



Weekly Digest

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Editor: Garry Cronan
Email: cronan@ica.coop

ICA
15 Route des Morillons
1218 Grand Saconnex
Geneva, Switzerland
Tel +41 22 929 8888
Fax +41 22 798 4122
Website : www.ica.coop

Editorial

Welcome to issue twenty of the Weekly Digest. Our lead item this week is on the importance of securing a firm academic base for co-operative studies. Without it, Dr MacPherson believes all co-operators are the poorer. We also highlight recent research on the wider community's attitude to co-operatives and demutualisation as well as reporting on an extensive range of other ICA activities. As usual, we would welcome your comments.

The Importance of Co-operative Studies

Dr Ian MacPherson, Director of the British Columbia Institute for Co-operative Studies in Canada recently spoke on the importance of co-operative studies. In an article for the latest Association of Co-operative Educators (ACE), newsletter he spells out the challenges facing co-operative researchers to be more relevant.

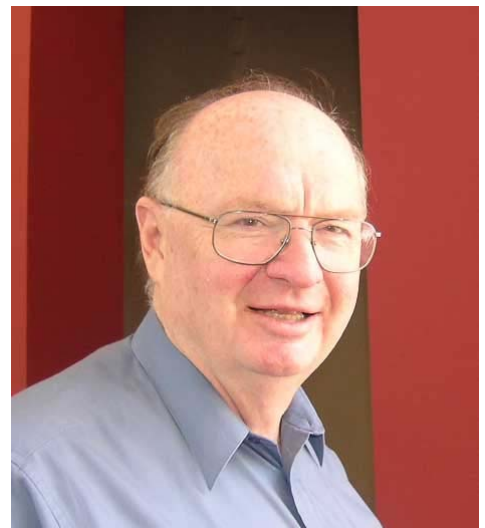
Dr MacPherson is well qualified to make such comments. He has a lifetime of involvement in the co-operative movement; among his many achievements was responsibility for drafting the 1995 ICA Co-operative Identity Statement, which included the new ICA principles.

In the ACE article, he points to the need for the field of co-operative studies to secure a firm base in the academic community. To deepen its understanding of the intellectual and academic disciplines informing its development while at the same time becoming more relevant to co-operators in the every day running of their businesses. These are not easy tasks, but they are becoming urgent if the discipline is to grow and help the wider co-operative movement survive and prosper.

The recent co-operative research conference held at Professor McPherson's own centre marked for the first time in his view a serious beginning to the effort to think more systematically and rigorously about what needs to be done to answer the question - why Co-operative Studies matters?

Dr MacPherson, notes that "while in one form Co-operative Studies has all the attributes of an academic discipline, its own questions, adaptations of evolving methodologies, and blending of bodies of knowledge – it also must be a resource for current practice. It must, therefore, be constantly evolving, continuously broadening and relentlessly deepening. Only then will it be welcomed in the academy, a force for public disclosure and a useful tool for empowering people"

See <http://www.wisc.edu/uwcc/ace/ace.html> for copies of the article.



One in Two Australians Believe Demutualisation is a Mistake!



The ICA's Australian member, the Australian Centre for Co-operative Research and Development (ACCORD), has recently released some interesting research on the question of membership and demutualisation. The ACCORD research was part of a broader social attitudes survey of 5000 Australians conducted by the Australian National University.

Over the last 10–15 years, Australia has witnessed extensive demutualisation of its mutual insurance, building society and agricultural marketing sectors. ACCORD's Senior Research Fellow Andrew Passey, (see photo) says that in spite of this 25% of Australians believe that mutuals and co-operatives are still the best form of organisation to deliver insurance. Almost half, (49%) say demutualisation has been a mistake! This is after most Australians have had the short-term benefit of cash for their co-operative or mutual shares. Only 19% regard co-operatives as old fashioned, something the proponents of demutualisation keep constantly stressing. These results suggest there is still strong support for co-operatives even in the face of concerted campaigns to remove them from the marketplace. For more information see http://www.accord.org.au/news/media/social_survey.html

ICA Monitors Foods Standards

International food standards have a direct impact on consumer and producer co-operatives. It is for this reason that representatives of the Japanese Consumer Co-operative Union (JCCU) on behalf of Consumer Co-operative International (CCI) regularly represent the ICA at meetings of the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission. CCI is one of the ICA's nine sectoral organisations.

Kazuo Onitake of JCCU's, Safety Policy Service was recently in Geneva attending the annual meeting of the Commission. He met with the ICA's Maria Elena Chavez Hertig and Gabriella Sozanski, Secretary of CCI to discuss how to increase awareness of the importance of work of Codex commissions. Increasingly, the discussions in Codex impact decisions of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Codex decisions can also have direct commercial impacts on consumer and producer co-operatives as well as affecting broader health issues.



Mr. Onitake regularly reports from a scientific perspective on Codex's work to the CCI Laboratories Working Group. However, Codex's policy deliberations regarding biotechnology and organic agriculture could also interest other groups within the ICA. It was agreed that a meeting bringing together ICAO, CCI and IHCO would be considered with the view to increasing co-operative input into the work of Codex.

