

Co-operation v Charity

Co-operative collective ownership is not generally understood in the capitalist mainstream culture.

An example of how the co-operative culture has been subsumed by mainstream orthodoxy is the emphasis on Charity which we see in the Co-operative Group. From Victorian times to the present, 'Charity' can be seen as a concept which fits comfortably within the capitalist orthodoxy. Large companies have always made token gestures in the way of donations to worthy causes. Philanthropy was very popular in Victorian capitalism and whilst there is nothing wrong with this in its self, it can never change the world. We can view 'Charity' as part of mainstream orthodoxy.

Co-operation is in fact the opposite. It is collective self help, and this does have the power to transform Society. This is people coming together to take greater control of their affairs and cutting out the profiteers.

Capitalist businesses of all kinds give to 'Charity' in all sorts of ways. In particular, the Co-operative rivals on the high street make much of their 'Charity of the Year' and their giving to local charities.

There can be no objection to co-operatives making donations to Charity, but this is not part of what a co-operative is. 'Charity' is an easy option because it is a concept well understood by everyone and staff can easily buy into it.

But a co-operative is not a charity.

The Co-operative Group grew out of the CWS, which for all its shortcomings was committed to 'Co-operation' and was a pillar of the Co-operative Movement. Sadly, this successor organisation has abandoned support for co-operatives and could be considered as no longer being part of the Co-operative Movement.

Why is the 'Community Dividend' restricted to Charities and Scouts and Guides? These are organisations which are in a completely different sector to the Co-operative Movement.

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