

# Principle FIVE

# P5

Co-operative Study Special

March 2023

A programme of co-operative study was proposed at the AGM.

The 'Study' page of the Principle 5 website carries most of the basics for that study, here follows an overview.

A collection of self-help community organisations form the Co-operative Movement. These are known as Co-operative Societies. There have been such community organised businesses since the 1700s.

The Movement started to become successful and cohesive in 1844 with the establishment of the Rochdale society.

Their purpose - to help people to not only survive, but to have more fulfilling lives through collective self-help. This was, and still is, the opposite to 'Charity' which is a vehicle of the capitalist status quo. Charity keeps disadvantaged people in their place. Co-

operatives help to liberate people and create a humane Society.

Co-operation is a Movement worth fighting for.

As well as co-operative societies which carry out community run businesses, there are co-operative support organisations. These used to be known as auxiliaries. It is these support organisations which require some attention. Here is a list of some past and present co-op organisations.

Women's Co-operative Guild - Co-operative

Women's Guild

National Guild of Co-operators

British Federation of Young Co-operators

UK Society for Co-operative Studies

The Co-operative Party

Co-operatives UK (formerly The Co-operative Union)

Industrial Common Ownership Movement (ICOM)

Co-operative Press

The Co-operative College

Woodcraft Folk

Men's Co-operative Guild

Principle 5 Yorkshire Co-operative Resource Centre

National Co-operative Archive (Co-operative Heritage Trust)

co-operative groups associated with retail societies such as rambling, drama, choirs, educational councils etc.

red - no longer active

black - active

## **The Co-operative Party**

The Co-operative Party is a very misunderstood organisation, and for this reason, it might be a good place to start.

From the earliest days of the co-operative movement there was a consensus that co-operatives should be non party political. Indeed, political and religious neutrality were written into the principles. There was of course a practical reason for this. Co-operative members were affiliated to many different working class and socialist radical groupings. If the Movement was formally affiliated to any one of them it could cause unnecessary division amongst the members.

Circumstances by the time of the first world war necessitated a co-operative voice in Parliament when the Tories and Liberals were legislating against the interests of co-operatives in favour of private businesses.

The Co-operative Congress (the Co-operative Union assembly of of the Movement) of 1917 resolved to enter into party politics. This lead later in the year to an emergency conference which drafted a constitution and political programme for a Central Co-operative Representation Committee. In 1920 that committee adopted the name 'The Co-operative Party'. The Co-operative Party was a department of The Co-operative Union (later Co-operatives UK). It's purpose, to be the political voice of the Co-operative Movement.

The first Co-operative Member of Parliament was A.E. Waterson who was elected as MP for Kettering in 1918.

From 1919 the Co-operative Wholesale Society (CWS) began making an annual contribution to the Party of £1,000.

At the Co-operative Congress of 1927 in Cheltenham a formal alliance between the Co-operative and Labour Parties was agreed. From then onwards Co-op Party candidates standing for election to Parliament or local authorities stood on a joint Labour/Co-operative ticket. The two parties remained independent of each other having their own policies and structures, but had a harmonious relationship with each other.

The purpose of the Co-operative Party then and now is to give political representation and support to the Co-operative Movement.

One of the most well known Co-operative MPs was A. V. Alexander, MP for Sheffield Hillsborough who served in the Labour governments of Ramsay MacDonald and Clement Attlee.

## **Co-op Party Set to Become Independent**

Co-operative Congress 2005

reported in Co-operative News 14<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> June 2005

Congress gave approval for the Co-operative Party to be set up as an independent society.

Subject to approval from members of the Co-operative Party at the annual meeting in September, the Party will be free to run its own affairs instead of being part of Co-operatives UK.

The proposal, submitted by the Board of Directors, Co-operatives UK, said it is determined to update the status of the Party in line with modern standards.

In particular, the Labour Party said it prefers its partnership to be directly with the Co-operative Party instead of going through Co-operatives UK.

Ben Reid, Chair of Co-operatives UK, told delegates: “The Co-operative Party will be able to run its own affairs, employ its own staff and take on more responsibility.

“We still very much want it to be part of the Co-op family. So as an extra safeguard, the new constitution of the Co-operative Party can only be changed with the approval of the Board of Co-operatives UK. This is just in case the Party is hijacked and used in a way against the wishes of the Co-operative Movement”.

Members at the Co-operatives UK AGM voted unanimously for the Party to be incorporated as an Industrial & Provident Society.

Peter Hunt, the Co-operative Party’s National Secretary, said: “ this is a historic day for the Co-operative Party.” The new draft constitution is expected to be released at the Co-operative Party’s annual meeting in September, in Bradford. It will then have to be approved by members.

There are 26 MPs in the current House of Commons who were elected on a Labour & Co-operative ticket.  
<https://party.coop/people/mps/>

There are 16 Labour & Co-operative members of the House of Lords  
<https://party.coop/people/lords/>

There are 11 Labour & Co-operative members of the London Assembly  
<https://party.coop/people/london/>

There are 11 Labour & Co-operative members of the Scottish Parliament  
<https://party.coop/people/msps/>

There are 16 Labour & Co-operative members of the Welsh Parliament  
<https://party.coop/people/ms/>

There are 5 Labour & Co-operative Metro Mayors  
<https://party.coop/people/metro-mayors/>

