

HELPER

Monthly for Leaders of Pathfinder, Pioneer, Rainbow Playway,
and Elfin Groups of the Co-operative Youth Movement

NEW SERIES, No. 1 Price 3d. net

JANUARY 1945

OUR PLANS FOR 1945

By J. L. WILLSON, M.A.

National Co-operative Youth Organiser

IN 1945 we start the second century of the Co-operative Movement, and at the same time we are encouraged to believe that the Co-operative Youth Movement should see phenomenal progress during the year.

With dim-out instead of black-out, with the release of co-operative halls and other premises, and before the end of the year, we hope, with the gradual return of men and women from the Services to take up leadership, the future is particularly bright.

Wherever possible co-operative education committees should make arrangements for their leaders to take adequate training, not only for groups in which they may be serving now, but for the new groups which may be opened. The Co-operative Union is appointing a Youth Leadership Training Organiser, and thus there will be greater opportunities for all of you to take training. Good leaders, it is said, are born and not made, but every leader needs training, guidance, and practical experience in youth work. It is important that leaders should be trained to carry out their work efficiently and in the right direction.

For leaders of Rainbow Playways and Pathfinders there is a correspondence course at the present time, and details may be obtained from the Co-operative Union.

During this coming summer plans are being made for summer schools for leaders of Rainbow Playways and Pathfinders, so

that they will be enabled to carry out their duties effectively in strengthening the Co-operative Youth Movement as a national organisation, since you will be creating through your programmes the knowledge that they are part of a live movement which has particular aims and objects, and which is organised in a special manner.

In addition to the summer schools for leaders of Rainbow Playways and Pathfinders, training camps will be organised for leaders of Woodcraft Elfins and Pioneers.

Co-operative education committees should be approached now to see what facilities they are prepared to grant to enable leaders and prospective leaders to attend summer schools and training camps.

January should see the publication of a handbook for leaders of Pathfinder groups, and during the year we can anticipate a similar handbook being published for leaders of Rainbow Playways.

Most sectional co-operative youth committees will be organising week-end schools for leaders, and the time given up to this training will be well repaid by the greater effectiveness of the work undertaken. One of the great advantages of residential courses comes from the contacts which are made. These enable leaders to appreciate that however great the difficulties may be, they can be successfully overcome. It is a great help exchanging opinions, ideas, and experiences.

Recently the Ministry of Education issued a special circular, "Leisure-time Provision for School Children," of which the following are extracts:—

"It was natural and proper that attention should be focused on this section of the community—roughly the 14's to 20's—as it seemed clear that they would stand most in need of the facilities and training afforded by youth centres, clubs, and all the other organisations concerned to provide for the leisure-time activities of youth, to enable them the better to stand up to the impact of war. As is now known, the energy and efforts of local Education Authorities and their youth committees and of the voluntary organisations, have combined to bring about a substantial expansion of provision, despite all the handicaps imposed by war conditions, more particularly in respect of accommodation and leadership.

"This concentration of attention on young persons has, however, tended perhaps to overshadow the consideration of children of school age, more especially those of 11 or 12 to 14 years of age who, in large numbers, hardly less than their elders, need provision for healthy leisure-time activity; a need that has been rendered more acute by the destruction of homes by air attack, and the absence of parents from home and their preoccupation with war work. It is significant, to put the argument at its lowest, that the figures for juvenile delinquency rise in the case of boys

SMALL BUT IMPORTANT

"HELPER" this month enters a new phase. It becomes the guide to the leaders of all the junior sections of the Co-operative Youth Movement.

Just as youth leaders have their special wartime problems, "Helper" has its problems. There is not a great deal of space available, but it is intended to pack the pages with practical ideas, and where these cannot be elaborated, to tell leaders where to get further information. Every group is part of the Co-operative Youth Movement. Every group has a contribution to make in the way of ideas which will help other groups. Jot down ideas, preferably on a post card, and send them to the "Helper."

