

WORKER CO-OPS

**Les coopératives de travail au Québec:
bientôt 50 ans!**

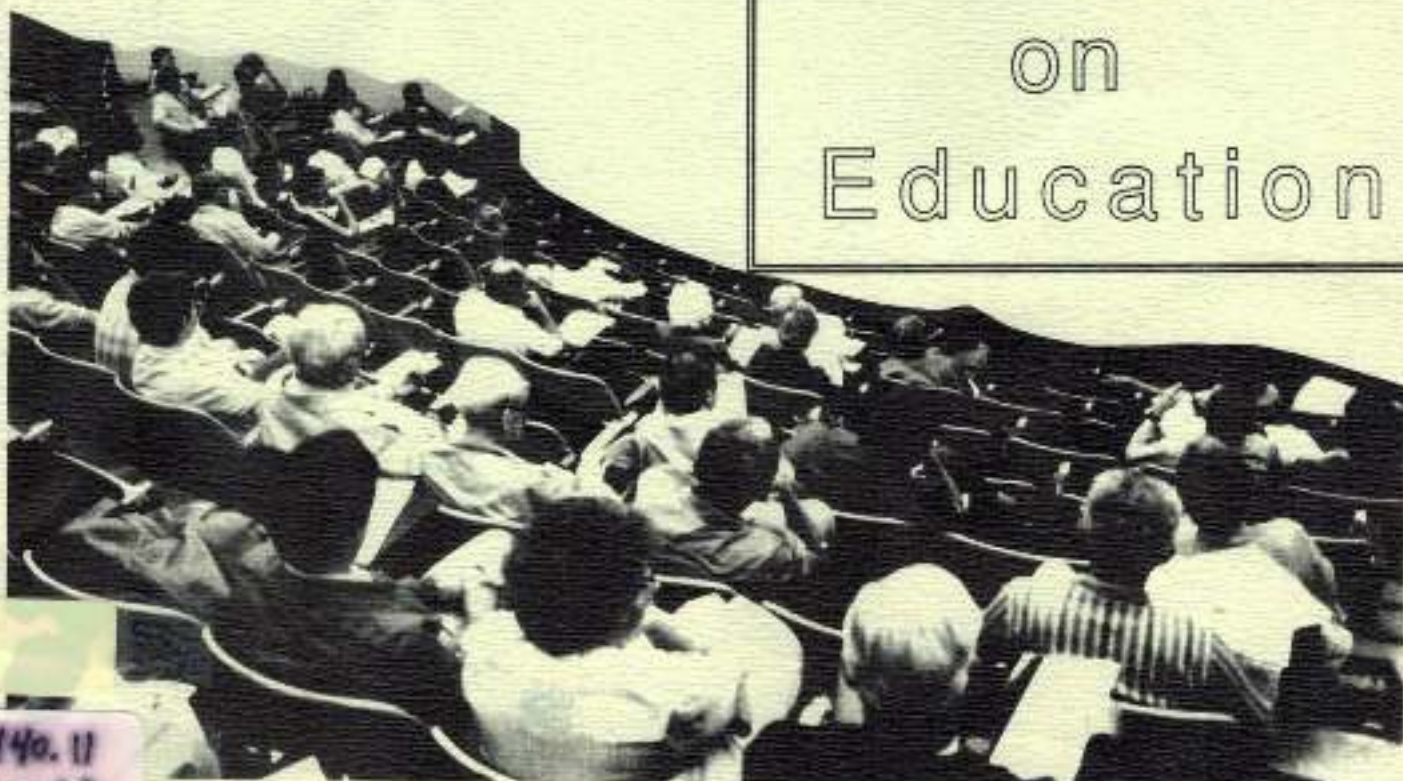
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Workers' education: important in building a social movement. See related articles in this issue on pages 17 and 19. (Photos this page courtesy of St. F.X. Extension Dept.)

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3"x 5"	\$40/\$150
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Production Manager

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Book Notes

Chris Axworthy
Treasurer



J.J. Forrestal
Rosemary Oliver
Copy Editors

Production: *The Centre for the Study of Co-operatives,
University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.*

Mailing: *Worker Ownership Development Foundation, Toronto.*

Worker Co-ops is an independent, quarterly magazine.

Indexed in the *Alternative Press Index*. ISSN 0829-576X

Send subscriptions/backorders to:
Worker Co-ops
c/o Centre for the
Study of Co-operatives
Diefenbaker Centre, U. of S.
Saskatoon, Sask. S7N 0W0

Individual subscriptions:
Canada \$15/yr; \$28/2 yrs
U.S. \$16/yr; \$30/2 yrs
Overseas \$18/yr; \$33/2 yrs
Institutions: \$18/yr; \$33/2 yrs

Bulk subs (10-49): \$12/yr
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Back issues: \$4.00 each

English language submissions to:
Worker Co-ops
253 Willow Ave.
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M4E 3K6

French language submissions to:
Worker Co-ops
Johanne Bûéard
Centre de gestion des co-operatives
École des HEC
5255 avenue Decelles
Montréal, Québec H3T 1V6

Cover:

Co-operative, trade union and other groups come together to talk and to learn at the Topshee Memorial Conference in Antigonish, N.S. (Photo courtesy of St. F.X. Extension Department).

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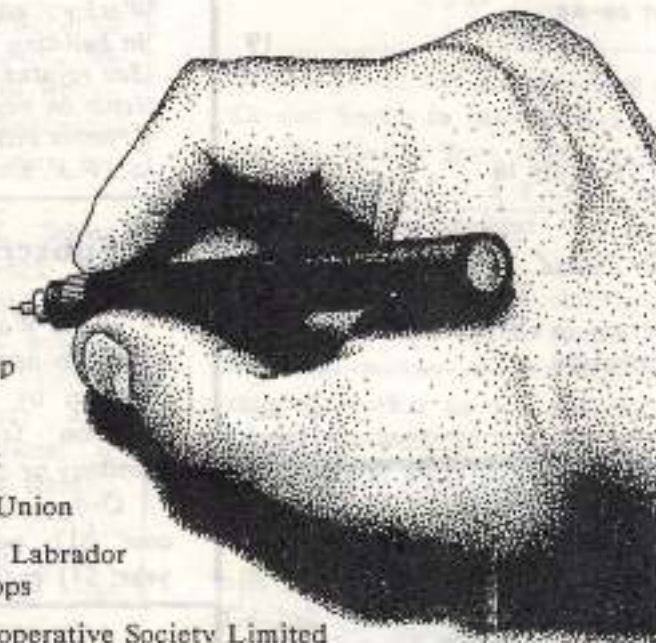
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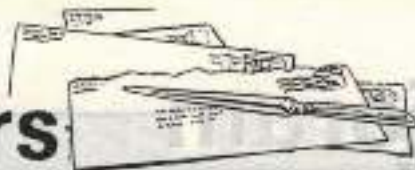
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Canadian Porcelain

As one of the 'Co-operative Work' consultants who was very much involved in the Canadian Porcelain saga, I was most interested to read Murray Gardiner's account of the events, "The Canadian Porcelain Co-operative Story" (reviewed by Ethan Phillips in *Worker Co-ops*, Spring, 1987).

The Canadian Porcelain story represented a major turning point in my life since it bridged my departure from the private sector to the co-operative sector. As the consultants engaged by the Canadian Porcelain Co-operative, Eunice Leeson and I spent two solid weeks working day and night to prepare the business plan which was instrumental in the buyout attempt. We met regularly with the Canadian Porcelain Co-op board and general membership and participated in all the key negotiations with the receiver. (During the course of this work, we often encountered Murray Gardiner, who was a concerned and involved citizen.) When the time came to submit the buyout offer, it was done in Co-op Work's legal identity since the Canadian Porcelain Co-operative was not yet incorporated. When the battle was all but lost, we participated on the picket line at the Royal Bank's Toronto headquarters. Even though we lost in the end, the experience taught us valuable lessons for the future and solidified my own commitment to the development of worker co-ops.

After this kind of involvement, I was very surprised to find Co-op Work relegated to one

sentence in Gardiner's otherwise detailed account of the Canadian Porcelain story.

Marty Donkervoort

Co-op Work
357 College Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5T 1S5; (416) 928-9568

David Carrington of Caledonia Products Co-operative Ltd. has forwarded the following memorandum regarding the eligibility of Caledonia members for unemployment insurance benefits. He would like to know whether members of other worker co-ops have encountered similar problems.

Revenue Canada ruling

In letters dated 6th May 1987 Revenue Canada informed us that six members and one ex-member were not insurable because "... she (or he) was not an employee. As you (Caledonia Products Co-operative) did not have the right to control or direct her (or him) while performing her (his) services an employer-employee relationship did not exist."

Letters to individual members had similar wording: "... your employment was not insurable because you were not an employee. Caledonia Products Co-operative Ltd. did not have the right to control and direct you while performing your services. . .there was not an employee-employer relationship."

Our information is that in a similar situation in Newfoundland, the Skilled Trades Co-op felt constrained to re-organize under the Corporations Act, Jan. 1, 1987. We understand that in

Nova Scotia the question has been raised as one needing clarification for worker co-ops.

We believe that the principle involved has wide implications for worker co-ops and other co-ops with worker-members. We are deeply concerned about the hardship for members and, in specific cases, the potential for very serious health problems.

David Carrington

Caledonia Products Co-op Ltd.
R.R. 1, Montague
P.E.I. COA IRO

Multi-stakeholder co-op

The article by Haalboom and Jordan on the Co-operators' "The Multi-Stakeholder Co-operative" (*Worker Co-ops*, Winter, 1987) was very interesting providing I was reading the business section of the *Globe and Mail*. In fact, for most people concerned with worker co-ops or who seek to make a living in a worker co-op, the re-organization of a corporate giant (by Canadian insurance standards) has little relevance.

Respect for the 'identity principle' (the genius of the co-operative approach to organization) and influence from Mondragon practice could strengthen the Co-operators Group and all other large co-operative organizations. However, it must be recognized that social responsibility is the root of the Mondragon success.

David Carrington

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Are worker co-operatives needed?

A reply to

Jack Quarter

Ian MacPherson's article, "Reflections on the uneven history of worker co-operatives in Canada" (*Worker Co-ops*, Winter, 1987) raises a fundamental issue: is there a need for worker co-operatives in this country? This issue is fundamental because social "need" is seen as the starting point of every type of co-operative development. MacPherson does not say "there is no need", but he raises the issue by pointing out that experiments in developing worker co-operatives have been undertaken since the 1860s, and unlike early experiments in producer, consumer and financial co-operatives, the worker model did not take hold.

MacPherson acknowledges the practical problems in developing worker co-operatives but suggests these are "standard problems" in co-operative development and these "do not by themselves explain the failure of so many efforts."

Here I must disagree, for I feel that there are special difficulties in developing worker co-operatives that are not shared by other co-operative models.

Financing

Most co-operative models are financed primarily through the service of members. As such, they do not require a large initial investment per member. The exceptions are housing and worker

co-operatives. In Canada, both of these models have moved forward only because there have been government programs to assist with financing. However, in the case with housing co-operatives, even though the development costs per member are high, there is no capital outlay by members. For worker co-operatives, not only do members make a capital outlay but also it is put at risk. In small businesses -- whether worker-owned or not -- the risks of failure are considerable.

Worker-owners also suffer handicaps because in the Co-operatives Act there are "limited return" restrictions on financing and because conventional financial institutions are wary about loans to businesses which are controlled by their workers.

In general, the financing of a worker co-operative is more difficult than the financing of other co-operative models.

Lifespace

In most other co-operative models, the members -- with the possible exception of a "handful" of activists -- make a very nominal time commitment. These co-operatives are controlled by senior management, and often the membership is very uninvolved.

In worker co-operatives, however, the members commit about half of their waking hours plus a substantial financial investment to the enterprise.

Moreover, the co-operative is the source of their livelihood, and earnings are often less than desirable. The decision about whether to join is a "major" one that cannot be taken as lightly, say, as the decision to join a credit union.

Businesses differ

There is much greater variety in business plans among worker co-operatives than among most other co-operative models. The business plans of worker co-operatives vary greatly according to the industrial sector. Often the knowledge required to create a proper plan is highly specialized, beyond even the scope of general business consultants.

