

W O R K E R

CO-OP

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of Economic Democracy
in Canada

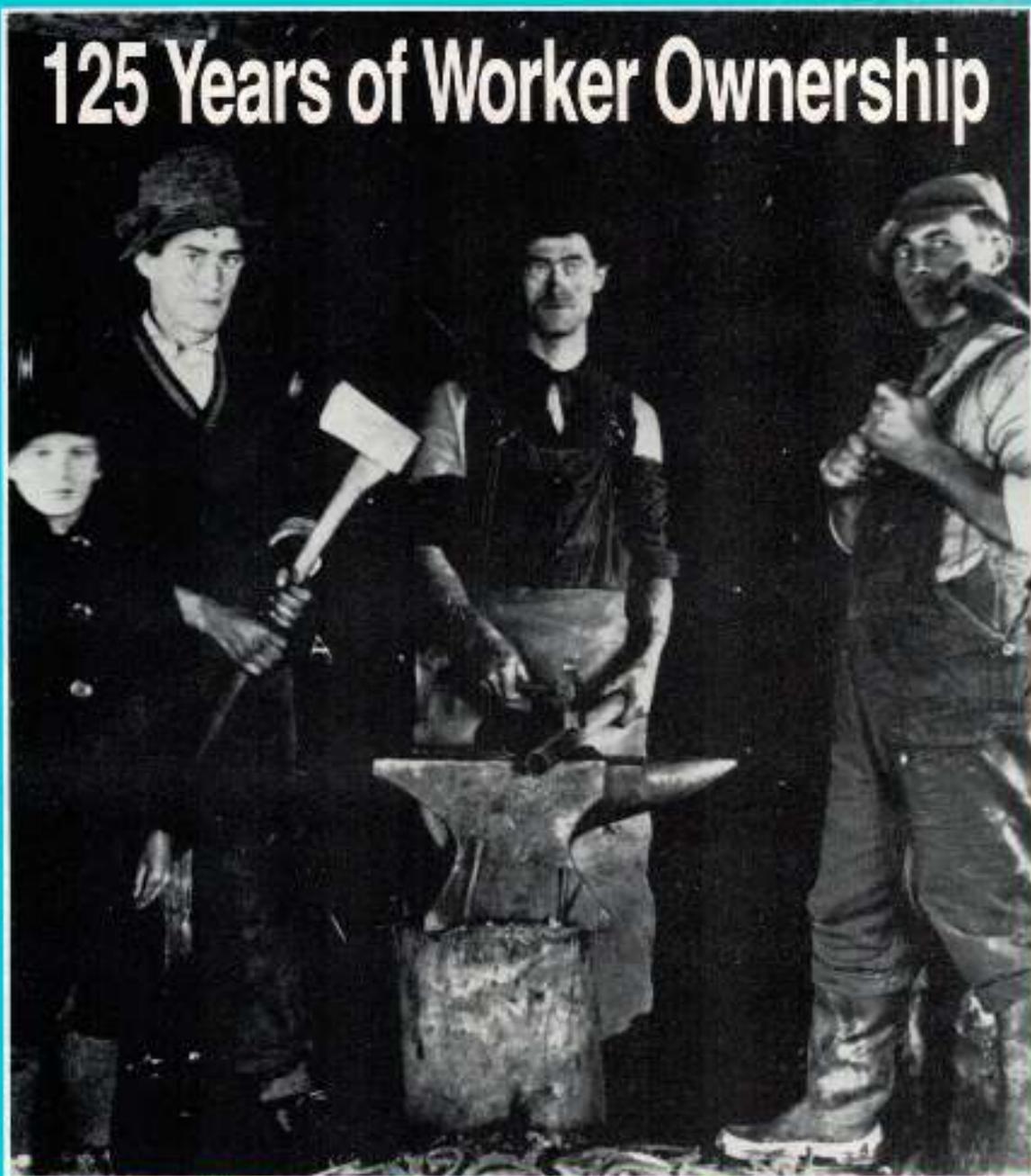
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edited by Jack Quarter and George Melnyk

The current interest in new forms of ownership of the economy stems from a number of sources: from worker buyouts to prevent plant shut-downs to workers' demands for self-expression and democratic control. The inability of established economic organizations to meet even traditional needs has led to the belief that worker ownership is "an idea whose time has come."

This book is about a form of business — the worker co-operative — in which workers are owners. The essays provide a record of the worker co-operative movement both as it stands at present and historically from the first experiments in the 1860s.

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CONTENTS

DEPARTMENTS

5 LETTERS

6 ACROSS THE COUNTRY
P.E.I. • Nova Scotia •
Newfoundland • Québec • Ontario
• Manitoba • Saskatchewan
• British Columbia

12 AROUND THE WORLD
China • Nigeria • U.S.A.
• Israel • France

14 SHOPTALK
The Problems of Success —
Vancouver's CRS.
By Mary Frost

35 REVIEWS
David Dale of New Lanark and
Developing Successful Worker Co-operatives



FEATURES

16 FORUM
Co-operation Among Social
Investment Funds.
By Ted Jackson

18 FORUM
The Lessons of History in
Financing Co-operative Development.
By Paul Demck

20 PROFILE
Cape Gael
Associates Co-op.
By Veronica Gilles

22 Organized Labour Encouraged
Worker Co-ops in the 19th Century.
By Grant MacDonald

25 The Workers' Co-operative of New
Ontario Was a Political
Battleground in the 1930s.
By Peter Vesilade

28 Worker Co-operatives in Québec:
1965-1969.
By Alain Bidaud and
Ginette Lafrenière

32 Skeptics About Worker Co-ops —
George Keen and the Co-operative
Union of Canada: 1909-1945.
By Ian MacPherson

NEXT ISSUE

Women Take on Key Roles in the Movement.

EDITORIAL

Learning from our history

This issue of the magazine is the second to focus on the history of worker co-operatives in Canada. The first was published in the Spring of 1987 (Volume 6, No. 4). In an overview piece in that issue, Ian MacPherson made the case that historically the worker co-op movement failed to be embraced either by unionized workers or by co-operative activists.

In searching for features for this current issue, I was struck by how little historical work on co-operatives is being done. A historical perspective is an essential ingredient in understanding the present as well as reshaping the future.

The history of worker co-operatives in Canada is very much an exercise in recovering an organizational form that functioned not just outside the Canadian mainstream, but also outside the co-operative mainstream. That recovery should include the subjective experience of the participants, the role of women and the many different and conflicting points of view regarding strategies for development.

In embarking on the current phase of developing worker co-operatives, it is important to appreciate the experiments that started in the 1860s and have continued in spurts since that time. Although current circumstances in Canada may be different than in the past, having an awareness of the difficulties that have beset worker co-ops historically will assist us today in dealing creatively with the problems that the movement faces.

Grant MacDonald
Historical Features
Editor

W O R K E R
CO-OP

Worker Co-op is an independent quarterly magazine produced and distributed by the Worker Co-operative Network of Canada. The French section is prepared by the Co-operative de développement régional de Montréal-Laval.

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LETTERS

Announcement for letters

Worker Co-op welcomes letters and conference information from its readers.

Write to: Jack Quarter, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 252 Bloor Street W., Toronto, Ontario M5S 1V6; (416) 923-6641, Ext. 2576.

Greetings from the U.K.

We have chanced to see a copy of your Summer '88 issue of the *Worker Co-op* magazine. We were most impressed by the magazine as a whole, but the front-cover illustration was of particular interest to us. We are a co-operative that specializes in screenprinting designs on to leisurewear (t-shirts, etc.), and in the main for political and campaign groups. We thought you might be interested to learn that the t-shirt being worn by the Zimbabwean co-op worker was printed by us for Anti-Apartheid Enterprises — another worker co-op.

We extend our greetings to the co-operative movement throughout Canada, and wish you every success in the future.

Yours faithfully,

Peter Cham
Robotnik 4 Stoney St.
The Lace Market
Nottingham United Kingdom
NG1 1LG
Phone: (0802)586243

We Agree

Congratulations on an excellent issue!

Fraternally,
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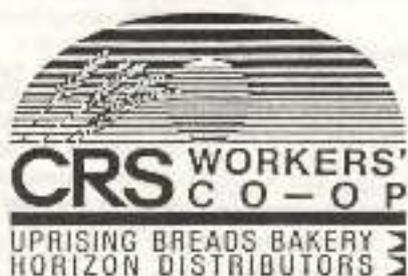
Lynn Murphy, Centre for the Study of Co-operatives.

Thank You

We are grateful to Lynn Murphy, who has given her special touch to the design and typesetting of the magazine during this past year; Luc Labelle, who as editor of the French section helped to break down the barriers between the two solitudes; and Louise Matchett, who has kept a watchful eye on the subscription list and the finances. We wish them well with their future undertakings.

Correction

In the previous issue of the *Worker Co-op* magazine, it was stated that there have been "about 100" worker buy-outs in Italy during the past decade (p. 24). The correct figure is 1,000 worker buy-outs.



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ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Chippin' away in P.E.I.

