

# Table of Contents

\*\*\*\*\*  
ICA News, ISSUES NUMBER 1 & 2, 1995  
Editor: Mary Treacy  
\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*  
TABLE OF CONTENTS  
\*\*\*\*\*

\*Co-operative Message at the Social Summit

\*News from the Regions

\*World Overview

\*Co-ops Lead Help Mission for Quake Victims

UN General Assembly Calls for the Annual Celebration of the International Day of Co-operatives

\*ICA Specialised Bodies

\*Co-op People

\*ICA Calendar

# Co-operative Message at the Social Summit

\*\*\*\*\*

## Co-operative Message at the Social Summit

\*\*\*\*\*

Among the thousands of participants at the United Nations Social Summit in Copenhagen from 6-12 March were representatives of the ICA and the other members of COPAC (the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Co-operatives).

The ICA's delegates-Board members Hasle Nielsen and Yehudah Paz, and Staff members Bruce Thordarson and MariaElena Chavez-emphasised the important contribution which co-operatives make, in serving their members, with regard to the three Summit themes of poverty alleviation, employment creation, and social integration.

In collaboration with the UN Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, the International Federation of Agricultural Producers, the JCCU Medical Co-op Committee, and the World Council of Credit Unions, ICA prepared eight pamphlets on key Summit issues for distribution to the participants.

On 7 March a special seminar was organised for official Summit participants on the theme of co-operatives, farmers' associations, and sustainable development. Mr. Nitin Desai, UN Under-Secretary-General responsible for the Social Summit, opened the meeting with a strong message of support for co-operatives.

The Social Summit's Programme of Action includes five specific proposals on the role of co-operatives, and four proposals on their participation in the implementation and follow-up of the Summit.

They were added during the various preparatory meetings prior to the Summit as a result of strong co-operative lobbying, which was assisted by the UN Secretary-General's 1994 report to the General Assembly, in which he declared that "co-operative enterprises provide the organisational means whereby a significant proportion of humanity is able to take into its own hands the tasks of creating productive employment, overcoming poverty, and achieving social integration".

A four-page co-operative insert was published in the Summit's official daily publication, Terra Viva, which was distributed to all Summit and NGO participants.

This insert was included as a special insert in the printed copy of this issue of ICA News (pages 9 - 12). Please note that the article The Pavement Dwellers on page 11 is by Eric Eggertson, Editor of the Credit Union Way Magazine and not Jenni Thomson as wrongly accredited in the supplement.

The Federation of Danish Co-operatives contributed to spreading the co-operative message by publishing three special brochures and organising study visits for the Summit participants, and by setting up an information booth at the parallel NGO Forum.

\*\*\*\*\*

## News from the Regions

\*\*\*\*\*

News from the Regions

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*AFRICA\*\*\*

Women, Co-operative Development and Africa

As part of the ICA's campaign to have the Fourth UN Conference on Women recognise the contribution of co-operatives to the advancement of women, Ms. Sendra Ratisimandresy Toure, HRD/ Gender Officer at the ICA Regional Office for West Africa attended the Fifth African Regional Conference on Women in Dakar, Senegal.

Convened by the UN Economic Commission for Africa, the Conference reviewed the situation of African women today. National reports were presented by government representatives supplemented by reports from NGOs. The ICA presented a document reviewing the contribution of co-operatives to the advancement of African women which cited specific areas in which co-operatives had been successful in improving women's economic and social status. Ms. Toure was also able to present a brief statement reiterating the fact that co-operatives could provide opportunities for African women which in turn could contribute to improving their conditions of life.

Although the final document of the conference is not yet available (The Platform for Action for the Advancement of Women in Africa), the resolution adopted by the conference does recognise the potential role of co-operatives in maximising women's human, financial and technical resources.

Please contact the ICA Secretariat for a copy of ICA's report to the Fifth African Regional Conference on Women.

\*\*\*ASIA & THE PACIFIC\*\*\*

Asia-Pacific Regional Assembly

The last of the four Regional Assemblies under the new ICA structure was held in New Delhi on January 5-6, 1995, with 112 representatives and observers in attendance.

The major themes of the meeting were the ICA's current review of the Co-operative Principles, the three-year development programme of the Regional Office, and a paper prepared in Australia on the reasons for the tendency of co-operatives to transform themselves into joint stock companies.