Given that the members of worker co-operative have a major financial stake in the business, they will usually want to participate in its design (owner's prerogative). Also such participation is consistent with co-operative philosophy.

This objective is most realizable when the business is small and simple. Thus the predominant model of worker co-operative development in Canada involves small groups preparing a simple business plan and raising the capital either by themselves or with the assistance of a government-support program, as in Quebec and Manitoba.

The exceptions (not many) are buyouts of plants slated for shutdown. These are larger, more



Ian MacPherson

technically-sophisticated businesses, and as such they require professional consultants to prepare the plan and to arrange the financing. The members are owners, but unlike most owners they do not have much input either into the design of their business or into its operation.

Both of these models -- the very small startup and the buyout -- are high-risk propositions because small businesses in general operate in a highly competitive market, often without proper financing, and buyouts of failing businesses bear extra risks.

Neither of these models are likely to "meet the needs" of either workers or entrepreneurs. Most working people are reluctant to invest in a risky business, and persons with entrepreneurial skills will often want to start their own business rather than participate in co-operative ownership.

Another way

The Mondragon approach to development provides an alternative. In the Mondragon co-operatives, the business plan is created by technical experts associated with the Caja Laboral Popular (the Central Bank) on the advice of the research and development group. By traditional co-operative standards, the approach is top-down ("hierarchical"), but it has succeeded in creating successful industries. To the extent that a primary need of workers is



Mondragon: criticized for insufficient workplace democracy.

a secure, decent-paying job, this approach meets that need.

The Mondragon model has been criticized for insufficient workplace democracy. However, even if a business is planned primarily by specialized consultants, there is no reason why the plan cannot include preparation of the members for participation in a democratic workplace.

PACE, a Philadelphia-based organization that has developed the O&O supermarkets, uses a variation of the Mondragon model in which it plans prospective worker co-operatives with local communities, develops the business plan, arranges the financing, recruits members and trains them for participation in a democratic workplace.

In my view, this is the direction the Canadian movement should take. MacPherson is quite correct when he suggests that working people in Canada don't perceive worker co-operatives as meeting their needs. Even though there is a national network of worker co-operative activists, there is very little development throughout the country. But needs are created by education and other forms of socialization

and needs can be changed by social circumstances as well.

It is premature to argue that lack of interest in worker co-operatives cannot be overcome by a more sophisticated development strategy. One Canadian example of such an approach is the potato chip co-op in the Acadian part of Prince Edward Island that was planned and organized through the Evangeline Credit Union. And there is even more potential on the 'West Coast' where the Van-City Credit Union (with assets similar to Mondragon's Caja Laboral Popular) has already set aside funds for worker co-operative development. Instead of letting that money collect dust, let's put the "need" theory to the test by seeing what would happen if Van-City hired a worker co-operative development group to plan, with the support of a B.C. community, a well-designed industry. Such an experiment would provide data about the interest of working people in joining worker co-operatives.

Jack Quarter teaches community psychology and community development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. ■

Hybrid co-ops are not the answer

Bryan Tastad

Several articles in the *Worker Co-ops* magazine (Winter, 1987) promoted a "hybrid" co-operative structure.

- In "The multi-stakeholder co-operative", Teunis Haalboom and John Jordan described the efforts of The Co-operators Group Limited to include staff and service users in the ownership and control of Co-operators Data and of Co-operators Development Corporation Ltd.

- In "A worker-consumer model for food co-operatives",

Doug Holland suggested that Ontario food co-ops could increase their market-share by using the worker-consumer model.

- Christopher Axworthy generally supported the thinking in both of the above articles in "Making a case for hybrid co-ops".

These authors described the benefits of the hybrid structure but paid scant attention to the many limitations. A hybrid co-operative would be more difficult to start and would be more likely to fail than a conventional "single-interest" co-operative. These

circumstances are demoralizing and create a negative public image of co-operatives. For these reasons, the conventional single-interest co-operative should remain the movement's recommended model.

Problems with hybrid co-ops

1. Reduced commitment

Holland said a worker-consumer co-op would feature a high level of commitment by both workers and consumers. However, each of the interest groups in a worker-consumer co-op would own less and have less influence in decisions than they would in a single-interest structure. It follows that they would be less committed to fulfilling the organization's goals.

2. Diffused purpose

The interest groups in a hybrid co-op would have different objectives and goals. In a worker-consumer food co-operative, the goals of the workers could include employment, income, a quality workplace and participation in the control structure. The consumers' goals could include savings, shopping convenience, community service and participation in the control structure.

These differing goals would lead to an organization eternally paralyzed by internal conflict. The chances of failure would be much greater than for a single-interest co-operative where the overriding purpose is clear.



Retail co-operatives in western Canada have achieved a great deal of success by concentrating on serving the needs of their consumer members under a single-interest co-operative model.

3. The co-operative principles

The notion of a hybrid co-op does not fit within the essential principles of co-operative organizations. One of the most cherished and oft-repeated of these principles is democratic control, that is one member/ one vote for primary co-operative societies.

In a hybrid co-operative, this principle must be altered to achieve a balance between the various interest groups. In his support for a hybrid structure, Axworthy passed over the specific co-operative principles in favour of a more general statement that these principles "are a reflection of the desirability of democratizing the economy".

Despite this desirability, we still have a principle that says primary co-operative societies should operate on the basis of one member/one vote. This principle ensures that minority groups cannot wield power over the majority.

Control is critical

These three problem areas all relate to the issue of control. Two other articles in the Winter, 1987, *Worker Co-ops* magazine addressed this same issue:

- In describing the differences between worker co-operatives and employee-owned companies (Forum, p.5), Marty Donkervoort wrote: "The importance of control is recognized throughout the corporate sector. Major battles are fought over control."

- An article entitled "The Big Carrot continues its remarkable growth" describes the sale of shares to Big Carrot customers: "These Class-A preferred shareholders earn 10 per cent interest. However, because The Big Carrot is a worker co-op, the worker-members will retain all voting control."

These comments emphasize the importance of having a clear purpose and a control structure that reflects the needs of the dominant interest group.

Co-operative retailing experience

The experience of the co-operative retailing system in western Canada shows that the single-interest co-operative can attract a significant market-share. In this region, retail co-operatives serve an estimated 750,000 members. They are especially strong in rural areas, but have a sizable presence in some urban centres. In 1986, wholesale food sales by Federated Co-operatives Limited to its member retail co-operatives totalled almost \$538-million. For a retail food co-operative to be successful, it must meet the following conditions:

- There must be a real need, such as a lack of local services or excessively high prices.

- The co-operative must meet that need by providing members with tangible benefits.

- The co-operative must be competitive with other retailers, in terms of prices, convenience,

facilities, service, location and the quality of products.

If, as Holland suggests, Ontario food co-operatives are interested in increasing their market-share, they should look at these prerequisites for success.

An alternative structure

Benefits may be achieved by giving various interest groups a greater say in the operation of a single-interest co-operative. For example, a consumer co-op could hire or contract a worker co-op to manage the organization. The worker co-op would have autonomy within criteria established by the board of directors of the consumer co-op. The co-operative's over-riding purpose, however, would be to serve the needs of its consumer members. Ultimate control would remain in the hands of the consumer members.

In conclusion, the hybrid co-operative, as discussed in several articles in the Winter, 1987, issue of the *Worker Co-ops* magazine, has many problems. For the good of the movement as a whole, we should concentrate on building strong single-interest co-operatives. Alternative structures can be used for reflecting the needs of minority interest groups within the single-interest structure.

Bryan Tastad is a secretarial officer with Federated Co-operatives Ltd., P.O. Box 1050, Saskatoon, Sask. S7K 3M9; (306) 244-3369. The views expressed in this article are his own. ■

Experimentation, unity and democracy in co-operatives: a reply to Bryan Tastad

Russell Christianson

In the article "Hybrid co-ops are not the answer", Bryan Tastad states that "for the good of the movement as a whole, we should concentrate on building strong single-interest co-ops". There are no magic solutions to co-operative development. There are risks and obstacles to any change in our society. The question is: do we want to try new ways or do we become defensive of present structures? In today's business climate, co-operatives cannot afford to become dogmatic.

Experimentation is needed

In Ontario, consumer food co-ops have not been successful in capturing the imagination and the will of large numbers of people. In fact, the Ontario experience of single-interest food co-ops is an abysmal failure. Of the dozens of buying clubs and co-ops begun in the 1960s and '70s, only a few remain. The first direct-charge consumer co-op in Canada, Shoppers' Co-operative (Ottawa), is even contemplating closing its doors. Such direct-charge co-ops have been hailed by many as the "best" model for co-operative development in the food sector. Also, there is very little awareness amongst the public or even the members that co-operation works as an alternative to capitalist structures in our economy. According to a 1986

survey by Decima Research, 30 per cent of the movement's key leaders do not believe that co-operatives will have much to offer Canadian people in the future.

Clearly, renewed commitment is necessary to revitalize the co-operative movement in Canada. New energy comes from new ideas and experimentation. Co-operatives have to continuously experiment with structures and services in order to fulfill member needs. Experimentation may involve risks, but it is the only way for co-operatives to survive in the dynamic business and ecological environment in which we live.

Creating unity of purpose

Over 60 per cent of Canadian consumers are concerned about the level of pesticides and fertilizers in their food. At the same time, family farms are going bankrupt at an alarming rate because their input costs (including \$800-million in chemicals each year) exceed the price they receive for their products on commodity markets. Other impacts of this trend in agriculture are soil erosion (which cost prairie farmers \$239-million in 1982 dollars in crop yields), increased unemployment, environmental pollution and an increase in chronic disease linked to diet.

We must build a unity of purpose amongst farmers, distri-

bution and retail workers, as well as consumers. All of us want to live healthy, rewarding lives while providing the same opportunity for our children. In order for us to realize these goals, we require nutritious food, meaningful work, adequate housing and a clean environment (to name a few). The only way these different groups (farmers, workers and consumers) can fulfill their needs is by working together in some way. By setting joint objectives, they can accomplish far more than they could individually. One of the ways they can achieve unity of purpose is through a hybrid co-operative structure with equal representation from each group. Rather than focusing on their own interests and developing adversarial relationships, they can create superordinate goals which bind them together.

Democratic control

Democratic control is often touted as the most cherished principle of co-operation. Unfortunately, in many situations, the concept and the reality diverge. In large consumer co-ops, democracy can be reduced to ritual formalism because these co-ops are controlled by their managers. This is not a result of individual managers conspiring to wrestle control from the membership. It is a result of the massive size and complexity of

these organizations and their exclusive concern with the efficient provision of goods and services to consumer members. Co-ops which measure their success using capitalist standards of market-share and return on equity and profit, eventually become indistinguishable from their capitalist counterparts. When the members of co-operatives no longer see a difference between co-operatives and private stores and when the members start feeling like customers, the future of co-operatives is threatened.

In order to survive, co-operatives must develop democratic management skills. There is a need to create structures,

processes and methods which can enhance democracy and operational effectiveness. This includes business skills designed to meet organizational goals and not merely success in the marketplace. Co-operatives must offer all interested parties (producers, workers and consumers) the opportunity for meaningful input in decision-making. The idea that a control structure must reflect the needs of a dominant interest group is anti-democratic and non-co-operative.

There are broader issues facing food co-operatives today than providing cheap food to consumer-members. Farmers, distribution workers and consumers

are faced with serious environmental contamination which directly affects their ability to fulfill their needs. Single-interest co-ops cannot address these issues unless they work together. We have to build trust between these groups if we are to succeed. In order to survive, we will have to experiment with new structures and services, to find unity of purpose between seemingly diverse groups and to ensure democracy in decision-making.

Russell Christianson is the director of the Ontario Federation of Food Co-operatives and Clubs, Inc., 22 Mowat Avenue, Toronto, Ont. M6K 3E8; (416) 533-7989.■



Conferences

Workplace Ownership and Democracy

This conference, September 13 - 16 at Grindstone Island, will look at the successes and difficulties in forming a democratic workplace. The conference is sponsored by the Worker Ownership Development Foundation, a charitable foundation committed to research and education in workplace democracy and worker ownership.

Registration is limited, and the \$175 fee includes meals and accommodation.