By Amand Arsenault

Wellington — The Olde Barrel Potato Chip Co-operative is making new inroads in marketing its product in the Atlantic provinces. All of New Brunswick is covered with Nova Scotia being developed quite successfully. An occasional truckload is now going to Ottawa and Toronto with the possibility of distribution in the eastern townships of Quebec in the near future.

The co-operative presently has 10 worker-owners with an additional eight people working the night shift. Olde Barrel is developing new flavours that will be unique to the Maritime provinces.

Sales for the co-operative's first year were slightly short of a projected \$1.25 million; second-year sales are projected at \$1.6 million.

Les Grands Acadiens

Urbainville — Les P'tits Acadiens, a worker co-operative specializing in children's clothing, is now producing an adult line of fleece pants and T-shirts. The co-operative, consisting of five women, recently acquired two contracts to produce the adult lines. Business has been brisk during 1989, and there is talk of bringing in a night shift to meet deadlines.

Amand Arsenault is manager of the Evangeline Regional Services Centre, P.O. Box 58, Wellington Station, Prince Edward Island COB 2E0; (902) 854-3131.

Co-op Ark major tourist attraction

By Frank Driscoll

Spy Point, Prince Edward Island — The Spy Point Co-operative Ltd., a 40-member community-based development co-operative, has acquired the "Spy Point Ark." The concept of "The Ark" was developed in the '70s by the New Alchemy Insti-



P.E.I. Potato Chip Co-operative at Urbainville.

tute of Woods Hole, Massachusetts, as a self-contained bioshelter using the wind, the sun and organic techniques to produce chemical-free food in a self-contained greenhouse. The original structure, built with federal funds on provincially-owned land (a beautiful, 130-acre peninsula in eastern P.E.I.) was initially successful, but fell on hard times when money became scarce.

The co-op's seven-member board, led by local credit-union manager Wayne Kane, approached the province and ACOA, the federal regional development agency, with a proposal that will see the property and building being leased to the co-op on a long-term basis for a nominal sum, while ACOA will contribute up to \$232,000 on a 50/50 matching basis. The co-op has raised a \$100,000 loan; about \$50,000 in some job creation money from the Canada Employment Commission; and a seed-capital grant from the province. The end result will be an education-tourist attraction; a 60-seat quality restaurant; 11 rooms of accommodation; and a class-one ocean swimming-beach facility. The educational component of the complex called the "Interpretation" involves walking trails, bird and seal watching as well as the "Ark itself." There will be a section on how the community came together to create the co-operative, and what it means to the local economy.

Since one of the objectives of the co-operative is to create jobs, members will be able to work on the project. This opens the possibility that the project could be

converted to a worker co-op in the future.

The Ark is expected to attract up to 30,000 visitors and create 20 seasonal jobs when in full operation in June, 1990.

Co-operator promoted in P.E.I. cabinet

Charlottetown — Leonce Bernard, P.E.I.'s minister responsible for co-operative development, has been appointed Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs. He retains Community Economic Development (which includes co-ops) from his former Ministry of Industry. Bernard has also been assigned to the Fisheries and Aquaculture Portfolio, as well as the chairmanship of the Rural Development Board. This new board will direct policies for development of rural communities.

Bernard is a long-time co-operator and former manager of



The Honourable Leonce Bernard, P.E.I.'s Minister of Industry.

the Evangeline Credit Union in the Acadian Region of P.E.I.

Frank Driscoll is the manager of co-operative development at the Government of Prince Edward Island, Box 2000, Charlottetown, P.E.I. CIA 7N8; (902) 306-4240.

Small boom in Nova Scotia

By Veronica Gillies

In Nova Scotia, several co-ops are in the planning stages and four others have been incorporated in the past few months. Here's some information about them:

Going Places Workers Co-op

Halifax — This worker co-operative couldn't have picked a more appropriate name. It has only been operating since March and already has enough contracts to provide 15 of its 17 members with full-time work doing painting, renovating, odd jobs and insulating.

Valerie Carvery, a resident of Uniacke Square in Halifax, took the initiative by organizing a meeting of 10 other people from the area who told her they wanted to work. Thirty people showed up at a second meeting, and so far the story is a happy one.

Promise Land Forestry Services Co-op

Port Bickerton — In April, Clifton Sangster, Mike Porter

and Arnold Padolsky formed their own silviculture worker co-operative in Guysborough County. Encouraged by the success of Future Forestry Services Co-op of New Glasgow, another silviculture worker co-op, the men called their new business Promise Land Forestry Services Co-op to indicate their commitment to forest renewal. "We worked under private company contractors, and we always did a good job," says Sungster. "Contractors don't pay workers who make an extra effort any more money for doing a good job. We finally said, 'Enough's enough!'"

The Green Butler Landscaping Co-op**

Richmond — People in the Richmond County/Strait area now have help keeping their grass green. The Green Butler Landscaping co-op of St. Peter's incorporated as a worker co-op in May. Members — Clair Rankin, Charlie Williamson and Paul Pate — do roto-tilling, laying sod, commercial and residential landscaping and maintenance.

Mabou Wreath Makers Co-op

Inverness — Some people in Inverness County are getting into the Christmas spirit early. The four members of the new Mabou Wreath Makers Co-operative are already planning for next year's busy Christmas season. They decided to form a worker co-op after participating in a course sponsored by the Inco Business Development Centre for local people interested in learning to make wreaths. Instead of making plain balsam-fir wreaths this year, the women plan to decorate them and market them directly to the consumer to increase profits.

Educational Video

Antigonish — The Innovations Project is producing an educational video about worker co-ops in Nova Scotia. The 20-minute production will focus on four worker co-ops — Future Forestry Services Co-op, The Greenhouse Co-op, Constructors Co-op and



Cape Gael Associates Co-op. The video is available from the Innovations Project, Extension Department, St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, N.S. B2G 1C0; (902) 867-5165.

Worker co-op support agency

Antigonish — After a good turnout, there was an optimistic feeling at the Nova Scotia Community Development Co-operative's Annual General Meeting. Representation on the Board of Directors changed dramatically when worker co-op members were elected to fill four out of nine positions. Ron Grunt, a member of Future Forestry Services Co-op, was elected as president of the Board of Directors, making it the first time this position and CDC manager both have been filled by members of worker co-ops. Other worker co-op members elected to the Board were Kathleen MacNearney, The Greenhouse Co-op; Clifford White, Halifax Workers Co-op; and Betty Crosby, Umbrella Co-op. A highlight of CDC's activities was assistance provided to Cape Care Co-operative in Sydney and other co-ops which have incorporated recently.

Manager, Peter Hough, reported that workshops on financial management, marketing and membership policies were given by the CDC to existing worker co-ops. Another positive development is the creation of a venture-capital company that will enable the CDC to give financial support to worker co-ops.

Co-op tackles illiteracy

Guysborough — Mulgrave Road Theatre Co-op's next production will deal with the difficult problems of illiteracy. But none of Mulgrave Road's actors will perform in it. Instead, the performers will be five people from northeastern Nova Scotia without any prior professional theatre experience.

Mulgrave Road has received funding from Employment and Immigration Canada's Job Development Program for this "Al-

There was a good turnout and lots of optimism following the Community Development Co-operative's Annual General Meeting in April. Worker co-op representation on the Board of Directors was increased dramatically at the meeting.

ternative Learning Project". Supported by a team of Mulgrave Road's theatre professionals, the five people hired for the 16-week program will train as theatre workers, develop a script and create the play. The project will culminate in a tour of the play July 4-14.

Veronica Gillies is Communications Assistant with the Innovations Project, St. Francis of Xavier Extension, Antigonish, Nova Scotia B2G 1C0; (902) 867-5165.

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ACROSS THE COUNTRY

New development policy in Quebec

By Claude Carbonneau**
(translated by
Rosemary Oliver)

Québec City — In an effort to encourage the conversion of privately-owned companies to worker co-operatives and also the start-up of larger ventures than is normal for worker co-operatives, la Société de développement des coopératives (SDC), the government agency that finances co-operative development, is encouraging "joint ventures," that is, arrangements in which a worker co-operative is often a minority (though significant) shareholder in its place of work, but it also has an opportunity to expand and to participate in an important way in management.

The prototype of the joint-venture approach was the revival of the closed saw mill in Sacre-Coeur. Under this arrangement, a co-operative of the workers (UNISACO) owns one-third of the venture and also is paid a management fee. Another worker co-op (BOISACO, specializing in forestry) owns another third and the local community owns one-third. The business is in good health and profitable so far.

Another interesting example is Normick Chambord, believed to be the most modern sign-production factory in North America. Located in the Lac St. Jean region among many of Quebec's forestry co-ops, the Chambord plant cost \$60 million. The shareholdings are divided as follows: a co-operative of the workers owns 14.5 per cent; a syndicate of seven forestry co-operatives owns 14.5 per cent; local investors own 20 per cent; and Normick Peron, a privately-owned plywood company owns the majority, 51 per cent.

Within this arrangement existing shareholders are given the right of first refusal if one of the stakeholders decides to sell some or all of its shares. Also, in any expansion each stakeholder is guaranteed the right to maintain

the same percentage of shares in the company. The worker co-op and the syndicate of worker co-ops each are guaranteed one member on the board of directors.

