

The Quay Co-op operates a vegetarian Cafe, a Radical Bookshop, a Womens Centre and a Resource Centre all under one roof in Corks City centre.

The Co-op is as much a political as a commercial enterprise. It was founded in 1982 by people involved with a number of groups in Cork (Women, Gays, Ecology and Disarmament Groups) who shared a common need for premises and working facilities. The initial idea, floated in 1979, was to lease office space and to share the rent and overheads among the different groups. This scheme never got off the ground but from its failure a more ambitious project emerged; to rent a large building and operate it as a 'Resource Centre' funded by a Cafe and Bookshop in the building.

There was no way this scheme or the groups involved would attract state assistance nor did we attempt to borrow money from the banks. We accepted that the project would stand or fall on our own resources. We raised the initial funds by getting long term loans from people who supported the project; some small some larger amounts. This money was given on the understanding that it would be repaid when and if the Co-op was able to repay it.

In 1982 the recession was deepening in Cork and landlords were grateful to get tenants who would maintain a building and pay their rent until the market and development prospects improved. We found a suitable building close to the city centre, signed a lease in Feb. 1982 and began two hectic months of renovation, decoration and fitting-out to prepare for our opening on, appropriately, the first of May.

The aim of the Co-op was never simply to develop a business and create jobs for its members. Clearly we would need to be commercially successful in order to survive- and we have been. The Cafe and Bookshop both provide a surplus to meet the costs of the non-commercial areas. This surplus together with income from renting meeting rooms, badge making and occasional fund-raising socials has allowed us to develop the projects which make the Co-op such an innovative and sometimes controversial place. *The Womens Place is a good example.*

#### THE WOMENS PLACE

From the beginning we agreed that the co-op had a particular commitment to supporting the struggle of women against the male domination of our society. This policy

operated on two levels. Firstly within the Co-op we agreed guidelines on membership and employment which aimed to guarantee that women would not be sidelined in our own meetings and projects. We cannot claim to have <sup>entirely</sup> succeeded in this. It is still a constant struggle not to let things take their 'natural' course and end up with a Co-op run by and for highly motivated, articulate, middle-class men. // !!

The other level was the establishment of a women-only area in the Co-op. The aim of this was to create a space in which women could meet, talk and organise without interference from the Co-op or any outside group. ]

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development & current activities of p's place

conclusion:-

'enterprise' is given too narrow a definition in our society. The ~~major~~ contribution which a project like the p's place makes is not assessable in <sup>pure</sup> financial terms - but