

**LOW PRICES
OR
HIGH DIVIDENDS ?**

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**INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE WOMEN'S GUILD,
38, Downshire Hill, Hampstead, London, N.W. 3.**

PRICE 2½d.

**LOW PRICES AND LOW DIVIDENDS
OR
HIGH PRICES AND HIGH DIVIDENDS.**

Which do the Housewives Want ?

In order that the Women's Conference in Stockholm should more readily come to a unanimous decision on this question the International Co-operative Women's Guild sent out a questionnaire both to women's organisations and Co-operative Unions. Not all replied and in preparing the report for the Conference we can only use the material actually received.

GERMANY.

The **Zentralverband deutscher Konsumvereine** reports that all societies which do not end their financial year with a loss pay dividend to their members. The amount of the dividend is up to 5 per cent. and is reckoned on the member's purchases. The dividend has a favourable effect on the turnover. In many societies the dividend is only paid when the member's share is fully paid up. In some societies the dividend is transferred to the savings bank. Special allocations for educational and social services are made according to the profits of the undertaking and on the decision of the general meeting. The women want lower prices and the payment of dividend must therefore not be allowed to injure the society's power of sustaining competition.

The **Reichsverband deutscher Konsumvereine** in **Dusseldorf-Resholz** has also no affiliated societies which do not pay dividend ; every society which has the means to do so pays dividend. The dividend leads undoubtedly to an increase in the turnover. No raising of the rate of dividend is in contemplation. In many societies Death Benefit contributions are deducted from the dividend. The general meeting decides whether a part of the dividend should be paid into share capital. Owing to the industrial crisis and the under-cutting policy of private trade women are led to pay more attention than formerly to low prices, but they always come back after a short time to the co-operative society as they see that the attractively low prices of competitors are of no real advantage.



JUGO SLAVIA.

The Union "Zveza gospodarskih zadrug" similarly reports that dividends of from 1 to 3 per cent. are paid to the individual members in proportion to their purchases. The society is considering the abolition of the dividend, although it has a good effect on the turnover, because private traders also give rebates and dividends. Individual societies also have funds for educational purposes, Sickness and Death Benefits. In spite of the payment of dividend women make purchases in other shops.

NORWAY.

The Union "Norges Kooperative Landforening" reports that the co-operative societies, particularly those in the West of Norway, pay dividends of from 2 to 10 per cent., which are often distributed not in money but in goods. The average dividend is 3 per cent. The dividend is also often used to pay for goods previously obtained on credit. There is an attempt, particularly in the West, where the dividend is high, to lower the dividend so that prices may compete more easily with those of private trade. Where the dividend is paid in money it is in many societies placed to the member's savings bank account. Beyond the individual dividends only small sums for sick members are paid out by the society.

The Norwegian Guild reports that the wish of the members is for the maintenance of the dividend but not at such a high level that it is impossible to keep prices low. In Norway the raising of the dividend has led to an increase of membership and an increase in the purchases of existing members. Most members leave their dividends to be added to their accounts in their society. The Oslo Co-operative Society also sets aside a certain sum to assist its members in other ways. There are women who run after low prices and purchase in other shops. In general, women are in favour of low prices and low dividends, but they most undoubtedly do not want to give up the dividend.

POLAND.

The "Zwiazek Spoldziolni spozycow" reports that it is usual in their country to let members' dividend accumulate till their share is fully paid up. In the last few years there has been a campaign to secure that the dividend should not be paid out but should be added to the share capital of the society, but practical results have not yet been reached. On an average 145 societies pay dividends of 2 per cent., 127, 2 to 5 per cent., 95, 9 per cent., and from 518 no exact figures can be obtained. There is no intention of raising the dividend.

The societies which sell to non-members transfer the dividends on this trade to the reserve fund. The payment of dividend in money as well as in goods enhances the loyalty of the members and induces them to increase their purchases. The dividend is only paid out when the member's share is fully paid up; after that the members can use it as they like. The societies aim at keeping to the market price, as otherwise their members go to private shops.