There are now five joint ventures involving worker co-operatives in Quebec and three others are in the process of development. The SDC is very supportive of joint ventures for future investments involving worker co-operatives.

Tax policy changes

Québec City — Until recently, worker co-operatives in Québec were forced by the Ministry of Revenue to treat rebates to members as if they were salary adjustments. Because of this, the co-ops and their members had to pay, on top of income tax, additional contributions to medical insurance, pension funds, etc.

In its last budget, the Québec Ministry of Finance stated that rebates will no longer be considered as salary, but simply as taxable income. For members, the change is not very significant. However, for the co-ops it will result in important savings which should have an impact on their profitability.

In its last budget, the Québec government also modified the Régime d'investissement coopératif (RIC). One hundred and twenty-five per cent of eligible investments in the RIC are now tax deductible. Until now, the deduction had been 100 per cent.

With this change, members of worker co-ops have gained the same tax treatment as Quebecers who put their money in other investment programs. Also, the Québec Finance Minister has announced a relaxing of the rules regarding the withdrawal of funds invested in an RIC.

Claude Carbonneau is the communications officer with la Société de développement des coopératives, 430 Chemin Ste. Foy, Québec City, Québec G1S 2J5; (418) 687-9221.



M. Gérard D. Lévesque,
Ministre des Finances,
Gouvernement du Québec,
and the Minister responsible for la Société de développement des coopératives.

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ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Feedback wanted

Ottawa — The Federal Government is proposing to allow individuals to capitalize a significant portion of their unemployment insurance entitlement under certain circumstances. And as a result of the recommendations in the *Proposed Strategy for the Development of Worker Co-operatives*, the government is prepared "to consider" allowing prospective members of worker co-ops to capitalize their benefits "on a group basis."

A consultation system is being created which will review these changes to U.I. policy, among others. If you or your co-op have any opinions on this proposal, please contact the Co-op Secretariat, Sir John Carling Building, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0C5; (613) 995-4787. Feedback can also be sent through regional federations and resource groups.

Newfoundland

St. John's — The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Co-operatives' (NLFC) "Development Fund" has made loans to the Household Services Co-op of St. John's (a three-women cleaning co-op) and to the Bell Island Community Development Co-operative for the creation of a worker co-op bakery in this employment-starved community off the coast of St. John's. The Fund has more than \$500,000 of capital. Negotiations are underway with the Newfoundland and Labrador Development Corporation (a provincial government agency) to match the NLFC's contribution to the Fund and to secure a matching contribution from an appropriate federal agency (e.g., ACOA, CEIC). NLFC director, Glen Fitzpatrick, says "the plan is to do development work in partnership with the government, with the government paying a portion of the cost."

Down by the sea

The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Co-operatives views the rural areas of the province as the prime target for its development

work. Daycare and consumer retail co-ops are being planned for Fogo Island, off the coast of Gander, which already has a successful fishery co-op. That co-op, consisting of 700 fish catchers and 400 plant workers, received the 1988 "Newfoundland Expert Award" for achieving \$13 million of exports (\$11 million to the U.S. and \$2 million in capelin sales to Japan).

Senior Development specialist at the Federation, Jim Winter, foresees Fogo as "the Mondragon of Newfoundland."

For more information contact Jim Winter, the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Co-operatives, The Co-operators Building, Crosbie Place, P.O. Box 13369, Station A, St. John's, Newfoundland A1B 4B7; (709) 726-9631.

Ontario Tidbits

By Judith Brown

Toronto — Delicious Desserts, a bakery in Toronto's trendy Yorkville district, may soon be a worker co-op. Workers at the bakery have expressed interest in a conversion to a co-operative and have the support of the current owners. The results of the feasibility study, which is being financed through the Innovations project, are anticipated soon.

Political designs

Blackbird Design, a worker-owned design and typesetting house, has recently secured a \$16,000 loan from Bread and Roses Credit Union to update and computerize operations. Blackbird has been operating as a co-op since March, 1988. In addition to offering full graphics services, the three-member team utilizes its resources to promote progressive social change by supporting literacy groups, anti-poverty and third world organizations. The workers are unionized under the Industrial Workers of the World.

Nature's best

Another wild-rice harvesting co-op, part of the Manomin group, is looking for funding for a start-up to



Toronto's Inglis plant will close in November.

be located north of Toronto (see *Worker Co-op*, vol. 8, no. 2, p. 27). The products of the Manomin group, like many other natural foods, are growing in popularity.

Time running out on Inglis workers

Toronto — Inglis has officially announced that its Toronto plant with 600 workers will close on November 30 of this year, somewhat earlier than was anticipated. The earlier closing date puts extra pressure on the union (United Steelworkers of America) who with the support of municipal and provincial governments had commissioned Peat Marwick (assisted by Co-op Work

and the CCA Buyouts' Project) to study the feasibility of various options available to the workers, including a worker buyout.

Inglis's director of corporate and industrial relations, John Utter, has poured cold water on the worker-buyout option: "We're not interested in selling our technology to the workers." However, the president of the United Steelworkers local at Inglis, Mike Hersh, still is keeping all options open:

"Ideally, we'd like there to be a worker buyout. Ideally, we'd like to save 600 jobs. Ideally, we like to make washing machines at the Toronto plant. But we are open to any option that will preserve the workers' jobs for as long as possible."

Inglis, a subsidiary of the American corporation Whirlpool, made a \$2.1 million profit on its Toronto plant during the last fiscal year. The plant closing is blamed on the free-trade deal which phases out over 10 years a 12.5 per cent tariff on appliances. Whirlpool is expanding its operation in Clyde, Ohio, to service the Canadian market.

Judith Brown is a doctoral student in Community Psychology at The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 252 Bloor St. W., Toronto, Ontario M5S 1V6; (416) 923-6641, L. 2576. Our thanks to Ethel Phillips who has been doing the Ontario section of *Across the Country*.

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ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Ministers Conference will feature worker co-ops

By Myrna Barclay

Ottawa — The fourth annual Ministers/Co-operatives Conference will be held October 19 and 20 in Montreal. The Ministers responsible for co-operatives will be responding to a report, prepared by their provincial officials, that makes 25 recommendations for government action to assist worker co-ops in Canada (see *Worker Co-op*, Winter 1989).

Among the key recommendations are: a special fund for the promotion and development of worker co-ops (including resource groups) that would be accessible to each province on a cost-shared basis with the federal government; a capitalization program, including tax incentives and a co-operative investment fund; the right to use residual benefits in the unemployment insurance account as start-up funds for a worker co-op; the advance payment of up to six months of unemployment insurance as a loan for investment in a worker co-op start-up; and making relevant government legislation specific to worker co-operatives.

From now to October, the CCA Worker Co-op Advisory Committee will be building support in the co-op sector for worker co-op development and asking co-operatives for their assistance to encourage Ministers to: (1) attend the October Conference and (2) to implement the recommendations in the report.

The other main Conference topics are: (1) the co-op sector's

views on co-operative capital formation and (2) an introduction to co-operative healthcare models.

New co-op minister

Winnipeg — Manitoba co-operatives are off to an early start with their new Minister responsible for co-operatives — Honourable Ed Connery, Ministry of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. About one dozen co-operators had a brief introductory meeting with Connery, who has only been in his new post since April, 1989. The Minister was encouraged to attend the October Conference and commit his government to the recommendations of the report on worker co-op development.

The meeting was organized by the Manitoba Co-op Council, CCA Directors, Ed Klassen and Charlie Swanson, were part of the co-op delegation as was Al Huffman, a member of the CCA Worker Co-op Committee.

Garment workers study worker ownership

Toronto — The Worker Co-operative Buyout Project recently received a proposal from the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) to fund a pre-feasibility study. Many economists have forecast a loss of jobs in the Canadian garment and textiles industry because of the Free Trade deal. Unionized firms in this sector are by far the most vulnerable to the threat of a shutdown. Therefore, the ILGWU, in an effort to save as many jobs as possible, wants to investigate different options, including worker ownership, for stabilizing the unionized workforce and promoting

the Canadian garment industry. The project is tentatively called Toronto Sews. Coady Consulting of Toronto is doing the pre-feasibility work.

CCA Buyout Project

Toronto/Winnipeg — A draft of the research report has been completed. The report assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the worker co-op buyout option and makes recommendations for facilitating buyouts.

The project's advisory group in Winnipeg has hired a part-time co-ordinator to initiate technical assistance for prospective worker buyouts. The information packages produced by the project staff, Ethan Phillips and Louise Matchett in Toronto, should assist outreach efforts in Winnipeg.

Myrna Barclay is the Director of Education and Development at the Canadian Co-operative Association, 400-275 Bank St., Ottawa, Ontario K2P 2L6; (613) 238-6711. She is responsible for liaison with the worker co-operative sector. We'd like to extend our appreciation to Albert Chambers who has reported the national news for the magazine for the past three years. We wish him well in his new endeavours.

Manitoba Worker Co-op receives awards

By Dan Nicholson

Souris — Souris River Communications Co-operative, publishers of the *Souris Valley Echo*, recently received two first-place awards for its community newspaper.

