.
 90. 'Trade from Propaganda', *The Producer* (August 1938): 204. For a Co-op publicist's comparison of private and Movement trade film shows, see, A.L., Sugar, 'Film Show Comparisons. A Favourable Impression', *The Co-operative Review* (March 1938): 81-87. For a brief observational

report on a CWS publicity film show presented in December 1937 and conducted by Mass Observation, see, 'The Co-operative Movement in Worktown', M-OA: Worktown Box 39 File D: 16-17.

91. Box, S., *Film Publicity*, op.cit.: 36-37.
92. Ovenden, E., 'The Film as Salesman', op. cit.: 87. Opportunist tie-ups were also a feature of local activity when CWS films were presented as part of the playbill at the neighbourhood cinema.
93. *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes*: (22 August 1936): 3; (19 September 1936): 5; (17 October 1936): 3; *Co-operative Union, National Educational Council Minutes* (17 October 1936): 3.

A resolution was carried at the Annual Co-op Congress (1938), demanding the promotion of film work under the Ten Year Plan:

That the Congress, recognising the importance of education as an essential factor in developing the Co-operative Movement, urges all societies to make greater efforts to secure the realisation of the Ten Year Educational Plan, and in particular to promote - b) the utilisation of the film in co-operative educational work.

See, *Co-operative Union Annual Congress Report 1938*: 537.

94. *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (17 April 1937): 3-4; (19 April 1937): 3; (19 June 1937): 5; (17 July 1937): 6; (18 September 1937): 4; (16 October 1937): 2, 4.
95. *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (17 July 1937): 6; (20 November 1937): 3; *Co-operative Union, National Education Council Minutes* (16 October 1937): 4; 'Proposals To Use The Screen As Educational Medium', *The Co-operative News* (25 June 1938): 6. The conferences were held at Manchester, London, Newcastle, Cardiff, Bristol and Birmingham.
96. 'Proposals To Use ...', op. cit.
97. Undated internal document on CWS publicity, op. cit.
98. 'Advertising and Display', op. cit.: 13. It also included two films produced for the Political Committee of the London Society in 1937: *Peace Parade* [NCFC 062] and *The People Who Count* [NCFC 063]. The catalogue comprised an impressive 107 pages of information and films.
99. *The Co-operative News* (1 January 1938): 3. A copy of the inaugural catalogue is held at the CWS library, Manchester, and the services and conditions are stated on page ii.
100. 'CWS Aid To Film Education', *The Co-operative News* (30 April 1938): 4.
101. 'Displays on Circuit', *The Co-operative Review* (November 1938): 336.
102. 'Success of New CWS National Film Service', *The Co-operative News* (5 November 1938): 8.
103. *Co-operative Union, National Education Council Minutes* (16 January 1937): 4-5.
104. Ibid. The initial suggestion to film Congress appears to have resided with a Bristol Co-operator who made the suggestion in a lecture entitled 'The Use of the Film in Co-operative Educational Work', see, 'Bath Congress on the Screen', *The Co-operative News* (19 December 1936): 1.
105. *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (16 January 1937): 3; (20 February 1937): 3.
106. The Executive Committee had no objection to the Educational Executive undertaking the project, but that was an unrealistic assumption, see, *Co-operative Union, Executive Committee Minutes* (21 April 1937): 20.
107. *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (20 March 1937): 3.
108. 'Scarborough Congress Relived on the Screen', *The Co-operative News* (24 September 1938): 9; 'The Congress Film. Officials "Shot"', *The Co-operative Official* (August 1938): 448.
109. Ibid.; 'Congress Film Now Ready For Renting', *The Co-operative News* (14 January 1939): 7. In 1938, the Women's Co-operative Guild had also arranged for an amateur film-maker to shoot its Congress at Southampton, a more modest production without a soundtrack. See, 'First Film of Guild Parliament', *The Co-operative News* (26 June 1938): 1.; 'Congress Film Needs Spoken Commentary', *The Co-operative News* (22 October 1938): 16. The film was photographed by Mr H. Niendorf of the Men's Guild.
110. 'Well Shot', *The Co-operative News* (13 August 1938): 1. This film apparently replaced an earlier proposal for a film aimed at juniors. See, *Co-operative Union Annual Co-op Congress Report*

- 1939: 80.
111. *The Co-operative News* (15 April 1939): 19; *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (20 May 1939): 3. The film was produced for the Union by two Lancashire amateur film-makers, and the story of the production will be taken-up later in the chapter.
112. *Co-operative Union Annual Congress Report 1939* : 80.
113. 'Screen Lessons in Salesmanship', *The Co-operative Review* (January 1939): 23. The use of films for training was largely undeveloped at the time. However, the discussions around a Co-op training film showed an awareness of comparable films in use with the Swedish Co-operative Movement and the Bacon Marketing Board. The scenario of a training film prepared by the Swiss Movement, *Verkauferschaft*, is presented in 'Vocational Films', *The Producer* (May 1939): 136; see also, *The Co-operative News* (1 April 1939): 4. A delegate to one of the film conferences held to debate the CWS National Film Service had suggested the production of films to teach salesmanship. See, 'Proposals to use...', op. cit.
114. Counterman, 'Film Training Plan', *The Co-operative News* (25 February 1939): 4. This anonymous 'expert' critic on Co-op trade, felt the plan to be insufficiently ambitious, and accused the Movement's leaders of being 'unimaginative' and 'unknowledgeable'.
115. *Co-operative Union, Joint Committee on Technical Education Minutes* (21 February 1939); '£1,000 Film Plan for Employee Training', *The Co-operative News* (25 March 1939): 4.
116. *Co-operative Union, Executive Committee Minutes* (17 March 1939): 15; *Co-operative Union, Joint Committee on Technical Education* (12 April 1939): 1.
117. *Co-operative Union, Joint Committee on Technical Education* (23 August 1939): 6.
118. The film was produced by Publicity Films and the scenario was evidently a house standard. Compare its plot with an earlier Publicity film, *Sweet Success*, whose storyline is presented in Box, S., *Film Publicity*, op.cit.: 51-64.
119. *Co-operative Union, Joint Propaganda and Trade Committee Minutes* (16 January 1939); (6 February 1939); (6 March 1939); (3 April 1939); *Co-operative Union Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1939*: 96.
120. *Co-operative Union, Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1939*: 96.
121. *Co-operative Union, Joint Propaganda and Trade Committee Minutes* (1 May 1939). By the late 1930s, daylight cinema vans were a well-established facility for audio-visual propaganda. A remarkably early reference to the use of the technology appeared at the turn of the century when it was utilised by Chadwick's Patent Advertising Company of Manchester:
- At the tail end of a large van a screen is erected when by means of a cinematographic lantern placed in front, animated advertisement films are projected on the screen, meantime the van is hauled about the streets. This will mean rather awkward work for the operator should the roads be at all uneven.
- The Optical and Magic Lantern Journal* (August 1900): 94.
- The equipment's use for political propaganda is altogether more well-known, especially its adoption by the Conservative Party commencing in the mid-1920s, see, Hollins, T.J., op. cit.: 55-109. In 1939, Kino were also operating a daylight cinema van, see the photograph in Hogenkamp, B., op.cit.: 205.
122. 'Co-operative Press Report Records Further Progress', *The Co-operative News* (3 December 1938): 5; 'Reynold's Marks Triumph of Co-operation in the Field of Popular Journalism', *The Co-operative News* (17 December 1938): 13.
123. *Co-operative Union, Executive Committee Minutes* (20 January 1939): 17.
124. 'Production of Films', *The Co-operative News* (16 December 1939): 5.
125. The details can be found in Hollins, T.J., op. cit.: 193-213; Jones, S.G., op. cit.:153-157; Hogenkamp, B., op. cit.: 176-188.
126. For a preliminary discussion of the educational film in this period, see, Low, R., *Documentary and Educational Films of the 1930s*, op. cit.: 7-47. The specific application of the film to history teaching is examined in Harper, S., *Picturing The Past: The Rise and Fall of the British Costume Film* (London: BFI, 1994): 64-76.
127. Butler, I., *To Encourage the Art of the Film. The Story of the British Film Institute* (London:

- Robert Hale, 1971).
128. 'Co-operative School at a Cinema', *The Co-operative News* (1 June 1929): 7; 'The Cinema and Education', *The Co-operative News* (25 May 1929): 13.
 129. 'Co-operative School', op. cit.; 'Film-Lectures. Cinematograph as an Educational Aid', *The Co-operative News* (1 June 1929): 6; 'Utilising The Cinematograph', *The Co-operative News* (22 June 1929): 14. It was revealed at those meetings that British Film Services had been advised by prominent figures such as Philip Snowden (Labour's new Chancellor of the Exchequer) to work with the Co-operative Movement to gain access to substantial audiences.
 130. The specific conditions are laid out in 'Film Service For Societies', *The Co-operative News* (24 August 1929): 2. The Co-op Union was also supporting the use of educational gramophones and proposals to secure discs of Co-operative subjects was announced.
 131. 'Cinema As Educational Aid', *The Co-operative News* (14 September 1929): 11.
 132. 'Sound-Film Display', *The Co-operative News* (15 March 1930); 7. The Western Electric Company were represented at the demonstration and its technical input would have been crucial.
 133. *Co-operative Union, Central Education Committee Minutes* (17 May 1930): 6. It was announced here that the Union had been requested to approach the CWS on the possibilities of a sound film on Co-operation being produced.
 134. 'Planning For The Next Ten Years', *The Co-operative News* (23 November 1935): 3. *Ten Year Plan for Co-operative Education* (Manchester: National Educational Council, Co-op Union, 1936).
 135. 'Educational Association', *The Co-operative News* (4 April 1936): 1.
 136. Clode, H.G., *A Short History of the National Association of Co-operative Education Committees* (1949): 7. In 1936, the Association held 237 affiliations from retail Societies.
 137. 'Educationists Differ On Ten Year Plan Proposals', *The Co-operative News* (4 April 1936): 13.
 138. 'The Film in Educational Work', *The Co-operative News* (18 April 1936): 4.
 139. 'Educational Methods Under Survey', *The Co-operative News* (1 August 1936): 3.
 140. 'Education From The Screen', *The Co-operative News* (29 August 1936): 9.
 141. *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (22 August 1936): 3. Provocatively, the Executive decided to send a representative who was not a member of its films sub-committee.
 142. 'The Film as an Instrument of Educational Policy', *The Co-operative News* (12 September 1936): 7.; 'Co-op Talkies', *The Cinema* (17 September 1936): 7.
 143. Reeves, J., *The Film and Education*, op. cit. A summary of the pamphlet also appeared as 'The Cinema and the Co-operative Movement', *The Millgate* (March 1937): 334-338.
 144. Ibid.: 16-19. It was reckoned that a minimum of fifty Societies accepting displays in twenty-six weeks of a year was required. The national film society idea bore some resemblance to the federation of film guilds proposed by the Labour Party around the same time, 'Federation of Film Guilds for the Labour Party', *World Film News* (November 1936): 29.
 145. Reeves' approach to cinema must be appreciated within a wider concern regarding the promotion of Co-op education. He had long appreciated the opportunity offered by mass communication and had written and lectured widely on the potential of 'scientific advertising' to the Movement. To gauge the emergence and development of Reeves' thinking on these matters see his numerous editorials and articles collected in *Comradeship*, the educational journal of the RACS, which he edited between 1918 and 1938. For his contemporary educational philosophy, see, Reeves, J., *Education For Social Change* (Manchester: Co-op Union, 1936).
 146. 'The Film as an Instrument of Educational Policy', op. cit.; 'The Film and Education', op. cit.: 8-10.
 147. 'To Keep Pace With The Times We Must Use Film Propaganda', *The Co-operative News* (22 July 1939): 6.
 148. 'The Film and Co-operative Education', *The Co-operative News* (26 December 1936): 3.
 149. *Co-operative Educator* (January 1937): 13; *Co-operative Educator* (July 1937): 78; *Co-operative Educator* (January 1938): 14-15.
 150. *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (21 November 1936): 3; *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (19 December 1936): 3; 'Educational Council Meets', *The Co-*

- operative News* (January 1937): 9.
151. 'Education Executive. Important Decisions on Films and Youth', *The Co-operative News* (28 November 1936): 5. The cautious recommendations of the film sub-committee of the Educational Executive are presented in *Co-operative Union, National Education Council Minutes* (16 January 1937): 4-5.
152. *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (20 February 1937): 3-4.
153. 'Co-operative Film Society in the Making', *The Co-operative News* (6 March 1937): 9. The arrangements were sensitive to the differing resources available to Societies and were clearly intended not to exclude smaller Societies.
154. *Co-operative Union, Executive Committee Minutes* (20 March 1937): 23.
155. 'A Peep into the Future. Sample Film Programme', *The Co-operative News* (3 April 1937): 15; *Programme, Co-operative Convention, 1937*: 15.
156. 'Co-operators and Films', *The Co-operative News* (3 April 1937): 2; 'Co-operators and Films', *The Co-operative News* (10 April 1937): 10.
157. *The Co-operative News* (3 April 1937): 10. At the first meeting of the Educational Executive following Convention, it was announced that:
 It was desired to make the CWS film department the agency through which films required by the Co-operative Movement should be obtained. Films at present obtainable through the department deal mainly with the trading operations of the CWS, but other types of films may be dealt with.
- 'Revised Policy for Easter. CWS as Film Agents', *The Co-operative News* (24 April 1937): 12.
158. *Co-operative Union Annual Congress Report 1937*: 461.
159. *Ibid.*: 456; 'New Educational Activities', *The Co-operative News* (25 September 1937): 7.
160. *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (17 July 1937): 6.
161. 'Film and Education', *Comradeship and Wheatsheaf* (May 1937): 1.; 'Co-operative Movement and Film Business', *The Co-operative News* (2 October 1937): 11; *Co-operative Educator* (July 1937): 80; *Co-operative Educator* (October 1937): 110-111.
162. 'Movement's Educational Film Policy', *The Co-operative News* (30 October 1937): 5. The first film shows under the auspices of the Association were provided for the Eccles Society who arranged a number of displays for children's rallies, *Co-operative Educator* (October 1937): 111.
163. 'Movement's Educational Film Policy', *op. cit.*
164. '"Dirty Work" Alleged In Film Dispute', *The Co-operative News* (26 February 1938): 3.
165. 'Cost of Film Service', *The Co-operative News* (30 April 1938): 12.
166. The extra prints would have cost the CWS Publicity Dept. £350, which advocates of an educational film service considered a trifle in comparison to the £96m invested in gilt-edged securities by the CWS in 1937, *ibid.*
167. *Co-operative Union Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1938*: 533. It is interesting to note the reaction of an independent Co-operative body, the Co-operative Productive Federation, representative of producer Co-operation. It considered the CWS/Co-operative Union specimen exhibition of films as demonstrating:
 A lack of appreciation of the true purpose of a Co-operative Film Service ...
 [N]one had the slightest bearing upon the permeation of Co-operative ideology.
 The 'star' film was nothing but a glorification of Imperialism and Jingoism.
- 'A Co-operative Film Service', *The Co-operative Productive Review* (June 1938): 258.
168. '"Acute Position" Over Co-operative Films', *The Co-operative News* (7 May 1938): 12. The film in question was *Kitchen Capers* [NCFC 059]. The Union sponsored a 'Film' debate at the Co-op Education Convention, 1938, and its roster of speakers, drawn entirely from the Union and CWS, clearly lacked representation from dissident bodies, *Programme, Co-operative Convention, 1938*: 18.
169. *Co-operative Union Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1938*: 540.
170. The Union's position is presented in Hall, F., 'Why The Delay In Planning A Comprehensive Film Service For The Movement?', *The Co-operative News* (14 May 1938): 2; the Association's case is expounded in 'Solution To Film Dispute in Sight?', *The Co-operative News* (21 May

- 1938): 3.
171. An editorial in *The Co-operative News* had called for a reconciliation between opposing film factions within the Movement and hoped "that the movement will soon present a 'united front' in organising a really imaginative series of films to tell the story of co-operation". See, 'Co-operative Film Service', *The Co-operative News* (21 May 1938): 8.
172. 'Resignation of Education Secretary to RACS', *The Co-operative News* (3 September 1938): 1, 7. He had served on twenty committees within the Movement, see, 'Mr Reeves to organise Workers' Film Association', *The Producer* (October 1938): 276.
173. Reeves had stood as the Co-operative-Labour Parliamentary candidate for Greenwich since 1931.
174. 'Sound films For Education and Propaganda', *Co-operative Youth* (May 1938): 119. The film programme consisted of *Spanish Earth*, *News From Spain*, *Madrid Today* and *The Basque Children* and would have derived from the Progressive Film Institute. For a general examination of the Labour Movement's aid to Spain, see, Fyrth, J., 'The Aid Spain Movement', *History Workshop Journal* (1993).
On the launch of the 'Milk For Spain' campaign, see, 'Starvation in Spain. Co-operation: Humanitarian Project', *The Co-operative News* (27 November 1937): 2, 9.
175. 'Sound films ...', op.cit.
176. The inter-connectedness of the various Labour wings at this time, through film activity, is demonstrated in the sponsorship of the public premiere of the ILP's anti-war film, *Blow Bugles, Blow*, by the Education Committee of the Port Talbot Co-operative Society, and played to 3,000 children. See, '3,000 Children See Our New Anti-War Film', *The New Leader* (2 September 1938): 7.
177. On Kino, see, Hogenkamp, B., op.cit.: Ch. 5.
178. *Kino, First Annual Report* (April 1936). The film department of the NACEC also acquired from Kino for distribution, *Kameradschaft* (1931), *News From Spain* (1937) and *War is Hell* (1936). Reeves was also on the Directorial Board of the Progressive Film Institute.
179. 'Recruits For Film Publicity. Screen Gives Aid To Spain', *The Co-operative News* (8 January 1938): 10. It was reported here that twenty Societies had purchased projectors since the formation of the National Film Society.
180. *Annual Report of the TUC 1937*: 196.
181. Hollins, T.J., op. cit.: 202-205. Reeves' acquaintance with the wider Workers' Film Movement goes back as far as 1929 when he made available The Tooting Hall for the first programme of the London Workers' Film Society, as a replacement for the original venue, see, chapter 2.2.
182. 'Resignation of Education Secretary', op. cit.: 7.
183. 'Trouble in the Camp Over Questions Concerning Films', *The Co-operative News* (23 April 1938): 9. The comment was made by Mr Tomlinson, manager of the CWS Publicity Dept.
184. 'Co-operative Film Services', *The Co-operative News* (15 April 1939): 12.
185. *Co-operative Union, Executive Committee Minutes* (21 January 1939): 2; *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (18 February 1939): 1-2; *Co-operative Union, National Council Minutes* (7 April 1939): 3; *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (20 May 1939): 3; *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (17 June 1939): 3; 'Progress Reported in Co-operative Film Service', *The Co-operative News* (15 April 1939): 6.
186. *Co-operative Union, Executive Committee Minutes* (15 September 1939): 11.
187. 'Film Plans Frozen', *Co-operative Review* (November 1939): 391; *Co-operative Union, National Executive Council Minutes* (21 October 1939): 4.
188. *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (18 November 1939): 7.
189. 'Film Plans Frozen', op. cit; 'Propaganda By Films', *The Labour Organiser* (November 1938): 214
190. 'Progress Reported ...', op. cit. The WFA immediately undertook a survey to determine the extent of possession of 16mm projectors by democratic organisations. For the views of a District Labour Party activist on the scheme, see, French, J.W., 'Films', *The Labour Organiser* (May 1939): 86-87.
191. 'Resignation of Education Secretary', op. cit.: 7.