For more information contact the Worker Ownership Development Foundation, 357 College St., Toronto, Ontario M5T 1S5; (416) 928-9568; or Grindstone Island

Co-op, P.O. Box 564, Station "P", Toronto, Ontario M5T 1S5; (416) 968-9187.■

Co-op Movement Strategy Conference

Leaders, organizers and members of Canadian co-ops will gather at Grindstone for the 8th annual Co-op Movement Strategy Conference from August 9 - 14. Conference themes include: worker co-ops, group process, intentional communities, and stakeholder models.

For more information, contact Grindstone Island Co-op, P.O. Box 564, Station "P", Toronto, Ontario M5T 1S5; (416) 968-9187.■

Boston College Conference

On August 5 - 7, Boston College will host a major conference on 'Economic Democracy as a Political Idea'. The conference will focus on how economic democracy has emerged in different countries and eras.

For more information contact Charles Derber, Dept. of Sociology, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA 02167, USA; (617) 552-4130.■

Worker Co-ops welcomes letters and conference information from its readers. Write to: Worker Co-ops Magazine, 253 Willow Ave., Toronto, Ontario M4E 3K6.

Les coopératives de travail

Johanne Bérard

À travers les statistiques de la Direction des coopératives du Québec (ministère de l'industrie et du commerce), nous sommes remontés dans le temps à la recherche des périodes-clés qui ont marqué l'évolution des coopératives de travail au Québec. Nous en avons identifié trois: d'abord 1938-74, époque où se multiplient les forestières; puis 1975-83 qui se caractérise par une croissance marquée du nombre de coopératives et une diversification des secteurs d'activités des coopératives de travail; et, finalement, la période 1984-86 qui coïncide avec la promulgation de la nouvelle loi sur les coopératives, la mise en place des Groupes-conseils (GC), la Fédération, et les Coopératives de développement régional (CDR).

Les forestières ouvrent la voie

Même si quelques coopératives de travail voient le jour au Québec à la fin du 19^e siècle, c'est vraiment à partir de 1938 que ce type de coopératives commence à se développer.

Jusqu'en 1974, soit pendant plus de 35 ans, les coopératives d'exploitation forestière dominent presque entièrement. Elles constituent en effet 86,4 pourcent du nombre total recensé entre 1938 et 1974. Il n'est pas surprenant de retrouver près de deux-tiers de ce nombre dans les régions-ressources du Saguenay, de l'Abitibi, et de l'Est du Québec. En outre, environ 28 pourcent sont encore

actives, avec une durée de vie moyenne de près de 32 ans (voir tableau III).

Des tendances se dessinent

Le nombre de coopératives créées entre 1975 et 1983 excède de près de 30 pourcent le nombre

correspondant pour 1938-74. C'est l'époque des projets PIL et Perspectives Jeunes (programmes gouvernementaux de création d'emplois), de la transformation en coopératives d'entreprises industrielles en difficulté et finalement de la crise économique de début des années

Tableau I / Table I

Coopératives de Travail (actives et disparues) par secteur d'activité
Worker Co-ops (active and disbanded) by economic sector

Secteur/Sector	1938-74	1975-83	1984-86	Total
agricole / agriculture	1	29	17	47
forestier / forestry	76	20	13	109
pêches et mines / fishing & mining	--	1	3	4
manufacturier / manufacturing	5	17	47	69
construction	1	6	11	18
sous-total: primaire & secondaire subtotal: primary & secondary	83	73	91	247
transport	--	3	7	10
communications	--	4	4	8
commerce de gros / wholesale	--	4	11	15
commerce de détail / retail	1	4	15	20
serv. aux entreprises / consulting	1	8	34	43
serv. d'enseignement / education	1	4	2	7
serv. de santé et serv. sociaux / health and social services	--	2	4	6
hébergement & restauration / hotel and food	--	2	9	11
divertissement & loisirs / recreation	1	9	12	22
personnels & domestiques / personnel and domestic	--	--	4	4
autres/others	1	1	9	11
sous-total: tertiaire (services) subtotal: tertiary (services)	5	41	111	157
Total	88	114	202	404
	(21.8%)	(28.2%)	(50.0%)	(100%)

au Québec: bientôt 50 ans!

'80 où les déboucheés pour les jeunes se font rares. C'est également au cours de ces années que sont mis sur pied la Société de développement coopératif (1977) et le Comité provincial des coopératives de production, de travail et pré-coopératives (1980), préambule à la Fédération.

Près du quart des nouvelles coopératives voient le jour au Saguenay et 23 coopératives agricoles sur 29 sont des bluetières. On note en outre un déplacement vers les régions urbaines de Montréal et de Québec (42 pourcent du total) accompagné d'une première percée du secteur des ser-

vices (41 coopératives sur 114).

Encore actives à près de 68 pourcent, les coopératives de cette deuxième génération existent en moyenne depuis un peu plus de six ans.

Enfin la nouvelle loi!

La nouvelle loi sur les coopératives (1984), la création progressive des CDR et GC et la fondation, en 1985, de la Fédération expliquent en grande partie l'essor sans précédent que connaissent depuis trois ans les coopératives de travail. La nouvelle loi réduit de 12 à trois le nombre de sociétaires exigé pour la mise sur pied d'une coopérative en plus de lever les restrictions relatives à certains secteurs de l'économie. Par ailleurs les GC et CDR, qui ne couvrent l'ensemble du Québec que depuis mars 1986 et février 1985 respectivement, "ont créé plus de 1 000 emplois et contribué au soutien ou à la création de 100 coopératives. Ils aideraient actuellement à l'émergence d'environ 150 nouveaux groupes de promoteurs de coopératives offrant un potentiel de plus de 2 000 nouveaux emplois" (*Le Devoir*, 3 mars 1987).

D'une part, les régions de Montréal et de Québec voient naître respectivement 34,7 pourcent et 18,3 pourcent des nouvelles coopératives; la région de l'Est du Québec suit avec 10,4 pourcent. Si l'on tient compte de la population de chaque région, on constate toutefois qu'il reste beaucoup à faire dans les régions urbaines. Le tableau II donne

Tableau II / Table II

Coopératives de Travail (active et disparues) par région
Worker Co-operatives (active and disbanded) by region

Region	Period			Total		Population *
	1938-74	1975-83	1984-86	active	disbanded	Active coops
01 Est du Québec	15	5	21	29	12	8227
02 Saguenay	24	28	12	37	27	8396
03 Québec	13	22	37	53	19	20003
04 Mauricie	1	7	7	12	3	37874
05 Estrie	—	4	19	18	5	13581
06 Montréal (Ile de Montréal)	12 (4)	26 (14)	70 (43)	86 (51)	22 (10)	43132 (34003)
07 Outaouais	1	6	13	16	4	17747
08 Abitibi	18	9	17	32	12	4925
09 Côte-Nord / Nveau-Québec	4	7	6	11	6	11110
Total	88	114	202	294	110	22386

* p. ex. dans la région 01, il y a 1 coopérative pour 8227 habitants;

for ex. in region 01, there is 1 co-operative for 8227 inhabitants

Tableau III / Table III

Coopératives de Travail (actives et disparues) durée de vie moyenne (ans)
Worker co-operatives (active and disbanded): average lifespan in years

Période / Period	Actives / active			Disparues / disbanded			Total	
	No.	%	durée/lifespan	No.	%	durée/lifespan	No.	durée/lifespan
1938-74*	25	28.4	31.7	63	71.6	14.0	88	19.0
1975-83	77	67.5	6.1	37	32.5	4.3	114	5.5
1984-86	192	95	1.3	10	5	1.5	202	1.3
Total	294	72.8	5.2	110	27.2	9.6	404	6.4

*Parmi les coopératives disparues, on retrouve des coopératives forestières qui ont fait l'objet d'une fusion et ne sont donc pas réellement disparues. Il n'a toutefois pas été possible de les identifier.

*Among the disbanded co-ops are those that merged with others. It is not possible to identify them.

une indication de l'écart à combler; par exemple en Abitibi on retrouve une coopérative active pour 4 925 habitants alors que ce rapport est de une pour 43 132 dans la région de Montréal.

D'autre part, les "services" comptent en 1984-86 pour 55 pourcent des coopératives totales, une augmentation de 19 points par rapport à la période précédente. Les services les plus répandus sont ceux aux entreprises (34 coopératives dont 13 sont des bureaux de conseil en gestion), le

commerce de détail et les services de divertissement et de loisirs.

Du côté primaire et secondaire, les secteurs agricole et manufacturier fournissent encore le plus grand nombre de coopératives. Le secteur manufacturier demeure à peu près inchangé avec une dominance de l'industrie de l'imprimerie et de l'édition et, dans une moindre part, de celles du vêtement et du bois. Le secteur agricole par contre se transforme pour faire une plus grande place aux spécialités horticoles (p.

ex. produits de serre), au détriment de la culture de fruits (bleuets). Enfin, on note peu de disparitions (10) parmi les coopératives de cette dernière période; elles existent en moyenne depuis 16 mois.

Johanne Bérard est assistante de recherche au Centre de gestion des coopératives, 3535 Chemin de la Reine Marie, #508, Montréal, Québec H3V 1H8; (514) 340-6017. ■

Fifty years of worker co-operatives in Quebec

Statistics from the Department of Co-operatives indicate three distinct periods in the evolution of worker co-ops in Quebec. Tables on the previous pages provide an overview on the sector of activity, region and lifespan of worker co-ops for these periods.

1938 - 1974: forestry co-ops

Several worker co-operatives were set up in Quebec at the end of the 19th century, but it was really only after 1938 that worker co-ops began to develop in earnest. Forestry co-ops dominated; they constituted 86.4 per cent of the total number of worker co-ops registered between 1938 and 1974. Almost two-thirds of these were in Saguenay, Abitibi and Eastern Quebec, and 28 per cent are still active. Their average lifespan is 32 years (Table III).

1975 - 1983: shift to urban and service sectors

In the eight years between 1975 and 1983, 30 per cent more worker co-ops were established

than in the previous 35 years. It was a time of youth unemployment, of government job-creation programs, and of the conversion of failing industries into co-ops. One-quarter of the new co-ops were based in the Saguenay region, and of 29 new agricultural co-ops, 23 were blueberry farms.

This period also saw the first shift toward the urban areas of Montreal and Quebec City, which now account for 42 per cent of the total number of new co-ops. Forty-one of the 114 worker co-ops created during this period were in the service sector.

1984 - 1986: new legislation

There has been an unprecedented expansion of new worker co-ops during the last three years because of new co-op legislation passed in 1984, the creation of Regional Development Co-operatives (CDRs) and advisory groups (Groupes-Conseils or GCs) and the founding in 1985 of a Federation of worker co-operatives. The new law reduced from 12 to

three the number of members required to form a worker co-op.

The CDRs and GCs helped to create "more than 1,000 jobs and ...100 new co-operatives. They are currently helping...about 150 new groups of co-operators with a potential of more than 2,000 jobs" (*Le Devoir*, March 3, 1987).

The Montreal area has 34.7 per cent of the new co-operatives, while Quebec City has 18.3 and Eastern Quebec has 10.4. On a *per capita* basis, there is still a lot to be done in the urban areas.

The service sector accounts for 55 per cent of co-ops formed from 1984 to 1986. The most common enterprises are management consultant firms, retail sales operations and recreation and leisure services. The agricultural and manufacturing sectors, however, are still in the majority. Manufacturing remains dominated by printing and publishing, followed by clothing and wood products, while agriculture is shifting to horticultural specialties from fruit growing.

(Translated by Julia Berry.) ■

The ICA approach to education for worker ownership

Frank Adams
Cheryl Gooding

The Industrial Cooperative Association has been very successful in developing worker co-operatives in the United States. In the following article, ICA's educational co-ordinators--Frank Adams and Cheryl Gooding--describe their organization's approach to education.

In early 1985, sewing factory workers in Fall River, Massachusetts were trying to buy out of bankruptcy the firm many of them had worked at for years. With the help of the New England office of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, they decided to start a worker-owned company. The workers elected officers, and one,

Almiranda Souza, a seamstress for nearly 30 years, explained why she agreed to chair the education committee:

"Years ago, when I first started working for the other company, I went to the boss and said I had an idea I thought would save the company some money. He told me, 'Almiranda, your job is to sew, not to think.' So from that day until we took over the company, I kept my mouth shut. Now, if I don't think, I don't get paid. That's why I accepted the job on the education committee. I want to learn."

