

29 June 2011, 14.00-17.15

University College London, Medical Sciences A V Hill Lecture Theatre

The Co-operative Movement and the Current Crisis

In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis and the subsequent recession, co-operatives have been widely debated as a potential strategy for coping with hard times, and have thus become the focus of political debate. Co-operatives have also been cited approvingly by Conservative politicians, including the Prime Minister, as part of the 'big society'. At the same time, political commentators on the left of centre have argued the 'rediscovery' of the co-operative and mutualist tradition is also crucial to the renewal of social democracy.

This seminar, organised by UCL with the support of the Co-operative College, brings together co-operative activists, advocates and academics to explore the question of how the current interest in co-operation can be translated into practice. With approximately a billion members worldwide the co-operative movement is flourishing, but how can it continue to do so, and what role can or should governments play in this process?

- What is the relationship between the established, historic Co-operative movement in the UK and the smaller local co-operatives which have emerged more recently?
- How important is the legal framework for the development of co-operatives?
- Can the democratic roots of the co-operative movement, as a 'bottom-up' strategy to help people take control of their own lives, be reconciled with 'top-down' government policies?
- Are co-operatives an alternative to state-funded public services, or is their role complementary?
- What do current political debates tell us about the wider meanings of co-operation as a social and an economic movement?

Panellists:

- Peter James, Titchmarsh Village Shop, Northants
- Sion Whellens, Calverts print and design co-operative, London
- Mark Lewis, The Fair Traders Co-operative, Holmfirth, Yorkshire
- Representative of The Co-operative Group (tbc)
- Mervyn Wilson, Chief Executive and Principal, Co-operative College
- Robin Murray, author "Co-operation in the Age of Google"
- Simon Randall, Conservative Co-operative Movement
- Michael Levin, Södertörn University, Sweden
- Helen Melia, The Plunkett Foundation

All are very welcome. There is no charge. If you would like to attend, and for further information, please contact Mary Hilson (m.hilson@ucl.ac.uk).

The seminar is organized with the kind support of the UCL Faculty of Arts and Humanities, and UCL Humanities for Business.



The seminar will take place in the Medical Sciences Building, AV Hill Lecture Theatre. The easiest way to find this is to enter UCL from the Malet Place entrance in Torrington Place (opposite Waterstone's). Nearest tube stations Euston Square, Euston, Godge Street, Russell Square.

For further directions see <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/locations/ucl-maps>