192. Reeves, J., op. cit.: 68. He considered such films as "contributing to social well-being". During the war, Reeves contributed to the Documentary Film Movement's journal, *Documentary News Letter*.
193. On the London Co-operative Societies' Joint Education Committee, see, Attfield, J., *With Light of Knowledge. A Hundred Years of Education in the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society, 1877-1977* (London & West Nyack: RACS/Journeyman Press, 1981): 47-49,, 64-66, 115-117. Reeves had been a member of the Joint Committee since its inception in 1926.
194. 'London's Big Four. Proposal to Produce Films', *The Co-operative News* (27 November 1937): 2. The total cost of £5,000 would be met by the Societies proportionally according to trade. Reeves had earlier made enquiries regarding a professional production giving an account of the history of the Co-operative Movement, but due to its high cost of £20,000, the project never commenced, 'The Film and Ideals', *The Co-operative News* (17 December 1938): 15.
195. '£1,000 a Year on Films', *Comradeship and Wheatsheaf* (January 1938): xii.
196. 'Big New Film Plan Launched', *The Co-operative News* (18 June 1938): 3.
197. *Co-operative Educator* (October 1938): 121.
198. Reeves, J., 'Advance Democracy. A Film which illustrates the Struggle of the Workers to Obtain Economic Redress', *The Wheatsheaf* (October 1938): viii. The article also appears in *Comradeship and Wheatsheaf* (October 1938): vi. Reeves says here, "The documentary film is the product of the desire of those who wanted to use the visual medium for educational and propaganda purposes ... Artistically the documentary film is as effective as the Hollywood glamour film".
The Realist Film Unit was a more politically progressive outfit than most, and Reeves was impressed by several of their films such as *Enough To Eat* (1936), *Plan For Living* (1938) and *The Londoners* (1939). See, 'Notes by the Education Secretary', *Comradeship and Wheatsheaf* (June 1939): 1.
199. Reeves, J., *A Century of Rochdale Co-operation* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1944): 98.
200. A brief review of the film appears in 'Films of Social Progress', *The Times* (26 September 1939): 6.
201. Reeves, J., 'The Co-operative Movement and Film', op. cit.: 68.
202. Reeves, J., *A Century of Rochdale Co-operation*, op. cit.: 98. A fairly sympathetic review of *Advance Democracy* appears in *World Film News* (October 1938): 268, the journal of the Documentary Film Movement.
203. "'Reinforcements now Appearing". Film Propaganda for the Democratic Movements', *The Labour Organiser* (December 1938): 238. The actual advisory role the WFA assumed for film production is presented in the *Workers' Film Association Catalogue* (1939): 4.
204. Reeves, J., 'Films and Propaganda', *Co-operative Youth* (February 1939): 74. The article also appears in 'You can't ignore the taste for pictures. A Labour and Co-operative Scheme Explained', *The Labour Organiser* (February 1939): 34.
205. 'TUC Report on Labour's Film Unit', *The Daily Film Renter* (21 August 1939): 5.
206. *Comradeship and Wheatsheaf* (June 1939): 1; *Comradeship and Wheatsheaf* (September 1939): xiii. For an account of an aspect of the film, see, 'Students as Film Extras', *The Observer* (August 1939), clipping in the CWS Library, Manchester. A brief review of the film appeared in *The Times*, op. cit. The film was reputed to cost £1,200.
207. Hogenkamp, B., op. cit.: 206-209; *WFA Catalogue* (1940). An advert for the Woodcraft Folk film appeared in *The Co-operative News* (23 March 1940): 5. A review of *The Builders* appeared in *Documentary News Letter* (June 1940): 8. Joe Reeves was an Alderman for the Camberwell Borough Council.
208. "'Reinforcements now Appearing'", op. cit. The only issue was silent. Other initiatives with Co-op newsreels are addressed later in the chapter. In all, a total of nine films were completed in the initial period of trading, *Catalogue of the WFA* (1945): 1.
209. *WFA, Third Annual Report and Balance Sheet* (1943): 1.
210. Ibid. Some of the Co-operative Society films appear to have been little more than trailers for use in local cinemas. *Two Good Fairies* is reviewed in *Documentary News Letter* (January/February

- 1944): 5.
211. Details are contained in Burton, A., 'Projecting the New Jerusalem: The Workers' Film Association 1938-1946', in Kirkham, P., and Thoms, D., *War Culture: World War Two and Social Change* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995).
 212. For a brief period between Spring 1940 and Summer 1941, Reeves took an appointment at the MOI Films Division, but his views on Labour's part in the war effort were not sympathetically received and he left. See, 'Ministry Appointment For Film Chief', *Co-operative Review* (December 1939): 419; 'Tributes To Film Pioneer', *The Co-operative News* (30 March 1940): 12; 'About the Silver Screen', *The Co-operative News* (28 June 1941): 8. It was noted that in his absence Reeves would maintain an oversight of the WFA, see, *TUC Annual Report 1940*: 214. The Co-operative Union also appointed a representative to an Advisory Committee of the MOI, see, *Co-operative Union, Executive Committee Minutes* (11 October 1941): 2.
 213. *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (17 February 1940): 7. The other members of the Committee were the Association of Cine Technicians, the National Association of Theatrical and Kino Employees, the NACEC, the Electrical Trades Union, the Workers' Travel Association and the *Daily Herald*.
 214. *Ibid.*: (16 March 1940): 6, (15 March 1941): 6; *Co-operative Union, Executive Committee Minutes* (18 April 1941): 11. The Educational Executive were far more flexible on the matter of relations with the WFA, and were even prepared to enter into discussions with the NACEC on the matter of film education and the role the WFA might play. See, *The Co-operative News* (24 May 1941): 5.
 215. *The Co-operative News* (26 April 1941): 3.
 216. *Annual Report of the Educational Council and Executive 1940-1941*: 13.
 217. *Co-operative Union, Executive Committee Minutes* (20 June 1941): 12; (19 September 1941): 12; *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (20 September 1941): 7.
 218. *Co-operative Union Annual Congress Report 1941*: 75-76; 'Education Report, 1940', *Co-operative Review* (March 1940): 97.
 219. *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (19 December 1941): 2; *Co-operative Union, Executive Committee Minutes* (9 January 1942): 7; *Sight and Sound* (Autumn 1941): 87. The CWS Film Unit had been created in 1940 and is examined later in the chapter.
 220. *Co-operative Union, Executive Committee Minutes* (9 January 1942): 8; *Co-operative Union, National Educational Council Minutes* (17 January 1942); *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (17 January 1942): 4
 221. *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (17 January 1942): 4. The circular supporting the adoption of associate membership was considered by the Co-op Union, Labour Party and TUC. The provisions for associate membership were drawn into the new rules of the Association when it registered as a Co-operative Society in 1941. See, *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (17 January 1942): 4; 'Workers' Film Association Ltd', *The Labour Organiser* (July 1941): 3.
 222. The special provisions had first emerged as a consideration in 1941. See, *Co-operative Union Annual Congress Report 1941*: 64. The payments were to be treated as 'gift-loans' to be paid back when it was financially expedient. See, *WFA Annual Report 1942*: 4.
 223. *Co-operative Union, Executive Committee Minutes* (9 June 1942): 15-16; 'Workers' Film Association', *The Co-operative News* (11 April 1942): 5.
 224. 'Not To Join WFA', *The Co-operative News* (27 June 1942): 12; 'Workers' Film Association. Co-operative Union Not A Member', *Scottish Co-operator* (27 June 1942): 404. The additional difficulties presented themselves at an unfortunate time, and came after the Union had informed Congress that it had become a full shareholding member of the Association, *Co-operative Union Annual Congress Report 1942*: 14. The new rapport between the CWS and the WFA is evident in the combined film show they provided at the Union's Education Convention in 1942, *Programme, Co-operative Convention, 1942*: 7.
 225. 'Recruit to WFA', *The Co-operative News* (17 October 1942): 12.
 226. 'Films. The Modern Method', *The Labour Organiser* (April 1942): 7; *Documentary News Letter*

- (June 1942): 93. The SCWS took up full membership of the Association in 1942 and demonstrated a commitment to the aims of the WFA in advance of the CWS and the Co-op Union. See, 'Workers' Film Association Ltd' (1942), a press handout in the TUC library.
227. In fact, two CWS/SCWS trading films were offered in the WFA's second catalogue issued in 1940: *Meat for the Millions* and *Rose of the Orient*. That was seemingly contrary to the wishes of the CWS, which had withdrawn its original offer to provide publicity films, and the source was probably the SCWS which remained continually more friendly.
228. *Documentary News Letter* (9 June 1942): 93.
229. *WFA Second Annual Report 1942*: 3.
230. 'They Have Revolutionised Film Production Methods', *The Co-operative News* (27 May 1939): 7. Cox also shot a film of the Men's Guild Conference at Bridlington, *The Co-operative Review* (December 1938): 379. For details of the Political Committee of the London Co-operative Society, see, Newens, S., *Working Together. A Short History of the London Co-operative Society Political Committee* (London: CRS, 1988).
231. Cox, F.H.W., 'A National Co-operative Film Society', *The Millgate* (October 1936): 39-40; 'A National Co-operative Film Society', *The Co-operative Guildman* (January 1936). In 1935, Cox had steered his resolution for a 'Co-operative Film Service' passed the National Co-operative Men's Guild Conference, see, *Proceedings of the Annual National Conference of the National Co-operative Men's Guild* (April 1935): 8.
232. Moir, S.E.L., 'Co-operative Films - When?', *The Millgate* (January 1937): 200-201. Moir was President of the Sub-Standard Film Society, which had been formed in 1932, see, *Cinema Quarterly* (Autumn 1932): 57. His article makes reference to an "'unofficial' Co-operative Film Council", which I have been unable to trace. Eisenstein's *The General Line* (1929) was the one acclaimed Soviet montage film to take a Co-operative subject as its theme.
233. The technical details are outlined in Cox, F.H.W., 'Experts Said It Could Not Be Done', *The Co-operative News* (5 November 1938): 8.
234. 'First Bid To Film Fiction', *The Co-operative News* (25 June 1938): 3; '?Utopia Has Its Premiere', *The Co-operative News* (2 April 1938): 19.
235. 'They Have Revolutionised Film Production Methods', op. cit.; although erroneously claimed as the Movement's first fiction film, it appears to have been even that unit's second such film after ?*Utopia* (1938).
236. 'A Colour Film of Wembley Pageant', *The Co-operative News* (25 June 1938): 3. The unit patented the process of recording direct sound on colour stock, see, 'London Film Invention', *The Co-operative News* (28 January 1939): 2.
237. 'Pageant Film Premiere', *The Co-operative News* (10 September 1938): 3; 'Wembley Pageant Lives Again on the Screen', *The Co-operative News* (17 September 1938): 5; 'The Wembley Film', *The Producer* (October 1938): 264.
238. LCS films which were available in the CWS *Catalogue* (1938) were *People Who Count* and *Peace Parade* (both 1937).
239. 'America and Finland Want Wembley Film', *The Co-operative News* (10 December 1938): 4; 'Pageant Film', *The Co-operative News* (17 December 1938): 3. The unit's films continued to find audiences abroad, and during the war the Wembley film, along with *Each For All* (c.1938), played to Co-operators in Australia. See, "'Aussies" See LCS Films', *The Co-operative News* (25 October 1941): 8.
240. 'Experts Said It Could Not Be Done', op. cit.
241. 'Reinforcements now Appearing', op. cit.
242. Hogenkamp, B., *Workers' Newsreels in the '20s and '30s*, Our History, 68 (London: History Group of the Communist Party, 1977). The first and only issue of a WFA newsreel was completed on 16mm in 1939.
243. 'Gaumont Studios Used to Make New London Film', *The Co-operative News* (29 April 1939): 3. The sponsorship of film work by the Political Committee of the LCS was quite unique as the political wing of the Movement demonstrated little interest in film propaganda. The Co-operative Party never directly involved itself in cinema work, although in 1937, the Party debated the need

- for suitable propaganda films, the Annual Conference believing that Russian and CWS films were inappropriate to the role. A resolution was carried proposing the need for educational films to promote the Party within the wider Movement, but in the event the National Committee put its hopes in the film initiatives of the NACEC. See, 'Propaganda Films', *Co-operative Party, Annual Party Report* (1937): 85-86.
244. 'They Have Revolutionised Film Production Methods', op. cit.
245. 'Congress Films', *The Co-operative News* (20 May 1939): 5; 'Film Pioneers', *The Co-operative News* (10 June 1939): 9. For details of *Potter's Clay*, see, *The Co-operative News* (3 June 1939): 10.
246. 'New London Film', *The Co-operative News* (14 October 1939): 3; 'Co-operators Produce Two New Films', *The Co-operative News* (2 December 1939): 3. I have recently learned there is a copy of this film at the Imperial War Museum. I would like to thank Toby Haggith for bringing this to my attention.
247. 'A Film Triumph', *The Co-operative News* (23 December 1939): 6; 'A Film to See', *The Co-operative News* (20 January 1940): 1
248. 'West End Debut', *Co-operative Review* (February 1940): 78. For lists of venues and playdates, see, 'A Film to See', op. cit; *The Co-operative News* (3 February 1940): 15; *The Co-operative News* (9 March 1940): 9. In the advertisement it was claimed as 'A Film All Co-operators Should See'.
249. 'Priestley to Collaborate', *The Co-operative News* (8 March 1940): 12. Priestley had earlier been interviewed by the Co-operative Union in regard to proposed literary plans for the Rochdale Centenary celebrations, see, *Co-operative Union, Executive Committee Minutes* (15 December 1939): 10.
250. 'Latest Co-operative Film Presents "The Home Front"', *The Co-operative News* (9 March 1940): 4.
251. Ibid.
252. Ibid.
253. 'Latest film on Nazis', *The Co-operative News* (1 June 1940): 16; 'New Film by LCS Section', *The Co-operative News* (7 September 1940): 5; 'Trade Show', *The Co-operative News* (5 October 1940): 1. The film is listed in David Quinlan's *British Sound Films* (London: Batsford, 1984), amongst the most outstanding shorts of the year: 263.
254. A project completed for the LCS was *A Romance of the Century* [NCFC 102], which interestingly features scenes of the unit at work.
255. *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (18 November 1939): 6. Cox maintained a propaganda campaign to convince the Movement of the expediency and viability of 16mm sound production, and the LCS unit's claim to provide a film service to the Movement was reiterated in a series of articles published in the early war years. See, Cox, F.H.W., 'Co-operative Film Production', *The Millgate* (November 1939): 88-91; 'Co-operative Film Propaganda', *The Millgate* (March 1940): 331-333.
256. *Second Annual Report of the WFA* (1942): 3.
257. 'London Film', *The Co-operative News* (26 June 1943): 3.
258. 'Killed On ARP Duties', *The Co-operative News* (25 January 1941): 1. John Lewis (exhibition) and George Pocknell (production) were the casualties. The premises used by the unit were also twice damaged by raids, see, *The Co-operative News* (20 December 1941): 5.
259. 'Speeches Go On Record', *The Co-operative News* (8 February 1941): 12; 'Film Unit Breaks New Ground With Production of Recording Discs', *The Co-operative News* (20 December 1941): 5.
260. For background on the Society, see, 'Rainbow Flag Over China', *The Co-operative Productive Review* (May 1941): 110-111.
261. *Co-operative Union, Executive Committee Minutes* (15 January 1943): 12-13; (19 March 1943): 12; (20 January 1944): 14.
262. 'Anglo-Chinese Film', *The Co-operative News* (23 October 1943): 1; 'Colour Film Tells Story of CIC', *The Co-operative News* (17 March 1945): 1; 'Chinese Co-op Pioneers', *Kine Weekly* (22

- March 1945): 15. The film featured Edgar Snow, author of Left Book Club choice, *Red Star Over China* (1937), and who had participated in some of the events depicted in the film.
263. 'P.E.S. Film Production', *The Co-operative News* (22 September 1945): 7.
264. Ibid.
265. Cox, F.H.W., 'I'd Like to See ...', *Film Sponsor* (May 1948); see also, the company's advert in *Film Sponsor* (June 1948): 24. Chelsea Films completed at least one commission for a Co-operative Society, for the St. Cuthbert's Association in 1949. See, 'A Film for the Cavalcade', *Scottish Co-operator* (16 July 1949): 10; 'Scottish Film Shows Society's Work', *The Co-operative News* (16 July 1949): 16.
266. These issues are developed in Chapter 5.
267. With the establishment of a CWS film unit, it was announced that "The CWS has always aimed to manufacture as many as possible of the products they supply to societies, and through the societies to co-operators in general; so it was not surprising when the CWS directors decided that the time had come for them to produce their own films", 'Putting the CWS on the Screen', *The Wheatsheaf* (January 1941): 3.
268. 'Reynold's Winning Its Way On Its Own Merits', *The Co-operative News* (17 June 1939): 5.
269. *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (19 October 1940): 4.
270. 'CWS Putting Co-operative Story on the Cinema Screen', *The Co-operative News* (9 November 1940): 12. It is possible that the CWS were prompted in creating its own film unit by the general scaling back in film publicity provision in the late 1930s. It has been reported that many producers and technicians at Publicity Films were laid off in 1939 due to the uncertain conditions in international relations. See, Box, M., *Odd Woman Out* (London: Leslie Frewin, 1974): 147.
271. 'Putting the CWS on the Screen', op. cit.
272. 'Film is Now Ready', *The Co-operative News* (10 August 1940): 5.
273. 'Tobacco Close Up!', *The Co-operative News* (12 October 1940): 6. This item includes a production still portraying both Wynn and Waxman in action. In the early war years the CWS completed several productions on tobacco: *Tobacco, Golden Harvest, and Golden Leaves* [NCFC 098].
274. 'CWS Film', *The Wheatsheaf* (September 1941): 2; 'Fire Over Manchester - CWS Film Is a Unique Blitz Record', *The Co-operative News* (25 October 1941): 11. The blitz film has attained considerable historical value, especially in the North-West, see, 'Film Relic', *The Co-operative News* (24 October 1989), clipping in CWS Library; Benfield, F., 'Vintage Film of the blitz is in demand 49 years later', *Manchester Evening News* (1 November 1989): 21.
275. 'See This Film', *The Co-operative News* (6 December 1941): 7. The NACEC had interested itself in the production of training films in association with the WFA and had approached the Co-op Union on the matter, though nothing seemed to have emerged. See, *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (17 May 1941): 7.
276. Pronay, N., and Thorpe, F., *British Official Films in the Second World War* (Oxford: Clio Press, 1980): 82, 151, 152, 189. Most of the material for the films was shot on CWS premises in Lancashire and Cheshire, see, 'CWS Film Unit On War Service', in *The CWS In Battledress* (Manchester: CWS, 1946): 63-64; *The Co-operative News* (24 October 1942): 3. Scenes for the acclaimed wartime documentary about the fighter-bomber, *The Mosquito* (1944), were shot at the CWS Enfield Cabinet Factory. Information supplied to author by G.R. Wichett.
277. *Co-operative Union, Executive Committee Minutes* (16 January 1942): 11. On the arrangements for non-theatrical distribution during the war, see, Forman, H., 'The non-theatrical distribution of films by the Ministry of Information' in Pronay, N. and Spring, D., *Propaganda, Politics and Film, 1918-45* (London: MacMillan, 1982). One of the wartime services provided by the Union for member Societies was the issuance of *War Emergency Circulars* containing information and requirements arising from the war. These sometimes contained specifics relating to cinema, advertising matters, MOI films, availability of film stock etc.
278. *Co-operative Union, Executive Committee Minutes* (16 January 1942): 11.
279. *The Co-operative News* (2 May 1942): 3. Further titles never did appear.
280. 'Co-operative Beveridge Film', *Today's Cinema* (10 December 1943): 9.

281. 'Beveridge Plan Filmed For SCWS', *The Co-operative News* (11 December 1943): 16.
282. In comparative terms the production values of *Men of Rochdale* and *Song of the People* were unmatched and the Movement would never attempt anything so lavish again. The scale and impact of the films was evident in their appearance in the list of documentary films of the year published in F. Maurice Speed's annual *Film Review* for 1945 (London: MacDonald and Co.). *Men of Rochdale* was even accorded a 'Book of the Film', see, *Cinegram Review 17* (London: Pilot Press, 1944).
283. See, for instance, 'Rochdale Pioneers Centenary - Taking Time by the Forelock', *The Co-operative Productive Review* (May 1928): 254.
284. *Co-operative Union, Executive Committee Minutes* (29 December 1937): 5.
285. 'Centenary Celebrations', *The Co-operative Review* (November 1938): 337. It should be assumed that the popular actress in question was Gracie Fields, a performer sympathetic towards the Movement, and with similar roots in Rochdale.
286. *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (18 February 1939): 5; (18 March 1939): 2. The proposals were forwarded to a special Centenary Celebrations Sub-Committee formed by the Co-op Union.
287. The status of the centenary proposals at the commencement of the war are presented in 'Rochdale Centenary Celebrations Plans', *The Co-operative News* (16 September 1939): 5; *Co-operative Union, Executive Committee Minutes* (20 May 1943): 11. For an outline of the propaganda imperatives of the celebrations, see, Jones, R.H., 'Tell The World. Some Centenary Suggestions', *The Co-operative News* (20 November 1943): 10.
288. For a summary of the celebrations, see, Richardson, W., *The CWS in War and Peace, 1938-1976* (Manchester: CWS, 1977): 146-149; 'Centenary News-Reel', *The Co-operative News* (30 December 1944): 2.
289. Brief details on the production background of the film can be found in MacQuitty, W., *A Life To Remember* (London: Quartet, 1991): 287. MacQuitty, the production manager, incorrectly attributes to the film the story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs; Box, M., op. cit.: 167. A plot outline and scene stills are presented in 'Men of Rochdale. Brilliant Centenary Film by CWS Film Unit', *The Wheatsheaf* (June 1944): 6-7.
290. 'Human Story of Pioneers in CWS Documentary Film', *The Co-operative News* (19 August 1944): 3.
291. 'New Documentary Films - Men of Rochdale', *Documentary News Letter*, 5, 5, (46) (1945): 53.
292. Ellias, S., 'Men of Rochdale film', *The Co-operative News* (30 September 1944): 15.
293. Maudsley, S.R., 'Men of Rochdale', *The Co-operative News* (14 October 1944): 10; Poyser, J.H., 'Books, Plays and Films', *The Co-operative News* (30 September 1944): 10; 'Men of Rochdale', *The Co-operative News* (23 December 1944): 11.
294. Topham, E., 'Pioneers On The Screen', *The Co-operative Review* (October 1944): 151.
295. 'Film Shown in Dominions', *The Co-operative News* (24 March 1945): 1. In my role as an education officer for the Co-op Union in the early 1990s, I had the opportunity to discuss the film with members of long-standing. Many could recall seeing the film as a child, and from the groans which invariably met the film when screened in history seminars, had evidently encountered the film on numerous subsequent occasions.
296. 'Song of the People. Sociological Subject from Co-op', *Kine Weekly* (17 May 1945): 23. The film was also released on 16mm prints and distributed to Co-op and progressive organisations, see, 'Co-op Propaganda', *Kine Weekly* (31 May 1945): 34.
297. 'Films of 1945', *Documentary News Letter* 16 (1946): 8.
298. 'A New CWS Film. Song of the People', *The Wheatsheaf* (May 1945): 6; Hogenkamp, B., 'Mile End Road, E.1', *GBG Nieuws* (Winter 1995-96): 40-41.
299. For assessments of British historical films in the period, see, Mace, N., 'British Historical Epics in the Second World War' in Taylor, P.M., *Britain and the Cinema in the Second World War* (London: MacMillan, 1988); Harper, S., *Picturing The Past. The Rise and Fall of the British Costume Film* (London: BFI, 1994): 77-146.
300. Burton, A., 'Reclaiming the Past: Workers' Films and Labour History, 1938-45', paper given at

- the *Cinema, Identity, History Conference*, 10-12 July 1998, UEA. For an interesting examination of commemorating Labour's past, see, Griffiths, C., 'Remembering Tolpuddle: Rural History and Commemoration in the Inter-War Labour Movement', *History Workshop Journal* (1997).
301. Burton, A., 'Amateur aesthetics and practises in films of the British Co-operative Movement in the 1930s' in *Jubilee Book. Essays on Amateur Film* (Belgium: European Association Inedits, 1997).
302. Poyser, J.H., 'Twelve Months' Cinema Education', *The Co-operative Productive Review* (March 1935).
303. Poyser, J.H., 'Local Co-operative Films', *The Producer* (August 1935): 247-248.
304. Details of these productions is taken from: Poyser, J.H., 'With a Cine-Camera', *The Wheatsheaf* (November 1934): 169; 'Local Co-operative Films', op. cit.
305. 'Long Eaton Working On Six Films For Winter Displays', *The Co-operative News* (2 July 1938): 3. This article details another film, *Trough to Troughers*, which conformed to the same ideal: "Pigs will be traced from one of the society's farms, through the abattoir, the cooked meats factory, the bakery, to the cafe, where the 'troughers' will tuck in at the society's famous pork pies".
306. Poyser, J. H., 'Co-operators Should Be Shot - with a cine-camera', *The Producer* (February 1937): 48-49.
307. An overview of international workers' newsreels can be found in Hogenkamp, B., 'Workers' Newsreels...', op. cit. One experienced British Co-op film-maker made the following observation on aesthetics: "The Co-operative Movement has at its disposal such wealth of colourful story matter that a simple and straight forward technique is the most desirable method of presentation", Denny, R., 'Any Society Can Afford Film Making', *The Co-operative News* (5 November 1938): 9.
308. Poyser, J. H., 'Local Co-operative Films', op. cit.: 248. A picture of the makeshift studio is reproduced in *The Co-operative News* (29 June 1935): 1., where it is claimed to be "probably the first film 'studio' in which local co-operators have made their own films".
309. Poyser, J.H., 'Long Eaton Working On Six Films...', op. cit. A regular performer in the Long Eaton films was Wynn Davies, a member of the Education Committee. A detailed account of the making of *Saint Monday* [NCFC 064], and of Mrs Davies' contribution, can be found in Poyser, J.H., 'How I "Shot" The Story Of Co-operation', *The Co-operative News* (30 April 1938): 11.
310. 'Local Co-operative Films', op. cit.
311. 'Twelve Months' Cinema Education', op. cit.
312. 'Co-operators Should Be Shot ...', op. cit. The Film-maker's evoking of the superiority of the social-realist documentary approach is revealing.
313. 'Local Co-operative Films', op. cit.; 'Co-operators Should Be Shot ...', op. cit.; 'Colour Talkies For Co-operators', *The Co-operative News* (17 July 1937): 200.
314. 'A Film Champion', *The Co-operative News* (4 March 1939): 11.
315. 'CWS Films', *The Co-operative News* (30 November 1940): 10.
316. See, J.H. Poyser's contribution to the Co-op films' debate at the 1937 Co-operative Congress, *Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1937*: 460-461.
317. Poyser, J.H., 'How I Shot ...', op. cit. Emphasis in the original.
318. 'Twenty Film Shows', *The Co-operative News* (9 April 1938): 5.
319. For film work at PIMCO, see, 'Local Co-operative Films. Extension of New Propaganda Method', *The Producer* (November 1935): 335. For the Leicester Society, see, 'Film Production and Propaganda - Leicester Society's Achievement', *The Co-operative News* (4 December 1937): 5; and 'Talkie Films At Leicester', *The Co-operative News* (22 August 1936): 1.
320. 'Bolton's Film Enterprise', *The Co-operative News* (22 June 1935): 9; 'Football Film is Outstanding Propaganda Coup', *The Co-operative News* (22 October 1938): 3; 'To Shoot Congress', *The Co-operative News* (7 May 1938): 11; 'Society Sells a Film', *The Co-operative News* (13 January 1940): 5; '"M & S" Pageant Filmed in Colour', *The Co-operative News* (24 June 1939): 11.
321. An article priming delegates to the Convention on film matters appeared as a supplement to *The*