Expanding knowledge is essential

Almiranda Souza's experience illustrates the essential aim of the Industrial Cooperative Associa-

tion's educational collaboration with workers who own their jobs. The end result of worker-ownership should be a fully self-determining role for workers. As workers take up the responsibilities of ownership and democratic management, they also assume control of their own educational destinies. Democratic management of the machinery of production should and must be paralleled by expanding self-knowledge. As Jaroslav Vanek wrote in a 1976 paper:

"Education, and more generally, the transformation of the human consciousness, is the precondition and the very lifeblood of any successful and lasting effort to bring about self-management and economic democracy."

Stating our aim is easier than putting that aim into practice. Education which seeks to enable workers to be economically and politically self-governing is fundamentally different, if not in opposition to, education which reproduces capitalist social relationships. As educators, we go about our work reflectively, learning and testing as we go, and sharing as we learn.

The working knowledge program

At the moment, our educational program has three parts. First, we give primacy to work-site learning, as we have since ICA's inception in the 1970s. When workers are faced with



"Education, and more generally, the transformation of the human consciousness, is the pre-condition and the very lifeblood of any successful and lasting effort to bring about self-management and economic democracy."

- Jaroslav Vanek

plant closings or have the opportunity to buy out a friendly owner or decide to create their own workplaces, we have a well-tested way to teach about business, legal and organizational issues.

Second, since we have come to expect workers to ask essentially the same sets of questions as they orient themselves to worker-ownership, we have organized those questions into clusters on democratic principles, business and self-management. We call the resulting small-group discussion materials, "The Working-Knowledge Program", and are presently field testing a basic orientation program in both English and Spanish. Two other programs in the series are being prepared -- one for committee work, and a second on the role of boards of directors. Our expectation is that these materials will teach the basic language of worker-ownership and the ideas of small-group activities.

Third, to interest a broader range of people in worker-ownership, we have commenced ICA Institutes on the theory and practice of worker ownership emerging from workplaces around the nation. These two-or three-day Institutes are held either at our Somerville offices or

are sponsored by organizations elsewhere. The workshops cover topics such as *Efficiency and Democracy: Decision Making and Problem Solving, Feasibility Studies and How to do Them, and Accounting in Worker-Owned Companies*. All told, nearly 20 topics are offered.

Evaluation

Evaluation poses special problems for us. It is not enough to judge our work as teachers by the typical capitalist measurement of a profit-and-loss statement.

In addition to asking if the business prospered, we must ask: Did group reflection and dialogue lead to group action? Was democracy nourished on the shop floor and with the board of directors? Was labour solidarity practised within the firm and without?

So in the end, as teachers collaborating with the Almiranda Souza's, we learn anew each day that labour-managed enterprises, ICA's included, demand ever-increasing knowledge, broader skills and growth in self and group consciousness. Our experience gives us questions, but as yet, no pedagogic prescriptions.

Frank Adams and Cheryl Gooding are in charge of the educational services of the Industrial Cooperative Association, 58 Day Street, #200, Somerville, MA. 02144; (617) 629-2700.■

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The PACE worker-education program

Cynthia Coker
Virginia Vanderslice

PACE of Philadelphia Inc. is best known for its role in developing a network of O&O (worker-owned and -operated) supermarkets in the Philadelphia area. The first two O&O stores were opened in 1982. A third store opened in 1985, and two more were started in 1986.

To assure a healthy environment for worker participation, PACE structures worker-owned companies according to the following criteria: each worker has one vote; profits are distributed according to labour rather than financial contribution to the company; the workers control the board of directors; and the majority of the company is owned by workers. This is the organizational structure within which worker education takes place.

Co-operative worklife education

The creation of a legal structure that legitimizes worker participation is a necessary but not a sufficient condition to ensure that workers are involved in decision-making. PACE's education program attempts to counteract workers' reluctance to participate actively.

Non-participation occurs because of a lack of information on a topic, an inability to understand a report, discomfort or lack of experience talking in groups and fear of retribution for mak-



Developing a co-operative culture: one of the PACE-developed O&O stores.

ing comments critical of superiors. It has been the experience of PACE staff that it takes more than personnel policies or an ownership structure designed to safeguard worker rights, to change workers' perceptions about their roles and about appropriate behaviour.

A major goal of the PACE staff is to develop a co-operative culture within each organization. This involves reinforcing co-operative rather than competitive behaviour, balancing group and individual needs in making decisions, and working together to create a financially stable and personally satisfying workplace.

Another goal of worklife education is to encourage members to use existing legal and

organizational structures that permit them to influence decision-making. Additional goals are the adequate preparation of workers for the multiple roles they will assume as members and also the building of a strong group identity.

Underlying the program is a belief that the educational process is developmental and takes place over a long period of time. This belief is realized in practice through an education strategy that attempts first to give workers the necessary skills and abilities to take control and then encourages the participation in increasingly complex and demanding tasks. Members of the PACE staff provide information, support, reinforcement and modeling throughout this process.

Education staff

Drawing on backgrounds in organizational behaviour, social psychology, human development and adult education, members of the Department of Organizational Development and Education at PACE design and co-ordinate the worker-education program. In addition, the lawyers and business developers on the PACE staff lead or participate in formal education sessions related to their area of expertise, and they also co-ordinate worker committees. All members of the PACE staff are, in part, worker-educators.

The PACE approach emphasizes small-group work and experience-based learning using current workplace issues and concerns.

Recruitment and selection

At PACE the education process begins with information sessions designed to acquaint workers with the O&O Supermarket concept and to provide them with the information about a particular store.

A followup interview introduces workers to the ownership structure and the participatory-management system of the store and prepares them for the formal training program.

Selection criteria for both worker and managers include their potential to be capable members of a worker-owned company, their ability to function within a democratic system and their specific job-related skills.

Workers' early experience in the store reinforce the idea that they will be taking control. From

the beginning workers are encouraged to participate in committees that will affect the store's success.

Formal education

The formal education program takes place both during and outside of regular working hours. Some parts of the education program are completed before a new store opens so that workers will have basic information and skills to make the store operational.

General information sessions cover legal, business and financial areas, but the education program also deals with the skills and issues related to the process of participation. Education in these areas includes team building, communication skills, co-operative value development, group decision-making and problem solving, and running effective meetings.

Concurrent with these general education sessions for all workers, an additional training program is taking place for the management team. The goal of this program is to create an effective participative management system. This is followed up with regular department meetings for the exchange of information. It is through the medium of these department meetings that workers exert influence over day-to-day operations. PACE staff work with department managers to help them run effective meetings.

As owners, workers participate in committees and become experts in an area related to the store's structure or functioning. Typical worker committees are

concerned with bylaws, personnel issues and the collective bargaining agreement. As committee members, workers educate other workers on these topics and take responsibility for developing relevant policy.

Informal education

A large portion of the PACE worker-education program is informal. A PACE staff member attends meetings of the management-team, the board, the various departments and the membership, and works behind the scenes with the individuals running those meetings, until the meetings are working well. In addition, PACE staff members work and interact with workers on an informal, individual basis to deal with both operational and ownership issues. These individual interactions are the basis for the transfer of a great deal of learning.

The education program is only a beginning. The most important learning will take place as workers interact with each other on a daily basis. Preparation to participate effectively and, therefore, continuous learning is the goal of the program.

Cynthia Coker and Virginia Vanderslice are educators at PACE of Philadelphia Inc., 2100 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103; (215) 561-7079. ■

Education in controversies in worker co-operatives

Chris Axworthy

Worker co-operatives are at an early developmental stage in Canada. As a result, the educational activities of the movement relate more to generating interest in the "idea" and to startups than to ongoing member education for established worker co-operatives.

Adult education appears to be most effective when it provides an opportunity for group participation. Yet it is difficult for workers to participate unless they are motivated and possess the necessary knowledge required to make sound judgements. Education for participation in decision-making is critical for the successful development of worker co-operatives. The challenge for resource groups is the creation of educational strategies which realistically address the needs and experiences of worker co-operative members.

Public-education strategy

If the worker co-operative sector is to compete effectively with the private sector, the public has to see worker co-operation as a normal and natural model of business organization. Our public education system provides the conventional business sector with employees possessing the attitudes and skills that sector needs. With minor exceptions, public education does not address the needs of co-operatives.

At least two consequences flow from this. Upon completing

their education, Canadians are left with a bias in favour of economic activity organized on a capitalist basis, and a bias against, and a lack of knowledge about, the co-operative model. Those involved in worker co-operative development are then faced with the difficult task of overturning this bias and overcoming the information gap. The second consequence is that the public education system does not provide co-operatives with properly prepared members.¹

It is important to educate the general public about worker co-operatives by publicizing their achievements. This will raise public awareness of worker co-ops, create an environment which is supportive and ensure recognition of their legitimacy.

Assistance and support will have to be nurtured over a long term. It will involve a continuing program of public education and will be most successful if a catalyst, such as a resource group, conducts the program.

Preliminary worker education

It is necessary to introduce workers who form the potential membership of a worker co-operative to what worker co-operatives are, how they work, the responsibilities of those involved, how these responsibilities can be carried out, the skills required to participate and the methods of participation.

In addition to education about process and philosophy, it is

critical to communicate practical, business skills. In all probability, the workers will have spent their working lives being distrustful of information provided by management. But for a worker co-operative to function and to survive, it must work as a business as well as a collective. The education process needs to prepare workers for the management of their co-operative and has to inculcate in the worker-members the confidence to meet challenges successfully.

Workers, managers and directors

The members need preparation for their multi-faceted decision-making and working role. Preliminary education should emphasize at least four functional skills:

1) *Production skills* in the actual tasks which the co-operative performs in order to serve its chosen market;

2) *Training beyond immediate job requirements* in order to carry out different work tasks and for effective decision-making, which requires general knowledge of the matters over which decisions are to be made;

3) *Managerial skills*, including a familiarity with the basics of business practice and financial, marketing, legal and accounting issues;

4) *Co-operative skills*, interpersonal skills, and debating and analytical skills have to be honed.

Managers require additional skills to be effective in a

democratic environment. Those workers who form the board of directors need a greater knowledge of finance, accounting, marketing and management than the non-board members.

Lessons learned

The abortive attempt to form Canadian Porcelain in Hamilton, Ontario, into a worker co-operative contains some valuable cautionary lessons for an effective education strategy.² An education committee was appointed by the union to which the workers at Canadian Porcelain belonged, rather than being elected by the workers themselves. This gave rise to a rather secretive education policy, and certain negative information being kept from the members.

The process caused frustra-

tions. Meetings were held, but the main source of information for the workers was local newspapers. The most effective approach in the long run is to present all the information available to the members and to let them make decisions.

Workers need to develop policy for their co-operative. Through role playing, simulations of real-life situations, and general participation, the members learn how to make important decisions on most major aspects of the co-operative's activities.

Participatory action-research

The educational technique of participatory action-research would appear to have considerable potential in worker co-operative development. It aids the workers to understand how the

economy works, how it affects their efforts to control their working lives, and it permits them to address the causes of their hardships.

In this process, researchers and resource groups should act as facilitators. They should provide information and assist in the learning process, but concentrate on helping worker-members to use their new knowledge.³ This two-way learning process not only assists the formation of specific worker co-operatives, but also encourages the development of worker co-operatives generally.

Chris Axworthy is the Director of the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, Diefenbaker Centre, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Sask. S7N 0W0; (306) 966-8503.■

¹ Greater utilization of the Co-operative College of Canada's co-operative resource materials in the school system would go some way to addressing these concerns. See also "The Co-operative College of Canada's Youth Action Co-operative", (*Worker Co-ops*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Fall 1985, p. 24) and the Yorkton "Junior Achievement" co-operative (*Worker Co-ops*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Summer 1986, p. 25), which illustrate ways to combine co-operative education and practical business experience for students.

² Murray Gardiner, "The Canadian Porcelain Co-operative Story", Saskatoon, *Co-operative College of Canada Working Papers*, 1986.

³ See M. Haubert, "Adult Education and Grass-roots Organisations in Latin America: The Contribution of the International Co-operative University", *International Labour Review* (1986), vol. 177, p. 125.