The co-operative submitted the year's best education story and was awarded first place in its class for its editorial page. The presentation was made at the Manitoba Community Newspapers Association's (MCNA) annual Better Newspaper Competition. The *Echo* was rated third overall in its class, third for best special section, and third for typography (total visual appeal).

Heritage Award

The *Echo* also received a major heritage award for its work in preserving the traditional Gothic typeface used by modern-day Hutterites. The *Prix Manitoba Award* was in recognition of the Worker Co-op's achievement in creating a typeface for use on Macintosh computers.

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ACROSS THE COUNTRY

The elegant, computer-generated script is the most demanding project yet taken on by the two-year-old co-operative. Says Business Manager, James Ritchie, "The typeface required a lot of creativity and caring." The letters were created from samples provided by the New Dale Hutterite Colony in southwestern Manitoba. In all, 60 characters were scanned, adjusted and incorporated into the typeface. In order to accommodate modern additions, such as dollar signs, additional characters had to be extrapolated from old ones.

Ritchie, and co-op members, Blair Lindbloom and Eric Raine, have been working on the Hutterite script, part-time, for almost a year. The Hutterites could not use off-the-shelf German word processors because of the five-century-old diphthongs that have been dropped from the modern script. Although the Hutterites are gradually adjusting their spoken dialect to modern High German, they continue to hold to their ancient spelling conventions. This is particularly important in that their own literature is entirely written in the older script.

Computers have made their way into classrooms and day-to-day operations on many Hutterite colonies. While the Co-op's typeface has applications for most Macintosh computer programs, it is in the field of desktop publishing that the greatest use is anticipated.

There are also plans to print a 600-piece song-book as well as other traditional prayers and verses.

Souris River Communications Cooperative will be marketing the typeface, in conjunction with the New Dale Colony, in Canada and the U.S.

Dan Nicholson is a member of Souris River Communications Cooperative Ltd., Box 490, Souris, Manitoba R0K 2C0; (204) 483-2335. The Co-op works with computer-assisted print media and is the publisher of a weekly rural newspaper, the Souris Valley Echo.

Buyout brewing

Saskatoon (Star-Phoenix) — Employees at the Carling-O'Keefe brewery in Saskatoon are considering a buyout following the company's decision to close the 60-year-old plant. Carling-O'Keefe is merging with Molson's. Two years ago the plant had 80 workers, but today only 44 remain in the bargaining unit (United Food and Commercial Workers, Local 346W), and there are just 27 active employees.

Greg Kitz, a 14-year veteran of the plant and vice-president of the union local, initiated the buyout proposal together with co-worker, Don Flash. According to Kitz, "there's more support from the workers as their options dwindle." He adds that the union local is at this point "neutral."

A feasibility for the buyout proposal is being prepared by Lorne Broten of Saskatoon management consulting firm, Chamberlain, Broten, Orr and Co. It is estimated that a buyout would cost \$4.5 million of which the employees would be required to put up \$500,000. The company's official position is that it would "consider selling the plant," though Kitz is fearful that it simply "wants to close the plant and eliminate competition."

For more information contact Greg Kitz, 134 Tobin Cr., Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7K 4N1; (306) 244-0123.

B.C. gets worker ownership centre

By Dana Weber
New Westminster — The New Westminster Economic Development Association (NWEDA) has received funding from the federal government's Innovations program to establish a resource centre for worker-owned businesses.

NWEDA's proposal to Innovations was based on an earlier study undertaken by Melanie

Conn and Shane Simpson which demonstrated the potential for such a centre. Simpson has also been retained to develop an initial business plan for the centre which has ambitions to extend its services beyond NWEDA's traditional base in New Westminster.

To budget for the centre, which Simpson says is "front-end loaded," will total \$500,000 over three years, provided annual evaluations under the Innovations program demonstrate satisfactory progress and the anticipated supplementary funding sources are accessed. Following the three-year pilot phase, he envisions a transition in the control of the Centre to representatives of worker-owned businesses, the Centre's community of interest and the Centre's staff.

While the range of services proposed for the Centre is extensive, Simpson stresses the importance of not re-inventing the wheel. Many information, education and training resources can

be marshalled from existing programs and data banks, leaving the centre free to concentrate on the unique requirements of conversions to worker ownership of privately-owned businesses and start-ups of worker-owned enterprises.

The Centre's services include: assisting worker-owned enterprises in creating appropriate governance, membership training programs, pre-feasibility and feasibility analyses, business planning and development assistance.

In addition to the Innovations funding, the Centre anticipates generating revenue from a sliding fee structure ranging from token amounts for low-income clients to substantial consulting fees for union and government contracts.

For more information contact Dana Weber, 3306 Findlay St., #16, Vancouver, B.C. V5N 4E7; (604) 873-2253.

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AROUND THE WORLD

CHINA

Chinese testing worker ownership

By Frank Adams

Worker ownership is gaining advocates in China, especially in the northern industrial city of Shenyang, according to David Ellerman, staff economist of the Industrial Co-operative Association (ICA) in Somerville, Massachusetts. He was the guest for three weeks of the Research Center for Rural Development of the State Council of the People's Republic of China.

Today, the city-level planning commission is in the forefront of China's economic reform drive. Ellerman visited a state-owned, 6,000-worker factory which manufactures all sizes of transformers, including some three stories tall, destined for West Germany. He learned that about 300 Shenyang enterprises are experimenting with worker stock.

An air compressor factory was a leading example. Some 830 worker stockholders elect both a board of directors and managers in secret balloting — one-person, one-vote, regardless of how much stock is worker owned. Worker stock is a kind of profit-sharing certificate paying an annual dividend ranging from three to 20 per cent on face value.

Managers are nominated, Ellerman said, and then campaign for election. "It is a presidential system as opposed to the usual parliamentary system where the board selects the manager."

"I asked the chairman of the board, who also happened to be head of the local Communist Party, what happens if the separately elected board disagrees with the manager on an important issue? He looked at me and exclaimed, 'Checks and balances!'" Company managers said their enterprise had a range of worker education and participation programs.

Luo Xiaoping, an economist with the Research Center who was Ellerman's host, is forming

the Industrial Co-operative Association of China to provide worker-owners with technical assistance and to formulate policy and needed legislation. Staff exchanges between ICA (U.S.) and ICA of China are planned. He and other Chinese planners expect to visit Mondragon.

In Beijing, Ellerman lectured on democratic worker ownership at the Chinese Academy of Social Science. His paper on the same topic was published in *Reform*, a leading journal on economics. Its editor, Jiang Yiwei, advocates worker ownership.

"There is no corporate law of ownership as we understand it," Ellerman said. "All financial transactions are bargained between different levels of government, either the production team, village, township, county, city, province or state, and so many problems of ownership arise."

For more information, contact David Ellerman or Frank Adams, ICA, 58 Day Street, Suite 203, Somerville, MA 02144, U.S.A.; (617) 629-2700.

NIGERIA

Hard times bring co-operative work

By Moji Ojo

In Nigeria, many co-operative arrangements are community-based. One of the most common — the local work bee — is found among farming communities. Community members work a piece of land belonging to a particular family. Then the group works another piece of land, and this process continues until all of the farms are completed. For each workday, the family whose land has been worked provides meals for the group.

Austere times in the '80s have brought about an increase in another form of co-operative arrangement. Groups of unemployed individuals and, in



particular, unemployed university graduates, obtain loans from banks and establish joint businesses. Such businesses include garbage collecting, dry cleaning, grocery retailing, and so on. These businesses usually have been very successful and also have created linkages to the community in which they are located.

Nigeria also has credit unions, agricultural-marketing co-ops, handicraft co-ops and collective farms.

Maji Ojo is a student from Nigeria, doing doctoral studies in Community Psychology at The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), 252 Bloor St. W., Toronto, Ontario M5S 1V6; (416) 923-6641, L. 2576.

UNITED STATES

Plant closing foes form national federation

By Frank Adams

Fifteen grassroots organizations that have been separately fighting

plant closings around America have joined ranks, calling themselves the Federation for Industrial Retention and Renewal.

At least 10 other local groups are considering membership, according to Dan Swinney, director of the Midwest Center for Labor Research, one of the Federation's founders.

Founding members are: the Calumet Project for Industrial Jobs in East Chicago, Indiana; the Cleveland Coalition Against Plant Closings; the Coalition of Religious, University, Community and Labor in Buffalo; Hometowns Against Shutdowns in Freehold, New Jersey; the Illinois Economic Crisis Network in Chicago; the Interreligious Economic Crisis Organizing Network in New York City; the Labor/Community Coalition to Keep GM/Van Nuys Open in Los Angeles; The Midwest Center for Labor Research in Chicago; the Minnesota Working Group on Economic Dislocation in St. Paul; the Oakland Plant Closing Project in Oakland, California; the Seattle Workers Center; Southerners for Economic Justice in Durham, North Carolina; the Tennessee Industrial Retention Project in Chattanooga; Tri-State Conference on Steel in Pittsburgh and Cleveland; and the Upper Ohio Valley Reindustrialization Project.