- Co-operative News*, 'Films Sell Our Goods: Why Not Employ Them to Sell Principles' (9 April 1938). Reginald Denny's contribution of 'Any Society Can Afford Film Making' appeared in *The Co-operative News* (5 November 1938): 9; while Alfred Booth addressed a Bolton District conference on 'The Cinema as an Aid to Education and Propaganda', *The Co-operative News* (3 December 1938): 11.
322. *The Co-operative News* (7 May 1938): 4. The series ran to thirteen instalments between May and November 1938. The unnamed author of the advice column was undoubtedly Mr A Booth of the Bolton Co-operative Society.
323. See, for instance, the range of adverts which accompany 'Films For Co-operators' - No. 6' - A Two Hours' Film Show Costs 15/-', *The Co-operative News* (11 June 1938): 22.
324. *The Co-operative News* (23 July 1938): 18.
325. 'Film Fanfare. Amateur v. Professional', *The Co-operative Review* (April 1939): 109.
326. *Ibid.*: 108.
327. Grierson, J., 'People With Purposes. Amateurs Can Perform Great Public Service says John Grierson', *World Film News* (January 1937): 33. For an interesting case-study of a local community use of 16mm film propaganda, see, Lebas, E., '"When Every Street Became a Cinema". The Film Work of Bermondsy Borough Council's Public Health Department, 1923-1953', *History Workshop Journal* (Spring 1995).
328. Gehring, W.A., 'A Great Field for 16mm Films', *The Co-operative News* (15 November 1941): 2.
329. Some of these issues are taken-up for the American context in Zimmermann, P.R., *Reel Families. A Social History of Amateur Film* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995).

Chapter 5. Challenge and Decline: Film and Co-operation, 1946 - 1970

The recreative side was not overlooked. There was a Shakespearian performance by picked students from the Co-operative Colleges. In the cinema theatre there were displays of films from the leading co-operative picture palaces, now a successful adjunct to most of the stores. These films in natural colours, were of a strictly educational character. "How different from the days of Charlie Chaplin buffoonery!" remarked one veteran.

(W.H. Adsett, 'Looking Forward. Co-operation in 1950: A Fantastic Forecast', *The Co-operative News*, 6 January 1917)

Finance is the lynch pin of the film industry in a Capitalist state. This is so for two reasons: first, the cost of buying the necessary film apparatus and running it is very expensive; secondly, as with press, theatre, radio and practically every other means of expression in the capitalist State, the film is used for the propagation of ideas favourable to the interests of the dominant capitalist clique.

(Alan Taylor, 'Film Making - is Co-operation missing an opportunity?', *The Co-operative Productive Review*, November 1942)

New recruit, David Davies. Having difficulty explaining where he comes from:

"Shall I tell you where it is? Cwm".

Private Frank Randle: "How do you spell it?"

Davies: "C.W.M."

Randle: "C.W.M. Sounds like the Co-operative Society".

It's A Grand Life (Mancunian Films, 1953)

Introduction

In the assessment of the third period under consideration, this chapter examines the postwar decades, a time of optimism for Labour when efforts were directed at winning the 'People's Peace'. In terms of Labour cinema the desire was to build on the promises of the Workers' Film Association, which had been restricted by the onset of war in 1939. Accordingly, the National Film Association is reviewed, the new Labour film organisation to promote the ideals of the democratic Left, and a body more fully representative of the democratic Labour Movement following the participation of previously dissident Co-op bodies. Of particular significance was the role of the film unit of the Co-operative Wholesale Society, which assumed a more central role within the new Association and its attempts to involve the trade unions and Labour Party branches more fully in cinema work. In this context, the chapter proceeds to examine the consequent concerns of the established commercial film industry which was unsettled

by the potential of a Labour film service based on the mighty CWS, and feared a possible curtailment of its own operations by a Labour Administration hostile to monopolies. As in other areas of the economy the representatives of Competition exhibited a considerable hostility to Co-operative and Socialist forms of economic organisation deemed inimical to their interests.

Into the 1950s, the Co-operative Movement had to adjust to a new culture of affluence and materialism, and this would have significant consequences for its publicity and propaganda. The chapter continues to chart the long-running conflict of interests between the publicists, who sought to promote trade through film, and the educationalists, who alternatively sought to express ideals, which intensified in this environment. As we will see, the Movement began to lose market share and the views of the publicists began to win out. The educationalists, though fighting a rear-guard action, retreated into the more insular activity of Film Societies, whose ideals conformed more to the tenets of liberal adult education rather than a progressive worker's education. The chapter then moves on to assess the impact of new media technology, namely television, which brought a further challenge to the Movement's idealists; especially post-1955, in the form of a commercially structured alternative to state broadcasting. Such developments significantly compromised a viable progressive film practice as the demands of trade placed increasing emphasis on alternative technologies and the Movement's publicists accommodated ever more conventional discourses of advertising.

Labour in Power: A National Film Association

The Second World War brought about an apparent social transformation in Britain. The tremendous sacrifices demanded of ordinary citizens, it has been argued, had been tolerated due to the promise of social reconstruction and the will 'never again' to allow the deprivations and injustices of the interwar years. In recent years, social and cultural historians have questioned the extent to which the conflict 'radicalised' the public and acted as a watershed in modern British political and social history; and as Steven Fielding has observed, "however radical these demands may have been, they did

not threaten existing political structures".¹ It has long been assumed that film propaganda made a significant contribution towards the public's expectations regarding a postwar 'New Jerusalem', principally through the presentation of peace aims in officially sponsored documentary films.² More recently, this view has been reassessed with the revelation of "the constraints that operated to prevent the [Documentary Film Movement] from projecting a truly radical programme of propaganda", and a denial of any 'open conspiracy' operating at the Films Division of the Ministry of Information.³

These accounts have made no acknowledgement of the contribution, however modest, that Labour film organisations like the Workers' Film Association (WFA) made to radical visions and progressive aspirations in the period. Throughout the war years the WFA operated a successful roadshow and film distribution service for progressive organisations, and its library contained many examples of the socially reconstructive documentaries of which historians have made so much. Specifically, clients were offered 'Sound Film Shows on Social Problems', with suitable titles to illustrate lectures on Social Security, Educational Advance, Housing and Town Planning, and Public Health. The Association's *Catalogue* for 1945, for example, listed twenty-two films on the subject of Town Planning and Housing and offered to present a sound film show anywhere in the country for £5. 10.⁴ The WFA was also important in promoting the cause of the Soviet Union, having been granted the rights in 1941 to distribute the majority of Russian material on the sub-standard format.⁵ In 1944, the WFA provided 1,463 film shows with its own mobile units, and further distributed 18,000 reels of film.⁶ By the end of the war, the Association had collected 900 sound films for its library, with a further 500 silent films, and was also providing a technical service and giving advice regarding projectors and public address systems.⁷ It clearly made some contribution to the raising of awareness about social issues and peace aims, and in engaging audiences of Labour activists and those of progressive outlook it was arguably addressing opinion leaders and influential publics.

It remained Joe Reeves' objective at the WFA to create a film organisation fully inclusive of the democratic Labour Movement. As we have seen, the CWS had finally been drawn into the Association by the middle war period, but the important Co-operative Union, the national authority representative of the individual distributive

Societies, remained outside of events. The Educational Executive of the Union made persistent requests of its parent body to reopen discussions with the WFA and even consented to endorse initiatives such as the Association's request that Co-operative Societies be urged to use materials prepared for the purpose of creating favourable opinion for educational reform.⁸ In the autumn of 1943, the Educational Executive agreed to meet with representatives of the WFA, and it was resolved here that it be recommended to the National Executive that the Union take up full membership of the Association.⁹ In its turn, the Executive Committee sought the views of the CWS, which continued to be seen by the Union as the senior arbiter in film matters. As would be expected from a body already working closely with the WFA, the Wholesale Society had no fundamental objections to the Co-operative Union participating in the Workers' Film Association and expressed the wish to reopen discussions with the Union regarding the "larger question" of a "National" workers' film organisation.¹⁰ This was the first indication of the manoeuvres within the representative Labour bodies that would lead to a new postwar Film Association. Throughout 1944 and 1945, the Educational and Executive Committees had been unprepared to send delegates to the annual film schools of the WFA¹¹, but with the progress towards a more inclusive 'national' film body, the Educational Executive finally consented to send a nominee to the film school held appropriately at the new Education Department of the Co-operative Union at Stanford Hall, Leicestershire.¹²

Essentially, early negotiations towards a national film organisation was a matter that occupied constituencies within the Co-operative Movement, specifically the CWS, the SCWS and the Co-operative Union. Other members of the WFA, like the TUC, merely observed from the sidelines and reported developments to their members at the appropriate forums.¹³ At the initial meetings of the CWS and Co-op Union in 1944, it was arrogantly, perhaps misguidedly, reported that the proposal under consideration was a "National Co-operative Film Service", and the TUC and Labour Party figured nowhere in the discussions.¹⁴ By early 1945, the more diplomatic proposal for a 'National Film Association' had been arrived at¹⁵, although the two Wholesale Societies were determining matters at this stage and passed on their "deliberations" regarding a constitution to the Committees of the Union.¹⁶ The establishment of a National Film

Association (NFA), to act on behalf of the Co-operative Movement, the Labour Party and the TUC, had been approved in principle by the Co-operative authorities and the WFA by the beginning of 1946 and a Drafting Committee was appointed to determine a constitution.¹⁷ The initial terms of reference for this committee were the proposals previously laid down by the CWS¹⁸, and the final constitution and rules of the National Film Association were ready by October 1946.¹⁹ The general desire for inclusivity was apparent in the agreement of the National Executive Committee of the Co-operative Union to the participation of the National Association of Co-operative Education Committees (NACEC) in the new Association. The organisation which had been so critical of the Union's film policy in the past.²⁰

The National Film Association was to be advised by a committee comprising three representatives each from the Labour Party, TUC, CWS, SCWS, and Co-operative Union, with one representative from the NACEC. Film production would be the responsibility of the CWS film department, with film distribution shared between the CWS (England, Ireland and Wales) and SCWS (Scotland). While this latter condition was understandable given the greater experience in film work of the two Wholesale Societies, some doubt must be cast over the disinterest of the CWS/SCWS with regard to the commercial opportunities on offer, and which had seemingly been betrayed in the nomenclature attached to the new film body as proposals were worked up. The influence of the CWS in the thinking around the NFA was evident in the authority it attained in the final formulation: not only would the CWS fulfil the requirements of film production and share distribution, it would appoint the secretary, acquire all assets of the WFA, and all staff in the employ of the former Association would transfer to the Wholesale Society. Such an approach, it was explained, would lead to "a great extension of film education and propaganda ... owing to the vastly increased resources available for these purposes."²¹ The objects of the Association were given as follows:

- (a) To encourage and promote within all sections of the democratic Labour, and co-operative movements the use of the film as a medium of democratic education, information, propaganda and social enlightenment.
- (b) To consider and make recommendations to its members for the development and extension of the film service to meet the needs of the members.
- (c) To co-ordinate the production and distribution of films and the purchase and insurance of film equipment and accessories on behalf of its members.²²

The replacement of the Workers' Film Association by a National Film Association was reflective of the shift from an oppositional character based on class conflict to one expressive of national unity and the hopes for a new egalitarian society under Labour. Within the Co-operative Movement there was considerable hope and ambition for the new Association. Long-time Co-op film-maker J.H.Poyser of the Long Eaton Society urged the annual Co-operative Congress in 1946 to give full backing to the film initiative:

I think most of you will agree from your own experience that as far as the young people are concerned the films have the most influence. In this matter the Movement is very slow, and only playing with the business. I have hopes that this National Film Association will be formed and that we shall get a move on. The CWS film unit has proved that they can deliver the goods, and the local societies ought to be able to ensure that these films are shown.²³

The delegate from West Somerset, R.A.Reed, held similar misgivings regarding the Movement's achievements so far in its film work, and sought of the new Association, "sufficient vision and courage to provide the Movement with what we really require". He advised Congress:

It is time we realised that film production is an industry, and the products of that industry are commodities. We should cease regarding the film as a mere adjunct to our trading side and regard it as a trading department of itself. Some societies have cinemas and they have to go outside the Co-operative Movement to secure their supplies from film groups which are rapidly becoming monopolies ... We have need of a production unit which will give us films worthy of the cinemas, and we should be doing something to break the awful grip which the present-day commercial cinema has upon the people ... It is time we moved with the times, and recognised that the thing of the future in education is visual instruction. There is a tremendous amount of work for this new film organisation to do, and if approached with courage and vision, this is a great opportunity for doing it.²⁴

Later in the year, Mr Reed, "enthusiastically expectant", presented detailed suggestions for the National Film Association with the intention of making the Movement "a force in the film world".²⁵ Ideally, the Movement should embark on an 'invasion' of the commercial cinema industry, to be effected through the establishment of a "chain of co-operatively-owned cinemas with a sufficient total box-office capacity to guarantee the financial success of any films which we produce".²⁶ The author recognised that a conventional gradualist approach was more likely to prevail, and here advocated the

substantial development of the Movement's 16mm film work, which with the proper application might grow into the daily showing of professional 35mm films. The advocate left his readers with a plea:

that we review our outlook on this matter of films. Let the business men of the movement cease regarding the film either as an advertising medium or as a frivolity, and let us see it for what it is - an essential commodity which our members are now purchasing outside the movement. It is our duty to bring them in.²⁷

Elsewhere, Mr Reed stressed the importance of sub-standard film work in rural districts, a previously unexploited area and "ours for the taking".²⁸ Another market was reckoned to be newsreels and newsreel theatres, with subsequent distribution on 16mm around villages with mobile cinema vans.²⁹

The commercial cinema industry had followed the Labour Movement's developments in film with trepidation. A main concern was whether the new Film Association intended to participate commercially in the film market, either by formal intervention in exhibition through the acquisition of cinemas, or the development of roadshow services for the screening of entertainment films. The involvement of the mighty Co-operative Movement with its wealth and trading experience was a particular worry for the industry, and as historian Bert Hogenkamp has observed, "[a] frightening picture was painted of 'socialist' competition in film production and exhibition".³⁰ On the announcement of the film service to be provided by the NFA, *Today's Cinema* calmed the trade with the news that "all the performances will be non-commercial. It was not intended in any way to compete with the cinemas".³¹ The same reassurances were given two months later, where it was also denied that the Co-operative Party had any intention to buy a group of cinemas.³² The political climate was such that the film industry was nervous about its market and its standing. There was much talk of replacing private monopolies with state monopolies, and this would have been worrying for the film trade as the Left had traditionally attacked it as a Capitalist monopoly serving private interests and denying access to screens for alternative voices. As one pamphlet, widely read on the Left, put it in 1946:

Monopoly is both harmful to the film industry and to the Nation, and contrary to the fundamental social thinking of the British people. There should be legislation to guard against any further monopolistic developments, and any further encroachment or control

from America.

The best creative minds in and outside the film industry must have freedom to work without the intellectual and economic restrictions that a private monopoly must sooner or later impose.

A progressive Government should not hesitate to give every encouragement to these ideas. By acquiring film studios, by making financial credits available, by establishing a distribution agency and a Tribunal or Development Board to co-ordinate the industry it can ensure a great future for British films.

Films, more than any other medium, can help to shape the future. Britain has set itself on the road of social advance, determined to create a society based on economic security for all. In achieving this, the Cinema has a great role to play - interpreting, informing and enthusing the new spirit of the British people. To that conception, and that purpose the film industry should dedicate itself.³³

There had been a number of calls from within the Co-operative Movement, early in 1945, to direct capital towards establishing a significant presence in the film industry. Addressing an educational meeting of the London Society, Labour historian and Oxford professor G.D.H. Cole argued for a Co-operative cinema circuit to act as a check on the monopoly chains, something that was alarmingly reported in the trade press as "London Co-op Wants 'Big Cine Circuit'"³⁴; while regular commentator on cinema issues, Mr R. A. Reed, saw the film industry as "Another Monopoly to Challenge".³⁵ Invoking the traditional responsibility of wholesome purveyance, he argued that it was the Movement's duty:

to provide our people with the leisure-time occupation which they demand, and to ensure that such service is rendered immune from the exploitation at the unscrupulous hands of the capitalist monopoly, which is a real and growing danger in the film industry.

Co-operation's intervention into the commercial cinema industry could be no piece-meal response:

Our full and complete participation in the film industry as an anti-monopolist force is as necessary as was our entry into the realms of grocery. Our vigilant presence in the studio is as indispensable as was our invasion of the editorial sanctum. Truth has a place in the spool-box as well as the headlines.³⁶

Certainly, such Gung Ho! appeals led to some alarmed reporting in the trade press, which, as early as April 1945, were warning of a "Co-op Circuit Menace", and feared "the possibility that the Co-operative Movement would invade the kinema exhibitor's field".³⁷ The extent of the private exhibitors' concern can be gauged from an

alarmist report in *The Cinema* a month later, where it was claimed that the "Co-ops Could Be Biggest Circuit". It quoted Mr J. Mather of the South and East Lancashire Branch of the Cinema Exhibitors' Association, whose view of the Movement was that, "If it embarked upon cinema enterprise it could be build (sic) up bigger circuits than G-B, Odeon and ABC ... With the wealth they had they could buy up the present major circuits".³⁸ It was recognised that the principal threat lay with the CWS, and one CEA member pointed to the financial trading strength of the Society, which at that time had disposable assets of £22m, and further reserves of £29m. The establishment by the Movement of the People's Entertainment Society was ominously noted, especially its acquisition of two theatres within twelve months of its foundation in 1942.³⁹ A notable panic attended a supposed take-over of a cinema chain in Scotland by the SCWS, or in an alternative scenario, the new National Film Association.⁴⁰ While even more improbably, the *Kine Weekly* stated that "Reports from Scotland indicate that plans are well advanced for putting up film studios."⁴¹ In this particular instance, the apprehension could possibly be traced back to an agreed investment by Scottish Societies in a proposed new Scottish National Film Studio in 1946.⁴²

There was certainly some grounds for the industry's fears regarding take-over or restrictions on their privileges and freedoms, for the immediate postwar years were witness to various proposals regarding State or municipal intervention in the cinema business. In 1946, a group of Labour MPs commenced an enquiry into monopoly in the British film industry and in a report to Sir Stafford Cripps recommended State support for independent production in both distribution and exhibition. Joe Reeves, recently elected Co-op-Labour MP for Greenwich, was active in forming the recommendations of the report, and, in keeping with the deepening Cold War climate, was labelled by the trade press, the "State Kinemas" MP.⁴³ A similar proposal was put to the general council of the TUC by the film unions, but it was equally undisposed towards a State-owned circuit; while the Communist Party supported both the creation of a 'Fourth Circuit', centrally or municipally-owned, and called on the Co-operative Movement to acquire a chain of cinemas, which should be granted tax relief as they operated without profit.⁴⁴ There was also Co-operative representation for a later enquiry into monopoly practices in the film industry, when Mr R.S. Edwards, a CWS director, was appointed

by the President of the Board of Trade in 1948 to an independent committee, "set up to consider whether or not to hold for the use of independent film producers, Government-owned or centrally-owned studio space".⁴⁵ In the final outcome, the Labour Minister charged with confronting monopoly tendencies in the British film industry, Sir Stafford Cripps, failed to substantially alter things. In the parlous economic circumstances of the postwar period, the Government needed the powerful Rank Organisation to offer some resistance to the dominance of Hollywood. There also failed to materialise any significant support from the independent film lobby, who for the time being were content to operate as satellites within the Rank set-up.⁴⁶

Some hostility was already being shown by the trade to those Co-operative Societies which operated cinemas. Primarily, local cinema proprietors irked at the practice of Co-operative cinemas paying a dividend on admission, in the manner that dividend was traditionally paid on general purchases with a Society. The *Kine Weekly* reported, with reference to the Long Buckby Society, that, "During the last six months, villagers paid over £1500 in admission to the kinema, and as the Society has fixed a dividend at 1s. 8d. in the £, more than £120 will be coming back to patrons in 'divi'".⁴⁷ *The Co-operative News* gleefully reported the nervous comment of an Oldham exhibitor, who declared, "Heaven forbid the time will come when the Lancashire Millhand will go to the local cinema and ask for 'two ninepennies and a dividend check'".⁴⁸ The trade undoubtedly feared the competitiveness of Co-operative cinemas which offered this inducement. Councillor W. Woolstencraft, director and manager of the South and East Lancashire Branch of the CEA, writing in the *Kine Weekly*, fully appreciated the threat to the Capitalist tenets of the business, and his own privileged position, when he declared that "Profits from private businesses go to the investor shareholders. Those from the Co-ops go to the customer".⁴⁹ Towards the end of the war, exhibitors became alarmed at the '16m Menace'. Members of the Manchester and Salford CEA Branch Committee expressed anxiety about the release of 16mm equipment through disposal boards after the war, and particular apprehension "was made of the likelihood of Co-operative Societies acquiring these sets for the numerous public halls which they controlled".⁵⁰ The issue was debated at the annual meeting of the CEA and delegates, fearing the widespread availability of entertainment films on the sub-standard format,

unsurprisingly sought protection and called for a system of licences to be regulated by the CEA.⁵¹ As in other areas of trade, the Co-operative Movement readily found itself confronted by private interests, which sought to protect private profits and their own dominant, privileged status.