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Issues and controversies in worker co-op education

Grant MacDonald

The aim of co-operative education has never been education for its own sake. From the beginning, co-operative education has sought to further the aims of the movement. However, those aims, often expressed in such terms as "development of co-operative opinion and character", have never been well-defined.

The co-operative movement in Canada has never embraced fundamental social change as its main aim, and the worker co-op sector at this point does not seem any different. Instead, the movement has sought the building of co-operatives within the existing order. This has meant a commitment to economically strong organizations. Educationally this has meant the provision of knowledge for the efficient management of resources. This is consistent with a conservative approach to learning.

Worker co-op education

We can look at worker co-op education in terms of who receives it and who provides it. In the first category are prospective and existing members of worker co-ops. Then there are specific communities of interest including the co-op sector, labour, women, native people and government.

The question of who should provide worker co-op education could be answered with another list that includes co-op societies,



(Photo courtesy of St. F.X. Extension Department).

Workers' education: an important part of building a social movement.

federations of co-operatives and co-op resource groups. So far, the needs of worker co-op members have been the first priority, and co-op resource groups the leading educator. These groups range from broad-based community coalitions to private, socially-conscious consulting firms.

While there is little competition for space in the territory of worker co-op education, the issue of its control is a contentious one. Whose concept of the world should be promulgated? Education can be a powerful force for change and a threat to vested interests. The Co-operative College of Canada was created by the co-op movement to ensure continuing control of

education by the movement, even though some co-operators felt education should be independent of institutional politics and conservative management views.¹

What is to be learned?

There are two broad categories of knowledge which form the content of worker co-op education: instrumental and philosophical. Instrumental education has to do with the development of skills and techniques. Philosophical education is meant to instill a sense of purpose, history and principles. In the co-op movement, this has meant covering the origins of the co-op movement and reviewing its principles and their applications.

There are many who believe that instrumental knowledge, especially associated with management training, is inherently neutral and needs only to be repackaged for co-operative use. Given its origins and modern practice, managerial techniques are profoundly rationalistic in orientation and reflective of a hierarchically-structured world, not a co-operative one.

The philosophical side of co-op education has tended to be self-centred and unmoving.

There is little agreement on what should come first, the instrumental or the philosophical. Those that favour an emphasis on the instrumental will argue that we do not have the luxury of looking at beliefs and values before trying to get a co-op off the ground. Those who emphasize the philosophical point out that the initial stage of a co-op has been the ripest time for political learning.

Pedagogical issues

Historically, two important vehicles for co-op education have been the fieldworker and the co-operative press. The fieldworker has been instrumental in organizing people. The press have served as the movement's eye on the world and as an instrument for needed propaganda.

Educational fieldworkers, once plentiful on the rural scene, are now an endangered species, and the co-operative press is only a shadow of its former self. This has meant that promoting and developing worker co-ops in Canada has focused largely on conferences and on the production of "how-to" handbooks and guides. Although successful,

these efforts have yet to reach much of the working class. *Worker Co-ops*, an independent magazine, only loosely ties the movement together. But news on worker co-op development is making it to the pages of other co-op publications.

Practical & organizational issues

How might worker co-op education be funded since worker co-ops themselves lack the resources? There are only two places to turn for support: government and the co-operative sector as a whole.

In seeking government funding, some choices must be made. The tendency is strong to get on the small business and entrepreneurial bandwagon. There is certainly money, but there is also the danger of getting drowned in the present wave of conservatism.

It is not yet clear how much support for worker co-op education might be available from the co-op sector. There is some support for worker co-ops in general, but little support for educational efforts.

The organization and co-ordination of worker co-op education poses an even greater problem than funding. Geographic distances, competing regional claims to leadership and the diversity of groups and political ideologies would seem to mitigate against a national approach.

Arguably, current social conditions have made the last quarter of this century as fertile a ground for fundamental change as any time in history. The fledgling worker co-op movement in Canada has not had the unity of vision or organization to take advantage of these circumstances through a broad educational campaign. This may be a long time in coming.

Grant MacDonald teaches at Henson College, the adult education division of Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3H 3J5; (902) 424-2526.

¹ See Ian MacPherson, "Sustaining a Movement Within Narrowing Limits: Creating a Co-operative College in English Canada, 1951-1973", forthcoming in Michael Welton, ed., *Knowledge for the People*, Toronto: O.I.S.E. Press, 1987.

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In 1985 and 1986 approximately 25 per cent of senior managers were leaving the co-ops in search of higher remuneration in private business. This rate of turnover has been substantially reduced over the past year by improving benefits and pay and introducing a bonus system based on performance and profit levels. The ratio of highest to lowest paid is now 4.5 to 1. If starting incomes are included, the ratio of highest to lowest can reach 5.8 to 1. However, relatively few Mondragon members are at the extremes of the pay scale.

Payscale criteria

Pay differentials are based on the following criteria, in order of importance: (1) Knowledge required for a position--technical, university degrees, other education (this follows the founder's axiom that "knowledge is power"); (2) Experience needed to master the job; (3) Responsibility relative to other jobs in the co-op; (4) Physical endurance required for the job (physical pain and hardship); (5) Decision-making responsibility in a particular job; and (6) Leadership qualities.

These criteria have evolved over time with the assistance of cultural and social surveys and the input of all interested workers. The criteria form the basis for negotiation.

Evaluating performance

Appraisal of job performance is based on the following factors: type of work, quality of work, organization of work and collaboration with fellow workers. Formal evaluations are done semi-annually, and informal supervisor/worker discussions occur monthly. Joint goals are set by supervisors and their work teams. Quality circles are being implemented and are estimated to have increased productivity by 4.5 per cent annually over the past five years.

Strike restrictions

Workers can strike for reasons of solidarity with external labour groups, but they cannot strike for internal reasons. There must be at least 66 per cent in favour of a solidarity strike. If the vote is in the 50 to 66 per cent range, those in favour are permitted to strike but receive no pay.

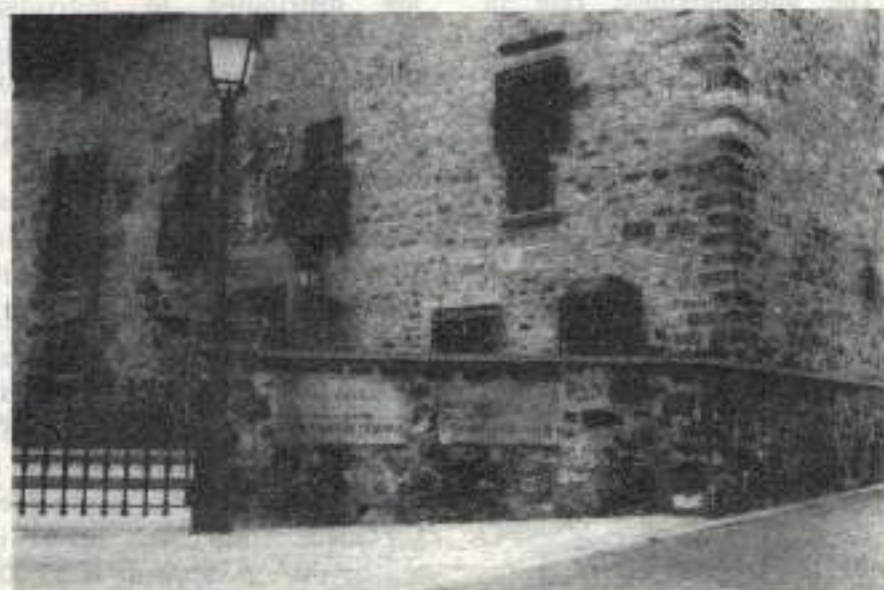
Changing priorities

The tradition of worker co-op development in industry is collapsing. Ten years ago, a new co-op industry could show a profit within two years of opening; now it takes a minimum of five years. Therefore, the focus for co-op development is in the service sector (e.g., Eroski--a hybrid worker/consumer food producer and distributor) as well as in agricultural production and processing. However, only four per cent of the Basque population are farmers.


Financing

The Spanish government supplies less than 10 per cent of the Mondragon group's financial requirements. (This estimate includes tax benefits.)

The worker-owned bank (Caja Laboral Popular) whose goal is to service the financing requirements of its associated co-



Mondragon's Iksabide Institute.



Around the World

ops, has 200,000 private depositors and 19,161 worker-owners. For the year ended December 31, 1986, it recorded \$2,142,551,591 (Canadian dollars) in assets, invested as follows: 33 per cent in co-ops, 17 per cent in personal loans and in other commercial loans, and 50 per cent in secure investments (i.e., private dwelling mortgages, government bonds, land and buildings). The 50 per cent secure investments is required by Spanish law.

Caja splits up

The entrepreneurial division of the Caja Laboral Popular is becoming an independent organization in response to concerns over the extent of the bank's control over planning. This change should lead to greater autonomy for the people who plan new worker co-operatives.

Retaining jobs

The unemployment rate in Spain is 23 per cent. Over the course of a five-year economic crisis, all members of the Mondragon group have retained their jobs. This is due to the strict financial control practised by the co-ops and the Caja as well as inter-co-operative financial support. There have been transfers of workers between co-ops to ensure that jobs were not lost. Hiring and firing can be done only by the worker-controlled board of directors.

Board elections

Board members are elected for overlapping four-year terms. On average, there are three candidates for each vacant board position. Attendance (either in person or by proxy) at the annual general meetings is compulsory and is considered in performance evaluations. As a result, attendance is usually over 90 per cent. Board members are elected on the basis of technical skill and social conscience.

Profit distribution

Profits are distributed on the following basis: 10 per cent to education and social promotion, (community service), 45 per cent to reserve funds in the business and 45 per cent to members' personal accounts. In new co-ops, the education component is allocated to the reserve account to strengthen the financial base of the business. Profits and losses are distributed to individual members on the basis of the salary ratio (i.e., the highest paid receive the highest proportion of profits, but also absorb the highest proportion of losses).

Joining up; leaving

There is a six-month probationary period during which an employee can leave freely or can be dismissed without cause. After the probationary period is over, a worker who is accepted for membership must invest in the co-op. Investment is \$9,000 (Canadian) over a two-year per-

iod. This amount can be borrowed from the Caja and repaid within five years. Of the \$9,000 investment, \$7,500 is personal capital (retained in a member's personal account) and \$1,500 is social capital. The investment required is the same for everyone.

Sixty per cent of workers are from families of existing members. This reflects the importance placed on maintaining a stable community.

A member's reason for leaving a co-op may influence the payout of a member's capital account. If the person is fired, a maximum of 30 per cent can be withheld; otherwise, the maximum holdback is 20 per cent. The maximum payback period is five years.

Work conditions

The required number work hours per year is 1800 (37.5 hours per week). All workers receive four weeks vacation per year. Time off in lieu of overtime is the standard, but if it is not taken within the same year, overtime pay is allocated.

Co-operation among co-ops

The Mondragon Group of co-ops barely held their own during the economic crisis of the 1980s. Through increased productivity, 14 per cent lower incomes, improved management techniques and greater efficiency, they were able to survive. However, a number of co-ops closed while others were strengthened. Mondragon is entering a new phase in

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its development. The emphasis is on new technologies and new markets in the agricultural and the service sectors of the economy. Through the newly formed Council of Groups (Consejo de Grupos), the Mondragon co-ops are working together to create an overall strategy because they believe that co-operation among co-operatives is essential for survival.

New co-ops

Three criteria for accepting a new co-op are: 1) confidence in the leadership of the new venture; 2) a capital investment per job of no more than \$100,000 (Cdn.); and, 3) a break-even point in the third or fourth year of operation.

Mondragon principles

The underlying principles of Mondragon include: 1) society is for people not capital; 2) return on capital is for people not capital; 3) socialism needs a personal face; 4) unity is strength; and, 5) people have the right to work. Co-ops can unite in a federation, but they cannot control each other. Each co-op within the Council of Groups retains its autonomy.

Russell Christianson has recently returned from a study tour of Mondragon co-ops. He can be contacted at the Ontario Federation of Food Co-operatives and Clubs, 22 Mowat Ave., Toronto, Ont. M6K 3E8; (416) 533-7889.

