

# Principle FIVE

# P5

Yorkshire Co-operative Resource Centre

January 2024

## **Building community wealth in the cracks of a broken economy**

**CLES's Community Wealth Building Summit**

Article in Co-op news [Alice Toomer-McAlpine](#)

4 December 2023

**Held in Manchester, with input from economists and local  
authorities**

**CLES is the national organisation for local economies  
- developing progressive economics for people,  
planet and place.**

<https://cles.org.uk/>

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**The notice regarding a co-operative email service  
appeared in our August 2023 newsletter.**

**It is re-printed below in case anyone missed it first  
time around**

## Co-operative broadband and email services

When [Your Coop Broadband](#) - formerly known as The Phone Coop - decided to stop providing email services to its broadband customers late last year, a consortium of tech coops came up with a way to keep the services running. Sheffield-based cooperative [Webarchitects](#) is working with Media Blaze Hosts and Community Broadband Network to set up a new venture called [mail.coop](#). By agreement with Midcounties Cooperative, which runs Your Coop Broadband, [mail.coop](#) will offer Your Coop Broadband users a way to keep their email address for a small annual fee.

Phone Coop broadband users were given email addresses in the form `name@myphone.coop` and `name@phonecoop.coop` but there are also users of addresses originally provided by Poptel, which merged with The Phone Coop in 2003 - for example `name@cooptel.net` and `name@poptel.org`.

The [mail.coop](#) venture will be set up as part of a new initiative called [Innovation.coop](#) which provides a framework for collaborative ventures of this nature. It's a great example of the 6th principle - cooperatives working together. Anyone who uses one of these addresses should have received a communication from Your Coop Broadband already. Further information about how to keep your email address, including costs, will be sent mid-August. If you're affected but are worried that you haven't heard anything you can contact [hello@innovation.coop](#)

Shaun Fensom

## **Social History and Adult Education**

The Yorkshire Co-operative Resource Centre is a base for independent study of social history. Of course help and guidance are always available to visitors to the Centre. It seems that adult education has always been denigrated in a society which values quick results and ready answers and when so many people have pressing concerns. The provision of educational resources, particularly for adults over the last two hundred years has been fought for against severe opposition.

**The Story of Sheffield** by Tim Cooper is in the Principle 5 library and is well worth reading. I quote from the book what the author says about the struggle for an educated citizenry pp. 130 - 132:

“An 1841 report into the levels of education in Sheffield found that only two-thirds of the male population and about half of females had basic literacy. The fact that twenty years later Sheffield was above the national average, with only 27% of the adult population completely illiterate, owed much to efforts in the sphere of adult education during this period. However progress was not made without genuine struggle; just as was the case for children, educational provision for adults was adversely affected both by the middle-class perception of Sheffield of a town as manual labourers on whom intellectual development was wasted and, perhaps more seriously, by the aims of the Anglican establishment to keep working people ‘in their place’.

The first of Sheffield’s establishments for adult education, the Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society (SLPS) was set up in 1822 by Dr Arnold Knight, a prominent Roman Catholic, and was clearly aimed at the middle-classes. The first provision specifically for working men was the Mechanics Library founded in 1842, from which developed the Mechanics Institute eight years later. The institute was established by members of the SLPS, including knight and

the social reformer James Montgomery, both of whom were keen to reassure their 'respectable' fellow members that it would not lead to subversion and revolution.

The library had its origin in the frustrations felt by reformers such as Montgomery that while many churches and chapels owned extensive book collections, they were intended solely for the use of their members. By 1842 the library had built up a stock of 5,628 volumes and had a membership of 643 readers. However, despite a philosophy of practical improvement through such means as an ambitious programme of scientific instruction, within little more than five years of their foundation, both the Mechanics' Library and Institute were under attack by the Anglican establishment. In the case of the library, this was for allegedly making available books that were likely to 'deprive the minds, injure the morals and weaken if not subvert the religious faith of the great majority of the rearing'; in the case of the Institute, its educational programme was deemed by a number of local Anglican clergy to be too overly secular. In both cases, the attacks were clearly aimed at keeping the working class in their place.

Following the visit to Sheffield of the philanthropic social reformer Robert Owen in 1833, an Owenite Hall of Science was opened six years later that went on to become the major educational expression of local radical politics among the working class. The Chartist leader Isaac Ironside, who had been ejected as secretary of the Mechanics Library on the grounds of allowing readers to access the works of 'a socialist leaning most dangerous to Christianity' - and to the works of William Shakespeare! - took on a similar role at this new institution. Under Ironside's direction, the Hall of Science encouraged open debate on controversial political issues. In 1841 for example, a series of lectures called 'The Principles of Socialism' was delivered, including one on 'the advantages and disadvantages of trade unions'. In general, Ironside was keen to put into practice

his conviction that the broadest possible cultivation of working people's intellectual and critical facilities was an essential step towards political emancipation. Inevitably, under increasing censure on the part of the authorities, the Hall of Science closed in 1848, to be followed by the Mechanics Library in 1861.