The Regional Assembly approved its new operating Rules, as well as those of the Executive Council which will meet more frequently. Mr. B.S. Vishwanathan of India was elected as Chairman of the Regional Assembly for the next two years, and Professor Ungku Aziz of Malaysia was elected Vice-Chairman.

The outgoing Chairman, Yang Deshou of China, reported that the All-China Federation of Supply and Marketing Co-operatives was now fully independent of the Ministry of Agriculture, and that the first Chinese Co-operative Congress would be held in May or June of this year to finalise the restructuring of the co-operative movement, which would now become more active on the international scene.

During the meeting Mr. M. Horiuchi of Japan announced his intention to

retire as ICA Vice-President at the time of the Manchester Congress. The Regional Assembly nominated Mr. H. Toyoda, President of JA Zenchu of Japan, to succeed him for the remaining two years of his term.

The 1996 Regional Assembly will be held in Malaysia.

\*\*\*THE AMERICAS\*\*\*

Business with Co-ops in Latin America

The International Co-operative Alliance, Regional Office for Central America and the Caribbean has launched an innovative new project relevant to businesses, investors and co-operatives interested in expanding operations in the Latin American Region, entitled 'Doing Business with Co-operatives in Latin America'. The project aims to draw attention to and promote business opportunities within enterprises that, until now, have received relatively little attention in the mainstream media and conventional sources of business information.

The project will offer practical information and help in forging contacts between regional co-operatives and their counterparts from around the world.

The project has been funded by the Swedish Co-operative Centre and the Societe de Developpement International Desjardins (DID) of Canada.

The project will publish executive-style business guides for several important countries of the region, including summarised information that investors and businesses will find invaluable in understanding these countries, their economic indicators, legal and political background, tax policies, key sector profiles, banking and finance information, labour policies, etc. and of course opportunities provided by the co-operative sector in each of these countries, besides highlighting advantages of such tax exemptions, free trade agreements, distribution channels, etc.

\*\*\*EUROPE\*\*\*

Co-operators Named to ECOSOC in Brussels

The Swedish Government has included two well-known co-operative figures among its 12 nominees to the European Union's Economic and Social Committee, which provides advice to the Commission and the Council of Ministers.

The new Committee members are Turid Strom, previously with the Swedish Consumer Co-operative Union (KF) and now representing Sweden's national consumer organisation, and Jan Olsson, the Brussels-based representative of the Swedish Co-operative Institute (Koopi). Following the entry of Sweden, Finland and Austria to the EU, there are now 220 members of ECOSOC. (Svenska Dagbladet, 22 January 1995)

\*\*\*\*\*

# World Overview

\*\*\*\*\*

## WORLD OVERVIEW

\*\*\*\*\*

### \*\*\*Austria\*\*\*

#### Konsum-Migros Partnership under Review

According to press reports, the Swiss consumer co-operative Migros is studying the possibility of increasing its 25 percent ownership of the Konsum consumer co-operative network in Austria. According to Migros officials, the "reconstruction" of Konsum will require three to five years. The 1994 losses of Konsum are reported to be 160 million Swiss francs, and the chain is under pressure from its bankers to sell some of its assets. (Hebdo, January 1995; Journal de Geneve, January 1995)

STOP PRESS: According to latest information received Migros has withdrawn its offer to buy shares in Konsom.

### \*\*\*Canada\*\*\*

The Conseil Canadien de la Cooperation (CCC) agreed at its Annual General Meeting to invite the International Co-operative Alliance to meet in Canada in the year 2000 to mark the 100th anniversary of the Desjardins movement.

### \*\*\*Cyprus\*\*\*

#### Co-op Blood

Last year the Pancyprian Co-operative Federation of Nicosia, Cyprus, celebrated the 72nd International Co-operative Day by organising a blood donation activity, inviting all co-operative members and colleagues to participate.

The event was held at the Blood Banks of General Hospitals in Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca and Paphos, where more than 150 co-operative members including Manolis Christofides, the Minister of Health and Erotokritos Chlorakiotis, the Registrar for Co-operative Societies and Co-operative Development, participated. The event was covered by the local media. The committee of the Pancyprian Confederation has decided to repeat the blood donation activity every year to celebrate International Co-operative Day, which is an initiative which other movements may like to emulate. (Source:Pancyprian Co-operative Federation of Nicosia, Cyprus)