Problems arise—share them with the "Helper." If they are of general interest they will be answered in these pages. If not, they will be passed along to experts who will try to provide answers.

to a peak at about the age of 13. The Minister is impressed, therefore, by the importance of action being taken to do all that can be done to provide for the welfare of these elder school children as a permanent service, and especially during the coming winter months. Such provision is one of the responsibilities of local Education Authorities and will, under the terms of Section 53 of the Education Act, 1944, become their duty.

"But in dealing with the problem, while the education service has a clear responsibility for making direct provision, the assistance which voluntary organisations can render should be fully enlisted. Many of the organisations associated with the youth committees have done much for children of 11 to 14, and have developed a technique which seems to meet their psychological needs, directing into useful channels their energy, their love of adventure and spirit of comradeship which, in the absence of healthy outlets, may sometimes degenerate into gangsterism, with its attendant troubles. Local Education Authorities should, therefore, consider whether they can further assist such organisations, financially or otherwise, so as to enable them to extend their work among children of school age."

Thus the Co-operative Youth Movement will now be able to obtain facilities which have previously been denied to it in junior work, and which have been available only for youth clubs.

Suggestions and criticisms are welcomed.

Upon good team work depends the success of the youth movement, and eventually the future of the Co-operative Movement. "Helper" is a new member of the Co-operative Youth Movement. The paper has much to give, but it must be helped by its readers. Our mail bag should be of growing dimensions every month. It should represent all sections of our movement.

"Communications" should be addressed to the Editor, "Helper," Co-operative Union Youth Section, Holyoake House, Hanover Street, Manchester, 4.

"Helper" is published in the last week of the month for the following month.

Closing date for editorial matter is the 15th of each month.

★ A BOOK TO TALK ABOUT ★

DR. ALBERT MANSBRIDGE, whose essays and addresses have just been published,* is an inspiring co-operative personality about whom more should be known. To him the working people of Britain owe a great debt for he founded the Workers' Educational Association, which brought great opportunities of scholarship to the people. Dr. William Temple, the late Archbishop of Canterbury, said of him: "Our country and the future democracy are his debtors."

Although Dr. Mansbridge never went to a university, he received honorary degrees from five universities at home and abroad. He left school to earn his living when he was fourteen. All his great learning he acquired while still working. While working as a clerk at the C.W.S. tea warehouse he thought of the sailors and the few opportunities they had for learning. Thus he founded the Seafarers' Education Service.

A wealthy man who was helping to finance his schemes for educating the people said: "He is the most dangerous man in England: he is teaching the people to think." Such a man had a cordial reception in the Co-operative Movement, which aided him in many ways. And, of course, co-operative societies themselves help people to think for themselves and find ways and means of managing their own affairs.

An interesting chapter in this book deals with some workmen scholars. Dr. Mansbridge points out that many of the world's greatest scholars have been manual workers. He mentions a whole string of professors who were weavers, millers, and carpenters. This chapter might well form the basis of a talk. It shows how love of learning may master all kinds of difficulties and hardships. Young people to-day have perhaps better opportunities for gaining knowledge, thanks to the efforts of men like Mansbridge. Are they planning to make full use of those opportunities? Have they hopes of going to a university, perhaps to Oxford or Cambridge or a university in their own town? Will they, like Mansbridge, love learning simply for the sake of learning, not just for their jobs, but to be useful and better citizens. Leaders, too, will find much to inspire them in other sections of this book. If the book cannot be bought, it can be borrowed from the public library, a project which Dr. Mansbridge helped to develop.

* KINGDOM OF THE MIND.—Dent, 12/6 net.

QUIZ: Dr. Mansbridge is a Companion of Honour. What other famous Co-operator also holds this distinction?

ANSWER: Mr. A. V. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty.

OUT-OF-DOORS IN JANUARY

COLD weather should not prevent groups from getting out of doors a few times during the present month. It would never do if the Playways and Pathfinders became firesiders. Parks and the countryside take on a new appearance when trees are bare and crops gone. Even young people well wrapped up and kept on the move can learn to enjoy cold, clear days, and the glow of natural warmth when they return indoors. There is something particularly enchanting, too, about the snow-clad countryside, and a quick change on return home should ensure no ill effects.