The Secretary of the Co-operative High School at Przysucha reports that not all societies pay dividend. A great many co-operative societies make no such payment, but where they do so their dividend is from 2 to 5 per cent. Most members have not fully paid their shares and a part of the dividend is kept back for this purpose. Those who have their shares fully paid up receive their dividends in cash. In Poland there is the difficulty that women are only attracted by low prices, so that the price policy of the movement is of primary importance.

The Union of the Polish Ukraine "Narodna Torhowla" reports that the interest paid on share capital is 2 per cent. over the National Bank rate. Members can decide at the general meeting on some other use of profits besides the payment of individual dividends if they wish it. Newly-formed co-operative societies generally pay no dividend in the first year. In the first period of inflation the dividend was of no importance; it was entirely used to pay up the member's share. The individual member can decide whether to have the dividend in cash or allow it to be added to his savings-bank account. Some societies make small allocations for education and social services. In spite of the dividend the women buy from private traders because the private trader gives more credit than the co-operative society.

GREAT BRITAIN.

England.—According to the reports and publications of the Women's Guild and the British Union, all societies affiliated to the Union pay dividends. In 1923, these averaged 1s. 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in the £, that is about 7 per cent. The following table shows that there has been a slight tendency to lower the dividend:—

1918.	1919.	1920.	1921.	1922.	1923.
1/6 $\frac{3}{4}$...	1/7 $\frac{1}{2}$...	1/7 ...	1/7 $\frac{1}{2}$...	1/3 $\frac{1}{2}$...	1/4 $\frac{3}{4}$

The great London society, like one or two others, paid no dividend after the war. It had to pay its first dividend out of reserves but it immediately secure a large increase in turnover and in the second

year it was able to earn its dividend. There is no general dividend policy. Each society does as it thinks best and neither the Union nor the Wholesale Society exercises any control over the dividend level. Consequently there are great differences in the practice of individual societies. The dividend varies from 1 to 15 per cent., and even in the case of goods produced by the C.W.S., the retail price is often different in different societies. The English Co-operative women have long fought against this; they want fixed prices for all C.W.S. goods. Some societies expend a part of their profits in Death Benefits, while others contribute to holiday and convalescent homes and practically all have funds for educational purposes.

The English Women's Guild reports, according to the results of its questionnaire, that 430 Guild branches have sent in information on the payment of dividend in their societies; 380 Guilds report that payments are made for educational purposes, collective insurance, death benefits, convalescent homes and hospitals. In most cases these payments were regarded as valuable. The dividend stood in:—

106 Societies at	1s.
70	2s.
52	1s. 3d. to 1s. 4d.
34	6d. to 1s.
33	1s. 6d. to 2s.
18	over 2s.

The dividend begins at 6d. and goes up to 3s., the average is 1s. or 2s. in the £, on the purchases of the members. In 225 cases the dividend has been raised, in 78 cases it has been lowered. In 180 cases it is reported that the dividend has caused an increase in membership and turnover. In 80 cases it was reported that the members drew their dividend; in 70 that they left it with their society, and in 100 cases the practice varied; 170 branches report that women use their dividends to make new purchases at the store; 226 Guilds have ascertained that their members prefer lower prices even when it means lower dividends. In 30 Guilds the members wish for higher prices and higher dividends; 401 Guilds are against the abolition of the dividend; 9 would forego the dividend if they could have lower prices, and 2 would forego it if greater support could be given to collective services.

The **Scottish Women's Guild** reports that all societies pay dividends amounting in some cases to as much as 3s. in the £. The members know that if they demand too high a dividend they must pay high prices. The lowering of both prices and dividends has had a good

effect in some societies. Generally a part of the dividend is paid voluntarily into the savings bank or when the family has acquired a little house it is used for paying off the mortgage or to pay the rent. The better-off members are in favour of high dividends because they are in a position to wait and prefer a large sum all at once which can be used to pay for special requirements, and are less interested in low prices. High prices are in this way a form of hidden saving.

Section V. of the Scottish Guild also supports the individual dividend. The Scottish Societies pay 15 to 17½ per cent. dividend and efforts are therefore being made everywhere to restrain a further rise in the dividend, although every increase is followed by an increase in turnover. A lowering of the dividend is always the occasion for sharp criticism on the part of the members and the Guild considers a cessation of the dividend impossible in Scotland.