The National Film Association was inaugurated at a dinner held at the House of Lords in the presence of Prime Minister, Clement Attlee.⁵² Film activists within the democratic Labour Movement were buoyant at the prospects of the new film organisation, and it was announced that plans existed "to send thirty 16mm daylight cinemas to all parts of the country".⁵³ The Workers' Film Association had navigated the difficult war years with some credit and emerged into the peace with an enhanced turnover and a modest trading surplus of over £700. In 1945, the Association had provided 772 film shows and further distributed 2,131 reels of film.⁵⁴ In the build up to the Election, it had supplied loud speaker equipment to the value of £10,000, considerably adding to the Labour Party's stock of public address facilities; although there remained some criticism of the Party's investment in, and effectiveness with, the technology.⁵⁵ Joe Reeves, now busily occupied at Westminster, was simply retained in an advisory capacity at the NFA, and in addition represented the Labour Party on the Association's steering committee. The primary functions of the Association, film production, the film library and road shows, were now the responsibility of the CWS, and to a lesser extent the SCWS. The CWS film unit was touted as "The New Film Production Unit of the Labour Movement", but was initially engaged on nothing more than a series of routine training and publicity films for its dairy divisions [NCFC 113, NCFC 114].⁵⁶ At its annual conference in 1947, the Labour Party announced extensive plans for film propaganda, although the proposals never got past the Executive. The occasion of the discussion seems to have been the visit to the Margate conference of the NFA's first cinema van (costing £3,000, and actually the property of the CWS), which showed political and educational films to the delegates. The intention was to build up a fleet of such vans to support "a vigorous film campaign, in readiness for the next general election".⁵⁷ The CWS film unit would supply the necessary films. The first film in the programme was announced early in 1947, a three-reeler, *Labour in Power*, illustrating the activities and achievements of the present Government.⁵⁸ It had long

been an ambition of Joe Reeves to persuade the Labour Party to embark on film propaganda, and as far back as 1942, he had tentatively announced that the Party was "considering" the production of a film on the rise and achievements of the Workers' Movement, culminating in Labour's contribution to the war effort.⁵⁹ The Labour Party's first film, eventually released as *Their Great Adventure* [NCFC 120] and produced by the CWS film unit, was completed only in the autumn of 1948.

There developed some concern over the apparent inactivity of the NFA and the direction it was likely to take. Making an intervention at the annual conference of the TUC, Marxist film-maker Ralph Bond wondered "what is being done to produce films representing the thoughts and ideals and aspirations of the Movement?". He also queried whether film experts and workers within the unions would be taken into consultation by the NFA.⁶⁰ Writing in the journal of the Documentary Film Movement, Doreen Willis criticised the ambitions of the Labour Movement when it came to film. With regard to the new Film Association, she believed it must "break decisively" with the WFA's former traditions of "planlessness, inefficiency and preoccupation with profit making".⁶¹ While in *Tribune*, Peggy Crane was anxious that "the right methods of ensuring original and stimulating productions both in content and technique should be adopted".⁶² Recent CWS film unit productions like *Men of Rochdale* (1944) and *Song of the People* (1945), gave her little expectation that in its present form the NFA would provide the Labour Movement with inspiring films. Part of the impetus here was the high regard within intellectual film culture for artistically crafted documentaries on social themes. The social-realist aesthetic had come to the fore in wartime documentary inspired cinema, and there was considerable expectation from both critics and film-makers that documentary, "Britain's outstanding contribution to the film", would find significant support from the Labour Administration - and by implication the wider Labour Movement.⁶³

It soon began to emerge, however, that the film-makers were as concerned with entertainment as they were with message. For it was reported in the summer of 1948, with regard to *Their Great Adventure*, that:

Instead of the old-fashioned documentary, with its all-knowing commentator, this is a one-act screen play. It is a distinct advantage in these days of austerity to have a dash of entertainment in any message you may want to convey to a message-saturated

public.⁶⁴

The approach should not have been surprising for those who were acquainted with the publicity films of the CWS film unit and the conflict that had raged in the late 1930s between the Movement's educationalists and traders regarding the National Film Service and Co-operative film work.⁶⁵ The CWS film unit retained considerable control over the project, especially as it had approached the Labour Party with the idea for the film, which consented once it realised that the CWS was also willing to meet the cost.⁶⁶ At the NFA, Joe Reeves was left to pursue the Labour Party concerning the exploitation of the film and arrangements for gala premieres in England, Scotland and Wales.⁶⁷ Early in 1949, the Party Executive expressed the desire to have the film in circulation as soon as possible and ordered fifty copies from the CWS film department. It was also suggested that the film be put to immediate use at a 'Meeting of Workers in the LCC Elections', to be addressed by Herbert Morrison. Finally:

Mr Morgan Phillips made it quite clear that the Labour Party would like the film to be shown on as wide a scale as possible, and would have no objections to it being hired by or exhibited to anyone.⁶⁸

A formal presentation of the film was made at the Palace Cinema, Blackpool, by Mr J. Peddie (CWS director and chairman of the NFA) to Herbert Morrison on the occasion of the Labour Party conference, 1949: "as an indication of faith in the Labour movement to make certain of the return of a Labour Government at the next General Election". It was a period of some tension between the Co-operative Movement and the Labour Party and Morrison, also a member of the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society, was moved to declare:

We shall do all we can to strengthen the bonds of unity that bind us, for we succeed or fail together; our enemies are the same and our objectives are the same.⁶⁹

However, the Labour Party and NFA were still a long way from having met the needs of effective film propaganda. *Their Great Adventure* was a start, but a sustained programme of film publicity was required:

We need others; short ten-minute stories of the housing achievement; social security; the miracle of the health service; the new hope on the farms; the great production spurt;

the end of mass unemployment; and so on for the mobile cinema.⁷⁰

No-one was more aware of the demands of film publicity than Joe Reeves and it had been his intention to draw a supplementary film programme from the library of the Central Office of Information. Unfortunately, staff shortages at the Central Film Library meant that the Association did not always get the films it required and Reeves approached Herbert Morrison on the matter. However, little could be done to ease the problem for fear of betraying the principle that the Government information services should not be used for party political purposes. In an overview of Labour film publicity of this time, historian Bert Hogenkamp has summarised some of the difficulties and failings:

Because of differing opinions about the effect of film propaganda, lack of financial support and Morrison's fear of being accused of Party bias in the Government's information activities, the only NFA production, *THEIR GREAT ADVENTURE*, could hardly be used for Labour propaganda.⁷¹

The CWS film department, as well as maintaining its service to the retail Co-operative Movement, in fact handled a large volume of work for Labour Party branches and trades unions demonstrating *some* progress with film propaganda. In the period May-October 1949, the CWS film unit provided displays of *Their Great Adventure* to twenty-seven Party branches, with a further fifty-three advanced bookings up to March 1950. The film library had loaned ninety-one prints of the film, with a further fifty-one bookings for dates to December 1949. The CWS film unit had also completed a commission for the Amalgamated Union of Operative Bakers, Confectionary and Allied Workers, *A Call for Action* (1948), and displays were given of the film at the Union's annual conference and at seven branch meetings. The film department also arranged presentations of *Through a Needle's Eye*, the film of the Amalgamated Union of Tailors and Garment Workers, at sixteen of its branch meetings. In addition, film displays were provided for the Union of Post Office Workers, the Association of Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen, Romford and Hornchurch Trade Council, Melsham Labour League of Youth and the India League, amongst many others. The NFA cinema van and mobile public address services were present at numerous Party and Trade Council

events, while public address equipment was supplied to nine local Labour Parties, the political Committee of the London Co-operative Society and the Association of Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen. The Film Department also participated with exhibition stands and displays at the Labour Party Summer School, the TUC School held at Ruskin College, the Co-operative Party's School and The NFA's own annual film school.⁷² The Trade Union Movement, if still cautious, was becoming film conscious and a small number of unions commissioned films from various documentary units in the postwar period.⁷³ However, it is apparent that the documentary producers who had perceived a great field of opportunity in the unions, were ultimately disappointed in the overall level of commissions.⁷⁴

The NFA was concerned to make its contribution to the General Election in 1950. The previous year, it had informed the Labour Party that "whatever machinery and resources are at the disposal of the National Film Association will be available in support of the Labour Party before and during the forthcoming General Election".⁷⁵ An offer that was greeted with "deep appreciation" by the National Executive Committee.⁷⁶ The NFA was put into a bullish mood and was generously reported in the trade press as capable of presenting thousands of individual performances each week: "The organisation will use a number of films made with co-op money and many of the Government-sponsored films with industrial significance".⁷⁷ In the event, the Labour Administration remained nervous of accusations of it using Government information services for party political purposes and Morrison declared a 'truce', banning the non-theatrical exhibition of COI films. As Bert Hogenkamp has observed:

This forced the NFA to modify its plans of canvassing for the Labour Party by using Government films complementary to CWS productions like *THEIR GREAT ADVENTURE* and revealed once more how half-hearted the Labour Movement's propaganda efforts were.⁷⁸

However, the Association's single daylight cinema van toured some local constituencies, such as the four covered by the Birkenhead Co-operative Society, where it was reported to be of "outstanding propaganda value". The van provided eight shows a day to "record crowds of workers and shoppers", the cost being met by the local Co-operative Party. A specially shortened version of *Their Great Adventure* was a feature of the

presentations.⁷⁹

Following the General Election in 1950, at which Labour won a narrow victory, the CWS/NFA announced an improved Road Show Service, made possible following an allocation of £40,000 per annum from the CWS. This offered members, able to provide certain guarantees, free film shows and correspondingly there was an increased demand for displays. Between September 1950 and May 1951, 1,605 shows were provided to an aggregate audience of over 175,000. Many of these were for Co-operative Societies, but seventy-nine displays went to trade union organisations, mainly convened through local trades councils, to an audience of approaching 6,000.⁸⁰ A comparable level of activity was recorded for the period up to February 1952.⁸¹ However, this improved performance did not lead to an Election victory in 1951, and in one post mortem the failure was linked to the under-resourcing of film work:

Why, indeed, did the Labour and Co-operative Government suffer a defeat after six proud years of progressive legislation? One of the reasons is that insufficient attention has been paid to the Film as an instrument of propaganda and social education. Now the lesson should be well learned. The Labour Movement must galvanise itself into active film making and secure wide distribution for its films. The next election could be won on two thousand reels of celluloid.⁸²

Once again, Morrison had declared a 'truce' on the distribution of COI films and there had been no new production of Labour political films. One commentator, while praising the distribution service provided by the CWS/NFA, lamented the fact that "we had not got the political films to show in it, except for CWS's broader films on Co-operation". He urged the Labour Movement to commission films from the film department: "We can't expect the CWS to make them for nothing".⁸³ One new opportunity that presented itself to the NFA at this time followed the suspension of the COI mobile film service and the introduction of hire charges at the Central Film Library. It was hoped that the CWS film department could fill the gap.⁸⁴

In the final analysis, there seems to have been insufficient support for the activities of the NFA. If we take one criteria, membership, then there was continual disappointment at the level of subscription. By February 1949, the Association had attained a membership of 549, which fell somewhat below expectations.⁸⁵ Only half a year later, subscriptions had fallen to a dismal 293 and the NFA confronted a deficit of

over £60 on its Associate Membership scheme and the publication of its journal. One of several requests for financial assistance had to be made to the founder members for the organisation to remain solvent.⁸⁶ There was a particular lack of support from the Trade Union Movement, such that by November 1948, the Association had received only sixty-two applications for membership from groups affiliated through the TUC, as compared to 211 from the Co-ops and 128 Labour Parties.⁸⁷ The NFA found it necessary in July 1950 to issue a circular to all Trades Unions and Trades Councils encouraging them to take up membership with the Association.⁸⁸

By the autumn of 1952, plans were underway to dissolve the National Film Association and a special meeting to effect the dissolution was called for 3 December.⁸⁹ The NFA worked on until the end of June 1953, at which point a surprisingly positive summary of achievements was offered:

The purpose of the National Film Association was to maintain, stimulate and develop an interest in the use of films and visual aids for educational and propaganda purposes, and for the enlightenment of the working classes, *and this they have successfully achieved.*⁹⁰

Informed delegates to the TUC Congress were incredulous at the claim that the NFA had 'accomplished' the task it set out to do. George Elvin of the Association of Cinematograph and Allied Technicians interpreted the action as the Labour Movement abandoning:

one of the most effective media of expressing their policy and opinion. It seems to me utterly ridiculous and fantastic that in this day and age the three wings of the Movement should between them agree to wind up their film organisation which is a necessary adjunct to its literature and other forms of expression of opinion.

On the reasons given for the dissolution of the Association, he drily added these observations:

[I]t says that the educational and propaganda work of the movement has been completed as far as the use of film is concerned, and in effect that the working class is now enlightened. I thought there was a lot of work to be done in both those connections.⁹¹

The reply provided by Vincent Tewson, one-time TUC representative to the NFA, offered a fairer assessment of the circumstances:

The National Film Association has been dissolved, it is true, but we were dependent entirely upon the services of the Co-operative Film Department, and although the Association has been dissolved the services available from the Co-operative Film Department can be secured by Trades Councils, trade unions, Labour parties, and all those bodies originally affiliated to the Association.⁹²

Within a few months, "Progressively-minded local secretaries" were being advised to "turn to the facilities of the CWS mobile film service for the screening of films to audiences of their own choosing".⁹³ Film displays had been the only significant achievement of the NFA, and this service could continue uninterrupted through the CWS film department. There had been an inadequate demand for film commissions from the trades unions and the Labour Party, with the bulk of film production going to the Co-operative Movement. The Labour Movement did not need an expensive National Film Association to serve that state of affairs⁹⁴, and the loss of the annual film school and the *NFA Journal* were not serious blows. For the CWS film department, it would continue to find clients among the wider Labour Movement for its new free road show displays, while concentrating on its principal function of providing a comprehensive film service for the Co-operative Movement.

The New CWS National Film Service

The CWS National Film Service, forged with the Co-operative Union in the late 1930s through the protracted conflict with the National Association of Co-operative Education Committees regarding the Movement's film work, was denied the opportunity to demonstrate its potential due to the outbreak of war. Initially, it was decided to continue with a film hire service for Societies, while some resources, as we have seen, were put into production, with the Movement's first training film, *Behind the Counter* (1941), and some product films on tobacco.⁹⁵ In the first season during the war, the Service hired 310 educational and entertainment films to Co-operative Societies and a further 2,004 CWS publicity films to Co-operative Societies, schools, educational authorities, associations and individuals.⁹⁶ For a period, as wartime conditions

intensified, it was difficult for the Film Service to maintain its level of operations and the following season only 100 films were hired to Co-operative Societies.⁹⁷ Film shows actually organised by the film department seem to have been restricted to shows on CWS premises and meeting specific publicity objectives, such as presentations for retail Societies' buyers.⁹⁸ At some point in the middle of the war the Service was able to provide mobile film displays once more, and this would have been a significant achievement in view of the looming centenary celebrations in 1944 and the desire to widely exhibit the expensively produced *Men of Rochdale*. Thus, we discover in October of the centenary year, that the CWS mobile film unit paid a week's visit to the Plymouth area with the centenary film, providing nine shows to a combined audience of 1,300.⁹⁹

Despite the difficulties thrown up by the war, the CWS film department clearly intended to extend its area of activities once circumstances allowed, and this was partly behind the decisions that led the CWS into closer alliance with the wider Labour Movement and the formation of a National Film Association in 1946. With the promise of an extended market, the film department could consider increased investment in its film work. One strategy, which did not ultimately meet with great success, was to tempt Labour organisations to sponsor film production through the CWS film unit. The generosity of the CWS in donating *Their Great Adventure* to the Labour Party and its involvement in *Call to Action* for the Bakers' Union, must partly be explained in this way. Furthermore, such production generated material for programmes suitable for Labour and Union audiences and would hopefully raise demand for film shows from those organisations. In a similar manner, the CWS presented the Co-operative Youth Movement with a film, the project being announced early in the summer of 1946 and it being the unit's first film production of the peace.¹⁰⁰ This was effectively a gift to the Co-operative Union, and in addition to expanding the constituency of bodies participating in film work, might be seen as a reward to the Union's loyalty in film matters over the preceding few years.¹⁰¹ Production commenced immediately with the CWS film unit visiting the three Co-operative Youth Centres at Tong Hall, Dalston Hall and Collington Rise, as well as filming various Playway and Pathfinders groups.¹⁰² The film, *Youth Looks Ahead*, co-scripted by the assistant youth organiser at the Co-operative

Union, was premiered at the 1947 Easter Education Convention of the Co-operative Union, part of a programme of youth activities.¹⁰³ There was also a private showing of the film to representatives of about twenty national youth organisations to demonstrate the youth work of the Movement. In explaining the intention of the film, it had been announced that:

For a long time, the youth section had been hiding its light under a bushel, but this film would help to make known some of the varied activities. These were days when young people were likely to be influenced by the showing of such films.¹⁰⁴

During 1948, there were a respectable 688 bookings for the Co-operative youth film¹⁰⁵, but the subject seemingly dated quickly, and by 1951, the Educational Executive of the Co-operative Union was considering an updated version of the film, which never materialised.¹⁰⁶ The CWS completed another film for the Co-operative Union in 1947, a record of the annual Congress held at Brighton. The production demonstrated the technical progress made by the CWS film department since the difficulties and disappointments of producing a Congress film in the late 1930s. Possibly in an exercise calculated to demonstrate the film unit's proficiency and expertise, the sound film was executed and completed in time for screening to delegates on the final day of proceedings.¹⁰⁷ Such work, while patently serving Co-operative propaganda and democracy, also established the credibility of the CWS film department as the nucleus of the NFA and were model film projects to tempt the Unions and the Labour Party into seeking their own productions.

In the main though, the CWS film unit had to busy itself with productions promoting Co-operative organisations and trade, and one new area of activity was training. Just prior to the war, the Joint Committee on Technical Education had considered the possibility of training films, and, as we have seen, the Movement's first example, *Behind the Counter*, had appeared in 1941. Although the film was used during wartime, it was not possible to realise its full effectiveness and the film made a reappearance in 1946, and in some quarters was erroneously accepted as a brand new production. For example, it was shown to members of the North-Western General and Grocery Managers' Association who were unanimous "in welcoming the film as a useful aid to the training of employees, and gave the film unit the signal to go ahead and make

other films on the same lines".¹⁰⁸ The CWS film department organised numerous previews of the film across the summer of 1946 for the benefit of Society managers, enabling them in turn to make local arrangements for screenings to employees.¹⁰⁹ The favourable response led the Movement into a sustained period of film productions to aid training, invariably dealing with sales techniques. Dairy was the division to be granted the first new film for training purposes and *Milk Salesmanship* [NCFC 113] was ready for use in February 1947. This was described as "a training film designed to help the roundsman to do his job properly, to sell more milk, to cultivate the customer, and to place his feet on the path to promotion".¹¹⁰ It boasted an innovative construction incorporating three discussion breaks, thus enabling "the points of the film to be assimilated progressively".¹¹¹ A general interest film on the theme of milk was also prepared, *The Milk We Drink* [NCFC 114], which was available through the CWS film service and also distributed into cinemas.¹¹² The final training project of the period was completed in 1952 and dealt with salesmanship in the shoe department. *Shoe Salesman* [NCFC 144-146] came in three parts, which, similar to the milk film, offered the opportunity for discussion breaks. The film was widely previewed around the country to departmental managers and buyers, and followed with free displays for retail staff as requested.¹¹³

Following a couple of prestigious wartime films, the SCWS became more active in film work. Initially, it promoted contemporary themes of social responsibility, most apparent in *Two Good Fairies* (1943) and *They Found a Future* (1946) [NCFC 107]. However, emphasis began to shift firmly towards more pragmatic subjects, of which three training films produced in 1947 were prominent. They dealt with respectively: the duties of the shop assistant, *Counter Courtesy* [NCFC 111]; the duties of the shop manager, *Know Your Business* [NCFC 112]; and the essentials of the advertising campaign, *Your Silent Salesman* [NCFC 115]. Lacking its own film unit, the SCWS commissioned the films from the Orion Picture Corporation, one of the numerous documentary film units that sprang up during and after the war to serve the demand for official and industrial films. The company also completed two general interest subjects for the SCWS at this time, with *Achievement* (1947) [NCFC 109] and *Pride and Progress* (1949) [NCFC 124].¹¹⁴ Into the 1950s, the SCWS maintained a significant

level of film work, far in advance of its pre-war activity, and concentrating largely on informational and publicity subjects. Film publicity would have been part of the "comprehensive propaganda campaign" launched by the SCWS in collaboration with the Co-operative Union in the postwar period. The effort was aimed to create more Co-operators throughout Scotland and to improve purchases of SCWS goods in the local Co-op stores.¹¹⁵ A mobile cinema unit brought the films to outlying rural districts, and for the 1946-47 season screened 1,500 films at 550 performances.¹¹⁶

Film distribution and exhibition also exercised minds at the CWS film department. The demand for film shows deriving from the arrangements established with the National Film Association fell below expectations, and in the summer of 1950 the CWS unveiled a new subsidised scheme of mobile film shows. Three types of show were available for three classes of audience: women (75 mins), children (60 mins) and mixed adults (105 mins). Each programme contained an entertainment feature, in addition to general interest, educational and CWS propaganda subjects. A significant departure from previous practice was that Labour organisations were offered the film shows free of charge as long as they could guarantee the following: (a) provide a suitable hall; (b) secure an audience of at least ninety; (c) make no charge for admission. The films were also available for hire without cost from the CWS film library.¹¹⁷ Mobile film units were operated from 'strategic centres' at Manchester, London, Newcastle, Leeds, Birmingham, Bristol and Plymouth, and the CWS provided posters and bills suitable for overprinting.¹¹⁸ The film trade was quick to take notice as it sensed yet another incursion by the Co-op into its sphere of business. The CWS had been careful to purchase outright a quantity of low grade features, "to avoid any copyright controversy or intervention by the industry"¹¹⁹, while a CWS official, in deflecting the trade's traditional opposition to free shows, somewhat paradoxically responded: "We can't possibly be harming anyone else because we are not charging for admission".¹²⁰ The new film scheme provided over 2,000 shows in its first year, to an audience of 217,000. On the abandonment of the NFA in 1953, it was the sole remnant of the Labour film service providing for the Party branches, trade unions and Co-operative bodies.¹²¹

If the CWS was disappointed in the take-up of its film services by Labour Party

branches, trades councils and unions, then part of the blame must be placed on the content of the film programmes that the road show service and the library offered. As we have seen, the bulk of new film production was on the initiative of the CWS, which had a tendency to foreground entertaining characteristics or concentrate on dryer informational subjects.¹²² Three representative subjects from the period illustrate this point: *A Change for the Better* (1949) [NCFC 121], an amusing puppet film in colour narrated by Stanley Holloway, which contained mild publicity for the Co-operative benefit of mutual saving; *Best Foot Forward* (1947) [NCFC 110], a closely detailed film on the manufacture of CWS footwear; and *The CWS (Manchester) Band* (1951) [NCFC 133], a studio performance by the celebrated brass band. While such films might have been courteously tolerated by progressive audiences as the occasion demanded, they were seemingly insufficient to draw the more politically-minded to Labour film shows.¹²³ Only one Co-operative subject completed at this time had potential for cross-over appeal to politicised audiences, *Co-operation* (1948) [NCFC 118], which was a hang-over from the war period with its themes of reconstruction and internationalism.¹²⁴

Into the 1950s, there was a noticeable emphasis on the film for publicity at the CWS. While educational and informational subjects did appear, overtly politicised films vanished. The CWS had assumed majority responsibility for the Movement's film production and the product film attained a place of prominence in its schedule. The experience of an independent Co-operative documentary film unit, DATA films, is indicative of this shift. Documentary Technicians Alliance Ltd had been formed in 1944 as a Co-operative Co-partnership Society, by a group of creative technicians formerly with Paul Rotha Productions. The unit successfully applied for membership of the Co-operative Productive Federation but initially failed to find acceptance at the Co-operative Union.¹²⁵ The idealism of DATA was evident from its declaration as "independent of monopoly and special interests", imbuing it with that sense of social responsibility characteristic of the period.¹²⁶ In time, it picked-up important commissions from the cotton industry, the National Coal Board and the COI. But according to its producer, Donald Alexander, DATA was disappointed over the lack of interest in film work among the Labour Movement:

What contributions could not the Miners or the Railwaymen or the Transport workers

or the Textile workers be making at the present time? Do the unions not see that it is not only on their organisation of their workers but on the catching of public sympathy that their success in Britain depends?¹²⁷

The film unit fared only slightly better with the Co-operative Movement. In 1948, a film was announced for the Co-operative Productive Federation, *Co-Partnership in Operation*, but the federal body for worker Co-ops eventually declined to pursue the production.¹²⁸ It was ten years before the Consumer Movement placed a commission with DATA with *It's Up To You!* (1954) [NCFC 159], a film on the organisation and management of the London Co-operative Society.¹²⁹ A small project was completed for the Colchester Society in the same year [NCFC 156], and these were followed by a few films for the CWS [NCFC 165, NCFC 193, NCFC 198].¹³⁰ Much later, chief cameraman Wolf Suschitzky remembered being disappointed in the level of support DATA received from the Co-operative Movement.¹³¹ While the Documentary Technicians Alliance brought Co-operative ideals and principles into the exalted world, in cinema terms, of documentary film production, it was afforded few occasions to fuse documentary technique with Labour ambition. This was, arguably, a missed opportunity for the democratic Left in the period of the majority Labour Government and the National Film Association.