By the end of the month snowdrops should be out in the woodlands and nests of daffodil

buds and foliage discernible. This is a good time to peep at the formation of trees. In a few months' time we will be dazzled by the appearance of buds, and later, by their brilliant new foliage. Now is the time to spot trees by their bark instead of by their leaves. A good book about trees will repay study.

Gardens are, of course, rather forlorn spectacles at present. Mild days may allow some digging, but in the main now is the time to plan. Perhaps juniors can persuade their fathers to part with a corner of the allotment for their own cultivation. Then groups could discuss simple gardening plans in winter evenings and make ready for the spring.

BEFORE the end of January families will be disposing of their Christmas and New Year cards. Ask your Playways to bring along two cards which they like very much. Get them to put their name on the inside of the card, then collect them and set them out on a table, so that everyone can see them.

Tell the group about the Royal Academy art exhibitions, where artists send in their best work, and how the critics decide whether the painting or sculpture is to be shown to the public. "Your group are going to have their Royal Academy."

Bring the Playways out one by one. Ask them to pick the Christmas card they like best. Then ask them why they like it best. Is it because of the colour? Is it because of the subject—fun, out-of-doors, home picture, etc.? Is it because of the wording? The children can either be asked out individually or in groups, if the numbers are too large; or they can be issued with paper and asked to pick.

After they have each picked a card in the way described, ask them to pick the one they like best for colour, the subject, and the message. Count a point for each card, add up the points, and see which card gets the most points. Then the leader should pick the cards she thinks is the best taste in each group.

It should, of course, be pointed out that everyone has a right to his own taste and choice. That is the right of an individual.

LEADERSHIP FOR BOYS

The Duke of Gloucester recently stated boys need above all leadership: "*I have seen on many occasions that, given leadership, even the most unpromising boys can rise to great heights. I believe that the five years following the end of the war will be critical. The generations growing up will be exposed to reaction which may well follow the war period. They are in danger of becoming dispirited, disillusioned, and frustrated. Among them lie our great responsibility and our great opportunity.*"

The Duke thought there was too much concentration on indoor work. There was a call for country clubs and permanent camps.

ELEANOR LANE has been scouting round 500 youth centres from Maine to California, U.S.A., on behalf of an American co-operative paper. Her conclusions are interesting, for she lays stress on the importance of youth centres having *glamour*.

One centre at Des Moines has black oil cloth and black walls, and silver planes provide the relief. This centre would undoubtedly appeal to young boys. Another centre in Arkansas, strikes a cowboy note. Furniture is of a rustic stick variety, and there are rough cloth curtains and furnishings. Cowboy murals, all done by the members of the youth group, decorate the walls. At Clinton, Ohio, she came across another centre which struck a nautical note. Walls were painted deep blue, with life-size paintings of mermaids, sea serpents, and ships.

Young people in another town called their centre the crow's nest, rather a high living crow, I'm afraid. Their room was done up as a ship's lounge. Blue tinted mirrors were put up to give the sea-scape effect. A ship's wheel was hung from the ceiling to carry lights. The sea-going spirit was carried even further, for there was a "galley committee" to look after refreshments.

Another centre in the same town was fitted up as a circus. The ceiling painted in red and white stripes like a tent. Pictures of clowns and animals decorated the walls. In the case of all these centres members helped with the fitting out the rooms.

Often it was found that the members would work much harder getting the rooms ready for their own centre than they would normally. In some cases the centres were originally a shop or automobile garage turned into a regular rendezvous for young people.

A NEW GAME FOR JUNIORS

The C.W.S. has been running an interesting series of advertisements in the national Press. These pictures show eminent people, and give a quotation of what they say about the Co-operative Movement.

Playways might collect these pictures and mount them for hanging in their meeting rooms. Pathfinders might be asked to

Not every youth group can hope to have the superlative centres described here, nor are such centres required to produce the best youth work, but certainly far more attention should be given to the environment of co-operative youth work than has been the case in the past.