### \*\*\*Egypt\*\*\*

#### Help Sought by Egyptian Movement

In response to the massive flooding in upper rural Egypt, CACU. is appealing through ICA for aid in cash or kind and contributions. As a result of the severe flooding, farmers lost US\$ 1.7 billion, 50,000 acres of arable land were destroyed, and 13,500 farmer's houses were demolished. A fund-raising campaign has been suggested in order to respond to these tremendous losses. Donations should be sent to M. Idris, President of CACU, Fax: 303 360 8256. (Source: CACU, Egypt)

### \*\*\*Finland\*\*\*

## SOK Honours the Rochdale Pioneers

SOK held a Seminar at its headquarters on 13 December last year to honour the 150th Anniversary of the Rochdale Pioneers. Esko Aho, Prime Minister of Finland expressed greetings from the Finnish government. He spoke of Finland's need to incorporate the morals and spirit of the Rochdale pioneers especially in light of Finland's present economic situation. He referred to the Rochdale Pioneer's main operating principles printed on each side of the front door of the Rochdale store stating its Objectives as the improvement of the social and economic situation of members through cash trading only. The Pioneers wanted to urge people to help themselves through mutual aid, he said, an essential condition of this was to get rid of the disastrous debt trading.

This was a message for those who were worried about the future of their welfare state. A welfare state must continue to work for social equality, he stressed, but through the principles of self help and entrepreneurship. Ivano Barberini from ANCC (National Cooperative Association of Consumers), Italy, was also represented at the Seminar.  
(Source: SOK, Finland, January 1995)

\*\*\*Gaza\*\*\*

### Housing Loans to Be Offered

The Co-operative Housing Federation (CHF) has initiated a home improvement loan programme in Gaza. The programme will help address the overcrowded and substandard housing conditions existing outside of the refugee camps in the formerly occupied territory.

The physical, social, and economic infrastructure in Gaza is currently deteriorated, and the institutional capacity to meet the demand for new and upgraded housing units is sorely lacking. Previous political and financial constraints resulted in limitations on improving homes in Gaza. Now, with political barriers removed, the region is poised to develop a thriving home improvement and new home construction industry in open financial and real estate markets.

The US Agency for International Development is investing five million dollars over a two-year period for a home improvement loan program designed by CHF. Under the program, eligible low-income families will obtain loans to upgrade or expand their living quarters. CHF will implement the programme in collaboration with the Bank of Palestine and the Palestinian Housing Council.

It is hoped that the pioneering home improvement loan program will pave the way for future investments in Gaza's housing sector and in the human resources required to administer lending programs such as this one. It is designed with an option to continue for a third and fourth year and to expand to meet the needs of residents of the West Bank as well.  
(Source: Alicia J. George, Co-operative Housing Foundation)

\*\*\*Iceland\*\*\*

### Samband's Settlement Receives Approval

On September 6th of last year, the District Court of Reykjavik gave its final approval to Samband's negotiated settlement with its creditors. For the last five to six years, Samband has been engaged in a massive sale of assets, in order to pay debts.

At the time of settlement, just over 97% of the debts had been paid, based on the historical high of 13.7 billion IKK in Dec. 1988. "It is a matter of great relief that Samband will not go into liquidation. We shall have full control over all our records, some of which are of great historical value. And there is no reason why Samband should not continue to be the national federation of

Icelandic co-operatives as it has been for over 90 years. Samband will not be engaged in any trading or business activities as these have been transferred to a number of joint stock companies," according to Sigurdur Markusson, Chairman of Samband of Iceland. (Source: Sambank Islenskra Samvinnufelaga)

\*\*\*Italy\*\*\*

The President of the Italian Lega Nazionale delle Cooperative e Mutue and member of the ICA Board, Mr. Giancarlo Pasquini, has informed the Alliance about attacks suffered by the Italian co-operative movement under the Berlusconi government during 1994.

The former Italian government wanted to impose general taxation laws on the co-operatives, in some cases retroactively including taxes on the indivisible undistributed reserves and the capital from the loans which the members make to their societies. The government refuses to take into account the particular characteristics and nature of co-operative enterprises and the constraints imposed on their investments and capital formation. The LEGA hopes to improve their relationship with the technocrats headed by Dini. (Source: Lega Cooperazione)

\*\*\*Japan\*\*\*

Credit Unions Rescued by Bank of Japan

The Bank of Japan, Sumitomo Bank, and the National Federation of Credit Co-operatives have set up a special bank to rescue two Tokyo-based credit unions which experienced severe difficulties due to non-performing loans. The three partners will capitalise the new bank, which is expected to be joined by other private banks in the future. (Japan Times, 14 January 1995)

First "Rochdale Club" Opened in Osaka

Osaka-Izumi Consumer Co-operative society established the first Rochdale Club in 1987. The club is located in one of the buildings of the co-operative society. There are rooms open to members for their cultural and social activities. Apart from using these facilities for such events as concerts, seminars etc., members may also rent the space for parties.