"We have now been a reactive movement until now," Swinney said. "Through the Federation, grassroots campaigns can be given more support while themselves playing a greater role in changing national policy."

Additionally, the Federation plans a national computer network to exchange information between projects, to hold regional conferences, to build support for local efforts at preventing plant closings, and to provide activist training.

For more information, contact Dan Swinney, Midwest Center for Labor Research, 3411 W. Diversey Avenue, Chicago, IL 60647.

AROUND THE WORLD

ISRAEL

Profile of the Kibbutz movement

As of year-end 1986, there were 269 kibbutzim in Israel with 126,700 members. During the last decade the kibbutz population has grown by about 20 per cent, the increase resulting primarily from natural reproduction.

Kibbutzim formed prior to 1935 are much larger (averaging 736 members) than those formed since 1967 (averaging 136 members). This is because the older kibbutzim are of three and four generations whereas newer kibbutzim tend to be one and two generational.

Thirty per cent of the kibbutz population is under 15 years of age and 42 per cent is under 25. Only nine per cent is over age 65, though the life expectancy of members exceeds the norm for Israel.

Twenty-six per cent of the kibbutz labour force works in agriculture and fisheries (primary industry) and 23 per cent in secondary industry. Secondary industry has become a mainstay of the kibbutz economy contributing about \$1.6 billion (Cdn.) of sales in 1986. Twenty-seven per cent of sales is from exports. There are a wide range of industries, with heavy concentrations in plastics, metals, electronics, food processing, optical and pharmaceutical supplies, and textiles. More recently, there has been a considerable investment in tourism, i.e., kibbutz-based guest houses and hotels.

In spite of considerable success in creating an egalitarian community with a high standard of living, the kibbutz movement finds itself with some troublesome problems. The retention rate for members has dropped markedly during the last decade so that at present about 50 per cent of kibbutz-born are leaving. And coincident with harsh measures taken to reduce Israel's triple-digit inflation rate, about one-third of kibbutzim are expe-



Israel's second largest agricultural cartons factory at Kibbutz Ein Hamifratz.

riencing financial difficulties — some quite serious.

Data published by **Yad Tabenkin**, Research and Documentation Centre, P.O. Ramat Eyal, Israel 52960.

FRANCE Worker co-ops grow rapidly

By **Alain Roy**

The development of worker co-operatives in France is monitored by the *Confédération générale des Sociétés coopératives ouvrières de production* (CGSCOP) which provides assistance in law, member training, finance, business planning, accounting, management and technology transfer. By the end of 1986, 1,358 worker co-operatives employing 33,997 people were active, and 75 per cent of them were less than ten years old.

The average worker co-op had 25 members, and 43 per cent of the members were employed in construction and public works.

The know-how developed by the CGSCOP is supported by a set of laws and a number of policies of the French government. These include: workers can receive their unemployment insurance payments up-front six

months in advance of the initial capitalization of a worker co-operative; the existence of preferential tendering arrangements for government contracts; tax concessions; legislation to help capital formation; and establishment of the "Delegation generale de l'economie sociale" to monitor various government activities in the worker co-op sector.

For more information, contact **Jean-Marie Curtois**, Director, CGSCOP, Rue 37 Jean LeClere, Paris, France 75017; (Phone) 46278958.

Alain Roy is research director at the Co-op Secretariat, Sir John Carling Building, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0C5; (613) 995-4787.

French worker co-operatives by sector of activity in 1986

	No. of worker co-ops	Employees	Average size
Construction and public works	507	14,737	29
Graphics and printing	117	2,634	22
Metal working	175	5,199	30
Other industries	169	5,927	35
Services	390	5,500	14
Total	1,358	33,997	25

Source: CGSCOP, April 1987

CO-OP

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Uprising Bakery, part of CRS, in Vancouver Peace March.

The Problems of Success

Vancouver's CRS requests feedback on issues it now faces

By Marty Frost

■ *CRS worker co-op of Vancouver now includes the largest wholesaler of natural foods in Western Canada with annual sales of \$6.3 million. Started in 1973 by some socially-conscious activists as a resource group for buying clubs, and incorporated in 1976, CRS has grown steadily as a business until it now embraces 37 members. In addition to the natural-foods wholesaler (Horizon Distributors), CRS also includes Uprising Bakery.*

CRS's growth from a small collective has resulted in some new problems in maintaining member involvement in decision-making and in deciding upon an incomes policy for an increasingly more complex range of jobs. The following presentation by CRS general manager, Marty Frost, is intended to initiate a series on how worker co-operatives are dealing with these thorny problems.

Member involvement

Until we grew to 23 members, involvement in decisions did not appear to be a problem. Management decisions were taken in three collectives which met weekly. Co-op-level decisions were made by a series of committees and in monthly general meetings of the whole co-op. Excessive meeting-time costs and a poorly-defined "committee" structure forced us to restructure in 1983 and to elect a board of directors that makes directional decisions. In 1984, a formal management structure was created. Managers at CRS have a similar level of responsibility to those at more traditionally-structured businesses, but our managers have direct accountability to both the collectives and the general membership through the board of directors.

Planning takes place at the collective level and at the board level. Each collective goes through a planning process around such issues as: working conditions, sales levels, personnel, etc. Each collective approves its own operating plan. The board goes through a planning process for general goals which span all collectives. General goals such as net-income targets and salary packages are approved at a general meeting by the entire membership. Each manager

There is a feeling of frustration because the avenues for expression are becoming unwieldy.

is responsible for planning within his/her collective and the general manager is responsible for co-ordinating planning between collectives. There is some feeling among the membership of losing its



CRS member Carol Madsen.

voice in the direction of the co-op. Meetings of the entire co-op take place about eight times per year, but the meetings are becoming so large that members are intimidated about speaking. When members do speak they sometimes feel "not heard." The board, and to an extent the general meetings, are becoming "bogged down" with policy issues. There is a feeling of frustration because the avenues for expression are becoming unwieldy. For example, members do not wish to relinquish control over policies; but having this work done at general meetings is, by virtue of their bulkiness, denying members an effective voice.

The Salary Dilemma

When CRS was established, and until 1986, there was a two-tier salary structure. There was a single-base rate, and there was a supplement for parents: \$200 per child, up to two dependent children, with (as of 1985) income-testing of our members. In 1986, after our management structure had been in place for about a year, seniority differentials were created, and a differential of \$100 per month was applied to managers' salaries. In 1988, seniority differentials were increased in amount and frequency, and managers' differentials were increased to \$275 per month.

There are several issues contained in the salaries' discussion:

1. Members and non-members are paid at the same rate. The only differentiation arises when profits are distributed. Those paid as cash are distributed to

members and non-members alike. Those allocated to internal capital accounts are given to members only.

2. Our dependents' support package currently costs over \$80,000 per year. There is talk in the co-op about more effective use of this money. Some believe that we should not be providing extra support for parents with children.

3. Job-based salary differentiation, particularly with respect to the managers, has created a lot of controversy. There is some feeling that to pay anyone more money diminishes the value of lower-paid jobs. Others feel that it is necessary for CRS to pay closer to the market rate in order to attract and hold the calibre of people needed to operate an organization of this size and complexity.

4. As our base rate continues to increase, new workers come in at increasingly higher salaries. How long can we afford to start workers off at higher and higher salaries?

Other worker co-operatives, which like CRS have grown in size, must be facing similar problems. It would be helpful if we could find out how you are dealing with these issues.

Marty Frost can be contacted at CRS, 3450 Vanness, Vancouver, B.C. V5R 5A9; (604) 439-7977. Readers wanting their feedback considered for publication in the Worker Co-op magazine should also send it to Jack Quarter, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 252 Bloor St. West, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1V6; (416) 923-6641, Ext. 2576.



Centro Proceso Datos de
Caja Laboral Popular
Mondragon — an example
of a community bank.

Co-operation among social investment funds

By Ted Jackson

■ The problem of lack of access to capital — in the form of loans, loan guarantees, mortgages and equity capital — plagues progressive economic initiatives. Lack of capital is not the only problem community-owned and worker-owned enterprises face, but it is one that must be solved.

Anyone who has been involved in community economic development understands that there are institutional and structural reasons why democratic economic organizations have difficulty getting capital. The banks do not trust democratic organizations: they see them as high-risk aberrations, especially if these enterprises are small. The Federal Business Development Bank (FBDB), our public lender of last resort to small busi-

ness, feels the same way. Moreover, the internationalization of financial markets and increased competition in the financial sector has led the banks, with the FBDB following in tow, to invest in increasingly larger, safer, more mainstream (if this is possible!) investments. This means financing large-scale mergers and acquisitions in particular.

Credit Unions

Some credit unions have proven to be very able and active lenders to community enterprise. Toronto's Bread and Roses and Vancouver's CCEC are fine examples. But commercial lending by credit unions has remained relatively undeveloped in this country.

There are many ways for Canadians to

act locally to fill the capital gap for democratic economic organizations. I am a member of a small non-profit organization in Ottawa called Communityworks, which serves as a financial-support organization for co-operatives and non-profits in eastern Ontario. With assets of about \$500,000, we make loans and loan guarantees of up to \$25,000 over three years. We are careful to screen proposals and take collateral in equipment, inventory or other assets. Over the past five years we have made several dozen loans (only one very small one had to be written off), financed the start-up of two non-profit housing projects and sponsored conferences and publications on community economic development. There are no full-time staff in this organization.

