

# Principle FIVE

# P5

Special Edition June 2021

This special edition of the newsletter comes to you with notices of co-operative events, the study group, utopian writing, and news about the Sheffield Co-operator Happy Summer!

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## **Birmingham Film Coop's film festival**

18th June – 4th July 2021

This year Birmingham Film Co-op are working with [Co-op News](#) and [Central England Co-op](#) on an exciting social justice film festival to mark Co-operatives Fortnight. The film festival will combine feature length films with some specially submitted short films.

[Festival page](#)

See more about the Co-op Film Festival in this Morning Star article: [HERE](#)



Co-operatives Fortnight takes place from

21 June to 4 July 2021.

and this [Co-op Fortnight](#) we want to encourage everyone to [#JoinACoop](#).

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### Co-operative Congress 2021

Green campaigner Chris Packham heads line-up for UK Co-op Congress

The event, free to all co-op members, will look at how the movement can help the country rebuild

More info: [HERE](#)

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### Utopian Writing

How can progressives describe the society they wish to build if they cannot first imagine it? CHRISTOPHER OLEWICZ recalls Fenner Brockway's forgotten novel and laments the lack of utopian fiction for a post-Covid world.

You can read this article published by the ILP

(Independent Labour Publications)

[HERE](#)

## Principle 5 Study Group

### Where are We, and Where are We Going?

Trying to understand the Co-operative Movement

The year is 2021 and for over two hundred years people have been trying to replace the capitalist system with a much more humane and inclusive society, based on co-operation and not competition. This led to a hugely influential Movement which succeeded not only commercially, but through a consistent focus on education as the key to the liberation of all peoples.

The Principle 5 Study Group has read short but pithy papers about the Movement's progress and decline over the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. As a result a clear picture should have emerged about the past and present status of the Movement. It is due to the teachers and co-operative activists of today, and those early pioneers from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards that we have a basis from which to move forwards. The the founders of the Movement continue to inspire people and I would like to mention in particular:

Robert Owen - who gave to the English language the word 'socialism'.

Dr William King

George Jacob Holyoake

Charles Howarth

J. T. W. Mitchell

T. W. Mercer

The list could get very long and continue to the present day co-operators.

If the Co-operative Movement of the past is understood, and there is enough documentary evidence for it to be researched thoroughly, the big question that remains is – what now?

The previous Study Group papers concluded that what was known as the Co-operative Movement has now gone. This is not meant to denigrate the independent retail societies which perform a needed and worthwhile service in the true tradition of retail co-operation. But the social, commercial and political culture of today is very different to the times when the Co-operative Movement was at its zenith.

Of central importance to the consideration of this question must be the demise of the successor to the Co-operative Wholesale Society (CWS). The Co-operative Group is now a viable business after its near collapse in 2013, but this was (in my opinion) at the expense of its continuing role as a co-operative.

Nick Matthews writing in The Spokesman (for the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation) in 2014 reminds us of the centrality of co-operative education for the success of the movement in this article about the events surrounding the near collapse of The Co-operative Group and Bank.

### [The Forward March of Co-operation Halted?](#)

For study Group page see:

<https://www.principle5.coop/p5-study>



The Sheffield Co-operator 1922 - 1939  
and the Bulletins produced after 1939  
have now been digitalised

with thanks to Chris Olewicz.

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