The CWS film department, meantime, was preparing a new configuration of its popular road show service. In the autumn of 1954, Societies were offered a free 'Woman's Hour' afternoon or evening display (for mixed audience), for which the film *Seal of Success* [NCFC 160] was commissioned.¹³² The scheme was promoted as "the basis of a powerful sales promotion drive", and offered Societies "unprecedented opportunities"; while the CWS bore the cost of posters, window bills, invitation cards and specially prepared recipe booklets. The host Society was only asked to provide free tea and biscuits for distribution at the afternoon shows.¹³³ The film section was clearly moving towards a more emphatic publicity role with production geared to support shows aimed at consumers, and the provision was accordingly fitted with the appropriate nomenclature: it became the CWS Publicity Film Service. The service remained free to retail Co-operative Societies but a nominal fee was introduced for outside organisations. The Movement's new synthetic detergent, Spel, had been strongly

promoted through film [NCFC 150, NCFC 153], and products and activities thought to be of special relevance or interest to women, traditionally configured as the woman with the basket and the organiser of consumption within the economy of Co-operation, became the main target of CWS films.¹³⁴ Mrs Turbit of the Co-operative Party, in praising the CWS film section, believed that through its efforts, "members would become better co-operators throughout the country and give their fullest support to CWS goods". She pursued this theme of the films promoting sales, declaring the film service "an excellent medium for reaching consumers".¹³⁵ Baking products received the greatest attention and the Woman's Hour shows were provided with *The Right Mixture* (c.1955) [NCFC 183], *The Cuckoo in the Kitchen* (1956) [NCFC 188], and *Father Takes the Cake* (1957) [NCFC 200]. The films addressed their audience as entertaining cookery demonstrations featuring celebrity cooks and 'star' performers. With the exception of *The Right Mixture*, the films were commissioned from the commercial film sector, indicative of an emerging policy within the CWS film department to place its more complex productions with outside producers. While Anglo-Scottish Pictures assumed responsibility for the publicity films, DATA secured some commissions for educational and propaganda subjects, such as *It's All Yours!* (1955) [NCFC 165], *Your Business* (1956) [NCFC 193] and *Working Together* (c.1956) [NCFC 198].¹³⁶ There were probably two reasons for this partial withdrawal from film production: the increased resourcing devoted to the film road show service; and the attention required for the new demand of television advertising, with which the CWS immediately participated beginning in September 1955.¹³⁷ Between October 1956 and March 1957, the film section gave 2,339 'consumer shows' to an aggregate audience of 261,000, and this represented a significant shift in orientation of film propaganda since the period of the NFA.¹³⁸ Some local publicity managers reported poor attendance at the matinee performances for women, achieving far better success at outdoor presentations, of which the CWS gave 1,200 shows to 147,000 people in 1955.¹³⁹ The 1950s also saw the appearance of the Movement's first travel film shows, put out in association with the Co-operative Travel Service (CTS). Although details are sketchy, it seems that from 1952, the CTS prepared travel subjects that were included in CWS publicity film shows as well as arranging some exclusive programmes of its own.¹⁴⁰

The Film Section of the CWS Publicity Department (1950s) eventually transformed into the Film Section of the CWS Public Relations Division (1960s), part of a wider reconfiguration of advertising and promotion that the Movement confronted in the period. The film road show and library remained the staple functions of the section into the mid-1960s, at which point the service was discontinued. At the time of the last substantial report on the CWS Film Section in 1962, it was supporting sixteen road show operators in England and Wales, which supplied 2,600 performances a year to about 250,000 people. A further 2,000 shows were given at Co-operative exhibitions, with a small number of screenings for visitors to the CWS Countercraft Centre, Manchester. About fifty travel shows were held in collaboration with the CTS. The programmes concentrated heavily on trade subjects and the long-established practice of distributing samples of the products featured in the films was maintained.¹⁴¹ The Film Section appears to have been a victim of the rationalisation that swept the CWS in the latter half of the 1960s. The focus of publicity had shifted to television and film shows were perceived as anachronistic. In the new, modern regime of Chief Executive Philip Thomas (1967-68), film publicity centred on regional units supplying road show performances was an expensive thing of the past, and did not match the smart up-to-date image which became the prerogative of the CWS in the late 1960s.¹⁴²

The revised road show service of October 1954 was a clear marker of a new emphasis in film work to support sales. As well as administrative 'streamlining' to eradicate as far as possible the 'one night stand', the CWS was explicit in its concentration on two specific audiences: retail employees and housewives. As the film department honestly declared: "Initial negotiations are to be undertaken directly with trading officials so that from the outset a Society's trading departments are completely aware of the scope of these shows ... In brief, the revisions aim at better co-ordination with local Co-operative trading interests, closer advertising association and, therefore, a more direct stimulus to sales".¹⁴³ Such a realignment was a concern for the Movement's educationalists and the CWS Publicity Department sought to assuage education secretaries that they need not be left out of arrangements. The Department did not wish complete severance from the Education Committees but did insist that "from the start of the negotiations, the principal trading official is himself aware of the

arrangements and can take steps to satisfy the new conditions".¹⁴⁴ With the dissolution of the National Association of Co-operative Education Committees in the late 1940s, there had disappeared an important forum for criticism of film work geared predominantly for publicity. However, disquiet at the trend to use film to support sales did remain. Early in 1951, a resolution tabled by the Portsea Island Society was carried at the annual meeting of the Southern Sectional Educational Association and asked the CWS film department "to produce films of an educational and social nature, portraying the history and story of the movement".¹⁴⁵

A more serious and sustained eruption appeared in the late 1950s, when the Movement's use of film was debated at Co-operative Congress. A motion was moved by Mr Hermelin of DATA Film Productions, requesting "the Co-operative Movement to recognise the importance of films in the development of the Co-operative idea". The proposal did not refer to sales or advertising films, which should remain the province of the CWS, but called upon the Co-operative Union to take responsibility for documentary film production of the "informative, educational and instructional type".¹⁴⁶ It was pointed out that at the recent Industrial Film Festival in Harrogate, where the best public relations films had been showcased, the Co-operative Movement had not been represented and the speaker offered the conviction "that the Co-operative Movement cannot afford not to have films".¹⁴⁷ In seconding the motion, Mr Jupp of the Co-operative Productive Federation effectively summarised the central objective of the proposal, the setting up of a co-ordinating group chaired by the Co-operative Union, "to enable us to use to the full the modern means of mass communication".¹⁴⁸ In tabling the motion, DATA was clearly revealing its disappointment at the level of film commissions it had attracted from the Co-operative Movement, or as it was put in the address: "how small is the call made upon its efforts by the Co-operative Movement compared with the services which it renders to other commercial, Government and nationalised organisations".¹⁴⁹ The proposal was carried by a substantial majority and reflected both the continuing influence of the quality documentary approach to factual film-making, as represented by DATA, and the perceived failure of the CWS film department to cater for the needs of the Movement's educationalists under the arrangements of the new publicity film service.¹⁵⁰

Later in the year, it was announced in pursuance of the motion that the Central Executive of the Co-operative Union had obtained from the CWS and the SCWS details of their film production and distribution. Future action, it was agreed, "could best be undertaken through the medium of an advisory committee consisting of representatives of the Co-operative Union, Co-operative College, CWS and SCWS."¹⁵¹ At the following Congress in 1960, the Central Executive feigned some confusion over the exact nature of the demands made the previous year regarding film. It had therefore asked DATA to present its case fully in writing and had received the following stipulations: that the Union should arrange the production and distribution of educational films on a continuous basis; that an appropriation of £25,000 be made for the first year's film programme, sufficient for ten to twelve reels of black and white sound film; and that a committee of four persons, comprising an educationalist, a publicist or public relations expert, a film production expert and an accountant to act as secretary be convened. Subsequently, and conforming to historical tradition, the Executive had consulted with the CWS and SCWS, "with special reference as to whether or not the two Wholesale Societies would place their facilities at the disposal of the Union should films enter into the Union's propaganda, educational and promotional work".¹⁵² The Wholesales gave an assurance that they were prepared to help with any film projects. However, the Union once more showed little enthusiasm for expensive film work and concluded the report with the following:

As the Union is not contemplating any such projects at the present time, the Central Executive came to the conclusion that in the event arising for the use of films, the Co-operative Union would utilise the services of the CWS and the SCWS. There is accordingly no immediate practical outcome to report from the adoption of the Congress resolution.¹⁵³

Unsurprisingly, the delegate from DATA, Mr Hermelin, accused the Central Executive of failing to implement the main purpose of the resolution. He saw little sense in assessing the present position of the Wholesale Societies in respect of film production and distribution as the resolution had called for a new film organisation. He also sensed an evasion by the Union on the whole issue of progressive film work:

The Central Executive was asked to examine the possibility of setting up a suitable organisation to promote film projects. That is what Congress requested it to do - and not pass judgement as to whether to use films or not. The case for having films

produced under the auspices of the Union was made last May and was approved by Congress. It was then up to the Central Executive to say how this was to be done. DATA made detailed proposals which were ignored. Instead of either approving those proposals, even as a basis for further discussion, or rejecting them and consequently seeking alternative proposals of a more acceptable nature, the Central Executive did neither, and thus turned completely away from the firm demand made by Congress last year.¹⁵⁴

That was the last intervention by the educationalist lobby into the films question and the Central Executive had effectively evaded the demands of Congress and left film matters in the hands of the CWS Publicity Department. It was revealing how the debate around the motion broadened into considerations of the mass media in general and clearly the importance placed on film was being eroded. Cinema and its contribution to education and propaganda would never again attract substantial discussion within the Co-operative Movement and the CWS and the SCWS would persevere with their publicity film units for only a few more years.

Films for Education or Education about Films?: Co-operative Film Societies

The Film Society Movement has held an important position within intellectual and political film culture in Britain. The privileged Film Society founded in London in 1925, was a crucial forum for the artistic consideration of cinema and host to the first screenings of Soviet montage films in the late 1920s.¹⁵⁵ The workers' film societies established from 1929 onwards were the bedrock of Labour film culture in Britain in the interwar period and one focus of oppositional activity within the cultural arena. However, the mainstream Film Society Movement, which emerged in the 1930s, was essentially non-political and concerned with aesthetic and social issues relating to cinema. The Federation of British Film Societies (FBFS) was established in 1932 for the purpose of collective organisation and gained crucial support in promoting film education from the British Film Institute, which appeared in 1933.¹⁵⁶ As we have seen, local Co-operative Societies were often involved with workers' film societies, notably providing venues when restrictions were put in the way by local authorities. In addition,

many Co-ops formed conventional film societies for the study and appreciation of film. There was some early activity in this area in the 1920s and 1930s, with prominent work taking place at the Royal Arsenal Society, as we have seen. In 1937, a Co-operative film society was formed at Walsall with the aim to "develop a keener appreciation of the real art of the film". It retained contact though with the original objectives of the worker film societies, in that it also sought "[t]o produce films illustrative of working-class life generally, and in particular of suitable propaganda films on behalf of the co-operative movement".¹⁵⁷ However, the post-World War Two decades were witness to the most concerted effort to organise and run Co-operative film societies. The formation of film societies conformed to the traditional support of education work within the Co-operative Movement and as one adult educationalist contended:

by cultivating critical standards in the art of the cinema and (in the case of scientific film societies) by illustrating scientific processes, in the broad sense, vividly and comprehensively, they are doing cultural work of the first importance.

In a very general sense, the objectives of a film society were taken as:

to provide members with an opportunity to see films denied them by the narrow entertainment policy of the commercial cinema, to revive such classics of the screen as are available in this country, and to encourage discussion of the numerous aspects of film production as an art and craft.¹⁵⁸

These were quite distinct from the political ambitions of the workers' film societies and their oppositional engagement with cinema, and the conventional Film Society Movement was taken to be more middle-class in character with its imperative to 'improve' taste and alignment with a non-political adult education. As one observer noted of the Movement in the late 1940s:

What a far cry it is from the late 'twenties when the censorship ban was on the Russian films *Potemkin* and *October* which were shown to the accompaniment of police armed with batons in an atmosphere of incipient bloody revolution ... Twenty years have seen the audience transformed from one of red ties fringed with aesthetes into a prevalingly middle-class assembly.¹⁵⁹

Although Co-operative film societies clearly attracted working-class members the ideals of these societies remained indistinct from conventional film societies affiliated to the FBFS.

Some of the most concerted effort took place among the metropolitan Co-ops, which began to form film societies in the early war years. This activity was certainly an outgrowth of the film propaganda work of the National Association of Co-operative Education Committees and the Workers' Film Association in the latter half of the 1930s, which had made Co-operative educationalists film conscious and stimulated numerous Co-operative Societies to acquire projection equipment. In particular, the WFA had organised film classes and annual film schools, a practice that was maintained by the postwar National Film Association and emulated by local Co-operative Societies. The London Society was the first to initiate film societies across its trading districts, with the purpose "to develop an interest and a critical appreciation of films". The Society possessed a well-resourced film unit that had lately been providing film shows to servicemen in the vicinity of London, as well as screenings to evacuees at the Society's farm at Ongar and staff evacuated to Hoddesden.¹⁶⁰ Initially, only a single society appeared, the London Co-operative Film Society (1941), and progress during wartime was seemingly slow.¹⁶¹ Slowly, other film societies were established, with the North London Film Society (1943) and the West London Film Society (1943).¹⁶² Also in 1943, a group of film enthusiasts at the South Suburban Society formed a film society under the sponsorship of the Education Committee.¹⁶³ The representative character of these film societies can be gauged from the programme of the West London Film Society, which, for its third session in 1945, screened *Of Mice and Men* (1939), *Turksib* (1929), *The Blue Angel* (1930) and Cavalcanti's study *Film and Reality* (1942). Members also heard Dr Roger Manvell of the British Film Institute lecture on 'The Social Influence of the Cinema' and visited some film studios.¹⁶⁴

The postwar years saw a substantial spread of Co-operative film societies, a situation that reflected the popularity of the Film Society Movement in general.¹⁶⁵ The London Society was soon supporting several film societies, as well as children's Saturday Morning Film Clubs.¹⁶⁶ By 1949, these had been joined by four societies sponsored by the RACS, two by the Enfield Highway Society and film societies at Watford (1954), Ruislip (?), Dartford (1948), Gillingham (c.1949), Brighton and Hove (1950) and Slough (1946).¹⁶⁷ The latter film society was particularly enterprising and its activities were regularly brought to the Movement's attention. In 1955, actor Michael

Redgrave was elected president, while Kenneth More assumed the presidency of the auxiliary Slough Junior Film Club in 1961.¹⁶⁸ The film society was able to take advantage of prominent film personages from the nearby studios at Pinewood, Denham and Ealing to address meetings.¹⁶⁹ The experience gained at Slough was shared with the Movement when the education secretary gave detailed advice on organising a film society.¹⁷⁰

Several film societies were also established by Co-operative Societies further North, with prominent examples at Newcastle (1950), Nottingham (c.1947), Mansfield (1951), Huddersfield (1952), Wellingborough (1947), Ten Acres and Stirchley (1949), Birkenhead (1949), and Doncaster (1948). Societies were also established by students at the Co-operative College (1955) and for CWS employees in Manchester (1947). In Scotland there was a strong Co-operative presence on the Glasgow Trades Council Film Society (1946).¹⁷¹ In their concern with film art, the postwar Co-operative film societies were distinct from the earlier workers' film societies, which had sought to put cinema to the aid of cultural agitation. This can be taken as an index of a lessening political role for cinema within the Co-operative Movement, especially into the 1950s and following the demise of the National Film Association. While some Education Committees put emphasis on the film society as a social and cultural activity within a conventional adult education framework, the use of film for social and political education was reduced, allowing the CWS to develop its film service primarily for the purpose of publicity and to promote trade.

Television

Since the establishment of national broadcasting in the 1920s, the Co-operative Movement had enjoyed an ambivalent relationship with the BBC: seeing the Corporation as both a powerful force for democracy and the spread of Co-operative ideas; and as exercising, on occasion, bias against the Movement in its programming and access to the microphone. Far greater alarm accompanied the introduction of commercial television in the mid-1950s. In particular, there was firm resistance to the American model of sponsored TV programmes, which, it was felt, would degrade the quality of

programming by giving undue influence to advertisers. As early as the summer of 1952, the Co-operative Press issued a condemnation of the principle of sponsored TV and radio and sought, through the Co-operative Party and the National Council of Labour, to bring pressure to bear on the Conservative Government, which was thought to support the model.¹⁷² The next year the Co-operative Press prevailed in getting the Co-operative Union to adopt the following motion:

That this Central Executive of the Co-operative Union Ltd., views with alarm the proposals to introduce commercial television into this country. We consider that the proposals set out in the White Paper on Television Policy would lead inevitably to a lowering of programme standards under pressure from advertisers and would weaken the power of the British Broadcasting Corporation to provide a television and sound radio service which expresses British culture and aspirations.¹⁷³

An appeal to oppose commercial TV was also issued by the President of the Women's Guild. Mrs F. Hall felt that continual interruptions for commercial announcements would be distasteful to audiences and implored the extra costs represented by advertising, which would be borne by the consumer. The WCG had already become highly suspicious of television as one of the attractions that adversely affected attendance at Guild meetings and membership.¹⁷⁴ Warnings were also issued against one prevalent tactic of the advertisers, the tendency to target children:

The American sponsors realise that one way to the housewife's purse is through her children. It means that goods are not being sold entirely on their quality or their value for money, but on their attractiveness to the child population.¹⁷⁵

Although the majority opinion was hostile towards commercial television, some constituencies did sense possible benefits in an expanded service. Regular commentator on the visual media, R.A. Reed, education officer of the West Somerset Society, suggested that television might be harnessed to aid Co-operative educational work. He argued that the Movement "must make better use of it than it had made of the cinema and radio", and that:

It was not beyond the bounds of reason to suggest that the movement could sponsor its own programmes for educational purposes, with local education committees having sets and sponsoring local television groups.¹⁷⁶

Elsewhere, the Movement was having to accommodate the popular demand for

TV and the spreading affluence that was bringing the possibility of owning a set to some of the Movement's membership. The CWS had moved quickly to manufacture and market its Defiant TV sets following the resumption of broadcasting in 1949.¹⁷⁷ While later in 1952, the *Reynolds News* prepared for its readers and Co-operators a popular guide to television, to answer their queries and doubts.¹⁷⁸ Amidst the general confusion surrounding the introduction of commercial television in Britain, the opponents of Co-operation conversely saw the new service as a possible boon to the Movement. Independent shopkeepers feared the high cost of TV advertising and believed that it would benefit larger units of distribution. As a former president of the National Chamber of Trade observed:

Co-operative societies seemed to have a wonderful medium in commercial television to say to the family sitting round the fireside: "Shop at the Co-op - there's a branch round the corner".¹⁷⁹

And certainly within the Movement, the fears concerning the cultural and social impact of commercial television were balanced by the expectations of the trading interests who saw benefits from the advertising potential of the service.¹⁸⁰

The White Paper on television policy, which was issued in 1953, represented a significant retreat from the more extreme form of commercial TV. It offered two concessions: the principle of sponsoring was dropped in favour of 'spot' advertising; and private ownership was rejected in favour of a public corporation, which granted licences for the regional stations. Even so, unease remained, especially over the probability of monopoly control of programme production. In particular, warnings were issued against the ambitions of the Associated Broadcasting Development Company, a combination of powerful interests in radio manufacturing and the press, which had independently shown their hostility to Co-operative enterprise. According to one commentator:

In placating and favouring the A.B.D.C. the Government has retained in its new proposals the worst features of commercial television. And the co-operative movement, along with all other democratic institutions, now faces a very dangerous situation.¹⁸¹

In a sudden and surprising revelation, it emerged that the Co-operative Movement had played a 'decisive' part in the Conservative Government's retreat from its original

intentions for commercial television and its acceptance of competitive television within a public service framework. In 1952, the CWS had secretly applied for a commercial TV licence, and according to George Darling MP:

The application from the CWS put the Government in a desperate dilemma. They could not fit the co-operative movement into their plans and they knew there would be tremendous public criticism if the movement were left out.