Poverty, food security, co-operatives: ICA – IUCN Collaboration

ICA will make a presentation to the World Conservation Forum on poverty, food security and co-operatives in November 2004. In a meeting held in Geneva on 29 June, Jan-Eirik Imbsen, Director of Development and Deputy Director-General, Maria Elena Chavez Hertig met with Peter Larson of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) to discuss ways of raising awareness on the important role of co-operatives in fighting poverty and promoting food security while still respecting the environment.



The contacts with IUCN were facilitated by Huseyin Polat of the Co-op Branch of the International Labour Office (ILO) in the scope of the ICA-ILO Memorandum of Understanding. ICA and ILO will make a joint presentation in one of the workshops at the World Conservation Forum, to be held in Bangkok, Thailand 17-25 November 2004, in conjunction with the 3rd IUCN World Conservation Congress. Both ICA and ILO will hope to encourage support from the IUCN for

the Global Co-operative Campaign against Poverty and link the Campaign to IUCN on-going conservation programmes. See www.iucn.org for more information on IUCN.

Training Seminar for Asian Co-operative Women Leaders held in Iran



ICA's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific is concerned about under representation of women in leadership positions in co-operatives.

Its regional Women's Committee for Asia and the Pacific took the initiative to identify what training was required to enable women to take up leadership roles. The Committee, along with ICA-ROAP and ILO COOPNET developed a Training of Trainers (TOT) Manual to assist leadership development of women co-operators. This initiative is one example of how the ICA is implementing its gender strategy.

A series of ICA training conferences, were also commenced. The fourth in the series, *Leadership Development of Women in Co-operatives* was recently held in Esfahan, Iran from 7-12 June 2004.

The Central Union of Rural and Agricultural Co-operatives of Iran (CURACI) generously hosted the programme. CURACI also translated the manual into local languages to assist attendees. The seminar participants were instructors from co-operative training institutions, managers of co-operatives and co-operative education instructors. Eighteen of the twenty-five attendees were women. For more information about the seminar contact Mrs. Savitri Singh, who help organised the seminar, at savitrisingh@icaroap.coop The photo above shows, ICA ROAP staff, seminar participants and representatives of the host Iranian organisations.

Co-operative Youth Seminar for Senior Secondary Students in India

Senior secondary schools in India recently joined in the golden jubilee celebrations of the Natesan Institute of Co-operative Management. The Institute, located in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, marked fifty years of co-operative education and training by organising a Co-operative Youth Seminar attended by 117 local school students.

Dr. S. Vadivelu, Principal of the Institute and Mr P Nair, Communication Officer, ICA ROAP were among the speakers at the youth seminar. The ICA has called on its members to give priority to increasing the involvement of youth in co-operatives.



Wide Representation on New ICA Communications Committee

Regular readers of the Weekly Digest will be aware of the increased commitment the ICA is making to communications with its members. To help in this process nominations were recently called for the ICA's global Communications Committee (ICACC). A total of 20 people expressed interest in being part of the committee. It includes representatives from Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, France, Ghana, India, Iran, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Korea, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, UK, USA and Vietnam. The first meeting of the new committee will take place in September in Warsaw coinciding with the ICA Europe's Regional Assembly. A communications seminar will also be held at the same time. For more information, please contact Garry Cronan, Secretary of ICACC at cronan@ica.coop.

Co-op Day Messages and Celebrations

The theme for this year's International Co-operative Day - *A Fair Globalisation: Creating Opportunities for All*, which was celebrated on Saturday 3 July, provoked a lot of interest. It was translated into at least ten languages and widely distributed throughout the ICA network. In addition, ICA partners, including DotCoop, FAO, ILO and the United Nations all issued messages for the Day. Copies are available at our website www.ica.coop/ica/ica/coopday/

The day was also the focus of a wide variety of celebrations and activities in many countries, including a major international conference on Co-operative Culture and Development in Genoa, Italy, see photo above. A full report of this very interesting conference will appear in next week's digest.

In addition, a forthcoming issue will be reporting on how other ICA members throughout the world celebrated International Co-operative Day. If you would like to have your celebrations included please forward information, photos etc to the editor Garry Cronan at cronan@ica.coop



ICMIF and ICA Meet to Discuss Action Plan for Joint Initiatives



The International Co-operative and Mutual Insurance Federation (ICMIF) recently held a meeting of its *Allnations* Steering Group in Geneva.

Allnations is ICMIF's development arm, providing technical assistance and financial support for these

development ICMIF activities. ICMIF is one of the strongest of the ICA's nine global sectoral organisations.

While in Geneva members of the Steering Committee of *Allnations* along with ICMIF representatives, including its CEO, Hans Dahlberg took the opportunity to meet with ICA officials, see photo above. The key item of discussion was possible joint development projects. An Action Plan is being discussed which is expected to lead greater collaboration in the future. The ICMIF are also interested in working with other ICA sectoral organisations, including health and possibly housing on these common projects.

Valued Co-operative Specialists Retire from FAO

John Rouse and Maximiliano Cox both retired from the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) at the end of June. Messrs. Rouse and Cox, both long-time co-operative specialists, have helped kept co-operatives on the FAO agenda. ICA has worked closely with both and wishes them all the best in the future. The photo opposite shows Max Cox, front right and John Rouse, second left back row with ICA officials during a recent visit to Rome.



Copies of the Weekly Digest are archived on the ICA's website www.ica.coop