



ICA Press Releases

29 September 1999

First Book To Chart The Global Success Of co-operative And Mutual Insurance

Geneva/Manchester 29 September, for immediate release--The first book to explain the phenomenal success of the worldwide co-operative and mutual insurance business sector is published in Britain on Thursday October 14.

"Not by Chance" is the story of the UK-based International Co-operative and Mutual Insurance Federation (ICMIF), whose members have more than a hundred million customers in 60 countries and measure their combined turnover in billions of US dollars.

Although the global "family" of co-operative and mutual organisations covers a vast range of economic activities - from agriculture, credit and banking to industry and commerce, retailing and wholesaling - author Jim Kennedy argues that insurance is the most successful sector of all in business terms.

The story starts out with a group of five insurers meeting in Rome in 1922, continuing through world war and recessions to the present day. Now that initial handful has grown to more than 100 businesses, banded together into a powerful organisation, ICMIF, which is fighting on a global scale against threats to its membership from "demutualisation" and the growth of faceless multinational corporations.

ICMIF's members include some of the world's leading insurers which, although thriving by any measure, have uniquely retained their co-operative identity and the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity.

Membership also embraces some of the smallest insurance businesses which have enormous potential to expand in the developing world. As the book recounts, among ICMIF's finest achievements is its patient work over many years in co-operative development, particularly in helping to establish new insurers in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the post-communist countries of central and eastern Europe.

With more than 75 years of almost continuous growth behind it, ICMIF has proved its durability and value to its members. As a global body it is, as Jim Kennedy writes, probably stronger today than it has ever been. "The Federation is a successful example of co-operation in action. Co-operative principles, updated and adapted to meet changing world circumstances, still lie at the heart of its membership and how it performs its tasks."

Jim Kennedy is a freelance writer who has worked in industry and commerce and written about it for more than 20 years. He is assistant editor of ICMIF's international newsletter *Network* and editor of *Rapport*, the newsletter for ICMIF's European regional organisation.

"Not by Chance" by Jim Kennedy (paperback with separate jacket, 272 pages, ISBN 0 85195 264 X) is published by Holyoake Books, Manchester, price £15. It is available by order from bookshops or can be ordered price £15 plus £2 postage and packaging directly from ICMIF, PO Box 21, Altrincham, Cheshire WA14 4PD (tel: 0161 929 5090, fax: 0161 929 5163, e-mail: sabbir@icmif.org).

For further information contact Iain Williamson 0161 246 2900 ext 2922 (Home 01253 730997).

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housing, tourism and consumer co-operatives. ICA currently has more than 242 member organisations from almost 100 countries, representing more than 760 million individuals world-wide

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Last updated: 29 September 1999



15, route des Morillons, 1218 Grand-Saconnex, Geneva, Switzerland

Tel: (+41) 022 929 88 88 Fax: (+41) 022 798 41 22

E-mail: ica@coop.org



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Press Release

Death of Sir Robert Southern

Geneva, 15 September 1999, for immediate release--Sir Robert Southern, General Secretary of the Co-operative Union (United Kingdom), the national federation of consumer co-operative societies, from 1950 to 1972, died on Wednesday (September 8) aged 92.

He had worked for the Co-operative Movement for 49 years and was well known both in this country and throughout the world as an eminent ambassador for the Movement, a lucid public speaker, and a leading authority on co-operative law.

Born on March 17, 1907, Sir Robert was educated at Stand Grammar School, Bury, and Manchester University, joining the Co-operative Wholesale Society in 1923.

Two years later, having transferred to the then CWS banking department, he won one of two CWS scholarships to further his studies at the Co-operative College, and a year after he was admitted as an associate of the Institute of Bankers.

He joined the Co-operative Union staff in 1929 as personal assistant to the General Secretary, R.A. Palmer (later Lord Rusholme), becoming a member of the Union's legal department. He rose to the post of Assistant General Secretary in 1946 and a year later became Acting General Secretary when Lord Rusholme joined the Government's newly-created Transport Commission. His time as General Secretary, starting in 1950, coincided with a period of dramatic changes in the retail industry. To meet the challenges of the times, Sir Robert had to advocate sweeping remedies to the disparate federation of consumer-owned retail businesses that then made up the Co-operative Union.

He always sought to persuade and not to hector, and this approach was successful in bringing societies round to accepting the radical changes necessary for them to survive and prosper with the minimum of hostility and resentment.

Sir Robert's urbane style, wide culture and unfailing amiability were well known throughout the Co-operative Movement. As a vice-president of the International Co-operative Alliance he travelled extensively throughout the world, and in return received visits at the Union's headquarters at Holyoake House, Manchester, from hundreds of overseas co-operators.

He was awarded the CBE in 1953 and a knighthood in the 1970 New Year Honours List. He received the Co-operative Movement's highest honour - Presidency of the Annual Co-operative Congress - in 1969.

Although he retired from the Co-operative Union in 1972, Sir Robert maintained links with the Movement - he was for a time a president of the Society for Co-operative Studies - and many friendships with co-operators in this country and abroad.

He lived in Prestwich, Manchester, and is succeeded by a son and a daughter. His wife, Lena Southern, died less than a year ago.

Source:Co-op Union (UK), News Release, 9 September 1999.