The CWS remained opposed to commercial TV but sought "to influence events in the service of co-operation". When the story broke during a debate within parliament, the CWS issued the following statement:

The CWS is opposed in principle to the introduction of commercial television, but realises that if this is to be introduced, the co-operative movement cannot be left out in the cold.

It will require equal facilities to those granted to other commercial advertisers, and the CWS has taken steps to protect its position in this respect by acquiring from the Postmaster General as to the possibility of being granted licences to operate television services for the 10,000,000 co-operators in England and Wales.¹⁸²

The CWS probably achieved its aim in this action, of modifying the original proposals, and it is unlikely that it was seriously considering an entry into broadcasting with its lack of experience and the high costs involved.¹⁸³

The CWS did fully participate, though, in the role of an advertiser, in the first series of broadcasts across the autumn of 1955. During the first week of broadcasting from the ITA London transmitter, a series of one minute adverts conforming to a *Spot the Likeness* theme were placed by the CWS, and for which local Societies were supplied with associated publicity materials.¹⁸⁴ [NCFC 167-172] CWS advertising was included in all schedules as regional transmitters came on line over the next few years and followed a policy of "being in" on the first night.¹⁸⁵ The new advertising media posed some difficulties for the Movement's publicists, especially with regard to stock lines and pricing, which might vary considerably between local Societies. The CWS Publicity Department arranged various meetings around the country to try and effect regional agreements, one of the first arising in the Midlands and referring to footwear.¹⁸⁶ Likewise, considerable effort was put into persuading Societies on the South coast to participate in joint TV advertising following the opening of the Southern Television station in the late 1950s.¹⁸⁷ However, the first regions to collaborate in their advertising

were the South West and Anglia, where "all-Co-operative" shopping magazine programmes were broadcast.¹⁸⁸ [NCFC 233] By 1961, fifty-four Societies in the South West were participating in a joint TV advertising scheme, with the CWS meeting half the costs, leaving local Societies to find £6. 10s. per thousand members.¹⁸⁹

The first nationally co-ordinated television advertising campaign by the Movement involved bread. Pressure for a national scheme had mounted in the second half of the 1950s, and in 1959 the Co-operative Publicity Managers' Association had pushed for the establishment of a national advertising fund. The proposal was considered by the Technical Panel for Publicity of the Co-operative Union where it was recommended the cost might be met by a small increase in subscriptions to the Union.¹⁹⁰ As was so often the case, it took the independent resolve of the CWS to actually put a scheme together. With the support of the Co-operative Union, a national campaign advertising the Wheatsheaf loaf was launched in 1959 in a bid to retrieve a declining market share.¹⁹¹ Bread adverts were included in the opening night broadcasts of the new Anglia service in October of that year¹⁹², and local Societies contributed to the cost in the form of levies collected by the Sectional Boards of the Co-operative Union.¹⁹³ A second annual campaign was devoted to Wheatsheaf bread in 1961, in what was assessed as "the biggest Co-operative combined operation to date", and the basic model for nationally co-ordinated television advertising was being formed.¹⁹⁴ The Movement's celebrated 99 tea was the second product to receive a national advertising campaign on TV commencing in 1960.¹⁹⁵ Co-op tea also became the first product to feature in the CWS's 'Six Star' scheme launched in 1962, a time when sales were suffering due to competitors offering cut-price tea as a loss-leader to lure customers into their shops.¹⁹⁶

Into the 1960s, the CWS was forced into a bolder approach to television advertising. Local Societies had not shown unreserved commitment to joint advertising schemes with the Wholesale Society, while the importance of television advertising within the promotional portfolio was ever growing. The Movement was also confronting a disturbing decline in market share. Thus, in July 1962, the Society launched "[t]he biggest national advertising campaign ever undertaken by the CWS to boost grocery sales in Co-operative shops".¹⁹⁷ Promotions would be cross-media, although TV would take a substantial share of the £250,000 appropriation for the 'Come

Co-operative Shopping' campaign. The CWS was prepared to shoulder the entire cost, a lesson it had learned from its publicity film work, and allocated a further £500,000 for each subsequent year should the scheme prove its anticipated success. A new approach to TV commercials was adopted with named Societies and customers:

The aim is to show a cross-section of the population who are Co-operative members, and what kind of facilities are offered by societies both in counter service and self-service shops. Members will be shown in their homes as well as in the bright modern Co-operative stores.¹⁹⁸ [NCFC 252 et seq]

The CWS's actions pre-empted the recommendations of the Committee on Public Relations and Member Education, which had reported to Congress in the summer of 1962. This committee had envisaged an annual allocation of £500,000 to publicise the Movement, to be financed partly from contributions by local Societies based on membership and aimed more generally to promote Co-operation and boost membership.¹⁹⁹ The 'Come Co-operative Shopping' campaign was concerned more directly "to get people into co-operative shops, an essential preliminary to them buying CWS goods", and the CWS through funding the scheme was showing its unwillingness to face the uncertainty of local participation derived from conventional contributory financial arrangements.²⁰⁰ Even so, the CWS had to rely on some local support in terms of stocking and pricing of special offers, and there was some concern over whether Societies were giving the initiative their full backing. Societies were warned they must respond to what was in effect an "act of faith" by the CWS.²⁰¹ While the immediate focus of the adverts was special offers, the wider objective was to get consumers:

to realise that the co-ops are regular advertisers, big people, important people. In this campaign, we are seeking not merely immediate results in sales of special offers, we are looking for a cumulative build-up of a favourable co-operative image.²⁰²

Image was to be a key concern of the Movement's publicists throughout the 1960s and the 'Come Co-operative Shopping' campaign was the first concerted national scheme designed to combat the impression of the Co-op as a dowdy, old-fashioned retailer living in the past.

It was reported at the final half-yearly meeting of the CWS for 1962, that "satisfactory" increases in trade for the promoted lines had resulted from the

campaign.²⁰³ It was, therefore, announced that the scheme would continue into the next period, and, indeed, 'Come Co-operative Shopping' remained the generic approach to national advertising for several years to come.²⁰⁴ Significant revisions to the Movement's national advertising attended the introduction of the new CO-OP logo and brand packaging in 1968.²⁰⁵ Retail market share had dropped alarmingly and Co-operators were warned that 1968 was their "Last Chance Year". The CWS allocated £1,300,000 for the annual campaign and introduced a new slogan, 'It's All At The Co-op Now', all aimed at aiding the local Co-op to "out-multiple the multiples".²⁰⁶ Societies were made mindful of the three main objectives behind the new campaign: to increase store traffic, to increase the sales of CWS products and to raise the image of the Co-operative Movement.²⁰⁷ The first of the new commercials was broadcast between 9.00 - 9.30 pm on 14 January 1968, and it was calculated that the advert would be seen at least once in fourteen million homes.²⁰⁸ The CWS Publicity Department used conventional films to inform local Societies of the details of the campaign and to persuade them of their role in making Britain 'co-op conscious'.²⁰⁹ [NCFC 297, NCFC 298]

In March 1968, a new intensity was brought to the sales push with the launch of the first 'Big Six Savers' campaigns. Local managers were warned that they confronted "the greatest challenge that has faced this generation of co-operative shop workers, managers and policy makers", and to put their full support behind the 'Big Six', "the biggest publicity drive in co-operative history".²¹⁰ The 'Big Six' sale offers were each "a brand leader in its field, known to every housewife in Britain", and the inclusion of non-Co-operative/CWS products in the group, from competitors such as Heinz and Nestle, was a significant departure in the Movement's approach to promotions and a fundamental retreat from the ideal of universalism.²¹¹ [NCFC 297, NCFC 298, NCFC 305] Within a few months the CWS was reporting spectacular sales increases for the three Co-op products featured in the advertisements: butter, 99 tea and cream.²¹² The gratifying results confirmed the inclusive approach to advertising and the Movement withdrew from an idealist position to assume a more pragmatic one. Accusations of historical betrayal and of the Co-op becoming merely another conventional high street trader intensified in this period.

The employment of the substantial national, cross-media advertising campaigns

of the 1960s deflected emphasis from film publicity and led to the virtual abandonment of film by the CWS as a promotional medium. The use of film by the Wholesale Society since the mid-1950s had been principally to improve trade, with a concentration on product films aimed at audiences in the main configured as consumers. With a declining market share, such films could aid in promoting member loyalty. Television, however, could deliver far larger audiences and potential customers. It was recognised as *the* visual medium capable of improving the Movement's image with the general public and able to impact instantly at a national level. The CWS publicity film shows became anachronistic in such an environment and were quietly let go. The intermittent films that were produced after the mid-1960s were either of local interest or commissioned by Co-operative groups such as the Woodcraft Folk or the Co-operative College, which did not have access to television and only desired to address specific communities within the Co-operative Movement. [NCFC 315, NCFC 317] The age of film was over and as the Movement began a fight for survival on the High Street, the emphasis shifted from one of making Co-operators, to which film had contributed greatly, to one of attracting customers. Television, it was hoped, was the medium to effect this urgent need.²¹³

The British Consumer Co-operative Movement promoted an active engagement with film for seven decades. That achievement prompts a number of requirements from historical scholarship: it demands a reorientation of the historiography of Labour cinema in Britain, which has undervalued the contribution of Co-operation; it requires a new periodisation to account for the significant role film played in Co-operative propaganda and promotion in the years before the establishment of the workers' film societies and the well-documented interwar Workers' Film Movement; and it is well-served by a sensitive and detailed historical account of the Co-operative Movement's aspirations and achievements with film. This thesis addresses these ideals and in the evidence it brings to bear, the historiographical focus it adopts and the issues it raises, offers significant new material and thinking on Labour film in Britain. The following Conclusion expands and develops these considerations of scholarship and the issues arising from the study

of Co-operation and film.

NOTES - Chapter 5

1. Fielding, S., 'The Second World War and Popular Radicalism: The Significance of the "Movement away from Party"', *History* (February 1995): 39. A variety of revisionist perspectives are collected in Smith, H.L., *War and Social Change. British Society in the Second World War* (Manchester: MUP, 1986).
2. Pronay, N., 'Land of Promise: "The Projection of Peace Aims in Britain"', in Short, K.R.M. (ed), *Film and Propaganda in World War Two* (London: Croom Helm, 1983).
3. Haggith, T., 'Post-war reconstruction as depicted in official British films of the Second World War', *Imperial War Museum Review*, 7 (November 1992); for the specific application of planning policy, see, Haggith, T., 'Films and the Reconstruction of the Built Environment: Britain 1939-1951', *Planning History*, 18, 1, (1996); for the case history of a particularly controversial film, see, Boon, T., 'Agreement and Disagreement in the Making of *World of Plenty*', Smith, D.F. (ed), *Nutrition in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1996).
4. *WFA Catalogue* (1945): 10. For an endorsement of this approach to reconstructive propaganda in a Labour journal, see, *The Labour Organiser* (June 1943): 11.
5. *Sight and Sound* (Autumn 1941): 88.
6. *Annual Report of the TUC* (1945): 217.
7. *WFA Catalogue* (1945): 1. A number of Co-operative Societies operated outdoor broadcast equipment for propaganda purposes. The Joint Propaganda and Trade Committee of the CWS and Co-op Union made available a trailer van from 1934, and the service operated successfully until it was discontinued in 1941, *Co-operative Union Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1934*: 96-97; *Co-operative Union Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1941*: 74.
8. *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (17 July 1943): 7.
9. *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (9 September 1943): 5; *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (20 November 1943): 7.
10. *Co-operative Union, National Executive Committee Minutes* (17 March 1944): 18; *Co-operative Union, Educational Council Minutes* (18 April 1944): 5.
11. *Co-operative Union, National Executive Committee Minutes* (20 April 1944): 19; *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (18 April 1945): 5.
12. *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (27 July 1946): 6. The Executive Committee refused the invitation to send a delegate in 1946, but this was possibly in deference to the Educational Executive, the appropriate body to be represented at the film school, see, *Co-operative Union, National Executive Committee Minutes* (15 May 1946): 20.
13. *Annual Report of the TUC* (1945): 18.
14. *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (14 July 1944): 6. Even as late as autumn 1945, the new film body was being recorded as the "National Co-operative Film Organisation", see, *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (17 November 1945): 3.
15. *Co-operative Union, National Executive Minutes* (22-23 February 1945): 15.
16. *Co-operative Union, National Executive Committee Minutes* (16 March 1945): 15.
17. *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (18 January 1946): 5; *Co-operative Union, National Executive Committee Minutes* (18 January 1946): 11, (15 February 1946): 12; *Minutes of a Meeting Called to Consider the Formation of a National Film Association* (10 January 1946), National Labour History Museum Archive. Both the Labour Party and the TUC were represented at this meeting convened at Transport House on 9 January 1946.
18. *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (16 February 1946): 6.
19. *Co-operative Union, National Executive Committee Minutes* (18 October 1946): 16.
20. *Co-operative Union, National Executive Committee Minutes* (15 March 1946): 11. Joseph Reeves, Secretary-Manager of the WFA, had personally made this request of the Union. The Educational Executive were less generous and requested the matter be raised with the Central Board, see, *Co-operative Union, Educational Executive Minutes* (20 April 1946): 6.
21. 'Plans for National Film Association', *The Co-operative News* (12 January 1946): 1; *National Film Association, Minutes of Meeting* (6 February 1946).

22. 'New Film Association Will Replace W.F.A.', *The Co-operative News* (28 September 1946): 16; 'National Film Association. Proposals for a New Organisation', *The Producer* (October 1946): 24. For the full range of services offered by the CWS film department at this time, see its brochure, *The Co-operative Wholesale Society Film Department Introduces its Services* (Manchester: CWS, 1947).
23. *Co-operative Union Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1946*: 295.
24. *Co-operative Union Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1946*: 296.
25. Reed, R.A., 'Breaking into the Commercial Cinema', *The Co-operative News* (23 November 1946): 11.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. 'Films, Music, Drama', *The Co-operative News* (12 April 1947): 5. Mr Reed's experiences in film exhibition with his West Somerset Society are recounted in Reed, R.A., '16mm. cinema circuit for co-operative societies', *The Producer* (April 1947).
29. 'Newsreels', *The Co-operative News* (27 April 1946): 14.
30. Hogenkamp, B., *The British Documentary Movement and the 1945-51 Labour Governments* (Unpublished D.Phil Thesis, Westminster College, Oxford): 79.
31. *Today's Cinema* (20 September 1946): 18. Cinema exhibitors had long been weary of sponsored 16mm film shows, and the *Daily Film Renter* had warned its readers in 1936, of "the prominent part that film shows are playing in the campaign by the Co-operative Movement who are presenting programmes of entertainment pictures in various parts of the country", *Daily Film Renter* (29 December 1936): 1.
32. *Today's Cinema* (3 December 1946): 3, 20. It was no doubt a mis-attribution on the part of the paper to suggest the Co-op Party's involvement in film matters.
33. Bond, R., *Monopoly. The Future of British Films* (London: ACT, 1946): 28-29.
34. *Daily Film Renter* (21 February 1945): 3; Hogenkamp, B., op.cit.: 79.
35. Reed, R.A., 'Another Monopoly to Challenge. The Film Industry', *The Co-operative News* (19 May 1945): 2, 10.
36. Ibid.: 2.
37. *Kine Weekly* (5 April 1945): 5.
38. *The Cinema* (2 May 1945): 31.
39. *Kine Weekly* (24 May 1945): 5.
40. Hogenkamp, B., op.cit.: 79.
41. *Kine Weekly* (22 August 1946): 1.
42. Wood, J.C., 'A Scottish Film Industry', *Scottish Co-operator* (11 May 1946): 320; 'Dunfermline Invest £500 in Films', *Scottish Co-operator* (20 July): 10.
43. Hogenkamp, B., op.cit.: 79; for Reeves's views, see, 'Film Industry Must Be Nationalised, Says M.P.', *The Co-operative News* (30 November 1946): 11.
44. Hogenkamp, B., op.cit: 80.
45. 'Film Inquiry', *The Co-operative News* (17 July 1948): 15.
46. The issues are explored in Dickinson, M, and Street, S., *Cinema and State. The Film Industry and the British Government 1927-84* (London: BFI, 1985): 170-174. Educational gatherings in the Movement continued to debate the crisis in British films in the years to come, see, for example, 'Should film industry be nationalised?', *The Co-operative News* (10 March 1951): 7.
47. *Kine Weekly* (18 October 1945): 5.
48. *The Co-operative News* (16 June 1945): 8.
49. *Kine Weekly* (24 May 1945): 5.
50. *Today's Cinema* (24 April 1945): 3.
51. *Kine Weekly* (5 April 1945): 5.
52. 'Premier At Co-op Film Inauguration', *The Daily Film Renter* (2 December 1946): 3, 11; 'A National Film Association', *Film User* (January 1947): 83.
53. *Film User* (November 1946): 20.
54. *Annual Report of the TUC* (1947): 303; *The Daily Film Renter* (10 January 1946): 8.; *Kine*

- Weekly* (17 January 1946): 12.
55. Hogenkamp, B., op.cit.: 32-33.
56. 'The New Film Production Unit of the Labour Movement. Behind the Scenes in the CWS Film Department', *Co-operative Home Magazine* (February 1947).
57. 'Nation-Wide 16mm. Shows for Political Propaganda', *To-Day's Cinema* (3 June 1947): 3, 22; 'Socialist Plans', *Film User* (July 1947): 315. A photograph of Prime Minister Attlee viewing a screening at the cinema van is reproduced in 'Mr Attlee Sees Outdoor Films', *The Co-operative News* (7 June 1947): 1, and *The Co-operative Home Magazine* (July 1947): 1.
58. Hogenkamp, B., op.cit.: 98.
59. 'Labour Party Considers Plan to Make Film Cavalcade of Democracy', *The Co-operative News* (28 February 1942): 7; 'Films. The Modern Method', *The Labour Organiser* (April 1942): 7.
60. *Annual Report of the TUC* (1947): 543.
61. Willis, D., 'Why No Labour Films', *Documentary News Letter* (January-February 1947): 68. It should be recognised that a 'hidden' purpose of this article was to attract more commissions for documentary films from the Labour Movement. In this respect, see the follow-up letter in *Documentary News Letter* (April-May 1947): 92.
62. Quoted in Hogenkamp, B., op.cit.: 96.
63. Higson, A., "Britain's Outstanding Contribution to the Film" in Barr, C. (ed), *All Our Yesterdays. 90 Years of British Cinema* (London: BFI, 1986). The phrase was first used in *The Arts Enquiry. The Factual Film* (London: PEP, 1947): 11. The expectations of the Documentary Film Movement in the postwar period are examined in Hogenkamp, B., op.cit.
64. 'The Labour Party Film', *Documentary News Letter* (July 1948): 74; 'This New Film is More Than Entertainment', *The Co-operative News* (10 July 1948): 8-9. See also, *Film User* (September 1948): 541, where it was reported the film "was shot on 'feature' lines".
65. The CWS film unit enjoyed a more comfortable position within the postwar NFA as the National Association of Co-operative Education Committees, its main critic, was a declining force within the Movement and was dissolved in 1949.
66. 'CWS Hands New Propaganda Film Over To Labour Party', *The Co-operative News* (18 June 1949): 16. At the Party conference, Labour Minister Herbert Morrison, who had been a frequent visitor to the set and 'vetted' the script, recalled, "that when the question of the film came before the Policy Committee of the Labour Party he asked who was to pay for it. When it was said that the CWS were to pay he said, 'Then I am all in favour of co-operation'".
67. *Minutes of the National Film Association* (10 November 1948): 4.
68. *Minutes of the National Film Association* (16 February 1949): 6.
69. 'CWS Hands New Propaganda Film ...', op.cit.; "'Their Great Adventure". CWS gesture of "democratic unity", *The Producer* (July 1949): 13; 'CWS Film Presented to Labour Party', *Ourselves* (July 1949): 7.
70. Bax, A., Labour Party Press and Publicity Officer, quoted in Hogenkamp, B., op.cit.: 112.
71. Hogenkamp, B., op.cit.: 114. The Conservative Party response was to lampoon the Labour film with their own take on the issues and soon had in release *Their Great Handicap* (1948).
72. *Minutes of the National Film Association* (14 September 1949): 20-21.
73. Cordwell, R., 'More Film-Using by Trade Unions', *Film User* (November 1950); Hogenkamp, B., op.cit.: 80-83. For details on the CWS film unit productions, *A Call to Action* (1948) and *Night Baking* (1949), see, 'Union Campaign to End Night Baking', *The Co-operative News* (20 November 1948): 1; 'Bakers on the Screen', *The Co-operative News* (2 July 1949): 9; 'Night Baking Restrictions. Co-operative experiments show public want fresh bread', *The Co-operative News* (13 October 1951): 3.
74. Hogenkamp, B., op.cit.: 80-83.
75. Letter to Morgan Phillips, Secretary, Labour Party (31 May 1949), National Labour History Museum Archive.
76. Letter to T.H. Taylor, Secretary, NFA (29 June 1949), Ibid.
77. 'Parties Ready For Election Battle on the Screen', *Kine Weekly* (5 January 1950): 29.
78. Hogenkamp, B., op.cit.: 113. The Labour Administration had stewarded a sizeable expansion in

the Home Information Services and its key administrative tasks, nationalisation and the creation of a welfare state, were formidable. The wartime preference for explanation over exhortation was maintained, and this was reinforced by Labour's traditional distaste for advertising and publicity. Correspondingly, the Government pursued a rigid separation of Party propaganda (for what it was worth) from Government information. See, Crofts, W., *Coercion or Persuasion? Propaganda in Britain after 1945* (London: Routledge, 1989).