Sections VII. and II. report to the same effect. Section VII. states that after the war a general reduction of dividend began. Section II. states that this was only the case at the time of the industrial crisis after the war, now dividends are beginning to rise again. This section reports that when the wages of the members are sufficiently high they wish for high dividends, for then they are less interested in securing low prices. The members generally wish for dividends up to 10 per cent. The payment of dividend always has a favourable effect on sales and the abolition of the dividend would be unsafe.

AUSTRALIA.

The **Australian Women's Organisation** also reports that the Consumers' Societies pay dividend. On an average the dividend amounts to 2s. and only in a few cases to 3s. in the pound, the lowest being 8d. Since 1924 the tendency has been for the dividend to rise. In 1923 the Balmain Society suspended payment of dividend, as did one or two other small societies. Most societies pay dividend in cash. The women want lower prices; indeed, they often wish a smaller dividend were paid so that prices need not be so high. No one wants the abolition of the dividend as they fear to injure the turnover.

SWEDEN.

The **Swedish Guild** and the **Swedish Union** also report that all societies pay dividends usually of about 3 per cent; just a few pay less or more. The dividend is good propaganda, it increases both the turnover and the membership. If it is not too high it is always open to the society to increase its effective competition with private trade.

A lowering of the dividend arouses opposition amongst old members, but does not prevent the influx of new ones. The share capital per member in Sweden usually amounts to 100 Swedish kroner; until at least 50 kroner have been paid up the member receives no dividend, the money being placed to his share account. Many members transfer their dividends to the savings bank. The Swedish women believe in an individual dividend as it helps propaganda and the Union is of the same opinion. Both organisations wish for low dividends so as not to impair the effective competition of the societies as regards prices. Both express themselves as opposed to collective expenditure for social services and education and regard the dividend as more valuable.

SWITZERLAND.

The **Swiss Union** considers that dividend should be paid. In Switzerland it amounts usually to 6 to 8 per cent. The Union believes that it is best that all societies should pay dividends at about the same level. The abolition of dividend would certainly have an adverse effect on the general development of the movement. Member's debts to the society are deducted from the dividend paid to them. The Union gives a special benefit to its members by an insurance to which members become entitled by subscribing to the co-operative paper.

BELGIUM.

The **Belgian Women's Guild** reports that in general dividends of from 4 to 5 per cent. are paid. There is a general effort to fix the dividend at 5 per cent. It is sometimes paid in checks which can be used for the purchase of further goods. The members of every co-operative society are ensured against sickness in the joint Labour, Trade Union, and Co-operative Insurance Union. The Guild does not consider that the dividend fixes the price level; only a minority wish for no dividend and low prices, most wish for dividends in cash and also an allocation for social services.

BULGARIA.

The Union "**Napred**" reports that it is general to pay a dividend of from 2½ to 5 per cent., half of which is placed to the member's share or savings in the society. The result is always an increase in membership and turnover; the remaining half is paid in cash to the individual member. At the same time all societies are able to set aside 10 per cent. of their net profit for special relief funds and succeed in their efforts to control the market prices.

FRANCE.

The "**Federation Nationale des Cooperatives de Consommation**" reports that only a few societies pay no dividend, the dividend in most cases being from 2 to 8 per cent. Social services are undertaken by individual societies. French women are loyal to their society even when it is no cheaper than private traders. Every society tries to sell as cheaply as possible. Most members draw their dividends. Where the payment of dividend has been suspended the turnover has fallen. In France there is no wish for any change in the existing system.

LATVIA.

The societies of the Union "**Konsums**" pay small dividends which can be paid in cash or added to savings as the member wishes. The net profit can also be transferred to the Reserve Fund at the decision of the general meeting. Most societies only pay 1 to 2 per cent. dividend on their members' purchases, but a few large societies pay as much as 6 per cent. The rules oblige the societies to pay dividends. The level of the dividend is not of so much importance as its regular and recurrent payment. It has great propaganda value and the turnover increases with each payment of dividend. The depreciation of money has meant a shrinkage in the value of the members' shares and consequently they are very ready to have their dividends transferred to their share capital. In most societies 10 per cent. of the net profit is set aside as a fund for co-operative employes, 10 per cent. for educational purposes and the rest paid in dividend to the members.