NEW ZEALAND

Maoris like Mondragon

Visitors flying to Auckland will notice a long line of 'co-op taxis' at the airport terminal. Six hundred taxi owners have formed a non-profit co-operative under the Friendly Societies Act to administer the business and to provide the vital radio service.

Members of the co-operative, the largest taxi company in the city, purchase a \$1,000 par-value share entitling them to one vote in electing the board. The members also contribute a portion of their fares to the co-operative and therefore pay for its staff.

Technically-speaking, New Zealand's taxi co-operatives use a producer model (i.e., they are semi-independent owners who form a co-operative and who hire staff to provide a service to the members). With the exception of

a small number of natural-food businesses and crafts, there are very few worker-owned enterprises in this country.

According to Peter McKinlay, a financial consultant and co-operative activist, the BBC documentary -- *The Mondragon Experiment* -- has made the rounds, but in spite of concern about high unemployment (currently at about six per cent of the labour force) neither the government nor the co-operative sector is promoting worker co-operatives. The Mondragon model, however, has attracted interest among some leaders of New Zealand's Maori communities (indigenous people), because the idea of a co-operative community is perceived as compatible with the Maori tribal structure.

For more information, contact Peter McKinlay, P.O. Box 11766, 9 Simla Cres., Wellington, New Zealand; (Phone) 793-226.



Auckland taxi co-op members at the airport.

Around the World

BRITAIN

New leader

ICOM, the national federation for British worker co-operatives, has elected Peter Milford as its general secretary. Milford was an organizer of six rescue co-operatives in Barnsley, now with 170 members and revenues in excess of 2-million. He was also a full-time trade-union official.

Partisan stance questioned

The North Yorkshire Society of Britain's co-operative movement has tabled a resolution for the upcoming congress that argues for a return to "political neutrality." The resolution argues that "the continuing decline of co-operative trading is, in part at least, a condemnation of the active political stance taken by the movement."

In a strongly worded rebuttal to the neutrality proposal, the *Co-operative News* editorializes that "it has been amply proved that the movement derives great benefits through having representatives in Parliament."

Wales development group

Vancouver-based CODA didn't make it as a worker co-operative development group, but its namesake in West Glamorgan, Wales is thriving, having developed 37 worker co-operatives in its nine-year history. An interesting aspect of CODA's activities is its Co-operative Youth Initiative which, with the

assistance of grants from the county council, helps unemployed youth to establish worker co-operatives. The Youth Initiative begins with educational programs in the schools and youth clubs.

The West Glamorgan co-operatives are involved in a variety of small businesses including knitwear production, taxi services, catering, video and film-making, computer services and furniture repairs.



"Adopt a Co-op"

Another innovative program has been initiated by the Kingston and Richmond Co-operative Development Agency. Its new "Adopt a Co-op" program aims to recruit 20 to 30 skilled volunteers who are willing to offer occasional seminars, consultancy and even longer-term guidance to potential co-operatives, not just with young members but with members of all ages. The Kingston and Richmond CDA is also initiating a program of adult-education classes in an effort to broaden community interest in worker co-ops.

For more information, contact the *Co-operative News*, Progress House, Chester Road, Manchester, United Kingdom M16 9HP

UNITED STATES

Frank Adams

New York state opens center

New York Governor, Mario M. Cuomo, and Lee Smith, Executive Director of the Industrial Cooperation Council, recently opened the New York State Center for Employee Ownership and Participation with offices in New York City and in Albany.

Christopher Mackin, Director of Development for the Industrial Cooperative Association and an advisor on the creation of the center, said the action was the most substantial effort to encourage worker ownership by a state government yet. The strategy, he said, "reaches beyond the reactive, crisis-driven program of most states and toward the full potential of the employee ownership idea. In addition, there appears to be a particular sensitivity on the part of the Center's staff and board to promoting more democratic forms of employee ownership."

Bricklayers' local starts a worker-owned company

For the first time since the days of the Knights of Labor in the 1880s, an American labour union has encouraged the creation of a new co-operative business. Jefferson Masonry, incorporated July 30, 1986 in Birmingham, Alabama, is a worker owned company supported by the organizing efforts of the International Union of Bricklayers and

Around the World

Allied Craftsmen. Other co-ops are being considered in the south and southwest.

Jefferson Masonry (with three members of Local 1, Alabama, as its founders) already has provided jobs for more than a dozen persons on commercial construction sites, including a hospital addition. Since the start-up, 17 other Local 1 members have expressed interest in becoming worker-owners.

Bricklayers and Allied Crafts General President John T. Joyce said that worker-owned co-operatives are a way for unions to regain lost members and work. "We are watching this project very closely," Joyce said, adding, "The most important aspect is that it will be providing work for union members."

Jobs saved in Illinois and Massachusetts

In December, 1986, the ICA was contacted by the leadership of the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers (IBB) union to assist in an effort to save a midwest plant. Working with the Midwest Center for Labor Research (MCLR) of Chicago, the Industrial Cooperative Association played a key role in saving 165 unionized jobs threatened by the possible sale of Kewanee Boiler Corporation, the largest employer in Kewanee, Illinois. ICA attorney Clark Arrington and the business staff prepared arguments supporting an innovative legal strategy to prevent liquidation by a bankruptcy court.

By analyzing the social and economic costs to the Kewanee region if the plant were to be closed, the ICA and MCLR built a case which convinced the liquidating buyer to withdraw, allowing another firm to purchase the company with the promise to keep the firm, and those jobs, within the community. On the day of the hearing, over 100 Kewanee boilermakers packed the courtroom. The dramatic outcome was greeted with relief by workers and townspeople.

The strategy was unique in Illinois bankruptcy proceedings.

Worker-owners take democratic practice to the shop floor

Worker-owners at Seymour Specialty Wire Company, in Seymour, Connecticut, added new meaning to the term "workplace democracy" since starting operation on April 17, 1985. Organized as a democratic ESOP, Seymour is one of the first of such firms with union members holding majority positions on the board.

During 1986, the 230-member company spent six months working out rules and procedures for decision-making on the shop floor. The social contract which emerged, supported by both labor and management, was called the Workers' Solving Problems (WSP) Program, and gives workers a democratic say in virtually every facet of production not covered by the union contract. Built on the idea that workers know as much, if not more, than any other person about the production

processes, the WSP Program places responsibility for solving most production problems in the wire mill with them. Should a problem require a decision by two or more departments, or shop floor sections, other decision-making levels were outlined.

With the board election giving workers representational control over company policy-making and the WSP Program providing direct decision-making authority on the shop floor, Seymour Specialty Wire is testing new democratic forms. The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor-Management Relations and Cooperative Programs has asked Professor Gary B. Hansen of Utah State University, a long-time advocate of worker ownership, and Frank Adams, Director of Educational Services at ICA, to write a case study of Seymour's accomplishments.

Puerto Rico focuses on plant closings

Officials of Puerto Rico's Department of Labour learned about worker ownership as one option for dealing with plant closings during a recent three-day Industrial Cooperative Association Institute in San Juan. Conducted in Spanish by staff business analysts Nancy Wilson and Jim Megson, the Institute was one of a series planned by ICA.

For more information, contact Frank Adams, ICA, 58 Day St., #200, Somerville, Massachusetts, USA 02144; (617) 629-2700



Across the Nation

NATIONAL

Albert Chambers

The recommendations of the National Task Force on Co-operative Development (including government support for worker co-operative development) are alive. On May 5th, the federal government announced the establishment of a "Co-operative Secretariat" -- a position that will act as an advocate for co-operative concerns within the government.

"The initiatives we are taking today are in recognition of the social and economic importance of Canadian co-operatives," Charles Mayer, the federal minister responsible for co-operatives, stated. "These measures will simplify and strengthen government relations with co-operatives."

The secretariat will be headed by an executive director recruited from the co-operative sector. Discussions are underway about

possible candidates and the office's agenda.

Albert Chambers is director of government affairs, Co-operative Union of Canada, 400 - 275 Bank St., Ottawa, Canada K2P 2L6; (613) 238-6711.

Community economic development advocate

Ernie Epp, the NDP member of parliament from Thunder Bay-Nipigon, has released a position paper and five-part resolution in support of community economic development, including worker co-operatives.

Epp's proposals call for a series of planning conferences, the establishment of regional CED resource centres and the use of Canada Pension and trustee pension plans to support the development of CED projects.

For a copy of this proposal, contact Ernie Epp, M.P., Room 262, Wellington Building, House of Commons, Ottawa, Canada K1A 0A6; (613) 995-7080.■

ALBERTA

George Melnyk

Employees consider buyout of fertilizer plant

A group of employees at Western Co-operative Fertilizer Ltd. in Medicine Hat, Alberta has approached the Local Enterprise Trust Society (LETS) of Lethbridge for assistance in evaluating the feasibility of a worker buyout of the plant. The plant is majority-owned by the three prairie wheat pools. At peak production the plant employed 325; now the workforce is 75, and the owners are expressing an interest in selling.

In the first phase, LETS is to provide feasibility studies on legal, tax, marketing and financial matters. If the workers decide to go ahead with a buyout offer, LETS will help them organize into a worker co-op. Advising LETS on this are Frank Green of Westcoast Research and Information Co-operative and Laird Hunter, an Edmonton lawyer and worker co-op specialist. Should the buyout proceed, it would result in the largest worker co-op in the province.

For more information contact Ed Ouellette at Local Enterprise Trust Society at (403) 329-1881.■

George Melnyk can be contacted at the Alberta Foundation for the Literary Arts, Suite 303-1204 Kensington Road N.W., Calgary, Alberta T2N 3P5.■

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Across the Nation

SASKATCHEWAN

Lars Apland

Department eliminated

In a move that has concerned many co-operators in Saskatchewan, the provincial government has eliminated the Department of Co-operation and Co-operative Development. As of April 1, 1987, the department was amalgamated with Tourism and Small Business to form the new ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Co-operatives. This amalgamation will probably lead to a de-emphasis of co-operative development in a province that historically owes much to co-operation. While the co-operative sector may benefit from the business experience of Tourism and Small Business, the emphasis on business concerns may be at the expense of co-operative philosophy and development.

It has been suggested that department services will be delivered on a "non-discriminatory basis", with department staff providing the necessary assistance whether clients choose a corporate or a co-operative structure. While specialists in co-operative development will be absorbed into the new ministry, it is unlikely that the co-operative structure will enjoy the priority and attention it received in its own department.

For more information, contact Lars Apland, Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Sask. S7N 0W0; (306) 966-8503. ■

ONTARIO

Ethan Phillips

Worker Ownership Development Foundation

The Foundation's efforts to obtain amendments to the Ontario Co-operative Corporations Act appear to be meeting with success. A general agreement has been reached with the government regarding the worker co-operative section of the act. It is expected that the amendments will become law in six to eight months.

Negotiations are continuing regarding a provincial financial-assistance program for worker co-operatives. Meetings are scheduled with the provincial Ministry of Labour and Industry, and that of Trade and Technology to discuss further the details of the Foundation's proposals.

On June 17, the Foundation held a one-day conference, "Municipal Economic Development in a Changing Economy". The conference, co-sponsored with the Labour Council of Metro Toronto, explored new ways in which labour and municipalities can respond to plant shutdowns.

As always, the Foundation is actively seeking new members and donations. The Foundation is a charitable organization and will issue receipts for tax purposes. Membership in the Foundation is \$40 for participating members and \$25 for associate members.

Toronto's newest worker co-op

A-WAY Express Inc. started its courier service in Toronto on June 1st. A-WAY expects to grow from its present 20 part-time workers to 40 members after a year. The members are ex-psychiatric patients brought together by two social agencies, Progress Place and House Links. Supporters of the co-op have formed Applause Development Corporation to provide ongoing management support to A-WAY and to assist similar groups. Both A-WAY and Applause are clients of Co-operative Work Consultants.

Ethan Phillips is director of the Worker Ownership Development Foundation, 357 College Street, Toronto, Ontario M5T 1S5; (416) 928-9568. ■

Big Carrot Fund

With its 7,000 square foot market and its mall under construction, The Big Carrot natural-food market has established a fund that will eventually be used to finance worker co-operative development. The fund will be set up from monies (after debts are paid) resulting from the ownership and rental of Carrot Common, the nine-store mall partly owned by The Big Carrot. The fund would ensure that Carrot members would not benefit from speculative land gains.