We would like to grow. One way is to invite loans "to" Communityworks from individuals and institutions (churches, community organizations). We could pool these loans, repay them at a modest interest rate and make loans to local enterprises.

In the U.S. there is a national association of community loan funds whose members manage a total of \$30 million. In our own country, there are many small loan funds in Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario, the Atlantic and B.C. On a national basis, the United Church of Canada has a small loan fund. To become effective these small funds must grow larger and become linked together.

Trade union investment

Organized labour can, if it chooses, play a major role in investing in democratic economic organizations. One possibility, with remarkable potential, is for unions to negotiate control of investment decisions related to their pension funds, and direct even a small percentage of these funds to democratic economic organizations. Some unions in Canada, the U.S. and the U.K. have set up union-

controlled investment companies to build low- and middle-income housing and real-estate projects that create jobs and local assets. In the U.S., at least, some of these companies engage in joint ventures with community agencies, churches and foundations. There is debate on this approach within unions in our own country.

Organized labour can play a major role in investing in democratic economic organizations.

Moreover, in Canada we now have a substantial and promising experience with labour-controlled, venture-capital funds investing in industrial enterprises. The Solidarity Fund, run by the Quebec Federation of Labour, with assets of about \$200 million and 65,000 investors, has created or saved 7,000 jobs through its investments in Quebec businesses. The Solidarity Fund is also negotiating with local community groups to provide them with loans for local initiatives.

It is becoming clear that we need some form of national financial institution — a development bank, a foundation or some other structure — to aggregate pools of capital and invest these funds in local development agencies, loan funds, credit unions and labour investment mechanisms, which, in turn, will invest in local democratic, economic organizations. Such a national institution could coordinate the movement of capital to regions of high unemployment and underdevelopment. Although government funds might be used, this financial institution could operate relatively autonomously. Funds could actually be delivered by local agencies.

We are obliged to think globally about problems and opportunities related to investing in democratic organizations. One of the unstated purposes of the G-7 summit meeting in Toronto (June 1988) was to institutionalize, beyond the political lifetime of the present leaders, the conservative economic agenda of deregulation, privatization and free trade. Groups that oppose these policies and propose alternatives must plan not only on a global basis but also on a long-term basis. Local coalitions of Canadians interested in making investments in democratic economic organizations can join with each other to form a national coalition. The groups interested in this type of investing already work together on many issues. They now should consider working together on the issue of investment capital.

Ted Jackson is an Ottawa-based consultant in economic planning and human-resource development. This article is adapted from a presentation to a workshop at the Citizens' Summit Conference held in Toronto in June, 1988. He can be contacted at Suite 712, 151 Slater Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5A3; (613) 230-5221.



One of the many Caja branches in the Basque country.



Photo by Hugo Dixon

Los Andes Wholefoods & Café in Hackney, England; one of the new generation of British worker co-ops.

The lessons of history in financing co-operative development

By Paul Derrick

During the last 15 years in Britain, hundreds of new worker co-operatives have been formed. While many of these new enterprises are small, there is growing interest in co-operative production, in part evidenced by the formation of numerous, local co-operative-development agencies. It is curious then, that in the midst of this co-operative renaissance, that the number of older worker co-operatives in Britain should be on the decline.

In 1911, there were 84 worker co-operatives in Britain, some of them with hundreds of members. By 1958, there were only 28 affiliated to the Co-operative Productive Federation, although one, Ideal Clothiers Ltd, had more than 800 workers. Today only three of these remain: Equity Shoes Ltd. in Leicester; N.P.S. Shoes Ltd. in Wool-

aston; and Northants and Queen Eleanor Ltd, in Kettering. The others, most recently Leicester Printers Ltd., were taken over or otherwise turned into conventional capitalist enterprises.

Most of these worker co-operatives were successful enterprises. The reasons for their takeover or conversion provide important lessons for what is still a youthful worker co-op movement here and in North America.

Co-ops sell out

Some of Britain's older worker co-operatives ran into financial trouble because they distributed too much of their surplus to worker-members, thereby failing to adequately re-invest earnings or maintain adequate reserves. Another reason, however, is that the membership sold out in order to realize a substantial capital gain. This happened with Wigston Hosiers (in the 1960s), Cardiff Printers and Avalon Shoe. When Bristol Printers was wound up after 68 years, the shares which had been redeemable at £1 became worth £28. Contrary to the principle of limited return on capital, co-operatives incorporated under the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts have been allowed to distribute their residual assets to members in proportion to their shareholdings. In other words, upon dissolution a co-operative's shares can increase in value, in effect becoming like the shares of other kinds of enterprise. Hence, where there has been a significant gap between original share values and assets, co-operatives have been ripe for a takeover or a sellout.

Limited return

This has not been a problem for co-operatives incorporated either using the model rules of the Industrial Common Ownership Movement (ICOM) or in countries with laws prohibiting the distribution of residual assets. However, the principle of limited return on share capital is not one widely promoted by co-operative activists in today's entrepreneurial environment.

Takeovers are not just occurring in manufacturing. Agricultural co-operatives in Australia have been taken over when farmer-members were offered

The issue is: how can members more adequately share in the growth of their co-operative's assets and yet still adhere to the principle of limited return on capital?

more than the value of their shares. This was the fate of West Cumberland Farmers, the largest agricultural co-operative in Britain. Could consumer co-operatives be ripe for takeover too?

The marketplace is full of predators. If we are to maintain larger co-operative enterprises and also develop new ones, the movement must address the problem of capital formation. The issue is: how can members more adequately share in the growth of their co-operative's assets and yet still adhere to the principle of limited return on capital?

One approach taken by worker co-operatives is to allow members some share in the growth of their enterprise's assets in proportion to pay. Ideal Clothiers adopted bonus shares in 1904. The Mondragon co-operatives have, for the last 30 years, achieved a high degree of member re-investment through the use of "capital credits" which are like bonus shares issued in proportion to members' work contributions.

Bonus shares

The Plymouth Co-operative Society, a consumer co-op in Britain, allowed members to share in the growth of assets by issuing, in 1971, special bonus shares in proportion to purchases, redeemable only upon reaching retirement or leaving the district. Presumably, agricultural co-operatives should be able to issue bonus shares in proportion to trade. Both consumers' and agricultural co-operatives could be empowered to issue bonus shares to their employees, also free of tax.

Additional shares in a co-operative enterprise do not imply additional privileges. Voting in co-operative societies is, of course, not in proportion to the shares held but is equally distributed among the members. In other words, bonus shares serve only as some recognition of growing equity that is the product of members' labour.

The issue of tax liability for investments in worker co-operatives is also important. In 1978 the Labour Government introduced a tax concession to encourage employee shareholdings which enabled firms to issue bonus shares free of personal income tax. For reasons that were not clear worker co-operatives were excluded from this concession, and it was not until many amendments later (in 1986) that this discrimination was removed.

Tax concessions

In some jurisdictions, worker co-operatives are limited by guarantee and thereby prevented from issuing shares. This is the case with co-ops registered under the ICOM Model Rules. Tax concessions, in such cases, could be extended so that people could invest in their co-operatives by making loans to them, free of personal tax. That is to say, when members of worker co-operatives re-invest part of their earnings, those earnings should be exempt from income tax.

It would also help development if co-operatives were free from corporation tax, except when earnings are distributed. John Moore found this an "interesting" suggestion when he was at the Treasury in 1985, but thought it might encourage the conversion of companies into co-operatives.

Co-operatives have difficulty competing with large private chains. If they can be encouraged to plough back a high proportion of earnings, with members sharing in the growth of assets through the issue of bonus shares or loan stock, they should be able to compete more effectively.

Paul Derrick is a co-op activist and author in the United Kingdom. His publications include Co-ownership, Co-operation and Control (London: Longmans, 1989). He can be contacted at 30 Wandsworth Br. Rd., Pulham, London, U.K. SW6 2TH; (01) 736-4514.

Four people guarding a fragile legacy

Cape Gael Associates Co-op

By Veronica Gillies

■ Summertime in Cape Breton. Kilts are conspicuous at every Scottish festival, sales of tartan cloth skyrocket and the sound of fiddlers and the swish of square-sets can be heard in steamy halls across the Island. Despite these apparently healthy signs of a Scottish presence, some are worried that the Gaelic language — the very core of these traditions — is being ignored.

Ellison Robertson, Donnie MacGillivray, Jim Watson and John Shaw formed Cape Gael Associates Co-op in 1987 to remind people about the culture that led to those Scottish traditions. And they are well-suited to the task. Between the four of them, they share a mere 10 university degrees in the fields of social and labour history, fine arts, education, Celtic studies and linguistics. Two speak and teach Gaelic and all have had books published on this topic. They share a common concern about the neglect of Gaelic culture in Cape Breton — the only region in North America where traditional Gaelic language and culture remain.