79. 'Daylight films in election campaign', *The Co-operative News* (25 February 1950): 6.
80. *Annual Report of the TUC* (1951): 300.
81. *Annual Report of the TUC* (1952): 301.
82. 'Films and Votes', *National Film Association Journal*, quoted in *The Co-operative Review* (February 1952): 41.
83. Gordon Walker, quoted in Hogenkamp, B., op.cit.: 161.
84. 'Film Unit', *National Film Association Journal*, quoted in *The Co-operative Review* (June 1952): 123. The NFA did protest though at the closure of the Crown Film Unit, 'N.F.A. deplors end of Crown Film Unit', *The Co-operative News* (12 April 1952): 3. It was also advised that the CWS Film Department "watch the position if the films in the Central Library were for disposal, with a view to taking over stocks of such films as might be appropriate to co-operative needs", *Co-operative Union, Minutes of the Education Executive* (23 February 1952): 11.
85. *Minutes of the National Film Association* (10 February 1949): 5.
86. *Minutes of the National Film Association* (7 December 1949): 6.
87. *Minutes of the National Film Association* (10 November 1948): 4.
88. NFA Correspondence (July 1950), TUC Library.
89. *Co-operative Union, Minutes of the General Purposes Committee* (17 October 1952): 13, (21 November 1952): 9.
90. *Annual Report of the TUC* (1953): 285. Emphasis added.
91. Ibid.: 467.
92. Ibid.
93. 'C.W.S. Takes Over', *Film User* (September 1953): 476.
94. Adviser to the NFA, Joe Reeves, thought it would take £100,000 a year to keep the Association going, see, 'Co-op Film Scheme Fails', *To-Day's Cinema* (28 July 1953): 7.
95. See, Chapter 4
96. *Co-operative Union Annual Congress Report 1940*: 76. In January 1940, the CWS film department commenced free film shows for the local Manchester ARP at twelve sites across the city, see, 'Film Show to Aid ARP', *The Co-operative News* (24 January 1940): 14.
97. *Co-operative Union Annual Congress Report 1941*: 63.
98. 'CWS Films Display', *The Co-operative News* (24 January 1942): 11. The presentation included the recent films, *Behind the Counter*, *Manchester Took it Too!*, *Machines and Men* and *Golden Harvest*.
99. 'CWS Mobile Film Unit', *The Co-operative News* (21 October 1944): 11. In the succeeding weeks the Plymouth Co-operative education department sponsored film shows from the WFA, demonstrating the level of film propaganda activity that was possible through the Labour film bodies.
100. *Co-operative Union, Minutes of the Educational Executive* (May 1946): 8.
101. In 1944, the CWS had originally promised a contribution to the Youth Movement as part of the Rochdale Centenary celebrations, see, '"Youth Looks Ahead" Film Is Seen by National Bodies', *The Co-operative News* (20 September 1947): 5.
102. *Co-operative Union, Minutes of the Educational Council* (27 July 1946); *Annual Report of the Educational Council and Executive 1946-47*: 26. A brief account of the filming at Dalston Hall Youth Centre is given in 'Dalston Hall Students As Temporary Film Stars', *The Co-operative News* (14 September 1946): 7.
103. *Programme of the Co-operative Education Convention 1947*: 9; 'New Youth Film Has Its Premiere', *The Co-operative News* (12 April 1947): 9. The film was premiered in Scotland at the Argyle Picture House, 25 January 1948.

104. "'Youth Looks Ahead'", op.cit.; *Annual Report of the Educational Council and Executive 1947-48*: 37.
105. *Annual Report of the Educational Council and Executive 1948-49*: 34.
106. *National Co-operative Education Association Convention. Official Report of Proceedings 1951*: 46.
107. 'Congress Film Hustle', *The Co-operative News* (21 June 1947): 1; 'CWS Film Unit's Congress Feat', *The Producer* (July 1947): 29. Although the film has not survived, a brief clip is included in *Co-operation* (1948) [NCFC 118].
108. 'Film to Help in Shop Assistants' Training', *The Co-operative News* (15 June 1946): 6.
109. "'Behind the Counter" is New Sales Film', *The Co-operative News* (6 July 1946): 16. The film remained in circulation for another decade, see, 'Employees at Film Shows', *The Co-operative News* (11 February 1956): 5. After this point the relevance of the subject was lost in the switch to self-service.
110. 'Film Will Help the Milk Roundsman to Promotion', *The Co-operative News* (1 February 1947): 4. It was reported here, that "the CWS film unit has the most up-to-date mobile film-making apparatus in the country", a claim that was persistently made for the CWS film unit since its establishment in 1940.
111. 'CWS film innovation. Discussion Breaks', *The Producer* (March 1947): 5.
112. 'New Co-operative Film Leads Way In Training For Milk Salesmen', *Co-operative Review* (April 1947).
113. 'Film on Shoe Salesmanship', *The Co-operative News* (13 September 1952): 9; 'New CWS film shows managers how to sell', *The Co-operative News* (27 September 1952): 6; 'Whole Staff Will See "Shoe" Film', *The Co-operative News* (11 October 1952): 6; "'Shoe Salesmanship" On the Screen', *The Producer* (October 1952); 'Good Selling!', *Ourselves* (November 1952): 9. *Shoe Salesman* was still in use with 'Countercraft' courses in the early 1960s, see, 'Countercraft Shows How to Sell CWS Footwear', *The Producer* (April 1960): 15. For a contemporary general discussion of film in teaching salesmanship, see, Redgate, B., 'Train Your Salesmen By Film', *Film Sponsor* (March 1950). It seems from this that the Movement's training films were quite conventional in narrative construction, contrasting the wrong and the right ways of sales techniques.
114. 'Employee in the Making. Three new SCWS films', *Scottish Co-operator* (4 October 1947): 7. A contemporary production still of film-making at the SCWS Shieldhall factory complex appears in *Scottish Co-operator* (12 June 1948): 9.
115. 'New Propaganda Scheme for Scotland. Movement Must Act Big', *Scottish Co-operator* (5 June 1948): 4.
116. 'The Show Goes On!' (advert), *Scottish Co-operator* (13 September 1947): 2; 'Culture comes with Co-operation' (advert), *Co-operative College Magazine*, 1, 3 (1948): 18. This second advertisement gives the figure of 1,200 films in 550 displays.
117. See the various CWS film catalogues issued across the 1950s. The CWS operated film libraries from its offices in Manchester and London.
118. 'New CWS Scheme', *The Co-operative News* (19 August 1950): 1.; 'CWS Films on Tour. A New Mobile Service', *The Producer* (September 1950): 20. For an impressionistic account of a CWS film show in the period, see, Bolton, G.I., 'Silver Screens - Commercial Travellers', *Co-operative Home Magazine* (May 1952): 5. For examples of promoting the service to general audiences, see the advertisements in *Film User* (July 1952): 324, (August 1952): 372.
119. 'Co-ops Start Nationwide Free Shows', *To-Day's Cinema* (6 October 1950): 3, 4.
120. 'The Films the Co-op Has Bought', *To-Day's Cinema* (12 October 1950): 3, 4. Here are listed some of the feature titles acquired by the CWS: *Dragnet*, *The Range Busters*, *The Last Alarm*, *Moon Over Montana*, *The Kid's Last Ride*, etc.
121. 'CWS Film Shows', *The Producer* (January 1952): 10; 'CWS Film Shows', *Co-operative Review* (February 1952): 37.
122. See, for example, the entry on the CWS film library in 'The Publicity Film Libraries', *Film User* (January 1947): 100, a shop window for the expanding Film Society Movement, where it was

- claimed of the CWS films that, "all are entertaining as well as being informative".
123. On *Change For the Better*, see, 'Puppet Film. Technicolour Advertising', *The Co-operative News* (5 February 1949): 1; 'CWS Puppet Film In Technicolor', *Ourselves* (March 1949): 8; and 'Advertising Film Section', *Film Sponsor* (April 1949): 126. For *The CWS (Manchester) Band*, see, 'CWS Band are stars in new sound film', *The Co-operative News* (17 March 1951): 1.
 124. The film was scripted by the radical Reg Groves who had worked on the wartime *Men of Rochdale* (1944) and *Song of the People* (1945). For some contemporary background on films with internationalist themes, see, Flory, E.H. (ed), *Films for International Understanding* (New York: Curriculum Service Bureau, 1947); Borneman, E., 'Film for International Understanding: The UNESCO Story', *The Penguin Film Review* 7 (London: Penguin, 1948).
 125. Hogenkamp, B., op.cit.: 19. On the initial refusal to accept DATA into the Co-operative Union, see, *Co-operative Union, Executive Committee Minutes* (22-23 February 1945): 2. The unit was finally admitted into the Union in 1949, following a persistent lobby from other Co-operative bodies, Hogenkamp, B., op.cit.: 44.
 126. *DATA Film Unit Statement of Progress* (1946): np. TUC Archive.
 127. Quoted in Hogenkamp, B., op.cit.: 82. DATA completed *Through A Needle's Eye* and a conference film for the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers. For contemporary accounts of DATA in this period, see, 'They Make Your Films. No.1 DATA', *Film Sponsor* (June 1950); 'Behind the Screen', *The Co-operative Productive Review* (December 1951); Fitzhugh, T., 'DATA Film Unit. A Courageous Co-operative Venture', *Review of International Co-operation* (March 1954).
 128. 'Film on Copartnership', *The Co-operative News* (3 July 1948): 4; Hogenkamp, B., op.cit.: 159.
 129. 'London Society to Make a Film', *Co-operative Productive Review* (October 1954): 218.; 'First Film For the Co-operative Movement', *Co-operative Productive Review* (March 1955): 62-63.
 130. 'Latest "co-op film is called "It's all yours"', *The Co-operative News* (30 July 1955): 7; 'Film-Making Society Gets Double Success', *The Co-operative News* (20 June 1956): 23 - on *Your Business*; 'Makes New Colour Film For CWS', *The Co-operative News* (17 October 1959): 17 - on *Working Together*. Following the production of *It's All Yours*, DATA placed an advert promoting its services in the Co-operative magazine, *Agenda* (December 1955): np.
 131. Interview with the author, 24 September 1994.
 132. 'New Film', *The Co-operative News* (24 July 1954): 1.
 133. 'New "Woman's Hour" Show sponsored by CWS', *The Producer* (August 1954): 17.
 134. 'Much interest in "Spel" film', *The Co-operative News* (9 January 1954): 6.
 135. 'Praise for CWS films', *The Co-operative News* (17 March 1956): 11.
 136. The SCWS put its product publicity films in the care of Gate Film Productions, see, [NCFC 213, NCFC 214, NCFC 215]. It did, however, complete a production with the CWS film unit, *A Helping Hand* (c. 1957) [NCFC 204].
 137. The Movement's relationship with TV is considered later in the chapter.
 138. 'You Can't Have Your (Cherry) Cake and ... ', *The Producer* (June 1957): 28. For reports on other CWS publicity films, see, 'CWS film tells the story of "Meat for Millions"', *The Producer* (January 1958): 4; 'Latest CWS Films Shown', *The Co-operative News* (11 October 1958): 6 and 'Publicity Men see CWS films', *The Producer* (December 1958): 16 - both on *Choice of Quality* [NCFC 207] and *Modern Miss Muffet* [NCFC 209].
 139. 'More women flock to see CWS film shows. But Reluctant to Attend Matinees', *The Co-operative News* (20 October 1956): 7. The CWS film service maintained regular contact with local Co-operative Societies through its bulletin, *Newsreel*. Some copies of this are preserved in the CWS Library, and one, undated, contains numerous tributes for the film service.
 140. 'Films to boost travel', *The Co-operative News* (22 December 1951): 5; 'Film Aids to Travel Business', *The Producer* (September 1954): 24. This latter report suggests the following CTS productions: 'the Belgian Coast', 'Lake Lucerne', 'holiday camps', 'motor coach tours' and 'travel in the Commonwealth', although it is by means certain these were commissions by the CTS. For a report of a local travel film show, see, 'Holiday film show', *The Co-operative News* (2 January 1952): 11. By the early 1950s, the CTS had risen to being the fourth largest agency, see, *The Co-*

- operative News* (9 February 1952): 7.
141. 'CWS Films Still Popular Despite Bingo and TV', *The Producer* (June 1962); 'Filming for the road shows', *Ourselves* (June 1962).
142. The former librarian of the CWS remembers a hasty order to disband the film section, at which point much of its possessions, including many prints, were lost. Bernard Howcroft in discussion with author, September 1993. An equal misfortune occurred in the mid-1970s, when the Film Producers Guild disposed of a considerable quantity of CWS films from the late 1920s and 1930s. Only a small proportion of these were acquired by the National Film and TV Archive. The details are contained in various letters in the CWS library, Manchester.
143. '£50 for attending a Free Film Show', *The Bulletin: A Quarterly Journal for Co-operative Educationists* (July 1954): 20.
144. Ibid.
145. 'Call to CWS: Produce educational films', *The Co-operative News* (24 February 1951): 6.
146. *Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1959*: 405.
147. Ibid.: 407. For some commentary on the contemporary industrial film, see, Spooner, P., *Business Films. How to Make and Use Them* (London: Business Publications, 1959).
148. *Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1959*: 408.
149. Ibid.
150. For the text of the full resolution, see, *ibid.*: 415.
151. 'Advice on Film Publicity', *The Co-operative News* (26 December 1959): 11.
152. *Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1960*: 2.
153. Ibid.
154. Ibid.: 274.
155. Samson, J., 'The Film Society, 1925-1939' in Barr, C. (ed), *All Our Yesterdays. 90 Years of British Cinema* (London: BFI, 1986).
156. 'The Federation of British Film Societies', *Cinema Quarterly* (Autumn 1932): 46-47.; Clark, J., 'The Federation of Film Societies Its background and its work', *Film Sponsor* (December 1950): 15, 30; Butler, I., *To Encourage the Art of the Film. The Story of the British Film Institute* (London: Robert Hale, 1971): Ch. 8.
157. 'Film Society. New Venture at Walsall', *The Co-operative News* (13 March 1937): 13. I have recently become aware of several surviving films of Walsall Co-operative Society activities in the late 1930s, but it was too late to include them in this history. Following a failed attempt to form a film society in 1939, the Burslem Society organised a successful Co-operative Secondary School Film Association in its district in 1940. See, 'Displays to Secondary School Children', *Co-operative Review* (June 1940); Owen, W.J., 'Schools Co-operate in This Society's Film Propaganda', *The Co-operative News* (6 July 1940): 9.
158. Reeves, M., 'The Film Societies and Adult Education', *Adult Education* (June 1949): 175.
159. Ibid.: 176.
160. 'London's Latest Move. Film Societies Formed', *The Co-operative News* (16 August 1941): 11.
161. 'Film Society News', *Documentary News Letter* (February 1942): 22.
162. 'Educational Activities In London', *The Co-operative News* (31 July 1943): 6; 'New Film Society Formed', *The Co-operative News* (20 November 1943): 6; 'West London Film Society', *The Co-operative News* (22 April 1944): 11.
163. 'Film Society Makes a Good Start', *The Co-operative News* (11 December 1943): 6.
164. 'Film Society's Ambitious Programme', *The Co-operative News* (13 October 1945): 11. A film society was sponsored at the Birmingham Society in the early war years, see, 'Value of the Film for Child Education not Realised by Movement', *The Co-operative News* (26 October 1940): 12.
165. Hardy, F., 'Target for Film Societies', *The Penguin Film Review* 8 (London: Penguin Books, 1949). The period witnessed a tremendous expansion in serious publishing about the cinema, which served the growing film society audience, such as Maurice Speed's *Film Review* (1944-), Peter Noble's *British Film Yearbook* (1946-) and *The Penguin Film Review* (1946-49). This was a time of considerable pride in the achievements of the national cinema.
166. Fairbanks, D., 'Co-operative Societies Involvement in Film', *Film. British Federation of Film*

- Societies Journal* (January 1978): 3. A film society was maintained in the Harlow district until the 1990s.
167. The London societies were West London, North London and Dagenham, while the RACS societies were Tooting, Woolwich, Greenwich and Peckham. For a detailed account of a Co-operative film society, see, Dellow, C., *Lights Out and the Stars Appear. The Story of the Slough Co-operative Film Society* (Reading: Slough Co-operative Film Society, 1995).
168. 'Film Star President', *The Co-operative News* (16 July 1955): 1; 'Film Star is President', *The Co-operative News* (29 April 1961): 6.
169. 'Experts will talk about film-making', *The Co-operative News* (10 September 1949): 6.
170. Ponting, J.F., 'Organising a Film Society', *The Co-operative Education Bulletin* (September 1955).
171. Details taken from various reports in *The Co-operative News*. For a detailed account of the Nottingham Co-operative Film Society, see, Horton, J.H., 'The Film Society at Nottingham', *The Co-operative Educational Bulletin* (December 1955).
172. *Co-operative Union, Minutes of the Central Executive Committee* (2 June 1952): 7.
173. *Co-operative Union, Minutes of the Central Executive* (2 December 1953): 8. The proposal was adopted at Congress, *Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1954*: 3.
174. 'Oppose Commercial TV, Says President', *The Co-operative News* (27 June 1953): 8.
175. 'Children's Choice and the Advertiser', *The Co-operative News* (12 September 1953): 2.
176. 'Harness Television For Co-operative Education', *The Co-operative News* (4 April 1953): 3. The Movement's press always carried positive reports of TV coverage of its activities, see, 'BBC at work in a Nottingham store', *The Co-operative News* (15 September 1962): 16; 'Pioneers Chosen for ITV's "The Co-op"', *The Co-operative News* (28 April 1962): 20. There was even the ambition that Co-operative Congress would be televised in the manner of the TUC Congress, see, Lazell, D., 'After the TUC on Television ... Will Congress be Televised?', *The Co-operative News* (22 September 1962): 14.
177. Richardson, W., *The CWS in War and Peace 1938-1976* (Manchester: CWS, 1977): 177; Geddes, K., *The Setmakers. A History of the Radio and Television Industry* (London: BREMA, 1991): 324.
178. 'The Answer to Every T/V Query', *The Co-operative News* (20 September 1952): 3.
179. 'TV will help to boost the "co-op", they say', *The Co-operative News* (28 November 1953): 6.
180. The contradictions are apparent in the Movement's criticism of programme sponsorship as the model for funding commercial TV, while concurrently the CWS was sponsoring a show on Radio Luxembourg, a practice that went back to the 1930s. See, *The Wheatsheaf* (August 1939): 7; *The Producer* (October 1954): 26, 34; *The Co-operative News* (9 October 1954): 9-12.
181. "'Sponsoring" is out - but danger remains says George Darling, MP', *The Co-operative News* (21 November 1953): 14. See also, 'Commercial TV drive comes from makers. Labour MP Hits White Paper', *The Co-operative News* (12 December 1953): 11, for the views of Labour's Christopher Mayhew presented at a meeting organised by the Birmingham Society.
182. 'CWS Application For Commercial TV Place Hit Tory Plan', *The Co-operative News* (19 December 1953): 1.
183. The Co-operative Union was invited to present evidence to the Pilkington Committee, the first significant review of commercial television in 1962. The Union maintained the Movement's stand against the worst abuses of commercialism and endorsed the final report, which confirmed the ideals of public service broadcasting and the social responsibilities of programme makers. See, 'Reflections On Pilkington', *The Co-operative News* (15 September 1962): 2, 13; *Co-operative Union Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1963*: 212.
184. 'CWS and Commercial TV. Quick off the mark with grocery and provision "spots"', *The Co-operative News* (17 September 1955): 1; 'Fireside View of CWS Products', *The Producer* (October 1955): 2-3. Frank Churchward, manager of the CWS Public Relations Division, considered the CWS as only a medium-sized national advertiser for many products, which made TV a less important medium than the press for the organisation. See, 'TV is No Substitute For Press Advertising', *The Co-operative News* (25 October 1958): 7.

185. Ibid. The CWS recorded the following total advertising expenditures for TV: 1955 - £10,400; 1956 - £52,000; 1957 - £72,740; 1958 - £226,000 (budgeted). See, 'Board's Faith in TV Advertising', *The Co-operative News* (10 May 1958): 8.
186. 'Midlands Plan For TV Advertising', *The Co-operative Official* (December 1957): 360.
187. 'Move For Joint TV Advertising', *The Co-operative News* (13 December 1958): 1; 'Time For TV Campaign', *The Co-operative News* (7 February 1959): 3.
188. 'Collective TV Advertising. Two Areas Experiment', *The Producer* (March 1960). In a number of instances there was insufficient local support for joint schemes, as was the case in the Northern Section, see, 'Societies To Consider Joint Scheme For TV and Press Advertising', *The Co-operative News* (9 September 1961): 4; 'TV scheme is dropped', *The Co-operative News* (11 November 1961): 13.
189. '54 Societies Join CWS in TV Advertising Scheme', *The Co-operative News* (23 September 1961): 8.
190. *Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1959*: 180-181; 'Prospects for television advertising', *The Co-operative News* (27 December 1958): 6.
191. 'N.W. Section Supports TV Bread Scheme', *The Co-operative News* (18 April 1959): 18.
192. 'Co-op Bread On ITV Stations', *The Co-operative News* (19 September 1959): 2. A still from one of the W heatsheaf adverts is reproduced in 'Take it from me ...', *The Co-operative News* (3 October 1959): 14.
193. *Annual Co-operative Congress Report 1960*: 16.
194. 'W heatsheaf Commercials put Spotlight on the Point of Sale', *The Producer* (February 1961): 28-29.
195. '"Best Cuppa Tea I Ever Tasted" is Theme of No.99 Tea TV Ads', *The Producer* (August 1960): 22-23. The CWS reported an annual sales increase for 99 tea of 18% for the year ending September 1960, see, 'TV publicity boosted sales', *The Co-operative News* (7 January 1961): 1. The adverts were produced for the CWS by Anglo-Scottish, which had been engaged on its publicity films for several years. For a description of putting together a CWS TV ad-campaign, see, 'From Script to Screen', *The Producer* (June 1959).
196. 'The Big Tea Dilemma', *The Co-operative News Grocery Supplement* (7 April 1962): 23. This item features stills from the campaign and details of the point-of sale support.
197. 'Our biggest advertising campaign ever starts', *The Producer* (June 1962): 15.
198. Ibid.: 16.
199. 'National advertising scheme essential - but it would cost £1/2m. annually', *The Co-operative News* (23 June 1962): 12.
200. 'The Big Campaign', *The Co-operative News* (13 October 1962): 2.
201. 'Has Big Publicity Campaign Had The Fullest Backing?', *The Co-operative News* (13 October 1962): 16.; Page, G.E., 'An advertising campaign that is an act of faith', *The Co-operative News* (20 October 1962): 9, 13.
202. Page, G.E., op.cit.: 9.
203. 'Advertising campaign has given whole movement a boost', *The Co-operative News* (3 November 1962): 5. When accurate statistics were available in 1963, it was revealed that many product lines had improved sales by over 100%, see, '£1/2m. Campaign is Pulling in Sales', *The Co-operative News* (2 March 1963): 1. However, criticisms of the achievements still surfaced, see, 'CWS advertising policy criticised', *The Co-operative News* (7 November 1964): 22.
204. 'Continuing the Campaign', *The Co-operative Official* (June 1963): 149. For background on the production of the series, see, Haigh, D., 'How They Put the CWS On', *The Producer* (April 1966).
205. 'Plans For Big 1968 Campaign', *The Co-operative News* (26 August 1967): 11.
206. '"And It's All At The Co-op Now ...". £1,300,000 advertising campaign starts next weekend', *The Co-operative News* (6 January 1968): 5. The catchy jingle was written by Alan Hawkshaw and was of sufficient merit to be included on his album *27 Top TV Themes and Commercials* (1972).
207. A full checklist of actions for Societies relating to the campaign is printed in 'Are You Ready? Check here for facts you should know and things you should do to prepare for new customers',

- The Co-operative News* (6 January 1968): 8.
208. 'Societies Gear Up For CWS Marketing Campaign', *The Co-operative News* (13 January 1968): 5; 'TV commercials begin big national campaign', *The Co-operative News* (20 January 1968): 12.
209. 'Full Scale Backing For The Campaign As New Image Impact Grows', *The Co-operative News* (17 February 1968): 5. A short information film had earlier been produced to support the 'Come Co-operative Shopping' campaign [NCFC 296]. See, 'Colour film puts stress on window bill link', *The Producer* (December 1966): 13.
210. 'All Ready For The Big Drive. And March 11 will be D-Day', *The Co-operative News* (2 March 1968): 5.
211. The six brand products in the initial campaign were Heinz Baked Beans, Heinz Tomato Soup, Oxo Cubes, Nescafe, Windowlene and Co-op Cream. There had been a call in late 1964 to include private enterprise productions in the 'Come Co-operative Shopping' campaign, but this was resisted until 1968 and the 'Big Six Savers' campaign. See, Gregory, J., '"Come Co-operative Shopping" campaign review is needed', *The Co-operative News* (5 December 1964): 11.
212. '"Big Six" Proves A Massive Success', *The Co-operative News* (25 May 1968): 1.
213. Later in the 1970s, the CWS established a Manchester-based Audio-Visual Unit, which provided the Society with corporate videos, mainly training and trading in nature. See, 'AV unit keeps Co-ops in the Picture', *Retail Marketing and Management* (April 1994).