HOLLAND.

The **Netherlands Women's Guild** reports that dividends are everywhere paid in cash. Some societies keep back a part as a special fund to help their members. The dividend is generally about 4 per cent., in exceptional cases as high as 15 per cent. At present the dividend is lower than before the war. The societies wish to extend their work and need money for that purpose; at the same time they pay dividends for propaganda purposes. Too low dividends injure co-operative loyalty. The better-off members leave their dividend with the society. The women are always ready to go elsewhere if all their requirements are not satisfied at the co-operative society. A few members wish for the dividend to be abolished and the capital of the society strengthened, but most wish not only for dividends, but high dividends. The co-operative washhouses pay no dividend, but they charge low prices, so that many women can make use of them. All the same,

working women do not use them much. It would be very hard to persuade the members to forego the dividend so that it might be used for common purposes. Co-operative education has not advanced so far as to have produced this degree of altruism.

RUSSIA.

The following information has been obtained from a recent speech of Mr. Gourevitch, Director of Centrosoyus, in London: He considers the question of price and dividend policy one of the most important questions for the Co-operative Movement. Before the war societies sold at the market price but they used a larger proportion of the net profit for educational purposes and returned less to the members in the form of dividend on purchase than in countries like England. The level of dividends in general was lower. A dividend of 8 per cent. was considered very good. Many societies, however, were not in a position to pay as much. After the war the market price no longer ruled, as owing to famine and speculation it often far exceeded the value of the goods, and the co-operative societies attempted to fix prices themselves based as far as possible on cost prices. After the war and the revolution the control of food supply was transferred to the Government, and the price policy of the co-operative societies was regulated by Government decrees. Now that the part taken by the co-operative societies in feeding the people is steadily increasing the movement has to try to regulate the market price. It has to undercut the price level of private trade, and consequently it can only pay a small dividend. For the members prefer low dividends and low prices to paying high prices and waiting all through the year for a high dividend at the end of it. If the Co-operative Movement followed the market price it would increase the tendency of prices to rise to the highest possible level. Statistics show that the Co-operative Movement sells 3 per cent. cheaper than the State and 10 per cent. cheaper than private trade. Lower prices are secured by an increase in turnover, a friendly rivalry between individual societies and the lessening of trade expenses through improvements in organisation.

The Moscow office of "Centrosoyus" reports that in the special economic conditions which exist in Russia, and taking into account the fact that there is a State trading monopoly and a State industry in existence, their price policy necessarily differs essentially from that pursued in capitalist countries. In some articles the State trading organisation and the Co-operative Movement dominate the market. For instance, in bread, meat, butter, etc. Consequently the consumers have a strong interest in having fewer high dividends, as lower prices

mean an improvement in their standard of living. Dividends are paid in a number of Consumers' Societies either in cash or other forms. The general meeting decides on the payment of dividend and also as to whether children's crèches or other social services should be supported. The whole of the net profit is not more than 3 to 4 per cent. By rule, 40 per cent. of the net profit must be used to increase working capital; 10 per cent. must be used for co-operative education and propaganda; 10 per cent. is divided amongst the poorest members; and 10 per cent. used for various co-operative needs (new buildings, etc.). Since 1924 individual dividends have been paid, which have shown a tendency to rise. The number of members grows year by year; a proof that the policy of the Russian Co-operative Movement in this matter is right. Through the increasing collaboration of the women the interest of the members in communal undertakings, such as communal kitchens, children's homes and other hygienic welfare undertakings for mothers and children, grows steadily. In general low prices are preferred to high dividends. In any case the policy should be to make the women understand that it is better to create welfare institutions than to pay dividends.

AUSTRIA.