Mr. Nishi, Vice-President of Osaka-Izumi Co-operative, invites worldwide co-operatives to start their own Rochdale Clubs. He introduced the idea at the ICA Regional Assembly for Europe in October 1994, as part of a campaign for an international network of Rochdale Clubs, an idea released 150 years after the Rochdale Pioneers started their activities.

The Co-operative Societies in Prague have already decided to start their own Rochdale Club and other ICA members have expressed an interest. For more information please contact Mr. Nishi, Osaka-Izumi, fax no. (81-722) 325074.

(Source: Mats Ahnlund, Co-op Network, March 1995)

\*\*\*North Korea\*\*\*

State Control over Co-operatives

In a letter addressed to the National Conference of Agriculture in February, 1994, Mr. Kim Il Sung, the new leader of North Korea, announced the objective of transforming the property owned by agricultural co-operatives into collectively-owned people's property. Co-operative farms are to be transformed into state farms, based on the district level and amalgamated where necessary in order to increase their efficiency. This transformation will be carried out progressively, according to the letter, in view of its historic role in providing a 'definitive' solution to the rural question.

### \*\*\*Russia\*\*\*

#### Credit union movement in Russia

Within the past two years, 23 credit unions have been registered in Russia, serving more than 15,000 members. One of the first steps toward starting a credit union movement was the creation of the Russian Committee for Credit Union Development (RCCUD) in early 1992.

During January 1994, this group of Russians met with WOCCU officials to review RCCUD's 1993 accomplishments and the 1994 work plan, and subsequently made several decisions, termed the Chelyabinsk Initiatives. Among these initiatives were to create five to seven regional training centres and to apply for associate membership within the World Council. Another crucial objective for RCCUD is to get credit union legislation passed in Moscow.

Although two regions had already legally approved credit union operations, the new Russian government wants that all laws must be passed in Moscow and not through a provincial government. World Council's members in Australia, Ireland and the US, including insurance companies of the latter two countries, have provided assistance to the Russian movement.

### \*\*\*Slovakia\*\*\*

#### 150 Years of Co-operation

The Slovakian co-operative movement celebrated its 150th anniversary on 8 February 1995 with a seminar in the village of Sobotiste, where one of the European continent's first agricultural credit co-operatives was established less than two months after the founding of the Rochdale pioneers' consumer co-operative in England.

The Co-operative Union of Slovakia and the Union of Consumer Co-operatives, in collaboration with EUROCOOP, also organised a seminar on the role of co-operatives as consumer organisations, which was attended by Members of Parliament from the European Union, Britain, and Slovakia, as well as co-operative leaders from Eastern and Central European countries.

The various activities generated considerable national media exposure for the Slovakian co-operatives, which have now completed their transformation process and are maintaining a significant economic presence in the consumer, industrial, agricultural, and housing sectors.

### \*\*\*South Africa\*\*\*

#### Southern Africa Comes Defines Strategy

Grassroots credit union development has become important in Africa within the last two years. To ensure they are on the right track, some 30 credit union leaders from nine southern African countries met in Swaziland last November. During a seminar sponsored by the Canadian Co-operative Association, participants learned more about Plan Africa 2000, the programme designed to strengthen local credit unions, and discussed a planning process for each country that was present. According to World Council Africa Regional manager, Rowland Thurlow, "The World Council's role at the workshop was to help determine and measure the awareness, acceptance and impact of Plan Africa 2000."

The World Council, along with International Co-operative Alliance and Co-operation for Development, served as observers. Participants agreed to put into effect Plan Africa 2000's three major objectives of safety and soundness, institutional strengthening, and product and services development at the local and national levels. They also supported setting dividend and interest rates at market levels. During the next few months, participating countries will begin implementing their country-specific

action plans with monitoring and support from ACCOSCA, the African Confederation.  
(Source: WOCCU)

\*\*\*Spain\*\*\*

#### Mondragon Targets Central-European Market

The Mondragon Group's division for electronic and household appliances, in collaboration with seven of its industrial co-operatives, has established a company, based in the Czech Republic, to serve as a base for its commercial activities in Central and Eastern Europe. The Mondragon Co-operative Corporation, which currently realises 65 percent of its sales from exports, also has offices in the United States, Germany, France, Italy, U.K., and Hong Kong.