For more information contact Mary Lou Morgan, The Big Carrot, 355 Danforth Ave., Toronto. M4K 1N7; (416) 466-2129. ■

Across the Nation

Credit union finances worker co-op

With the help of a credit union and a community development organization, seven people in Sault Ste. Marie have solved their employment problems by organizing a worker-owned housing-renovation business. Offing Enterprises, a Sault-based community development corporation, helped the workers launch Total Control Renovations Inc. as an example of a community-level response to unemployment problems. The business was organized without any government assistance.

"The company is run as a worker co-op," explains company president Laurie Burry. "Everyone is an equal owner with 100 shares and everybody has a role

on the board of directors."

Despite a detailed business plan, the group could not arrange financing from the banks. In part, the bankers were hesitant because the co-op members' skills were in the trades rather than business management. Harry Davis, the loans manager at ASCU Community Credit Union, saw things differently. Davis negotiated a general security agreement with Total Control and provided a substantial line of credit. The credit union officer was also impressed with the community economic development aspect of the proposal. "We're in this partly because of the concept, as an example of what can be done," Davis explained.

Fred Griswal, a board member of Offing Enterprises, said the idea for the business arose

when local church groups explored ways to address unemployment problems through community economic development projects. The group was inspired by the success of the Mondragon co-ops.

Reprinted from "Update" newsletter, Ontario Credit Union Central, 180 Duncan Mills Rd., Don Mills, Ontario; (416) 441-2900.

Credit unions and CED

On June 18 and 19, the Ontario Credit Union Central sponsored a workshop on community economic development for credit union officials. The workshop helped inform Ontario credit union leaders about how to get involved. ■



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Across the Nation

QUÉBEC

Claude Carbonneau

Un rôle accru pour la S.D.C.

La Société de développement des coopératives sera appelée à fournir de l'aide technique au démarrage de nouvelles entreprises coopératives. Il s'agit donc d'un rôle accru par rapport à celui que le Gouvernement du Québec lui avait demandé de jouer depuis sa transformation en Société d'état en juin 1984.

Ce mandat renouvelé que lui a confié le Ministre Daniel Johnson n'est cependant pas une activité nouvelle pour la Société. En effet, au moment de sa création en 1977, la S.D.C. offrait aux coopératives des services, tant sur le plan technique que financier. En 1984, le Gouvernement lui avait demandé de se concentrer sur le montage financier des dossiers. Les agents de la Société avaient cependant continué d'agir à titre de conseillers financiers auprès des coopératives.

Lors d'une rencontre avec le nouveau Conseil d'administration, Monsieur Johnson a rappelé que la S.D.C. avait fait l'objet d'un examen attentif au cours des derniers mois. L'expertise développée par la Société dans ses relations avec les coopératives et les besoins spécifiques de ce type d'entreprises ont justifié son maintien.

Dans ces interventions financières, la S.D.C. continuera de se préoccuper des retombées économiques des projets. Cela re-

joint d'ailleurs le mandat de la Société qui est de favoriser la création et le développement d'entreprises coopératives en vue d'assurer une participation accrue de la population à l'activité économique et le développement économique des régions et la création d'emplois dans ces régions.

Quant au secteur d'activités, le Gouvernement demande à la Société d'éviter de créer des

distorsions au égard à la constitution légale de l'entreprise. Il y aura donc lieu de canaliser l'aide financière octroyée dans les secteurs d'activités pour lesquels les autres types d'entreprises peuvent bénéficier d'une aide financière comparable. La Société et le Ministre entretiendront cependant un préjugé favorable à l'égard des secteurs qui ont traditionnellement évolués dans un mode coopératif.

Charlevoix: investissement de 150 000 \$ à l'abattoir coopératif

Malgré sa raison sociale, l'Abattoir coopératif de Charlevoix n'opérait jusqu'à maintenant qu'une charcuterie spécialisée dans les coupes commerciales et les produits de charcuterie. Il vient de se doter de l'équipement nécessaire pour procéder lui-même à l'abattage des animaux.

Cette entreprise avait été créée en 1983 pour prendre la relève de la charcuterie C.N. Simard Inc. Il est la propriété de ses quatre membres travailleurs. Au moment de son acquisition par la coopérative, l'entreprise avait été complètement renouée de façon à répondre à toutes les normes en vigueur. On avait également prévu l'espace nécessaire à la mise en place d'un petit abattoir. Ce nouvel investissement vise donc à compléter celui qui avait été réalisé initialement.

Grâce à cette addition, la Coopérative sera mieux en me-

sure de stabiliser les coûts et la qualité de ses approvisionnements. Elle pourra également mettre en valeur les sous-produits d'abattage. L'entreprise prévoit abattre principalement des agneaux et des moutons, une production relativement abondante dans cette région.



Regroupés en coopérative, les travailleurs de Fibres Donnite Inc. deviennent partenaires de leur entreprise

Les travailleurs de Fibres Donnite Inc. se sont regroupés en coopérative afin d'investir 170 000 \$ dans cette entreprise. Ils détiendront ainsi 27 pourcent des actions votantes de la compagnie et pourront participer encore plus activement à son développement. Fibres Donnite Inc. est une jeune entreprise de l'Estrie. Elle se spécialise dans le moulage de pièces en fibres de verre et en plastique. Elle réalise notamment des sous-contrats avec des entreprises comme Bombardier, Venmar, etc. Elle a également mis au point un recouvrement de planchers qui devrait bientôt être installé dans des véhicules de transport en commun.

Confrontée à une expansion très rapide, elle désire associer ses employés de façon à mieux faire face à la croissance. C'est donc sous forme d'une coopérative de travailleurs que la vingtaine d'employés de la compagnie investiront dans l'entreprise. On s'attend à ce que le nombre d'employés double très rapidement ce qui se répercutera automatiquement sur le membership de la coopérative.

Un fonds de développement pour les coopératives de travailleurs

La Fédération québécoise des coopératives de travail est en voie de se donner un fonds de développement. Constitué à partir

des sommes investies par les membres des coopératives, ce fonds aura le double avantage de permettre aux travailleurs de se constituer un fonds de pension en plus de doter le mouvement d'un fonds de développement. La constitution de ce fonds se réalisera grâce à la collaboration du fonds de solidarité des travailleurs du Québec (F.T.Q.) Pour sa mise en application, les dirigeants de la Fédération espèrent obtenir la collaboration de plusieurs organismes impliqués dans le développement coopératif, notamment la S.D.C., le fonds de solidarité de la F.T.Q., le mouvement Desjardins, etc.



Un Journal pour les coopératives forestières

Depuis quelques mois, le réseau des coopératives forestières s'est donné un nouveau moyen de communication. Il s'agit du *Journal, Le coopérateur forestier*. Les dirigeants de la Conférence des coopératives forestières du Québec ont voulu ainsi créer un lien essentiel entre tous les intervenants du milieu. Ce journal permettra de bien informer les milliers de membres qui pos-

sèdent cet important réseau de coopératives de travailleurs. Il est publié à tous les deux mois.

On peut joindre les responsables de ce journal en s'adressant au 2833, Le Prévost, C.P. 8945, Sainte-Foy, P.Q. G1V 4N8.

La SDC et les coopératives de travail

Au cours de la dernière année financière, la Société de développement des coopératives a autorisé 41 aides financières pour un total de 8,4 millions de dollars. Il faut souligner que 30 de ces 41 aides financières ont été destinées à des coopératives de travailleurs. La part que reçoit ces coopératives est constamment en croissance à la S.D.C. De façon cumulative, ces entreprises se sont vues attribuer 55 pourcent de toutes les aides accordées par la Société. A elles seules, les coopératives forestières ont reçu 18 aides pour un total de 4 470 000 \$. Cela représente donc plus de la moitié des sommes autorisées par la S.D.C.

Les coopératives funéraires se donnent une fédération

Les coopératives funéraires du Québec sont en train de jeter les bases d'un regroupement formel. Plusieurs coopératives ont déjà manifesté leur accord à la création de cette fédération et les promoteurs espèrent rallier l'ensemble du mouvement au cours des prochains mois.

Across the Nation

Increased role for S.D.C.

The Society for the Development of Co-operatives (S.D.C.) has been asked to provide technical aid in the startup of new co-operative enterprises. This new responsibility is an addition to its role as set out by the Government of Quebec in June of 1984 when it was made a crown corporation.

The new mandate, however, does not mean new activities for the Society. From the time it was created in 1977, the S.D.C. has provided co-operatives with technical as well as financial services. In 1984 the government asked it to concentrate on providing accounting and financial management expertise to its clients. Officers of the S.D.C. have continued to act as financial consultants to co-operatives.

At a meeting with the new administrative council, Daniel Johnson, the Minister, noted that the S.D.C. had been the object of an attentive examination over recent months. The expertise developed by the Society in its relations with co-operatives had justified its continued existence.

In its financial interventions, the S.D.C. continues to focus on the economic relapse of projects. This coincides with the Society's mandate which is to promote the creation and development of co-operative enterprises with a view to ensuring an increased participation of the population in economic activity and regional economic development and job creation.

In an effort to ensure a comparable level of funding for co-operative and non-co-operative enterprises, the Government has asked the S.D.C. to avoid creating distortions by favouring the co-operative form of business enterprise. Within certain sectors of activity, allowance will be made to channel financial to other types of enterprises. The Society and the Minister hope, however, to foster a favourable response from economic sectors which have traditionally been areas of co-operative involvement.

Co-operative abattoir

Despite its trade-name, the Cooperative Abattoir of Charlevoix until now operated a meat-cutting operation specializing in commercial cuts, coldcuts and meat products. It has recently acquired the equipment necessary to begin slaughtering animals itself.

The enterprise was created in 1983 to take over from the C.N. Simard company. It is owned by its four member-workers. At the time of takeover by the co-operative, the enterprise had been completely modernized. Space was allotted for the installation of a small abattoir. The \$150,000 investment for the abattoir is in accordance with the original plan.

Thanks to this addition, the co-operative will be in a better position to stabilize the costs and the quality of its supplies. The company will also be able to

market by-products of the abattoir operation. The company expects to slaughter mainly lamb and sheep, which are relatively abundant in the region.

Fibres Donnites co-operative

Workers at Fibres Donnite Inc. have formed a co-operative in order to invest \$170,000 in the enterprise. They will hold 27 per cent of the voting shares in the company and will be able to participate more actively in its development. Fibres Donnite Inc. is a young enterprise in the Estrie region. It specializes in products molded from fibreglass and plastic. Much of its business is subcontracts with firms such as Bombardier and Venmar. The company has also developed a floor covering for installation in public transport vehicles.

Confronted by the prospect of rapid expansion, the company wanted to include its employees in order to better deal with its growth. The twenty or so employees will invest in the enterprise via a worker co-operative. It is expected that the number of employees will double in the near future. This should result in an increased membership in the co-operative.

A journal for forestry co-ops

The network of forestry co-operatives in Quebec has recently started a journal (*Journal, Le coopérateur forestier*) as a new

Across the Nation

vehicle of communication. The journal will be published every two months.

For subscriptions or more information, contact 2833, Le Prévost, C.P. 8945, Sainte-Foy, P.Q. G1V 4N8.

S.D.C. aid to worker co-operatives

Over the last fiscal year, the Society for the Development of Co-operatives (S.D.C.) authorized 41 applications for financial assistance for a total of 8.4 million dollars. Thirty of the 41 enterprises to receive aid were worker co-operatives. The share of S.D.C. funding to co-operatives is constantly increasing; co-operatives now account for 55 per cent of all financial assistance requests awarded by the Society to date. Forestry co-operatives alone have received a total of 18 grants for a total of \$4,470,000. This is more than half of all the money authorized by the S.D.C.

Development fund for worker co-operatives

The Quebec federation of worker co-operatives is establishing a development fund. Constituted initially of money invested by its co-operative members, this fund will permit workers to establish a pension fund as well as a development fund. The constitution of these funds will be realized thanks to the collaboration of solidarity funds of F.T.Q. (a federation of

Quebec workers). The directors of the worker co-operative federation hope as well to obtain the co-operation of several other organizations involved in co-operative development, notably the S.D.C. and the Desjardins movement, among others.