Making a difference

If existing institutions were not going to respond to the problem, the co-op would. According to Robertson, an artist and fiction writer, it "just seemed logical" to form an organization once the ideas for projects started to flow. The community-based structure of a worker co-op appealed to them as a small community could relate to it and it was consistent with Gaelic tradition.

"Since the 1920s, the entire region has been in an economically bad situation," says MacGillivray, a professor of social history at the University College of Cape

Breton (UCCB). "No so-called policies have helped. It's not simply an economic problem — it's a social, political and a cultural one. The loss of self-esteem and self-reliance has to be stopped and a sense of worth must be built around our Gaelic culture."

Ironically, Jim Watson and John Shaw, the two Gaelic-speaking members of the co-op, are not originally from Cape Breton. Watson, brought up on the coast of Maine, first became interested in Gaelic when he worked with Gaelic-speaking Irish immigrants in a graveyard in South Portland. "I became intrigued, and the more I found out about their culture, the more intrigued I became." When he later travelled to Ireland and Scotland, Watson became "fervently impassioned" about the loss of this culture. He came to Nova Scotia 15 years ago to investigate the state of Gaelic culture here. He ended up marrying a Cape Bretoner and settling in River Denys, Inverness County, eventually learning Gaelic both through courses and directly from older people in the area. A teacher by profession, he now teaches Gaelic each summer at Iona Highland Village.

The '60s influence

Shaw grew up in central Ohio. He heard about Cape Breton and its Gaelic culture as a linguistics student in the early '60s. He spent two summers studying Gaelic in Glendale, Inverness County, and moved there permanently after completing a master's degree in Celtic studies and a doctorate in linguistics. He became a co-ordinator of Celtic studies at the College of Cape Breton (now UCCB), with the task of making Gaelic culture and language available to the community. He soon discovered, however, there were no appropriate teaching materials that applied to Cape Breton's situation.

"I became aware that Cape Breton was an extremely important area worldwide as far as Gaelic was concerned and that this valuable resource was not being guarded by our institutions," Shaw says.

"Over the last 10 years, we've lost a great opportunity to record local history — we've lost half the population of Gaelic speakers here. If work had been done back in the '70s by institutions that are gobbling up taxpayers' money,



Cape Gael Associates Co-op, l. to r.: John Shaw, Jim Watson, Donnie MacGillivray, and Ellison Robertson.

things would be a lot different."

Co-op very active

In their short time together, the Cape Gael co-op members have been trying to encourage the development of the Gaelic language, traditional singing, instrumental music, dance and story telling in a variety of ways. They helped organize the International Conference on Gaelic and Culture held at the UCCB two years ago. They organized a Gaelic show through UCCB's Gaelic Cape Breton Island Play Group Fund. (UCCB set up the fund after the International Conference to assist in the establishment of Gaelic pre-schools.) They have carried out consultancy work for post-secondary institutions and produced Gaelic learning materials based on local cultural resources. They arranged a three-week series of lectures for Elderhostel last fall about Cape Breton Gaelic culture. One of their proudest achievements was the Gaelic Cape Breton show they organized for Expo '86. Fifteen performers put on 33 shows over a two-week period. The

Over the last 10 years, we've lost a great opportunity to record local history — we've lost half the population of Gaelic speakers here.

shows were so successful that Cape Gael was asked to organize another one for Vancouver's Folk Festival the following year.

Besides their plans to organize more Gaelic Cape Breton shows, the co-op

also hopes to publish a book of Gaelic reminiscences by Cape Breton Gaels. Robertson and Watson have already published one, called *Sealladh Gu Taobh (A Sideward Glance)*. They are also planning other projects to make Gaelic language and music more accessible and more closely linked to the economic and social development of Cape Breton. To achieve this goal, they are looking at heritage development in other countries.

To Shaw, Gaelic language and music is as tangible an asset as any natural resource. If it is to be there for those who come later, it must be preserved.

"The choice is up to us," he says. "To remain Gaels people have gone through a lot of adversity. We have a responsibility to look after the culture."

For more information about Cape Gael contact Jim Watson, River Derys, Nova Scotia; (902) 756-3142.

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By the middle of the 1800s, Canadian workers (like their counterparts in Great Britain and industrial Europe) were organizing co-operatives to protect themselves from capitalism's ravages.



Photo: Public Archives of Nova Scotia

Organized labour encouraged worker co-ops in the 19th century

By Grant MacDonald

Few of us recognize the depth of Canada's co-operative history. By the middle of the 1800s, Canadian workers (like their counterparts in Great Britain and industrial Europe) were organizing co-operatives to protect themselves from capitalism's ravages and to gain some political and economic control of their society.

One of the earliest co-operative experiments occurred on the east coast. The Carleton Co-operative Society was started in 1864 in Saint John, New Brunswick, for "manufacturing and commercial purposes." Three years later, the Saint John Tru-

des Co-operative Association was incorporated to "carry on a general mercantile and manufacturing business on the principles of co-operation, cash dealings only and mutual participation in profits."

The Iron Moulders International Union in Toronto founded as many as 20 co-operative foundries in the 1860s. Although many of these were in southern Ontario, at least one was reported as under construction in the Maritimes. A March, 1868, letter in the *Moulders Journal* declared that strikes were "played out" and that unions should go all out for the co-operative movement.

At its Toronto convention in July of the same year, the Moulders changed the name of its union to the Iron Moulders International Co-operative and Protective Union, with amendments to the constitution and provision for serious promotion of co-operatives. In 1873, one union official stated that co-operative foundries were "the sovereign balm for all our wounds; the morning star, hailing the coming day of labor's redemption." But he added that any such enterprises had to be carefully planned.

Best shoe factory

In February, 1869, 15 members of a local of the Knights of St. Crispin, a shoemakers' union which, for a time, was one of the most powerful international unions on the continent, established a co-operative shoe factory in Saint John. The Crispins were ardent supporters of co-operative principles, which they considered "a proper and sufficient remedy for many of the ills of the present system..." By July, 1869, the co-operative had 150 members. Shares were \$50 each, and available to Crispins anywhere. Their sale is reported to have realized \$20,000, and the factory is described as the best shoe factory ever started in that city.

Printers were another craft with an interest in co-operative production. In Toronto three co-operative newspapers

were started. At the height of the nine-hour struggle in 1872, the *Ontario Workman* became a co-operative venture, but lasted only six months. D.J. O'Donoghue's *Labor Record* which was started in 1886, lasted a year. In 1892, during the strike at the *News*, a group of printers banded together and founded the *Star*. It, too, lasted about a year, despite financial support from the Toronto Typographical Union and the Toronto Trades and Labour Council.

In 1878, cigar makers established the Toronto Co-operative Cigar Manufactory Association. The Toronto Typographical Union assisted the venture by taking 20 shares for which it was allowed a representative. The Association's factory opened for business in March, 1879, and a year later was reported to be doing fine.

Journeyman Bakers in Halifax, striking against a number of bakeries including Moir and Company in 1882, established a co-operative bakery which survived for three weeks. After that, the workers were rehired by their employers at the wage they had demanded and with a shorter working day. In 1887, Hamilton bakers successfully used the threat of a co-operative bakery to win their demands and in doing so demonstrated their interest in some of the basic elements of workers' control. There were other forays into co-operative baking in-

The Knights of Labour, the most important national labour organization in Canada prior to 1900, was a strong proponent of co-operation.

cluding at least one operation in Toronto which lasted about two years in the mid-1880s.

The Knights of Labour

The Knights of Labour, the most important national labour organization in Canada prior to 1900, was a strong proponent of co-operation. After 1880, the Knights, one of the first unions prepared

Quarry workers in the old days.

Photo: Public Archives of Nova Scotia





Workroom of Women, circa 1890, courtesy public archives of Nova Scotia.

to organize both the skilled or unskilled, significantly raised the consciousness of workers, employers and entire communities regarding the co-operative alternative.

The Knights did more than advocate for co-operation. Through local assemblies, the Knights operated grocery co-operatives in Hamilton, Ontario; Nanaimo, B.C.; and Sherbrooke, Quebec; and started or supported worker-owned enterprises, including a printing co-operative in Toronto, a co-operative biscuit and confectionery works in Chatham, Ontario, a shoe company in Montreal, and a knitting factory in Norwich, Ontario.

Cigar makers in Stratford, Ontario, also founded a co-operative factory in 1886 which was owned by the Knights of Labour and run under Cigar Makers International Union rules. It employed between 20 and 30 people and produced a brand known as "the Little Knight." The Knights were also behind another co-operative cigar factory in Belleville.

Although opposed to strikes as a means of change, the Knights did not avoid them. They were at the centre of the dramatic Toronto Street Railway strike in 1886 and the attempt by the workers to establish an alternative co-operative transportation system. Although the co-operative bus service did not last more than a month and a half, it met with considerable support from the public and other trade unions.

Co-operative experiments occurred in other industries and trades. Machinists and blacksmiths in Toronto reportedly

organized a co-operative foundry early in 1872 after losing a strike at the Soho works. And, although few details have been uncovered, the Working Womens' Protective Association, following a strike, set up a co-operative glove factory in Toronto in 1893.