\*\*\*Sweden\*\*\*

#### European Youth Parliament for Environment

The Natural Step Foundation is organising a European Youth Parliament for the Environment with the support of the Committee for the Environment in the European Parliament.

The Foundation, which has several Swedish Co-operative Federations as founding members, wishes to collaborate with co-operative organisations and other companies who can include this activity in their own environmental strategies in their respective countries.

The Natural Step Foundation in Sweden is an environmental organisation which has met with outstanding success. It was started six years ago by leading cancer specialist, Prof. Karl-Henrik Robert, who enlisted the assistance of a large group of scientists from different disciplines. The network of scientists has assisted in the production of educational material for a nation-wide campaign, produced several consensus documents on various subjects, and produced an encyclopaedia on environment, which is a supplement issue to the Swedish encyclopaedia, which is under production.  
(Source: The Natural Step)

\*\*\*United Kingdom\*\*\*

#### A Brighter Future Dawns for Stanford Hall

The British Co-operative Union has appointed a new Board of Management to direct the activities of the Co-operative College at Stanford Hall in the English Midlands, following a major independent review of education provision for co-operators.

Staff at the College have been reassured by the new Board that necessary action is being taken to deal with recent financial problems, and implementation of an earlier decision to put the Stanford Hall buildings and estate on the market and possibly relocate the College has been deferred.

"The future of Co-operative Education and the role of the Co-operative College was never in doubt," commented Lloyd Wilkinson, Chief Executive and General Secretary of the Co-operative Union. "Now a business plan is being developed to secure new markets, and the recent award of Government contracts for the use of Stanford Hall should assist the recovery process."

Courses for overseas students will continue to be provided at Stanford Hall and plans are being drawn up for an expansion programme directed towards the improvement of training programmes and facilities. Stanford Hall is a converted country mansion situated in beautiful parkland, and it was acquired for the Co-operative Movement in 1944 as part of the centenary celebrations of the Rochdale Pioneers.

Meanwhile, Dr. Robert Houlton, Chief Education Officer and College Principal, has taken early retirement and his deputy, Mr. Robert Wildgust,

has taken on his responsibilities in an acting capacity.  
(Source: Co-op Union, March 1995)

#### Take Over by CRS

The Co-operative Retail Society (CRS) has taken over 101 Lo-Cost stores, in a move to arrest the continuing decline of the Co-operative Movement. Harry Moore, Chief executive of CRS said the take over is "a clear message to our competitors that the Co-operative Movement is not going to contemplate continuing decline". Lo-Cost is the biggest ever acquisition by the Co-operative Movement. It will increase the Co-operative Movement's food turnover by 5.7 per cent, thus preventing the co-op market share falling below the 4 per cent landmark. This will also allow CRS to capture trade from competitors by being better retailers. In view of the merger of CRS and CWS, the Lo-Cost stores could act as better retail outlets.  
(Co-operatives News, Nov.29,94 PBS transmission)

\*\*\*USA\*\*\*

#### The Spirit of Co-operation

The Spirit of Co-operation, the story of co-operatives in America, was transmitted for a second time to PBS stations on Sunday, 25th December, according to a Press Release issued by the National Co-operative Business Association in Washington D.C.

The hour-long documentary tells how co-operatives have helped America and how they will continue to meet the country's needs into the 21st century. The Spirit of Co-operation blends history, economics, co-operative examples and interviews with members of co-operatives to demonstrate how co-operatives work. The show's distributor, the Southern Educational Communications Association, has been impressed with the number of stations that have taken the show already.

A video by the same name, The Spirit of Co-operation, is also available now. The video is available in VHS format for \$39.95 each or \$29.95 each for quantity orders of 100 copies or more. Send orders to Jill Stevenson, Co-operative Development Foundation - video, 1401 New York Avenue, N.W., Suite 1100, Washington, D.C. 2005., USA.

#### Co-operative Expansion

Ithaca, N.Y. - Co-operatives are a silent giant in the Northeast economy, spreading into areas as diverse as aquaculture and high-tech manufacturing, according to a new Cornell University study. Co-operatives- organisations owned and operated for the benefit of their members- range from local farmers markets to multibillion-dollar groups of supermarkets that pool resources for purchasing goods and services. New ones have formed to produce and market speciality vegetables, venison, lamb, rabbits and farm-raised trout.

