

Motion 9

Council Motion – Hate divides communities, co-operation builds them.

- We ask the Board to introduce a new Member Engagement and member-to-member communication programme to empower member-owners to come together to promote and support unified and co-operative communities at home and abroad, enabling member-owners wherever they live to share ideas with their co-op and other members on issues they care about.
- We further ask the Board to explore ways to further support our Academy schools to empower young people to come together in the spirit of co-operation to engage, discuss, debate and resolve their issues working together for the common good. We would also ask the Board to explore the possibility to expand the reach of any such democratic empowerment programme more broadly across the UK.

At a time when the world at large and our communities here in the UK are becoming more divided places, it is incumbent on the Co-operative Movement to bring people together in line with our values and principles. We have seen the success of co-operatives in bringing together fractured communities in Rwanda, and here in the UK, including in our Co-op Academy schools. We would like our Co-op to engage and empower our member-owners to come together and find co-operative solutions to the problems and issues they care about.

Our Co-op sponsors academies at Primary, Secondary and College level who do amazing work to create the next generation of co-operators. At this time of division we would also like our Co-op to continue to lead from the front on further empowering the young people in our Co-op Academies, some of whom will be eligible to vote by the time of the next UK General Election, giving them the skills to disagree agreeably, discuss, debate and resolve issues together.

Board Response:

Throughout our 180 year history, co-operatives have always been great advocates for and builders of peace because, as the great co-operator, William Maxwell, said in 1913 – ‘co-operation is the antithesis of war’.

Co-operatives bring people together to share talents in pursuit of a common goal and that builds the relationships which are the foundation of peace. Events around the world and on our streets in the UK in the summer of 2024, make clear that there has never been a more important time for co-operatives to step forward and help rebuild ravaged communities.

Our member-owners made clear in their tens of thousands that this is an issue they care about and wanted their Co-op to take action on. As a result, in January, the National Members’ Council approved a Co-op campaign designed to put co-operation and co-operatives at the heart of how communities are rebuilt in the UK and around the world after division and conflict – our Hate Divides Communities, Co-operation Builds Them campaign. At the heart of our campaign is supporting the creation and

scaling of co-operative enterprises because they bring people together both in the UK and overseas.

Together with other co-operative societies and institutions in the UK, our Co-op has established the International Fund for Co-operative Development to support co-operative development overseas and we are using our trading relationships to support existing co-operative producers and businesses in conflict-affected areas because we know a strong co-operative economy will support peace.

In addition, in the UK, as part of the work of the Mutual and Co-operative Sector Business Council to support the Government's Manifesto Commitment to double the size of the Co-operative Economy, our Co-op is working with and supporting others in the sector including Co-operatives UK to ensure the conditions and mechanisms for co-operative growth are provided.

A central part of our campaign is the opportunity for members to understand more about different conflicts and the way co-operatives and co-operation can play to build peace. We have a programme of activity throughout 2025 and we are exploring with the Co-operative Academy Trust ways in which we can make these available to our Co-op Academy schools and their students.

The Board recommends supporting this motion.