

Workers' Co-operatives 1970s-1990s



What is a workers' co-operative?

Workers' co-operatives are businesses owned and controlled by the members who work in them. Most are flat structures where each member has a say in how the business is run.

These societies often included in their rules open membership, democratic control, and a distributed dividend to the members.

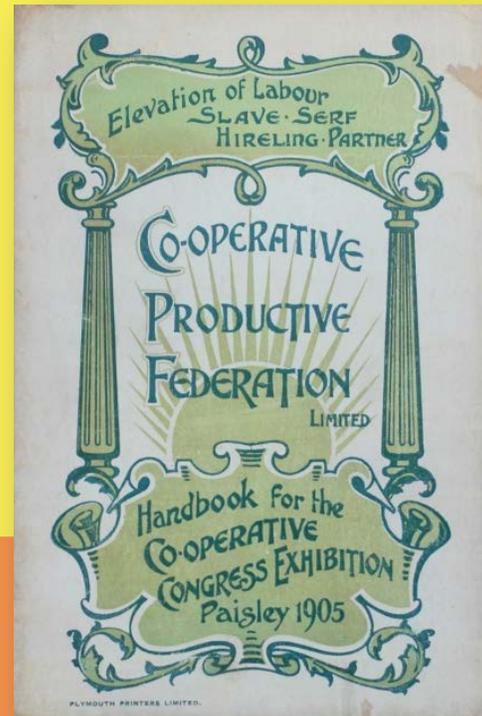
By the turn of the 20th century there were 200 societies, however by the mid-20th century many of these had fallen into decline.

The workers' co-operative movement pre-1970

Co-operative productive societies

The first steps within the British co-operative movement towards workers' control were the **co-operative productive societies**. Largely set up in the late 19th century, these were often based in industries where a high element of craft was required, such as printing or footwear.

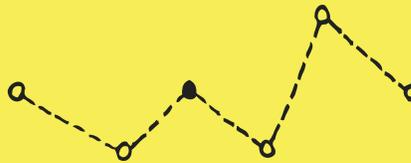
Many of these societies belonged to the **Co-operative Productive Federation Limited**.



Although preceded by the co-operative productive societies of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the 1970s-1990s saw a new wave of workers' co-operatives developing due to a number of factors.

Economic Conditions

Oppressive economic conditions and high unemployment during this period meant that many saw workers' co-operatives as allowing greater job security and control.



New Attitudes

Although prompted by poor economic conditions the new wave of workers' co-operatives also developed as part of a wider change in societal attitudes. A new generation of activists were looking for a more peaceful, equal and fair society.

Evolving Industries

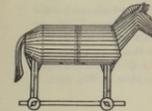
Many workers' co-operatives were set up in evolving industries that complemented the ideals of the movement. These included sale and distribution of whole foods, radical bookshops, and printers.

TROJAN PRINTING SERVICES

A Workers' Co-operative

Trojan Printing Services is a workers co-operative recently established in Hackney. We offer a unique blend of practical printing services, help, friendly advice and easy access to all community groups and progressive organisations. The co-operative was set up in December 1979 and grew quickly as it acquired new equipment and expanded the range of services it could offer. In April 1980 it moved to new premises in Dalston Lane, which also became the base for Hackney Peoples Press, the local community newspaper.

Trojan, like other co-ops in the area, is trying to create a practical alternative to private enterprise. Our aims are twofold: firstly to grow and therefore provide new jobs in an area of acute economic decline and secondly to be of service to the community. At present there are three full-time workers, plus a number of partners, but these figures will grow as the co-op expands. There is a 100% trade union membership amongst the workforce. The day-to-day management of the co-op is in the hands of the workers, and people from various community groups are co-op members contributing help and advice on how Trojan should develop.



See inside for a full list of our services

Trojan Printing Services, 85 Dalston Lane, London E8.

"It was the time of late 60s' alternative counter-culture and we decided we'd like to do something completely different to promote more collaboration, rather than competition."

Jenny Slaughter,
Member, On the 8th
Day, Manchester



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