In Austria dividend was paid until the first year of the war. Only when the famine had destroyed normal industrial conditions societies in general ceased to pay dividend. The prolonged industrial crisis, unemployment, and the dismissal of thousands of officials led to a universal policy of reducing to the minimum the difference between wholesale and retail prices. The gross profit in Austria is 10 to 15 per cent. lower than in other countries. Co-operative societies have the greatest difficulty in covering their expenses on this narrow margin. There is a huge increase in small traders—in Vienna they have increased from 16,000 before the war to 80,000. Unemployed officials and workers who have some savings start small businesses and sell at cut-throat prices. The co-operative societies have to face this competition, and it is only by an increase of turnover and reduction of overhead charges that they can reach the position of paying a dividend. In principle the Austrian Union still retains the dividend policy of the Rochdale pioneers, but where a country's economic life has suffered as severely as in Austria it is necessary first of all to create the conditions which make dividend payment possible.

A third of Austrian industry will never again reach its pre-war output, and a long process of readjustment is necessary before the balance between production and consumption can be restored.

All the same, some societies are already able to pay dividends through a reduction of overhead charges and an increase in turnover. The largest society in Austria, that of Vienna, last year paid a dividend of 1 per cent., and by making this known and by a sweeping reorganisation an increase in turnover of 16 per cent. was secured, which rose to 23 per cent. in the last weeks of the year. The opening of a number of new branches in the blocks of municipal flats has also contributed to this result. Even the Austrian movement will slowly be able to return to the payment of a dividend. That it has survived eight years without payment of dividend is due not only to its members' loyalty but also to the fact that a section of its members see in the co-operative movement a sphere of conscious activity in the building of a socialist commonwealth.

HUNGARY.

The "Hangya" Union of Hungarian farmers' societies reports: In general the societies affiliated to our Union pay dividend. The average level of dividends cannot be given with complete certainty as we have had some difficulties in getting reports on this point. In the exceptionally depressed economic conditions of the last few years it has only been possible to pay a dividend of 1 to 5 per cent. But even in times of prosperity our dividends have not exceeded 5 per cent. Our affiliated societies lay the greatest stress on selling at the lowest possible prices and regard this as more important than the payment of a dividend. The level of turnover in Hungary is scarcely affected by the level of dividend. Low prices have a much greater effect on the buying public. In the period of inflation the payment of a dividend involved great difficulties, as its relation to the turnover had become quite illusory; therefore, no importance was attached to the payment of dividend and in many societies the members suspended it. In general the sums which are distributed as dividend are used to build up share capital. There now exists a state regulation connected with the valuation of assets, which obliges co-operative societies to increase the value of their share capital in this way. According to the law 25 per cent. of the net profit must be used for the formation of a Reserve Fund until this reserve has reached a sum double that of the original capital. Interest of 5 per cent. is paid on share capital. In addition welfare or cultural objects or agricultural efforts are promoted. Some of the rural societies have built "people's houses" with assembly rooms and libraries.

CZECHO-SLOVAKIA.

On behalf of the women in the German Union, Frau Riedl reports that in the German societies the problem of the dividend has not been solved uniformly. The majority of societies pay dividend in the form of a rebate on purchases, a course which is determined by the technicalities of taxation. The other societies do not go in for any distribution of the net profit, as they need money for necessary plant, buildings, etc. The great majority of societies, however, pay death benefits of from 100 to 500 Czech kronen. In strikes and other industrial conflicts food is distributed to members free. There is no special fund for this; help is given out of the general resources of the society. In a number of societies the dividend was abolished some years ago, the turnover, however, as a result fell, for members did not take into account the advantage offered by lower prices. Since the reintroduction of dividend there has been a gradual but steady improvement. The dividend is used principally for the completion of the members' shares or as an addition to savings. In general people hold fast to the dividend, and only a few members would be ready to give it up in the interests of general development.

FINLAND.

The Finnish Union, Suomen Osuus kauppojen Keskuskunto R.L., reports that 40 per cent. of its affiliated societies pay a dividend of $\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 per cent. During different years the societies have distributed 21 to 24 per cent. of their surplus in dividend.