Funeral co-operatives form a federation

Funeral co-operatives in Quebec are laying the groundwork for a formal federation. Many co-operatives have already indicated their support for such a federation, and the promoters hope to rally additional support over the course of the coming months.

Claude Carbonneau may be contacted at the Société de développement des coopératives, 430 Chemin Ste. Foy, Québec City, Québec G1S 2J5; (418) 687-9221. (Translated by Jo-Anne Andre) ■

NEW BRUNSWICK

Maureen Edgett

New development

The Miramichi Worker Co-operative, a community-based coalition of organizations which promote worker co-operatives in the Miramichi region of New Brunswick, has hired Co-operative Work Consultants, a worker co-op consulting firm, to do a feasibility study of several proposals for regional development.

The cost of the four-stage study is being shared by the Canadian Mental Health Association, PLURA (an inter-denominational church group) and Local 689 of the Canadian Paper Workers Union.

Early in May the Miramichi Worker Co-op and the Miramichi Solidarity Action Committee jointly sponsored a conference ("Topshee on the Miramichi") which was attended by 70 people.

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This conference brought together diverse groups and gave participants an opportunity to learn about the worker co-op idea.

Co-operation between co-operatives

The Miramichi Worker Co-operative, a small manufacturer of lawn furniture, is helping to market products from small Mexican and Guatemalan hand-craft worker co-operatives. The arrangement was made through a Christian Foundation and the personal contact of Roberto Garay, a member of the Miramichi Worker Co-op. The products, including rugs, wool sweaters and belts, are sold at the weekly farmers' market and at other events in New Brunswick where the Miramichi Worker Co-op has an information table.

This arrangement, with the Miramichi Worker Co-op taking only a small commission on the sales, enables the workers in Mexico and Guatemala to receive a much larger return than would be possible if the goods were sold in their own country. Although the Miramichi Worker Co-op is itself only in the development stage, it is fostering the principle of "co-operation between co-operatives".

For more information, write to **John McLaughlin, 98 Henderson St., Chatham, N.B. E1N 2S1.**

Maureen Edgett can be contacted at 76 Woodleigh Street, Moncton, N.B. E1C 8Z8; (506) 384-8563.■

NOVA SCOTIA

Grant MacDonald

Tony Scoggins, co-manager of the Community Development Co-operative of Nova Scotia, told the annual meeting of the Nova Scotia Co-op Council in Truro that the co-operative movement can assist the worker co-op movement by "acting as a resource base for advice and by acting as a funding arm through the credit union movement."

The Community Development Co-operative of Nova Scotia also has a loan pool of \$50,000 -- investments in the pool coming from member organizations in the Atlantic region.

The CDC's workplan for 1987 calls for assistance to six worker co-op projects. At the Nova Scotia Co-op Council's meeting, John Chisholm stated that the CDC is primarily concerned with the promotion and development of worker co-ops. The intention,

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he said, is to develop a federation of co-operatives as a support base for new and existing worker co-operatives.

An impetus to the CDC has come from the Innovations grant received by St. Francis Xavier University. This federal-government grant has made it possible for St. Francis Xavier to make available to the CDC its co-managers, Tony Scoggins and Ron Ryan.

For further information, write to the CDC of Nova Scotia, Box X, St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia; (902) 867-2191.

Grant MacDonald is an adult educator at Henson College, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3H 3J5; (902) 424-2526.■

Health Co-operatives

Margie MacDonald

The Nova Scotia Co-op Council and the Federation of Community Health Clinics of Nova Scotia have been meeting with the province's Department of Development about the feasibility of health co-operatives as an alternative to the more traditional form of health-care delivery. It is anticipated that a health co-operative worker will be hired to assist communities interested in exploring the health-co-operative option.

In a province where the co-operative movement is already strong, health co-operatives make

a lot of sense. In the co-operative tradition it is important for people to have control over their health care, and such care is not just an individual's responsibility but a community responsibility. The health co-op model could involve both worker and consumer control.

Further information about the development of health co-operatives in Nova Scotia, contact Johanna Oosterveld, North End Community Health Association, 2165 Gottingen Street, Halifax, N.S. B3K 3B5.■

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Colette Arsenault
David Carrington

Les P'tits Acadiens

La Coopérative "Les P'tits Acadiens" Ltée has started selling children's garments at its factory outlet. The garments should be available soon in other stores on the Island and throughout the Maritimes under the trade name "Les P'tits Acadiens".

The five worker co-op members have completed a 12-week training program on the roles and responsibilities of shareholders in a worker co-op and on basic business administration and marketing.

The co-op members also took six weeks of training in clothing manufacturing at Holland College in Summerside under the super-

vision of Aggie-Rose Reddin, teacher of Fashion Technique and Design.

The last phase of training at the co-op's manufacturing outlet in Urbainville was on production, quality control, marketing, ordering, shipping and receiving. The co-op was fortunate to have the assistance of Lloyd Biggs from the Federal Business Bank, who is an expert in the needle trade.

For more information, contact Colette Arsenault, general manager, La Coopérative Les P'tits Acadiens Ltée, R. R. #3, Urbainville, Prince Edward Island C0B 2E0; (902) 854-2218.

Briefs wanted

The PEI Co-operative Development Committee is receiving briefs that will provide the basis for its report expected in early 1988.

There is a new forestry worker co-op (specializing in silviculture) in the Montague area and a new fishing co-op in Murray Harbour.

Caledonia Products, a 30-member community development co-op, is planning a daycare and a tannery. It is also collaborating with the St. Francis Xavier Extension Dept, which has been the recipient of a federal government Innovations grant.

For more information, contact David Carrington, Caledonia Products Co-op, R.R. 1, Montague, P.E.I. C0A 1R0.■

ALTERNATIVES TO UNEMPLOYMENT

by

John Osmond

Shaping our own future

One of the latest publications on the future of work takes a more useful approach. John Osmond's book, *Work in the Future: Alternatives to Unemployment*, is less concerned with making predictions than with showing us what we can do now to start shaping the future we want. Osmond tells us the stories of mutual-aid groups in the U.K. who have set about designing their own jobs and changing the shape of their own communities.

His stories are memorable. And though few of these experiments could be transplanted in total to other countries, there are lots of lessons and plenty of good ideas.

Most of Osmond's groups not only create jobs but also improve the general quality of life in their own communities. They do this either by bringing new services to a neglected area or by taking over existing services to ensure that profits stay in the region.

Inner-city football

The Pleck is an impoverished inner-city neighbourhood, just north of Birmingham, with an unemployment rate of 30 per cent. The Pleck Community Association was set up to enable this neglected area to take control of its own destiny.

Since its founding in 1982, this remarkable association has set up a day centre for the unemployed, providing a meeting-place and work experience, and has generated all kinds of new ventures. A gardening project

provides home-grown vegetables for the elderly who can also get free compressed paper-fuel blocks from a reclamation group. Another team has cleared one-and-a-half miles of derelict canal and stocked it with fish for anglers.

The church hall now houses a daycare centre and the Pleck Association has set up laundry facilities for six highrise blocks of flats where in 1985 the unemployment rate soared to 81 per cent.

To help keep cash within the Pleck, the Association took over the local milk delivery round and a popular fish-and-chip van -- small, mobile businesses which used to take their profits out of the area at the end of each day.

The Pleck also boasts a community co-op set up to nurture a group of small worker co-ops. The community co-op renovated and operates a block of vandalized garages, formerly owned by the council, but now generating profits which are ploughed back into new ventures.

The most surprising new venture is an American-football team, the Pleck Titans, complete with a coach on loan from Detroit. American football is the fastest growing sport in the U.K., and the Pleck organizers are confident that their team not only brings some glamour into the lives of the unemployed but also will create jobs when the team goes professional.

Resourcesaver, Ltd. is a community business set up by the Bristol branch of Friends of the Earth. It employs 110 people collecting and recycling materials which would otherwise add to the

Work in the future: alternatives to unemployment, Thorsons Publishing Group, Wellingborough, U.K., 1986, £5.99.

Reviewed by Robert Briscoe

In this age of unemployment there is at least one growth industry -- the writing and publishing of books on *the future of work!* Word processors in electronic cottages around the world are humming away happily, churning out visions of the future. One eminent reviewer dismissed the lot as "post-industrial babble". He may well have a point.

Futurists seem to fall into two camps. First there are the optimists who expect the new technologies to abolish toil and to lead us inevitably into a decentralized, co-operative society, characterized by self-help and by mutual aid.

Then there are the pessimists who confidently predict the dawning of a grim, technological apartheid consisting of a wealthy minority of highly skilled technocrats and their financial backers and the rest of us. At best, we will be condemned to making do with poorly-paid service jobs. At worst, we'll be joining the ranks of the "never-worked", the people who have never had a paid job of any kind.



city's waste-disposal problems. The Resourcesaver ventures include groups which make new products out of old office furniture; a roof- and wall-insulation firm employing 12 full-timers; a resource-collecting company which uses horses and carts to pick up a cornucopia of throw-aways, including 60 tons of paper a week; a firm which makes paper from recycled fibres; and Scrapstore, a nationwide chain of shops which sells discarded industrial leftovers converted into materials for playgroups.

Other community ventures in Osmond's book include the Cyclepath Project which has already built 700 miles of paths for cyclists and which has surveyed another 3,000 miles of disused railroads and canal towpaths. Then there's the energy group in Wales which has cut energy consumption in their community by 20 per cent, and a bevy of worker co-ops including a computer firm which designs software for Britain's steel foundries.

The economist E.F. Schumacher argued that work has three important functions over and above providing us with a source of income: worthwhile work produces necessary and useful goods and services; it enables us to develop our talents; and it provides us with opportunities for helping each other. Osmond's survey shows us how thousands of people are managing to create just that kind of work for themselves.

Robert Briscoe is currently on staff at the University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji Islands.

Gestión empresarial de la cooperativa de trabajo asociado, by Juan Jose Barrera Cerezal, 1985, published and distributed by the Servicio de Publicaciones, Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, Lope de Vega 38, 28014 Madrid, Spain, 291 pp.

Written by Juan Jose Barrera, an economist with considerable experience as a technical advisor to various co-operatives in Spain, this book on worker co-operative management is very practical and full of formulas and tables. For a Canadian, its value would be in the detailed explanations of the economic, accounting, legal, tax and social security structures of Spanish worker co-operatives and the ways in which these could be used to develop our own models here in Canada.

Beyond Isolation: Constructing a Co-ops Sector in the UK Economy, by Martin Stott, 1986, published by ICOM, 7 & 8 Corn Exchange, Leeds, England LS1 7BP (£3.30).

Using considerable statistical evidence, this book makes a thorough survey of the current state of worker co-ops and their support network in the U.K. It then looks at what will be needed to develop fully an independent worker co-op sector and eventually an alternative economy. The final chapter discusses ways in which worker co-ops might become a significant force in the U.K. economy.

Model Employment Contract for Worker Co-operatives, by ICOM Legal Working Party, 1986, published by ICOM Co-Publications, 8 Bradbury Street, London N.16 8JN, U.K., 13 pp. (£2.80).

This pack provides co-operatives with the information needed to produce their own employment contract. Designed for Britain and based on practical experience in the workers' co-op movement in the U.K., the model contract is used there with only minor amendments or as a starting point for co-ops wanting to draw up their own agreement. It covers job description, holidays, sick pay, health and safety, maternity provisions, pensions, anti-discrimination issues, disciplinary and grievance procedures. For Canadian co-operatives, the kit would help in identifying issues and preparing a draft contract, although the final contract should be reviewed by the co-op's legal counsel to ensure that it conforms to government legislation.

Employee Ownership and Corporate Growth in High Technology Companies. Available from NCEO, 927 S. Walter Reed Drive, Arlington, Virginia, 22204, 1985, (members: \$5.00; others: \$8.00).

This 1985 study by the National Center for Employee Ownership studies the relationship between employee ownership and job creation in electronics and computer companies. It compares the performance of firms that offer some or all of their employees ownership and firms that do not.

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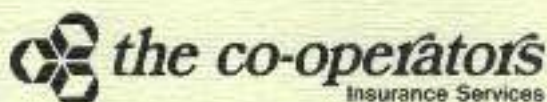
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