It was in response to the opening of the Hall of Science that the Church of England Instruction Society, later to become the Church of England Educational Institute, was founded in 1840 and claimed by its supporters to be 'amongst the first of its kind in the country'. The intention of its founder was to provide a continuing education for graduates of the Sunday Schools and an alternative to the rough life of the street gangs for young apprentices. Its curriculum was heavily slanted towards religious indoctrination, and the strong support it received from the authorities enabled it to build impressive accommodation and thrive well into the nineteenth century, in contrast to the mixed fortunes of the secular and nonconformist foundations. By the 1860s, powerful establishment support meant that the Institute had nearly 100 teachers on its books, including seventeen members of the clergy.

Taking its cue from the Hall of Science, the People's College founded by local independent minister R. S. Bayley in 1842 aimed to deliver a sophisticated curriculum to both male and female working-class young people. As such, it was one of the first educational establishments in the country to admit women, and set a standard in equal female access to education in Sheffield that was to continue with the establishment of the town's university. Students were encouraged to debate issues arising from the history and science of politics in classes scheduled to fit around the working day. Once again, financial support from the wealthier sections of Sheffield society was almost completely lacking, and the college's continuing existence depended almost entirely on its students' fees. When Bayley left Sheffield in 1848, sixteen of the students took

over the People's College and ran it as a self-governing institution supported by fees. Direct government involvement in the provision of adult education in Sheffield came in 1843 with the foundation of the School of Design, which by 1849 was a successful venture with 550 pupils, and was renamed the School of Art in 1857. Indeed it was to become one of the most respected such institutions outside London, with prominent pupils including Godfrey Sykes and later, C. S. Jagger”.

Tim Cooper. 2021

## **Contemporary Adult Education**

**[Working Class Movement Library](#)**

**[Workers Educational Association](#)**

**[The Co-operative College](#)**

**[Northern College](#)**

**[Independent Labour Publications](#)**

**[Independent Working Class Education Network](#)**

**The IWCEN produces Plebs News, you can receive this publication by contacting**

**Dave Berry**

**[daveberrygmb@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:daveberrygmb@yahoo.co.uk)**

**And of course**

**[Principle 5 Yorkshire Co-operative Resource Centre](#)**

## **The Equipment of the Workers**

In 1918, [Arnold Freeman](#) who understood the importance of education for people who were deprived of the opportunities to develop their potential, organised a survey

in the Crofts area of Sheffield, '[The Equipment of the Workers](#)'. He was aware that democracy was of no use to people who had not got the tools to use it. The survey assessed the attainment of literacy and culture in this, the most deprived area in Sheffield at the time.

For this reason he spent most of his life as tutor for the Workers Educational Association (WEA). He was a researcher and writer, and before he was appointed as the Warden of the Sheffield Educational Settlement.

[The Equipment of the Workers](#) and [Education Through Settlements](#) had already been published.

A very useful book is [Sheffield Troublemakers](#) by David Price. This book is in the Principle 5 Library. It includes a chapter 'The Settlement Movement' which gives some good background about 'Equipment of the Workers'.

Jonathan Rose's 'Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes' has a section summarising the survey, and puts this work in the context of the whole history of working class education, especially seeking the voice of those working class people who sought and found education. Equipment of the Workers often records how workers identified their own intellectual identity, which was more usually done for them by the establishment. There is a review of this book in Plebs News August 2023: <https://iwceducation.co.uk/images/PDFfiles/Plebsnews/Plebs%20News%20August%202023.pdf>

If anyone would like to research the Settlement Movement or the findings of The Equipment of the Workers, please contact: [steve@sheffield.coop](mailto:steve@sheffield.coop)

The papers of Arnold Freeman are in the Sheffield University Library:  
<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/library/special/shefed>

Suggestions for newsletter content are always  
welcome,  
contact: [steve@sheffield.coop](mailto:steve@sheffield.coop)

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

**For appointment contact [steve@sheffield.coop](mailto:steve@sheffield.coop)**

**Tel: 0114 282 3132**

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

**Principle 5 Yorkshire Co-operative Resource  
Centre  
Aizlewood's Mill, Nursery Street, Sheffield, S3  
8GG**