15, route des Morillons, 1218 Grand-Saconnex, Geneva, Switzerland

Tel: (+41) 022 929 88 88 Fax: (+41) 022 798 41 22

E-mail: ica@coop.org



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ICA Pressreleases

Over 1,000 delegates from Co-operative Movements the world-over will gather in Quebec City for a Congress

Geneva, 25 July 1999, for immediate release-- At the end of August over 1,000 delegates from Co-operative Movements from all sectors of the economy and all regions of the world will gather in Quebec City at a Special Congress of their business association, the International Co-operative Alliance, held to mark the coming Millennium. This Congress, which is the first ICA Congress to be held in North America, is hosted by the Mouvement des caisses Desjardins, the Conseil Canadien de la Cooperation (CCC) and the Canadian Co-operative Association. This important event will be held on August 30, 31 and September 1, 1999.

The main theme of the Congress will be "Adding Value to Membership: the co-operative Challenge for the New Millennium" On the morning of August 31, the Congress will break into three business forums on "New Financial Services in a Global Environment", "New Challenges in the Food Sector" and "Co-operative Services in the face of Deregulation and Privatisation". Each forum will report at the plenary session the next day.

After the Congress the organisation will hold its General Assembly, a business meeting held every two years. A Board meeting, meetings of co-operatives from different sectors of the economy such as banking, agriculture, insurance as well as peripheral meetings such as a Global Forum for women, and a seminar on lobbying will also take place.

Commenting on the main theme Claude Béland, President of the Mouvement des caisses Desjardins and the ICA's Banking Committee and ICA Board member, remarked that the Millennium Congress would give the international co-operative community an opportunity to strengthen ties and to examine the great challenges which had brought them together. He stressed that at a time when the force of capitalism has a tremendous influence on the issues of humanity it was important to reflect on what the members cherished most about their organisation. He stated that the holding of the Congress in Quebec City was a momentous occasion in the evolution of the ICA. It had considerable historical significance for his own movement as it was through the sharing of the experiences of several European movements that Alphonse Desjardins was able to achieve his great social project nearly 100 years ago, a few years after the ICA was founded in 1895.

Mr. Béland stressed that Solidarity would be on the agenda, stressing that at a time when the implementation of a global economy was an inescapable reality we must not lose sight of the fact that people also want to see their local and regional economies flourish.

ICA President Roberto Rodrigues stated in the Congress invitation that it was gratifying for him as a Brazilian to welcome Congress participants to the Americas where so much dynamic co-operative growth and innovation are currently taking place.

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In 1946, the ICA was one of the first non-governmental organisations to be accorded United Nations Consultative Status. Today, it is one of the forty-one organisations holding Category 1 Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

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15, route des Morillons, 1218 Grand-Saconnex, Geneva, Switzerland

Tel: (+41) 022 929 88 88 Fax: (+41) 022 798 41 22

E-mail: ica@coop.org



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ICA Press Releases

ICA President recognises International Women's day

Geneva, Switzerland, 8 March 1999, for immediate release -- Roberto Rodrigues, President of the International Co-operative Alliance, says that the world-wide co-operative movement strongly supports the increased participation of women at all levels of decision-making within co-operatives.

Speaking on the occasion of the United Nation's International Day of Women, Mr. Rodrigues said that co-operatives, as people's organisations, have a special responsibility to involve women in their structures. While much has been accomplished, he says, much more remains to be done.

"Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making would provide the balance that is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning," says the ICA President.

In 1995 the ICA's General Assembly adopted a resolution on "Gender Equality in Co-operatives." Since that time ICA has been asking its members to provide gender disaggregate data for membership and employees. It has initiated special education and training programmes for women through its Regional Offices, and has developed regional gender policies for the Americas and for Europe. The ICA has also adopted policies to ensure that at least one woman from every region is represented on the global ICA Board.

"In the final analysis," says Mr. Rodrigues, "co-operatives should be leading their societies in the involvement of women, just as the Rochdale Pioneers were strong advocates of women's rights last century at the time of the founding of the co-operative movement."

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Press Release

Former ICA Director has passed away

It is with great sadness that we inform our members of the sudden death of Dr. Surren K. Saxena, former Director of the International Co-operative Alliance, who passed away on Sunday, 10 January, 1999 while visiting his family in London. Dr. Saxena was 72 at the time of his death.

Dr. Saxena, who was born in India in 1925, was Director of the ICA for 13 years between 1968 and 1981, having worked for the organisation since 1961.

Dr. Saxena started his career with the ICA as Regional Officer for South East Asia at the ICA Regional Office and Education Centre in New Delhi. He became Regional Director in 1963.

Dr. Saxena held a Masters Degree in Economics from the University of Agra in India and Masters in Social Science from the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, Holland and a Ph.D. in Philosophy and Economics in the field of Industrial Relations from Municipal University of Amsterdam. He also held an honorary degree from Sherbrooke University in Canada. He has written many books on Co-operation, one of the latest of which is the book Co-operatives and the Environment, published in 1995.

Dr. Saxena has worked as a Co-operative Development Consultant since leaving the ICA and has worked with the World Bank, The Asian Development Bank, the Canadian Development Agency and a number of Non Governmental Agencies. He has also been a Senior Advisor of the Swedish Co-operative Centre in Stockholm.

He leaves a wife, Ingali Saxena, daughters Anna-Karin and Nandini and son, Rahul.

ICA will pass on any messages of condolences to the family of Dr. Saxena, to whom our sincerest wishes go at this sad time.

MAY HE REST IN PEACE!

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15, route des Morillons, 1218 Grand-Saconnex, Geneva, Switzerland

Tel: (+41) 022 929 88 88 Fax: (+41) 022 798 41 22

E-mail: ica@coop.org