The other Finnish Union, Kulutososuuskuntien Keskusliitto, reports that the dividend level in its affiliated societies is on an average 1 to 2 per cent. In the year 1925 the gross profit of the affiliated societies was 15.5 per cent. and the net profit 1.7 per cent. of the turnover. Mrs. Rakel Karkinen reports further from this Union. In addition to the total sum of 8,197,129 Finnish marks paid in dividend by societies in 1925, 10,029,647 marks were also paid into the reserve funds; 280,367 marks allocated to various purposes; and 74,558 to propaganda. Some of the members leave their dividend in the savings bank. Even when prices are low there are certain articles for which members always go to private shops. In general the women desire a dividend.

From the replies which we have received from Unions and national Women's Guilds, it is evident that all stand in principle for the Rochdale Pioneer policy of paying individual dividend on the purchases of the individual member. In some countries extremely high dividends are paid, which, however, are only possible when there is a sufficient difference between wholesale and retail prices to enable such a profit to be made. The most important question is not in what form the dividend is paid—cash, goods or contribution to savings; the deciding factor is that this dividend gives the members an interest in the increase of their individual purchases, and in this way promotes the development of the movement. The payment of socialised dividend in the form of social institutions (holiday homes, homes for the aged, etc.), or through the support of such welfare institutions does not seem to have developed very far in any country. Special occasions have permitted some movements to make special profits (for instance, providing for the army in war-time), and out of these they have created social institutions. But in the constant economic crises of post-war times it has scarcely been possible to earn sufficient profits to make large grants for social services in addition to paying dividend.

The decision which the International Women's Conference has to make is, therefore, not primarily that of payment or non-payment of dividend, as both theory and practice have already decided this, and the experience of nearly 100 years speaks against the complete abolition of the dividend. Consequently the question before the Conference is primarily one of the level of the dividend. Here it is well to give a warning against the payment of too high dividends, not only because in industrial crises they lead to excessive prices which injure the standard of life of the members, but also because the members become accustomed to profits which cannot be maintained. In the present industrial situation with the exceptionally modest profits which can be made in most countries the movement might well aim at a dividend of about 3 per cent.

Such a dividend save in abnormal circumstances such as those in Austria can be more easily earned and constantly maintained. Such a dividend has a more and more decisive influence on the housewife. For such a dividend she will put up with many inconveniences (shops at a distance, cash payments and other things made necessary by co-operative trade). Co-operative price policy will not be hampered by such a dividend to the extent of being unable to adapt prices to meet the competition of private traders. But women will have to learn one thing—that even the Co-operative Movement with all the advantages of an organised market which it brings, cannot do conjuring

tricks to satisfy the housewife's wishes. It cannot sell at much lower prices than private trade and at the same time pay a high dividend; present economic conditions make it impossible to realise wishes of that kind. This is a case for the education of the housewife in the Co-operative Movement. She must learn to understand economic cause and effect. From this she will learn that it is she herself who by her purchases settles whether there shall be a dividend and how high a dividend it shall be. The unreasonable wishes in this respect which are unfortunately still often expressed by members, and very often especially by women members, must give place to an understanding of economic facts which alone can ensure the steady and continuous development of co-operation. If we are to sum up in a sentence the attitude of women's organisations in this respect we should say: Women stand for the payment of individual dividend according to the individual purchases of the member. They wish that the dividend should never be so high as to hinder the movement from adapting itself to competition and to the market price. In this way alone women can secure both a just price and an individual dividend.

In many countries propaganda has been undertaken in several quarters with the object of abolishing the dividend altogether. This propaganda has never appealed to more than a small minority of co-operators, men or women. The economic difficulties against which most members have to struggle prevent their rising to the ideal of foregoing personal advantages in the interests of the movement as a whole. Certainly there would be a great increase in the strength of the individual society if it could use all its profits for the development of the undertaking. But it should be clearly realised that this very development is determined to a large extent by the member's pleasure in purchasing, and that this member is herself an important factor in the trading and stocktaking of the society. To-day it is impossible to dispense with the collaboration of the member and the making of new members from indifferent outsiders, and for this reason the dividend must be regarded largely as part of the trading costs necessary to building up the movement. The member can only gradually be brought to see that control of the market is more important than a small temporary advantage. The winning of the indifferent masses is an important and decisive question particularly in view of the advertisement, rebates, touting for customers, etc., practised by private trade, which have a great effect on the Co-operative Movement. It is important that all factors should have equal consideration. Just as a concern may fail through a bad price policy, defective management,