At least 9,955 co-operative enterprises throughout the region serve 9.9 million members and account for \$37 billion in business activity, said Brian Henahan, a Cornell Co-operative Extension associate, and Andrew Ferguson, a co-op development specialist.  
(Cornell University Gopher, January 1995)

#### NCB Releases Top 100 Co-operatives

The National Co-operative Bank (NCB) has released the NCB Index of the Top 100 Co-operatives of America. These 100 co-ops have contributed \$87.2 billion to the economy last year and employed more than 750,000 Americans. The report was created by the NCB in 1993. The Index provides a listing of revenues for the past two years for co-operatives with revenues over \$200 million, as well as employment figures for the companies. The report was designed to bring attention to the co-operative sector and create awareness of the contribution co-operatives make to the U.S. economy, according to NCB President and Chief Executive Officer Charles E. Snyder.

Co-operatives in the U.S. generate more than \$ 100 billion in economic activity each year and serve over 100 million Americans - 40 per cent of the population. "Co-operatives are not alternative companies, but mainstream business structures formed to create economies of scale for the small businesses and consumers they represent," said Mr.Snyder. (Co-operative Business Journal, Vol.8, No.9, Nov.,94)

#### NCBA Establishes Grant Programme

In recognition of the Co-operative Month, Russ Notar, President and CEO of the National Co- operative Business Association (NCBA), today announced a new matching grant programme which will provide funding for co-operative economic development projects throughout the United States. This new NCBA programme is designed to be a catalyst for local co-operative development projects, using the NCBA fund and local co-operative development funds. By participating in the United Co-operative Appeal Programme, and designating the NCBA Fund, co-operatives become eligible for the matching grant programmes. The grants can be used to expand existing co-operatives or help organise new co-operative activities.

[ICIC Home](#) •

[ICA](#) | [UWCC](#)

---

# Co-ops Lead Help Mission for Quake Victims

\*\*\*\*\*KOBE-JAPAN\*\*\*\*\*

Co-ops lead help mission for quake victims

by Suvendrini Kakuchi  
IPS Tokyo

The impressive, multi-storey building of Co-op Kobe, said to be the largest co-operative building in the world, was reduced to rubble in the massive earthquake that struck western Japan in January. But co-operative members hardly blinked at the sight of their levelled office before many were clawing through the wreckage of other buildings to help victims of the 'quake - which registered 7.2 on the open-ended Richter scale. More than 5,000 people died in the disaster and at least another 11,000 were injured. More than a month after the tragedy, hundreds of thousands remain homeless in Kobe, the worst affected area.

The Japanese Government is still smarting from criticism that it failed to respond quickly to the emergency situation there. But Maseo Ohya, Executive Director of the Japan Consumers Co-operative Union (JCCU), says the people of Kobe found solace in co-operatives and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that rushed to their aid. "Members of Co-op Kobe were among the first people to start rescue operations and help get food to people when the quake struck," he says. Ohya also pointed to the success of emergency open-air markets that began selling goods just a day after the earthquake reduced much of the Japanese western port city into rubble. "Unlike the volunteer groups giving help for free in the area, the market sold goods cheap," he says. "We focus on fostering self-help."

'Self-help' has been the battle cry of sorts of Japanese co-operatives that are not farm-based. Akira Kurimoto of the JCCU's international division says, "we depended on no one for assistance. We are a pure grassroots organisation." This is in contrast with agricultural co-operatives, which have been around in Japan since the 19th century and are heavily subsidised by the government.

The JCCU opened its first office in 1952. While the league now has 18 million individual members including those who belong to Co-op Kobe (a JCCU affiliate), officials say the JCCU and others like it had to fight hard before it finally began to gain acceptance and respect.

"We fought step by step," says Kurimoto, who adds that they had to fight against 1.6 million local retailers who possessed formidable political clout as staunch supporters of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) that ruled postwar Japan until 1993.

With its focus on improving the quality of family life instead of industrial growth, Japan's consumer co-operative movement has often been associated with the country's left-wing political parties. Indeed, grassroots activism has been the motto of the consumer co-operatives since the first co-op league was established in Japan in 1945. But it was not until the 1970s, when the local economy was gaining strength and the buying power of the public was growing, that the concept of consumerism began gaining ground in Japan. For the first time, the middleman was a non-profit organisation that sold goods, purchased directly from the producer, without exorbitant price tags.