And Labour & Co-operative Councillors throughout the Land

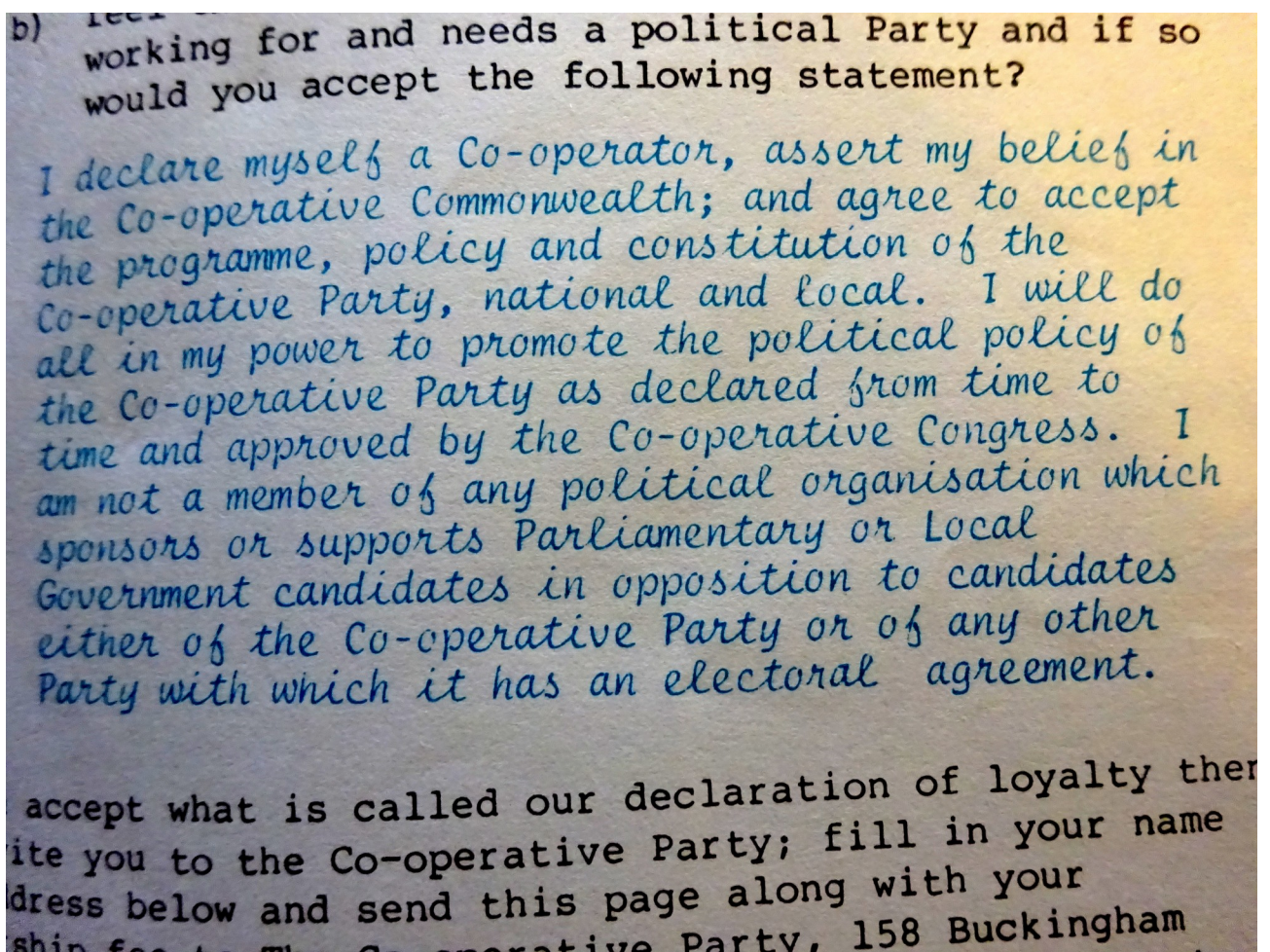
For more information about the Co-operative Party  
[party.coop](https://party.coop)

The conditions for membership of the Co-operative Party are;

- you must be an active member of a co-operative
- you must **not** be a member of any political party (other than the Labour Party)
- you must pay your subscription

These conditions are there to ensure that all members are working towards 'The Co-operative Commonwealth'

The old membership declaration was more specific than the modern one.



The current wording is:

I declare myself a Co-operator. I agree to accept the rules and to promote the policy and values of the Co-operative Party. I am not a member of any political Party other than the Labour Party or the Social Democratic and Labour Party. I am a member of a co-operative recognised by the National Executive Committee of the Co-operative Party.

The Co-operative Party is funded by its members (co-operative societies and individual members).

The Co-operative Group is the biggest Co-op Party member. Each year at the Co-operative Group AGM, the members vote on the level of subscription to be paid. Other co-operative societies will have similar arrangements.

Yorkshire & the Humber Co-operative Party covers our region.

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I hope that this study paper has been helpful. If you find anything in it which may be incorrect, please contact:

[steve@sheffield.coop](mailto:steve@sheffield.coop)

Comments and discussion is always welcome. If you would like to organise a study meeting, I will be happy to host it at the Resource Centre.



These Parameters will help to guide further study papers and discussion

To examine:

- The Co-operative Movement at its zenith
  - The Co-operative Culture with reference to 'auxiliaries' and support organisations.
  - The debate about the two socialisms
1. Centralised (top down). National and Municipal delivery of services, nationalisation, municipalisation.
  2. Collective self-help (ground up). Co-operative, social, cultural, community. Consumer co-operatives v Producer (worker) co-operatives.
    - The decline of consumer co-operation
    - The rise of the Co-operative Group
    - The fall of the Co-operative Group
    - The re-birth of co-operation
    - Co-operative educational facilities and other support organisations
    - Imagining the Co-operative Commonwealth
    - Towards the Co-operative Commonwealth
    - Security and accessibility of quality food the co-operative way.

Supporting material can be found on the 'Study' page:

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

**Members are always welcome to visit the resource centre.**

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**[www.principle5.coop](http://www.principle5.coop)**

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