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1956 AFTERMATH AND FORMATION OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF
STUDY GROUPS

I recall that all through the first two weeks of the Conference it was accepted that this would be the one-off of the original concept. But in discussions a number of us began to feel that it had been such a valuable and unique experience it should not be allowed to die but shared with others in the future. A number of us were asked to speak to small groups about the Conference we had just experienced but I found my audiences could not understand how we came to be a large body of men and women drawn from all parts of the Commonwealth in the 30-42 age bracket, almost entirely Managers or Trade Unionists but representing no one other than our individual selves and secondly why our reports drew no conclusions nor made any recommendations. One realised then what an individual and personal experience it had been which probably could only be repeated through another Conference.

A number of us met at different locations trying to get something started, but we were getting nowhere until in 1962 we learned that for the 1962 Conference in Canada E.P. Taylor had raised a surplus which was going to make it possible to form a Central Trusteeship and Secretariat to be based on London. Harold Hartley who had chaired the 1956 Conference arranged for a weekend gathering of 1956 members at the Central Electricity Generating Board's Training Centre in Surrey. As a result of this the Committee (I cannot remember its original title) was formed with Harold Hartley as Chairman; Reginald Verdon-Smith (Vice); Alexander Fleck (Chairman of ICI and Membership Committee, 1956); Sir John Hanbury-Williams (Chairman Courtaulds and Treasurer, 1956); Tom Williamson (General Secretary, General and Municipal Workers Union) and Tom King (General Manager, Admin, Shell Mex and B.P. and Study Group Chairman 1956) as its members. Shortly afterwards they were joined by Jack Cooper who had been a Study Group Chairman 1956 and succeeded Tom Williamson as General Secretary of the GMWU. It was agreed that Susanne Walker who was Harold Hartley's secretary should become secretary to the new Committee. It was further agreed that there should be set up a Central Committee of Study Groups whose membership should not be confined to Conference members.

In August 1962 I was Guinness Northern Sales Manager based in Chester and our third daughter was newly arrived. I had just been promoted to the post of National Trade Manager which meant moving self and family South again. On the particular day only a kitchen chair and the telephone besides myself were left in the house. At this point Tom King phoned to ask me to take on the Chairmanship of the Central Committee of Study Groups. As such I would have an immediate seat on the new Committee of Trustees under Harold Hartley and Suzanne Walker would be my P.A.

The timing could hardly have been worse but I was so keen to further the Conference aims, much reinforced by the great success of Canada's Conference just finished, that I agreed immediately.

Over the next months we formed about 15 Groups round the country. As I had become Sales Director of Guinness by then, I was travelling round Great Britain a great deal: Suzanne had my programme and wherever possible tried to arrange meetings which I could attend. I had many enthusiastic helpers in setting up the Groups but most especially Dr Duncan Murray who was an Industrial Medical Officer and had attended the 1962 Conference. James Downie of Shell Mex and later a member of the 1968 Conference wrote the 'theme' papers for each Study. The basic idea was that every Group would study a particular 'theme' over a year and we had then a weekend together at a number of locations to discuss the findings so that they could be compiled into a report which would later be published through the Industrial Society with a Press launch at a location such as the Cheshire Cheese in London's Fleet Street. I hope that the published Reports are somewhere on record but they included "The Introduction of Shift work into an Area", "Training of Young People", "The Optimum Use of Leisure" (in the 60's there was a widespread belief that technology would bring about shorter working hours and thereby greater leisure!) and most importantly "Redundancy and Retirement", the recommendations of which formed the basis of the Government's Redundancy Act – Michael Clapham who then ran I.C.I. Metals was Chairman of that Midlands Group. The weekend locations varied from Butlins Holiday Camp at Bognor Regis; Company Training Centres and Keele and Manchester Universities. Prince Philip invariably attended them on the Saturday evenings and was a great inspiration and discerning in his comments.

My recollection is that the Central Committee continued to the early '70s. By that time Harold Hartley had died and Suzanne became Conference Organiser at St. George's House, Windsor and Duncan Murray had been posted to Cyprus. In 1972 I took over the Chairmanship of the U.K. Trustees from Sir Michael Clapham who had become President of the Confederation of British Industries and Chairman of I.C.I. and Betty Sharp became my P.A. Shortly afterwards I became a member of Prince Philip's Council preparing for the 1974 U.K. Conference in which Betty and I were actively involved.

After the 1974 Conference it was agreed that rather than resurrect the Central Committee of Study Groups, it would be better to organise Interim mini-conferences confined to U.K. members. These proved very successful. The first was in 1977 when one Group went to Holland.

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