The Japanese government values the producer over the consumer and

co-ops preached the opposite message," says Kei Kurimoto, a co-operative convert. Nimura represents the most common type of member at the JCCU. The 40-year-old housewife is among the women who form the base of the Japanese consumer co-operative movement.

Divided into 'han' groups, the members rely on the joint purchase system offered by the co-operatives. Food ordered the week before is delivered to the group on a specific day. The groups also organise a variety of activities in their communities. Among the most popular are study and cooking sessions and peace activism.

Advocates of co-operatives say this kind of networking came in handy in the Kobe earthquake aftermath, when it became apparent that help from the government in Tokyo would take some time to arrive. It did not take long for the medical 'hans', for instance, to get organised and help, along with other NGOs, to provide first aid to those suffering from shock and injuries.

More and more Japanese co-operatives have taken networking to another level, reaching out to their counterparts in other countries. The JCCU, for example, is among the more than 200 members of the Geneva-based International Co-operative Alliance (ICA). More than 63 percent of the total ICA membership comes from the Asia-Pacific region and the Japanese are among the most active and enthusiastic.

The JCCU itself is taking care of training and dispatching consultants in consumer co-operative development throughout the Asia-Pacific region through the ICA.

# UN calls for Celebration of International Day of Co-operatives

\*\*\*\*\*

UN General Assembly Calls for the Annual Celebration  
of the International Day of Co-operatives

\*\*\*\*\*

On 23 December 1994, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 49/155 which recognizes the significant contribution of the co-operative movement in economic and social development and calls on governments, international organizations, specialized agencies and national and international cooperation agencies to observe annually the International Day of Co-operatives starting from 1995.

The full text of the resolution follows:

The role of co-operatives in the light of new economic and social trends

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 47/90 on 16 December 1992, in particular paragraph 2 thereof, in which it proclaimed the first Saturday of July 1995 to the International Day of Co-operatives,

Welcoming the report of the Secretary-General on the status and role of co-operatives in the light of new economic and social trends, especially the important recommendations contained in section II of this report aimed at ensuring the best possible means of dealing with the issue of co-operatives, taking into account their broad significance in contributing to the solutions of major economic and social problems,

Recognizing that co-operatives in their various forms are becoming an indispensable factor of economic and social development in all countries promoting the fullest possible participation in the development process of all population groups, including women, youth, disabled persons and the elderly,

Recognizing also the important contribution and potential of all forms of co-operatives to the preparations and follow-up of the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women, : Action for Equality, Development and Peace, to be held in 1995 and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) to be held in 1996,

1. Takes notes with appreciation of the report of the Secretary-General on the status and role of co-operatives in the light of new economic and social trends;
2. Invites, Governments, relevant international organizations, specialized agencies and national and international co-operative organizations to observe annually the International Day of Co-operatives on the first Saturday of July starting from 1995, as proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/90;
3. Encourages Governments to consider fully the potential of co-operatives for contributing to the solution of economic, social and environmental problems in formulating national development strategies;

4. Also encourages Governments to consider reviewing legal and administrative constraints on the activities of co-operatives with a view to eliminating those constraints that are not applied to other businesses and enterprises;
5. Invites government agencies, in collaboration with co-operatives and other relevant organizations, to develop programmes aimed at improving statistics on the contribution of co-operatives to national economies and facilitating dissemination of information on co-operatives;
6. Invites the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women; Action for Equality, Development and Peace and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), in formulating respective strategies and action, to give due consideration to the role and contribution of co-operatives;
7. Requests the Secretary-General, within existing resources, to continue to provide support to the programmes and objectives of the international co-operative movement and to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session a report on the implementation of the present resolution.

# ICA Specialized Bodies

\*\*\*\*\*

ICA SPECIALISED BODIES

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*ICA Women's Committee\*\*\*

## The Creation of an Informal Women's Network

ICA Women's Committee has decided to establish an informal network. in Europe to "address problems of discrimination through an exchange of information, prevent feelings of isolation by giving mutual support, and influence decision making to enable the progress of women."

Due to lack of resources it was not possible to create a formal European Regional Women's Committee, however the Committee believes that an informal 'network' will prove to be a inexpensive and effective solution in the exchange of ideas for the advancement of women.

Among the suggestions for raising the status of women were the circulation of a mailing list, the publication of a newsletter, electronic communications via the Internet, and more coverage of Women's issues in ICA publications and members' magazines.

It was also suggested that a representative from each organisation could communicate information to 'networkers' in their own region to keep mailing costs down.