A good many junior sections are meeting in rooms which are not their own, but used by others—Guilds, youth clubs, etc. This for the present prevents steps being taken to have the room decorated as one would choose, but there is the matter of effects.

Since films with their lavish detailed decorations beat the stage at its old game of showmanship, the theatre has resorted to curtains rather than scenic effects, and relied on properties and lighting.

The same approach might be made in the case of rooms which are not permanent homes for the junior groups. For instance, it would be comparatively easy to pin up a big rainbow flag on the wall before the Pathfinders or Playways meet. It might be possible to decorate the lights temporarily with pictured shades.

A model flagpole might be made on which the flags of all the United Nations are hung, with the rainbow flag of co-operation surmounting them all. A model galleon or a Noah's ark might be introduced into the meeting room, which on special occasions could be decorated with flags and coloured lights.

Temporary equipment of this kind would give the members a personal interest in their quarters, and if a really good scheme of decorations was thought out it might prove so attractive that other users of the rooms would be quite happy to accommodate themselves to the tastes of the youth group.

Do they identify themselves with the great industrial movement that is advertising.

The whole series have been run in the

Co-operative News.

LEADERS of junior groups are often asked to supply reports of their activities for publication in the local society's *Wheat-sheaf* or magazine.

Members of a society are helping the youth work, and they have a right to know what is being done. If the members see that good work is being done they will be willing to help still more. Besides, members will want their own children to become members of the youth movement, and parents have perhaps a greater influence in encouraging their children to join the junior groups than they have with the clubs.

If your society does not publish reports the Editor might agree to publishing them if he is approached. The first thing to do is to see that reports reach the Editor in good time, before the last date for receiving reports. Leaders should find out the amount of space they are allocated in the magazine. Don't write pages of matter when only a few paragraphs can be published. It will probably be found that by cutting woolly phrases a good amount of real news can be tucked in the space. Perhaps a member of the group could be made the reporter at each meeting, and the reports discussed before being sent along to the Editor.

Whatever course is adopted, make the reports crisp and bright. One report of a youth club meeting described how the gramophone broke down. It would have been better not to have mentioned the breakdown, but pointed out that the group had an instrument and would be glad to have records which members of the society did not require; that the group was trying to develop musical taste as well as providing music for dancing. Statements of programmes should be summarised.

The report is your contact. See that every issue contains a clear statement of where people can lodge inquiries about youth work. If your activities have been ordinary, describe them as briefly as possible, and ascribe broad plans for the future.

Leaders will know a lot about co-operative youth organisation, but the average readers will not. Therefore, don't use terms which will not be explained.

WOODCRAFT ORGANISATION

Below is published the first of a series of articles on the organisation of Woodcraft, Elfin, and Pioneer Fellowships. They are contributed by a well-known Woodcrafter with long, practical experience of his organisation.

By KOODOO

ORGANISATION of a Woodcraft, Elfin, or Pioneer Fellowship has its special problems and methods of approach to children which are not met in any other children's organisation. The purpose of this series of articles is to convey to all headmen, especially those who may have recently taken up this position, to carry into their group the spirit of the Folk, and also its technique of child education.

Naturally, we must start off with the position of headman, as it is around this figure that all the Fellowship life will revolve, and it will be the headman's responsibility whether the group is a success or failure.

FIRST DUTY.

The first essential to ensure success is that the headman shall catch the interest of his Pioneers, and this can only be done through his having a very deep interest in the children themselves. It is not enough to like children generally, or to desire to do things for their good. The headman must try to make a personal friend of each child and find out their real feelings.

He will soon find what many people strangely overlook, that every child is different. Each has different interests in different degrees, and each has different ways of expressing himself.

It is up to the headman to study these differences, and give each Pioneer special attention—hence the Folk do not encourage too large a group without a fair amount of assistance from capable helpers. In the last resort an interested and attentive child is one that is doing what he wants to do. It is the business of the headman to find the compromise between what he wants to do, what he can train them in, and what they themselves want.