Conclusion

The dominant historical treatment of Co-operation in Britain has been to dismiss the Movement's radical credentials and to promote it as a reformist organisation seeking accommodation with established society. The ideological and academic reasons for that assessment were introduced and discussed in Chapter One, from which it was argued that similar thinking led to the marginalisation of Co-operation in studies of Labour cinema. Overall, it was revealed that criticism of the Co-operative Movement's film propaganda has essentially come from two quarters: historians and theorists of Labour film who have largely dismissed Co-operation's contribution to worker's cinema as insufficiently radicalised and tainted by a too obvious commercial orientation; and a group of contemporary practitioners who felt the Movement did not devote its full capabilities to cinema work and undervalued educational in favour of publicity productions. The specific contemporary criticisms of the documentary collective DATA, which were articulated across the 1950s, were addressed in Chapter 5, but it is also worth briefly considering the more general admonishments of the influential film-maker Paul Rotha. A radical, independent member of the celebrated British Documentary Film Movement, Rotha had been on the fringes of the Labour Party's and TUC's flirtations with film in the mid-1930s. Later in the 1940s, he had been disappointed that the Labour Movement had not more fully supported documentary cinema at a time of progressive opportunity, and in that sense his criticisms should be partly understood as a case of special pleading from a professional film-maker who sought increased commissions from potential sponsors. In a widely read and influential report, *The Factual Film*, published shortly after the Second World War, Rotha (anonymously) criticised political organisations for their generally insufficient appreciation of film. In particular, he singled out the 'amateur' approach of the Workers' Film Association, and further that:

The Co-operative Society (sic) which owns several cinemas has not attempted to use these for other than entertainment purposes. It is unfortunate that the rapid extension of the non-theatrical field during the war and the successful appeal of documentary and instructional films to specialised audiences does not appear to have been sufficiently appreciated either by the Co-operative Movement which is in a unique position to speak to organised consumers, or by the Unions which are themselves the channels for

addressing organised labour.¹

Rotha remained consistent in his view and maintained in his 'biography' three decades later that the Workers' Movement had failed to grasp the potential of the documentary film; that "Labour had no ear for such an imaginative approach to public service and public education". As for the 'wealthy' Co-operative Movement, this had simply "Squandered its money " on advertising pictures.²

As was articulated in both the Introduction and Chapter Two, such criticisms have persisted in the emergent literature on Labour cinema in Britain. That scholarship, often guided by its own radical political agenda, has rarely shown an awareness of the unique characteristics of the Co-operative Movement or adequately surveyed the evidence of Co-operative film practice, which have laid ignored. Conventional histories of workers' cinema in Britain have charted their subject from the establishment of workers' film societies in the late 1920s, formed to show the heroic masterpieces of Soviet cinema. Whereas, this thesis, a close examination of the Co-operative Movement's engagement with film, significantly reveals that by the end of the silent period Co-operation had already experienced three decades of achievement in cinema propaganda; that a well-resourced system of film sponsorship, distribution and exhibition had been developed and was bringing moving pictures promoting Co-operative ideals to members and consumers across Great Britain. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, this activity had commenced at a remarkably early time in the history of cinema, before the nineteenth century was out, and Co-operative Societies were arguably the first Labour organisations in Britain to adopt film to their propaganda work. Similarly, a national perspective was soon brought to cinema publicity and promotion by the federal body the Co-operative Wholesale Society, which introduced films of its own operations into its lecture service, perhaps as early as 1899. These were probably the first Labour films produced anywhere in the world, a significant achievement of the English Co-operative Movement, and were quickly followed by Co-operators in Scotland. The CWS lectures were important events to propagandise about Co-operative ideals, structures and practices, to promote the Co-operative difference and advantage, and to radicalise members and audiences in their expectations regarding social change. As

detailed across Chapter Three, in the following few decades, both nationally and locally, the Movement significantly developed its film propaganda: it compiled a film library and lecture service, commissioned narrative as well as documentary productions, distributed films into commercial cinemas for the widest possible exposure, and debated the potential of cinema in a comparatively sophisticated manner. All of this was considerably in advance of other Labour organisations, which had progressed little beyond sponsoring the odd film show for their members.

Before the establishment of the renowned worker's film societies from 1929, Co-operators had already brought an international dimension to their cinema work and through the International Co-operative Alliance were preparing to distribute films around national Co-operative Movements. These events were examined in Chapter Four. Here, it was revealed that the scheme ran throughout the 1930s, resuming post-war, and was seemingly unique within the international Labour Movement as no comparable provision emerged among the Socialist parties or the trades unions. There has been some comment on the 'Popular Front' films produced by the Co-ops in the pre-World War Two years, as these were seen as both more overtly political and were issued within the framework of the Workers' Film Association, a body also representative of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress. As demonstrated in Chapter Four, Co-operators were instrumental in the formation of the Association and that to a considerable degree it was predicated on structures and practises developed by the National Association of Co-operative Education Committees (NACEC) and almost totally relied on funding support for film commissions from Co-operative Societies. At the heart of these activities was Joseph Reeves, a well-known figure in Labour Movement politics, but whose principal allegiance was to the Co-operative Movement as the Education Secretary of the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society, the secretary of the film committee of the NACEC and member of the Educational Executive of the Co-operative Union.³ Less visible has been the extensive cinema activity of the Co-operative Movement outside of the WFA and the attendant 'Five Year Film Plan' of the metropolitan Co-operative Societies. These activities, surveyed in Chapter Four, involved a professional national film service and library developed by the Co-operative Wholesale Society, notable experiment and practice in the 'amateur' film by local Co-operative Societies,

and the imaginative marriage of the professional and amateur approaches in the technologically innovative work of the film unit of the London Co-operative Society. This latter group, in particular, achieved some quite remarkable productions on the sub-standard format, and, directly sponsored by the Political Committee of its Co-operative Society, should have attracted more attention from scholars of Labour film in Britain.

In the analysis of Labour film culture in Britain and its attendant scholarship, presented in Chapter Two, it was made apparent that existing studies of workers' cinema in Britain have concluded on the outbreak of war in Europe, implying a diminution of political film activity on the Left. For the groups and film-makers which have been the traditional focus of those studies that was undoubtedly the case, as both Kino and the Progressive Film Institute ceased activity at that time. Certainly, the WFA was stunted in its development, but as argued in Chapter Four, it did continue to make provision, and in terms of its film library and the acquisition of the distribution rights of Soviet films on 16mm made some notable progress. In contrast to the general trend for Labour film in wartime, the Co-operative Movement continued to develop. In 1940, the CWS took the substantial step of forming its own in-house professionalised film unit, and, in addition to the typical publicity films associated with this trading body, produced some striking films more political in nature. Prominent among these was *Song of the People* (1945), with its radical presentation of working-class history. The Scottish CWS also became more film conscious during the war and was inspired to commission a film promoting the ideals of the Beveridge Report on social insurance and allied services; a subject avoided by the official documentary films. A historiography concerned with political cinema on the Left should also take account of the wartime films of Frank Cox at the London Society. Unfortunately, these films are seemingly lost, but available evidence, as surveyed in Chapter Four, suggests a body of work distinctive in its criticism of wartime policies and practices, and in striking contrast to the consensual ideology as promoted in official wartime cinema propaganda. The thesis makes the case, here, that largely under the patronage of the Co-operative Movement a radical Labour cinema was maintained in wartime Britain, producing films which both offered a critique of some undemocratic practices which emerged as a consequence of the conflict, and an endorsement of proposed social legislation which offered brighter

prospects for the ordinary citizens who were fighting the 'People's War'.

The postwar decades, which formed the focus for analysis in Chapter Five, have invariably been seen as a disappointment for Labour cinema, with merely sporadic and unconvincing attempts to revive the high ideals of progressive film of the 1930s. The next high point would come in the later 1960s, when a new generation of radical activists experimented with film with what were proclaimed as quite new political and aesthetic purposes. This activity was largely outside of the formal participation of the traditional Labour Movement. Certainly, the immediate postwar decades were a time of adjustment for Labour, especially in its accommodation of affluence and materialism. The period commenced with the election of the first majority Labour Government, and Labour's inadequate response to official propaganda and, in particular, documentary film has been ably surveyed by Bert Hogenkamp.⁴ It is important to consider closely within that framework the transition of the Workers' Film Association into the National Film Association (NFA). The NFA was even more securely bound to the Co-operative Movement than its predecessor through the central participation of the CWS and was a further example of the principal contribution of Co-operation to the film work of the democratic Left in Britain. As the historical analysis has indicated, the Co-operative Movement, through the NFA, continually sought to involve the Labour Party and the trades unions more fully in film work, even to the extent of presenting the Party with its first propaganda film. While the Co-operative Movement's blandishments were never entirely altruistic, there was always the desire to secure film commissions for the CWS film unit, Co-operation clearly continued to take the lead in social democratic film propaganda in the postwar decade. Margaret Dickinson has partly attributed the 'failure' of the NFA to the CWS film unit's adherence to the tenets of the sponsored film, an approach more suited to public relations than political propaganda. As she states:

It was a model for top down communication and avoidance of controversy which was ill-designed for the needs of democratic organisations supposedly run by and for the members.⁵

Indeed, as consistently brought out in this thesis, there was a vocal group of educationalists within the Co-operative Movement who were critical of the CWS's predilection for publicity films and brought pressure to bear on the CWS film unit to

make films suited to Co-operative and more general progressive education. Having acknowledged that, though, evidence presented in Chapter Five reveals that it was the Co-operative Movement that continued to press for Labour Party branches and trade unions to get involved in film work, to the extent of subsidising such activities. Any blame for the failure of the NFA lay less with Co-operators than other wings of the Labour Movement.

In the longer term, Movement idealists were disappointed in their aspirations regarding film's continued potential for Co-operative education. While the Co-operative Movement remained a vibrant commercial organisation and a significant challenge to conventional business there was an acceptance of the more obvious publicity films promoted by the trading interests. In fact, there was a real need for such films when the Movement was winning new markets and customers who could be brought over to the Co-operative ideal. By the 1950s, though, Co-operation was experiencing comparative decline and the Movement's idealists were less tolerant of a publicity that aimed to retain custom and had no apparent connection with the promotion of Co-operation. The renaming of the CWS Film Department as the Publicity Department was perhaps indicative of the commercial shifts taking place, as was the new emphasis accorded television advertising in the Movement's visual campaigns. Paradoxically, Co-operators had resisted the intrusion of an American style commercially orientated second television service, but were quick to take advantage of its potential for national advertising and the opportunity to stem the decline in market share. Film as a medium of education and promotion was squeezed in these circumstances and, as elsewhere, began to lose out to the attractions of rival media and a more home-centred leisure culture.⁶ By the middle-1960s, these trends had led to the virtual abandonment of film by the Co-operative Movement in its attempts to attract customers and to promote the ideals of Co-operation. A consistent tension was apparent between education and publicity in the Movement's film propaganda, and emerged as early as 1908 when Co-op educationalists first began to take film seriously. The various incidences of this ideological conflict have been surveyed across Chapters 3-5; in terms of the 'dissident' cinema activities of the National Association of Co-operative Education Committees in the 1930s and its criticisms of the film provisions of the Ten Year Plan of Co-operative Education; the undue emphasis on

trade in the CWS National Film Service felt in educational circles; and the disappointment in the reversion of the CWS film section to publicity film shows following the demise of the National Film Association in the mid-1950s. Quite clearly, these circumstances paralleled the over-arching tension between idealism and pragmatism, central to the Co-operative mission. Subsequently, Labour scholars, swayed by the commercial imperatives of Co-operative trading and an ideological aversion to the blandishments of consumption, have dismissed the Movement's ideals, and failed to find a proper place for Co-operation in their studies. This thesis, through the identification of this conflict seeks to bring a more balanced perspective to the study of Labour film in Britain, and thereby to acknowledge Co-operation's significant contribution to the workers' struggle through film.

This thesis has presented a detailed examination of the British Consumer Co-operative Movement's engagement with cinema and has revealed an extensive set of practices and structures developed to bring film to the aid of Co-operation. Taken in conjunction with the supporting filmography, which collects together for the first time information and prints relating to the Movement's films, these represent a significant resource and advance for the further study of Co-operation. They also offer insight into varied aspects of the Labour Movement, as well as the practice of alternative cinema in Britain, especially in relation to films for education, publicity and social progress. The history of the Co-operative Movement in the twentieth century has attracted relatively little scholarship, and the Movement's archive films offer an invaluable visual source on that experience. The outline examination of Movement culture in Chapter Two revealed varied activities, parades, galas, sports days, drama, choirs and other social events, which require further systematic analysis, and the Movement's historic films present one resource which allows for key insights into popular experience and policy. There is also an urgent need for studies of the Movement's accommodation of advertising, a considerable problem for an organisation predicated on a moral approach to distribution, and the cinema of Co-operation would be invaluable to such discussions. The material and argument presented in the thesis represents a significant advance in knowledge regarding the Co-operative Movement and Labour culture in Britain. In terms of workers' film it confirms an historiographical revision which re-emphasises the role of

the Co-operative Movement in Labour cinema culture, and considerably extends the chronological treatment of Left-political film in Britain. On these two important historical issues the thesis presents its intellectual justification.

On a broader level, the growing literature on consumption has taken little account of the alternative formulation as expressed through Co-operation. Much of the work has lacked an historical perspective, being driven by enquiry derived from modern critical theory. As such, concern has centred on the social transformations which emerged in the 1980s, with their attendant rhetoric of individualism, self-interest and enterprise culture. This was a time of retreat for the Labour Movement and ethical concerns with consumption, as embodied in Co-operation, were lost sight of in face of the new orthodoxy of 'greed is good', or the emphasis now placed on 'you are where you shop'. Recent scholarship on consumption has largely been concerned with the 'post-capitalist' condition: with articulations of the 'Society of Spectacle', with the generation of identity through consumption, and attendant issues of gender, sexuality and lifestyle.⁷ Future scholarship might adopt a more historical concern with consumption and acknowledge the presence of an alternative form and set of practices as embodied in the Consumer Co-operative Movement. This was no tiny insignificant sect, but a major international commercial organisation with a considerable market share and ideological impact. It is important to know more about its role in the practice of consumption in Britain in the twentieth century, and one aspect of that role was its film propaganda to promote Co-operative forms and ideals.

This thesis also brings much that is new to historical film research. Future studies of Labour cinema in Britain should acknowledge the contribution made by Co-operators, and, in particular, the Co-operative Movement's sole engagement with film on the Left in the period before the workers' film societies in the late 1920s. The achievements of the British Co-operative Movement with film should alert other national studies of Labour cinema to the possible contribution of Co-operative Societies. The film catalogues issued by the International Co-operative Alliance (1930-1960) reveal numerous Co-operative Movement's, in Europe, North America and Asia, active in film work. It is desirable that more is known and researched about these activities, how they compared to the achievements of the British Movement, and how they related to the film

propaganda work of their own national Labour Movements. Such work would counter the distortion in Labour Movement film studies which relegates Co-operative Societies to a marginal or invisible role. This thesis has been concerned with charting and assessing the Co-operative Movement's engagement with cinema and is the product of historical film scholarship. Other types of questions, deriving from a film studies approach, could be asked of the Movement's films. As was made apparent at the outset, this thesis intended to offer an empirical examination of the Co-operative Movement's engagement with cinema, that is to assess historically Co-operation's aspirations and achievements with film. There was, correspondingly, insufficient space to consider detailed issues of thematic and stylistic construction. How, for instance, do the films compare and relate to the influential films of the Documentary Movement?, other contemporary industrial films?, or the films of the Labour Movement?; and what assessments can be made of the films according to the representation of gender and significant social formations like the family, or the articulations of specific Co-operative ideals? Only one American study has attempted to take a new critical approach to the filmic construction of Left-political films, whereby the few surviving films of the Workers' Film and Photo League (US) have been considered in view of the philosophical orientation of Deconstruction; a theory "that investigates epistemological and ontological matters within texts".⁸ As I argued in the Introduction, such critical and theoretical enquiries should *follow* empirical reconstruction and develop their line of questioning from a secure historical base. The thrust of film historical studies in the 1980s and 1990s has been an acknowledgement of this and a rejection of some of the film studies of the 1970s as ahistorical.⁹ The study of the cinema of Co-operation presented in this thesis represents the kind of detailed historical analysis from which other kinds of enquiries can proceed; furthermore, the archive films collected and identified in the work presented offer a significant resource to advance future studies.

The research for this thesis was carried out at a time of considerable adjustment for the Co-operative Movement in Britain. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the values of association and mutuality were subjected to much hostility and attack as investor owner models of enterprise were widely promoted into the popular consciousness. As Peter Hunt, the General Secretary of the Co-operative Party, has recently commented,

there has been "a pretty unsophisticated rush to demutualise building societies ... the public do not see the value of membership when offered a short term cash gain".¹⁰ The "flight from mutualism"¹¹, most apparent among building societies and insurers, has also been accompanied by some direct attacks on Consumer Co-operation. First the Co-operative Bank and then the CWS have been subjected to hostile take-over bids, which, thankfully, have been driven off. Such disconcerting developments has galvanised the Movement into response: a difficult merger of the two largest retail Societies, CWS and Co-operative Retail Services, has been brought to fruition, and has brought a new rationality to Co-operative trading; and a new Co-operative Commission has been launched "to review the role and purpose of the Movement and recommend any changes needed to ensure its future success".¹² This first major review of the Movement since 1958 has received the backing of Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair, and Co-operation's continued partnership with the Labour Movement is also indicated in the participation of the TUC General Secretary, John Monks, as Chair of the Commission.¹³ The review could ensure the significant presence of Co-operative trading in the British economy well into the twenty-first century. Plans to see a Co-operative Bill put through Parliament under the present Labour Administration would afford some protection to businesses based on the values of mutuality and association. The task then would be to convince the public of the virtues and advantages of working with each other rather than thinking solely in the selfish short term. The officials charged with that task will find a tradition of promotion within the Movement, seeking not only to sell goods, but to make Co-operators. And it is only in the making of Co-operators that Co-operation has any meaning and future.

Notes

1. *The Arts Enquiry. The Factual Film* (London: PEP, 1947): 161-162.
2. Rotha, P., *Documentary Diary. An Informal History of the British Documentary Film, 1928-1939* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1973): 280. Of interest here is an article Rotha contributed to the Co-operative Movement's Sunday newspaper, *Reynold's News*, in 1956. Here, he argues for a more progressive outlook to British documentaries, which should promote the social achievements of Britain. In this regard, he refers to the contributions made by trades unions and Co-operative Societies. See, Rotha, P., 'The British Case (3)', reprinted in *Rotha on the Film. A Selection of Writings About the Cinema* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958): 241-245.
3. Although Reeves was the prospective Labour Parliamentary candidate for Greenwich throughout the 1930s, he was sponsored by the RACS, a Co-operative Society which had a unique membership of the Labour Party. See, Rhodes, R., *An Arsenal for Labour. The Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society and Politics 1896-1996* (Manchester: Co-op Union, 1998).
4. Hogenkamp, B., *The British Documentary Movement and the 1945-51 Labour Governments* (Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Westminster College, Oxford, 1991).
5. Dickinson, M., *Rogue Reels. Oppositional Film in Britain, 1945-90* (London: BFI, 1999): 25.
6. The context of the decline of cinema in Britain is discussed in Docherty, D., Morrison, D., and Tracey, M., *The Last Picture Show? Britain's changing film audiences* (London: BFI, 1987).
7. Lee, M.J., *Consumer Culture Reborn. The cultural politics of consumption* (London: Routledge, 1993); Mort, F., *Cultures of Consumption. Masculinities and Social Space in Late Twentieth Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1996); Featherstone, M., *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (London: Sage, 1991).
8. Meier, T.G., *Deconstruction and the films of the (Workers') Film and Photo League* (Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Missouri, Columbia, 1988): 7.
9. A landmark discussion of the role and forms of film historical scholarship is presented in Arnes, R. (ed), *Problems of Film History* (London: Middlesex Polytechnic with the BFI, 1981).
10. Hunt, P., 'Promoting the Co-operative Agenda - New Mutualism and the 'Third Way'', *Journal of Co-operative Studies* (September 1999): 104.
11. Green, D.G., 'Modern Mutualism and the Historic Friendly Societies', *Journal of Co-operative Studies* (December 1999): 197.
12. 'A New Beginning', *The Co-operative News* (29 February 1999): 1. The present restructuring of the world's supermarket business could prove to be a watershed moment. One market analyst predicts that shortly the international market will be dominated by just three companies, none of them British. It is depressing to imagine what little space will be left for Co-operatives, Lyons, T., 'Sainsbury the Target', *Financial Mail on Sunday* (16 July 2000): 13.
13. 'All together now! Blair Backing Co-op Review', *The Co-operative News* (7 March 2000): 4.

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The Millgate
National Film Association Journal
The Optical Lantern and Cinematograph (Kinematograph) Journal
The Optical Magic Lantern Journal
Our Circle
Ourselves
Penguin Film Review
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