Some recent efforts include a Gender Issues Report in the current ICA Review, the formation of a small task force consisting of Moira Lees, Mary Treacy, and Raija Itkonen (ICA Board member) to prepare reports for the Centennial Congress 1995, and the future ICA Women's Committee seminar which promises to include subjects such as: "training and re-training in management skills relevant to a changing economic scenario, practices which discriminate against women, childcare provision and maternity leave, environmental protection, consumer rights, and laws and their effect on women's rights."

## Co-op People

\*\*\*\*\*

Co-op People

\*\*\*\*\*

Senator Bob Dole, received the National Co-operative Business Association's (NCBA) prestigious Honoured Co-operator award on Thursday, January 26, in Washington, D.C. The award is presented each January to a Member of Congress who has demonstrated support for co-operatives on Capitol Hill.

Jean-Francois Hoffelt, is taking over the General Secretariat of Febecoop from January 1st. The former General Secretary, Roger Ramaekers, will become Chairman of the Federation, assisted in this task by two Vice-Chairmen: Jacques Forest (Chairman of the Association of European Co-operative and Mutual Insurers) and William Janssens (Chairman of the European Union of Social Pharmacies).

Michael Kitchen, has been named President and Chief Executive Officer of the CUNA Mutual Group and the Century Companies of America, headquartered in Madison, Wisconsin. Kitchen is currently President of The CUMIS Group of Canada and a member of the Board of Credit Union Central of Canada

Birgitta Lindstrom, Folksam's International Secretary, will be leaving the Swedish co-operative insurance company in March to work as a consultant to Thierry Jeantet, Managing Director of EURESA, the joint venture of five European co-operative and mutual insurance companies. Folksam's Chief Executive, Hakan Tidlund, has announced that her international work at Folksam, including liaison with ICA, ICMIF, and membership on the Board of the Swedish Co-operative Centre, will be assumed by Ellis Wohlner.

Rt Hon Alfred Morris AO QSO MP, has been awarded the U.K. Co-operative Movement's highest national honour by being elected President of the Co-operative Congress. He will preside over the 1995 Co-operative Congress, the annual "parliament" of the Co-op, which will be held in Edinburgh from May 28 to 30.

Joon-Hyang Ryuh, Vice president of Korean Federation of Community Credit Co-operatives, was elected as Chairman and President of KFCC on February 28, 1995. Kyu-E Lee, Chairman and President of Korean Federation of Community Credit Cooperatives will retire from both positions on March 14, 1995.

Robby Tulus, was recently made the official representative of the Canadian Co-operative Association effective this January 16, 1995. He will continue his work from the CCA's Manila office as Senior Policy Advisor of the International Co-operative Alliance as well as the CCA, for the Asia Pacific region. All future communication and correspondence should be sent to the new CCA Representative Office at: 42 Eisenhower Street; Greenhills, San Juan 1502; Metro Manila, Philippines. Tel. / fax: 63-2-722-9305.

\*\*\*Obituaries\*\*\*

George Ganneby, first President of the International Co-operative and Associated Tourism Organisation (TICA), died on 22 February 1995, quietly in his sleep.

William Pascoe, ("Will") Watkins, the "Grand Old Man" of British Co-operation, died on January 1, 1995 at the age of 101.

Wolfgang Seibt, head of the department Participation and Projects in VdK (Federation of Consumer Co-operatives, Germany) died in on February 11 1995

following a long and serious illness.

# ICA Calendar

\*\*\*\*\*  
ICA Calendar  
\*\*\*\*\*

## Co-op Calendar

31 March 1995  
Meeting of the ICA European Council  
Strasbourg, France

5 April, 1995  
ICA-IRU Consultation Meeting  
Utrecht, Netherlands

18 - 20 April  
ICA Board Meeting  
Sao Paulo, Brazil

15 May  
Audit & Control Cttee.  
Geneva, Switzerland

1 July 1995  
International Co-operative Day  
Centennial Year

18 September, 1995  
ICA Communications Seminar  
Manchester, UK

18 September, 1995  
ICA Board Meeting  
Manchester, UK

11 - 19 September, 1995  
Meetings of the Specialised Bodies  
Manchester, UK

20 - 23 September, 1995  
31st ICA Congress  
Manchester, UK

N.B  
New telephone number for ICA Geneva is (41-22) 929-8888  
New address for Co-op Listserver is bus@relay.doit.wisc.edu