If he wants to take his Pioneers to the theatre and says "We are going to the local theatre to see 'As You Like It,' he may receive no response, but if he knows his Pioneers and says "What about seeing a

show on Saturday? Shall it be a play, an opera, or what?" and finally arranges to take most of them to see "Midsummer-Night's Dream" on another day, and the rest to an opera, I would say that he has more than achieved his purpose. He has, by considering his Pioneers' wants, been able to make these wants the same as his own desires for them.

PREFERENCES.

By giving Pioneers special attention the headman will find that he will be giving some Pioneers more attention than others. Those he can help most he will tend to do most for. This is not favouritism, but it may lead to favouritism.

Most headmen have favourites, but they must keep their feelings secret. They must not do more for a Pioneer because she or he is a good-looking or otherwise attractive child. That would be favouritism, and would immediately break up the discipline of the group. The Pioneers will not require sameness of treatment, but they will demand equality of opportunity. The headman can ensure fairness by letting everyone have their own say.

Besides being scrupulously fair, there are one or two other points of character the headman must try and develop if he is to retain his Pioneers' interest and respect. He must have a good reason for everything he does, and be prepared to explain himself. Pioneers are expected to be reasonable creatures, but they will not be so if the headman does things without reason. That does not mean that the headman must always think twice before he does anything. This is often impossible, but he can at least try to think coolly afterwards why he did a certain thing so that his future actions may be more rational. Another thing a headman must strive for is always to keep his temper. Then again, to keep Pioneers interested does not mean to keep them quiet, that means to have their subservience, not their interest.

A headman must be prepared to put up with a certain amount of noise, and only insist on quietness when the activity absolutely demands it. Children find considerable harmless self-expression in making a noise, and it is only a selfish impulse on the part of adults to try and stop them doing so when there is no need.

PROMISES.

Other points of character to take care of are to keep promises and to be punctual. Pioneers soon lose interest in the desires of the headman they cannot rely on, and they will tend to become unreliable themselves as far as the group is concerned. Some Pioneers are often unreliable, and lose interest through no fault of their own, but through casualness and misunderstanding opposition on the part of their parents. They are kept away from the group and certain activities very often through forgetfulness or other insufficient reasons.

The headman should try and see the parents of each child, try and get to know them, and give them a direct interest in the work he is doing with the group. A local supporters' council containing as many of the parents as possible is a great help in this matter.

Then if he can let the parents have good

Children Overseas

A GREAT deal has been heard about the need for the work of UNRRA in newly released occupied countries, and for a long time British co-operators have clamoured for the sending of food and necessities to children abroad.

These things must come first, but the welfare of children demands the provision of joy and gaiety too, through the ownership of toys, pretty clothes, books, and pictures. When we think of the universal misery and sadness of the past five years, it gives us new hope and enthusiasm to plan for happier times, and especially to plan for what we can do to bring happiness into a devastated world.

NOT SO EASY.

Sometimes folk are inclined to talk a little glibly about establishing international friendship among young people, as if it were the easiest thing in the world. Actually it is one of the hardest tasks we could undertake. Friendship must be based on understanding, knowledge, sympathy, and common interests of some depth and intensity, and demands a measure of self-sacrifice and real effort. Its foundations should be laid in early youth.

PLAN NOW.

Let us, therefore, start now to plan the lead we can give in this direction from our co-operative children's groups. In France

notice of all the special events of the group, say through a group *News Letter*, he will ensure a maximum attendance and therefore greater interest in all the activities.

INTEREST AND VARIETY.

Pioneers' interest is increased if things are kept going well, and there is always something to do. They will want some free time at the group meetings, but not too much. If the headman can, every now and again, introduce some new games and new activities, the Pioneers' interest will mount higher and higher. He should take them to camps, hikes, and visits as often as practicable, and provide as many meetings as can be arranged for his members. This will give them the feeling that the group is not just something to go to one night a week, but something constantly in their mind as part of their everyday life and interest.

and Belgium there are co-operative convalescent homes for children: what a welcome gift would be a parcel of toys, scrap books, and picture books from some of our Pathfinders and Rainbow Playways. It would form a real link between co-operative children in each country, and many pen-friendships would result in course of time.