or excessive overhead charges, so it may also be wrecked through a bad policy towards its members. All obligations necessary to the development of the society must be fulfilled. The attainment of this object is only possible when no duty is neglected and no side of the work is allowed to predominate over others equally important. A society which distributed its entire profits to its members would be as ill-advised as one which paid no attention to the individual needs of the members. Here, as in every democratic organisation, it is only possible to attempt the equal treatment of all interests.

In discussing the effect of the dividend on the women customers we must bear in mind that a section of the poorer women with very limited incomes are not in a position to purchase at the co-operative store if in order to secure high dividends prices higher than those of competing traders are fixed. It is just on these women too that other benefits that are given have a good propaganda effect. Thus in many countries the collective insurance of members for death benefits has had very good results. The question of how far the individual member is benefited by the provision of such insurance has not yet been sufficiently studied in the Co-operative Movement to make a decisive judgment possible.

It must be recognised that in some countries high dividends, even though accompanied by high prices, have had a favourable effect on trade and membership. This has been the case particularly in some societies in Scotland and England, while the average dividend in both Great Britain and Switzerland is higher than in most countries. It must be remembered, however, that these are countries which have not suffered the severe currency difficulties, and consequent economic collapse which forced many countries to face the question of prices, and they are also countries which represent a relatively high standard of life.

From all the material that we have received on the question of dividends a uniform conclusion can be drawn from the point of view of principle. There only remains for discussion the level of dividend and the form in which it is paid. We therefore propose to the Women's Conference the following resolution.

RESOLUTION.

“The International Co-operative Women's Conference at Stockholm, following on the investigations made among Co-operative Unions and Women's Guilds as to the policy of the different national Co-operative Movements in the matter of prices and dividends, expresses its satisfaction at co-operation's growing influence over prices. Lower prices for food and other necessaries mean a definite easing of the housewife's task. But the Co-operative Movement can only secure control of prices nationally and internationally if all women unite their purchasing power as loyal co-operators. The Conference therefore urges all co-operative women to work unceasingly for recognition of this fact among housewives in general, and to see that women study intelligently the price policy of their co-operative societies and support them in the attainment of their difficult task.

“Further, the Conference declares its adherence to the system approved by the practical experience of all countries that each society should distribute a part of its surplus in the form of individual dividend on purchases. To dispense entirely with the individual dividend can only be contemplated in exceptional circumstances, such as war or economic crises which shake the whole economic structure. The level of the dividend, however, must in no way prejudice the power of competing in prices. It should never reach a level at which prices have to be kept so high as to prevent the poorer women from making their purchases at the stores. Further, it must never be so high as to prevent adequate provision being made for reserves, extensions, and the development of co-operative production.

“The Conference, therefore, looks to the Co-operative Women's Organisations of all countries so to direct their educational work that women learn to understand :—

- “ (1) The connection between prices and dividends and between purchases and dividends.
- “ (2) How the economic circumstances of their country affect dividends and prices.
- “ (3) The need for using all dividends to increase the trade of their society, so that the Co-operative Movement may secure such strength as to enable it to exercise a decisive control over prices and thus over the standard of life.”

RESOLUTION

The International Co-operative Women's Federation, following on the instructions of its constituent unions and Women's Guilds as to the policy to be pursued in the matter of prices and the means of securing its maintenance in co-operation with the Government, has decided to support the Government in its policy of control of prices and to urge the Government to take such steps as may be necessary to secure the maintenance of the present level of prices and to secure the maintenance of the present level of prices and to secure the maintenance of the present level of prices.

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 - (2) How the economic circumstances of their country affect prices and dividends.
 - (3) The need for raising all dividends to increase the value of their society, so that the Co-operative Movement may secure such strength as to enable it to exercise a decisive control over prices and thus over the standard of life.