The children of the Soviet Union, Jugo-Slavia, Czecho-Slovakia, India, China, and Greece will need all the gifts we can send them, and if you picture for a moment the terrible devastation of some of these countries, and the rebuilding and building of schools, nurseries, play centres, and so on, that we hope will take place, you can think of a range of interesting gifts that would be appreciated, and you can plan for months of work to produce some of these gifts.

In years to come it may be that there will be an exchange of gifts at Christmas time, bringing a close contact between the children who make and send them. Think of the dolls dressed in national costume which would be received with delight by British girls, and the other toys and books individual to any particular country which would be gladly welcomed by the boys.

Letters of thanks and photographs would follow, until perhaps one day the opportunity for a visit to each other's homes would arise,

or a large co-operative holiday school or camp could be organised. What fun it would be to meet in person the girls and boys who appear in the photographs and write letters.

It isn't a very easy time to commence making gifts, you will say, when toys are so scarce in our own country, and there is so much unrest even in partially liberated countries! But at least the children are not to blame for any of these things, and they have suffered enough. The need is so great, we cannot let this opportunity pass.

Even to plan what we will do when supplies of materials are available will cheer us at this beginning of a new century of co-operative endeavour.

WHAT TO DO.

The scrap bag is not quite empty yet: many children can draw remarkably well, and given suggestions for humorous or descriptive themes, they can combine to produce a really interesting scrap book. Holiday times, for instance, would offer them opportunities.

Carrying out a scheme like this well calls for some hard work on the part of children's group leaders. So often it is the thought we put into our gifts which make them valuable and fitting. If your children would like to work during the coming months to

prepare a parcel or hamper to be sent abroad, will you let us know at Holyoake House, mentioning to which country you would like it to go.

We will then try, with the help of the International Co-operative Alliance, to see that you have the address of a specially needy town or village, and are able to establish a personal contact between your children and the children who receive their gifts.

CHRISTMAS TREES FOR 1945.

If you would like to wait until next Christmas, still let us know of your interest, as it takes some time for letters to be received abroad and arrangements made. Christmas trees are just as popular abroad as they are here, to dress one and to picture its colourful candles burning in 1945 in some remote spot would capture the imagination of our young co-operators. There couldn't be a more practical or enjoyable way of beginning this great task of building up international youth friendship, could there?

E. BORMAN

◆ ◆ ◆
A £200,000 fund has been launched by the National Association of Boys' Clubs for the training and establishment of men from the Forces as leaders of boys' clubs after the war.

LAST MINUTE LINES

Ten Rainbow Playway groups and ten Pathfinder groups are thriving in Birmingham under the direction of the society's youth organiser, Fred Jennings.

◆ ◆ ◆
The Co-operative Union education executive has appointed Mr. N. L. Stevens as assistant youth organiser for the South-Western Section. He will be taking over shortly, and his headquarters will be Exeter.

◆ ◆ ◆
An organiser for training in youth leadership is to be appointed by the Co-operative Union. The position has been advertised in the *Co-operative News* for 30th December 1944. The appointment will strengthen still further the organisation.

According to the Co-operative Congress Report there were in 1944, 352 Pathfinder groups with, 13,330 members, and 85 Rainbow Playway groups with 2,480 members. Good junior groups will make strong youth clubs later.

◆ ◆ ◆
The 1944 Education Convention takes place in Paignton, Devon, this year, commencing 29th March, Thursday before Easter.

◆ ◆ ◆
Rainbow Playway and Pathfinder groups have now their own attractive coloured posters, size 30 by 20 inches. Copies should be obtained by leaders in societies where such groups are organised or about to be formed. Price, 7s. 6d. per dozen.