A community of workers

The co-operative experiments in the 1800s reflects more than some pockets of interest. Rather, there was a growing class consciousness and a community of workers identifying with each other's plight. They recognized the common enemy of industrial capitalism and communicated their concerns, strategies and ideas across geographic, industrial and craft boundaries.

As Canadian workers organized themselves, they became aware that their power might be used not just to limit the power of capitalists but also to transform society. Co-operative institutions, initiated by trade unions and controlled by the working classes, might become a major agent of change. It was an idea that was talked about within most working class organizations of the period.

As labour historian, Greg Kealey, has suggested, worker co-operatives were important because they "flowed directly from the shopfloor experience of people and the practices of their unions in struggling to control production." Co-operative experiments, although they were often short lived, were valuable both symbolically and tangibly as a testament to the potential for worker self-management. While local efforts "failed," workers were

regularly reminded of examples elsewhere that had not. Hope remained strong. Perhaps co-operative organizing, like trade union organizing, would require more than one attempt.

Much of the interest in co-operative production came from craftspeople, from workers whose ability to put their own stamp on their product had not yet been taken away from them. Interest in co-operation came as a logical extension of their knowledge of their trade and their refusal to accept management's views of how things should be run. "It was easy for workers to believe," as Kealey notes, "that all the capitalists brought to the process was capital" and that "an alternative source of capital would transform the society."

This article draws heavily on Eugene Forsey's, Trade Unions in Canada, 1812-1902 (University of Toronto Press, 1982); Gregory S. Kealey's, Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism 1867-1892 (University of Toronto Press, 1980); and Greg Kealey and Bryan D. Palmer's, Dreaming of What Might Be: The Knights of Labour in Ontario, 1880-1900 (Cambridge University Press, 1982).

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A primary institution of mutual self-help for the ethnic working class in northeastern Ontario and one of the more unique operations in Canadian co-operative history.

By Peter Vasiliadis

The Workers' Co-operative of New Ontario was a political battleground in the 1930s



Photo: Public Archives of Nova Scotia

In November, 1980, the last remaining store of the organization known as 'The Workers' Co-operative' was closed in Timmins, Ontario, an area of Northern Ontario once known to goldminers as Porcupine Camp. This was the quiet termination of what had been one of the most unique co-operative operations in Canada.

From its debut in 1926, The Workers' Co-op rapidly expanded to include a bakery, dairy, boarding house and stores in Timmins, Schumacher, South Porcupine, Connault, Larder Lake and Kirkland Lake. While it originally began as business, its reputation, indeed its notoriety, stemmed from its political and ethnic activities.

In the natural-resource-rich region of northeastern Ontario, far from the regul-

atory restrictions of the metropolitan south, capitalists have usually been able to do what they pleased. This was most apparent after the First World War when the goldminers of the Porcupine Camp were faced with the problems of rising inflation and decreasing wages. The mining companies were able to blunt any reaction by dividing the workers along ethnic lines. They promised Canadian citizens job priority and access to bargains in newly-created mine-owned stores in return for maintaining the labour peace and being vigilant against 'aliens.' Although similarly grim economic conditions led to the creation of co-operatives in other Canadian mining communities, the workers had invariably been supported by strong unions. In the Porcupine Camp there was no such

thing. The initiative, however, would come from a new quarter — from the very immigrants who were under attack.

Co-operative experience

The original appeal for a co-operative came from the Finns who had experience with such enterprises; co-op stores were common in Finland as well as in the Finnish communities of the United States. In the Porcupine Camp, the Finns had created informal co-op boarding houses in which compatriots bought shares, rented rooms and were provided with meals. This model was taken up by other ethnic groups, notably the Ukrainians and recent British emigrés. It also gained the backing of an emerging Communist group who perceived it as a possible political platform, especially after its attempt to create a radical trade union had failed by mid-1926.

The co-op was incorporated in November, 1926, with \$4,000 in capital accrued through the sale of \$10 shares. The organization was officially called 'The Workers' Co-operative of New Ontario Limited,' a name which referred to the social class of its members rather than the structure of the co-op whose members were its consumers. There was no real debate over whether they should function as a "worker co-op." In a region with an absolute class division between labourers and capitalists, where the leaders and customers of the co-op were workers, it did not make sense to argue over non-issues, especially at a time when worker-owned establishments were not considered viable options.

A political role

The first manager of The Workers' Co-op was Charles Haapanen, an American Finn. Because he wanted to placate the host Anglo-majority, he advocated the classic Rochdale model which was a standard part of Anglo-Canadian co-operativism. Through the Rochdale model, Canadian co-ops sustained a socio-political "neutrality" that helped to maintain both capitalist and Anglo control. For the immigrants, situated in environments where class and ethnic conflicts were the norm, this perspective was nothing short of insane. They refused to regard The Workers' Co-op as a sanctuary from a politicized world. Their interpretation of co-operativism resulted in mistrust from the Co-operative Union of Canada (the national organization of the co-operative movement), which was controlled by Anglo-Saxon farmers. In

an effort to nullify a confrontation with militant immigrants, in 1927 an amendment was made to the Co-operative Union charter which forbade political discussions. However, the tactic only served to push The Workers' Co-op further left on the political spectrum.

These differing interpretations of co-operativism came to a head in 1928 when the Communist International declared that the working class was entering an era of a revolutionary class struggle. The onset of the Depression seemed to provide verification and gained the Communists many new converts. The Communists openly criticized the operation of co-ops outside of their party's influence, especially those utilizing the "utopian" and neutralist consumer approach. They insisted that all co-ops should be worker-run and politically militant.

The supporters of the Communist Party in the Porcupine Camp viewed The Workers' Co-op's consumer orientation as only momentary expedience prior to the creation of a politically militant, worker-owned institution. This perspective was espoused by Nick Thachuk who had the multiple roles of employee and secretary of the co-op, as well as being the Ukrainian community leader and head of the local Communist group.

The Workers' Co-op had accumulated a large cash surplus during its first years of operation. It maintained a good cash-flow even through the worst of the Depression because gold mining continued to prosper. This privileged position enhanced its appeal to the Canadian Communist Party who wanted to use it as a regional base for its interests. Changes were already occurring within the co-op which encouraged the Communists. On July 15, 1930, the manager, Charles Haapanen, resigned because of a desire to return to the United States. His departure removed the major stabilizing influence.

The Takeover

Amos Tobias Hill, Finnish leader and Communist Party of Canada politbureau member, was transferred to the Porcupine Camp to direct party supporters. With Hill operating among the Finns and Thachuk among the Ukrainians, the Communists prepared for the expropriation of The Workers' Co-operative. Party supporters bought shares in the co-op and, if they owned multiple shares, sold them to Communist sympathizers. Hill and Thachuk understood that one of the major strengths of co-ops, the principle

of 'one-person/one-vote', was also a major weakness, as it allowed vocal individuals and their followers to gain power by showing up at irregularly-attended meetings and voting as a block. On February 22, 1931, the 'take-over' took place at a packed assembly of partisan supporters. The new leadership immediately changed the character of the co-op from an emphasis on gradual economic reform to radical political activism.

The Communists assumed control of the co-op's board of directors and the all-important educational committee which had been set up according to Rochdale doctrine to encourage instruction in co-operative concepts. This committee now assumed a more propagandist purpose. The alteration in co-op objectives was interpreted to the rank-and-file by Nick Thachuk who became chairperson of the education committee. One of Thachuk's other objectives was to transform the co-op from consumer to employee ownership. As part of this effort, indoctrination meetings were held twice a month to prepare employees to assume control. The employees were also compelled to participate in summer courses sponsored by the Communist Party to enhance their class consciousness and to groom them

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THE ONLY SOLUTION
of the
HIGH COST OF LIVING

is by organizing the control of
THE NECESSARIES OF LIFE
in the interests of the consumers
THROUGH CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES

There can be no problem where the people control and direct the economic, civic, and trade profits in proportion to purchases. If there is a Co-operative store in your community join it, give it all the trade you can, and induce your friends and neighbours to do likewise; the greater the trade, the greater the return. If you have no Co-operative store, and you and your friends wish to organize one, for information and advice write to:

THE ORGANIZATION DEPARTMENT
THE CO-OPERATIVE UNION OF CANADA
MONTREAL, QUE.

for their proper position in the co-op. Yet, despite promises, there was little actual progress toward a worker co-op, as the political objectives of the Communist Party surmounted any such attempt. The vision of a worker co-operative was ef-



Photo: Canadian Tribune

Western Federation of Miners Local 145, Porcupine, Ont., circa 1919-20.

fectively misappropriated by political interest and could not overcome it.

The Communist Party found it expedient to maintain control of The Workers' Co-operative as a regional power base and a milch cow from which they appropriated funds to finance supporters across Canada. The co-op also served as a refuge, providing employment for those party members who lost their jobs because of their political activities. If the party surrendered control to the co-op's employees, it might have lost these benefits, since it could never be certain that worker loyalty to the party would override loyalty to the co-op and the employees' own interests. The worker as consumer and employee could be controlled. However, it was unlikely that workers as owners could be so manipulated.

Successful, yet marginal

Although The Workers' Co-operative

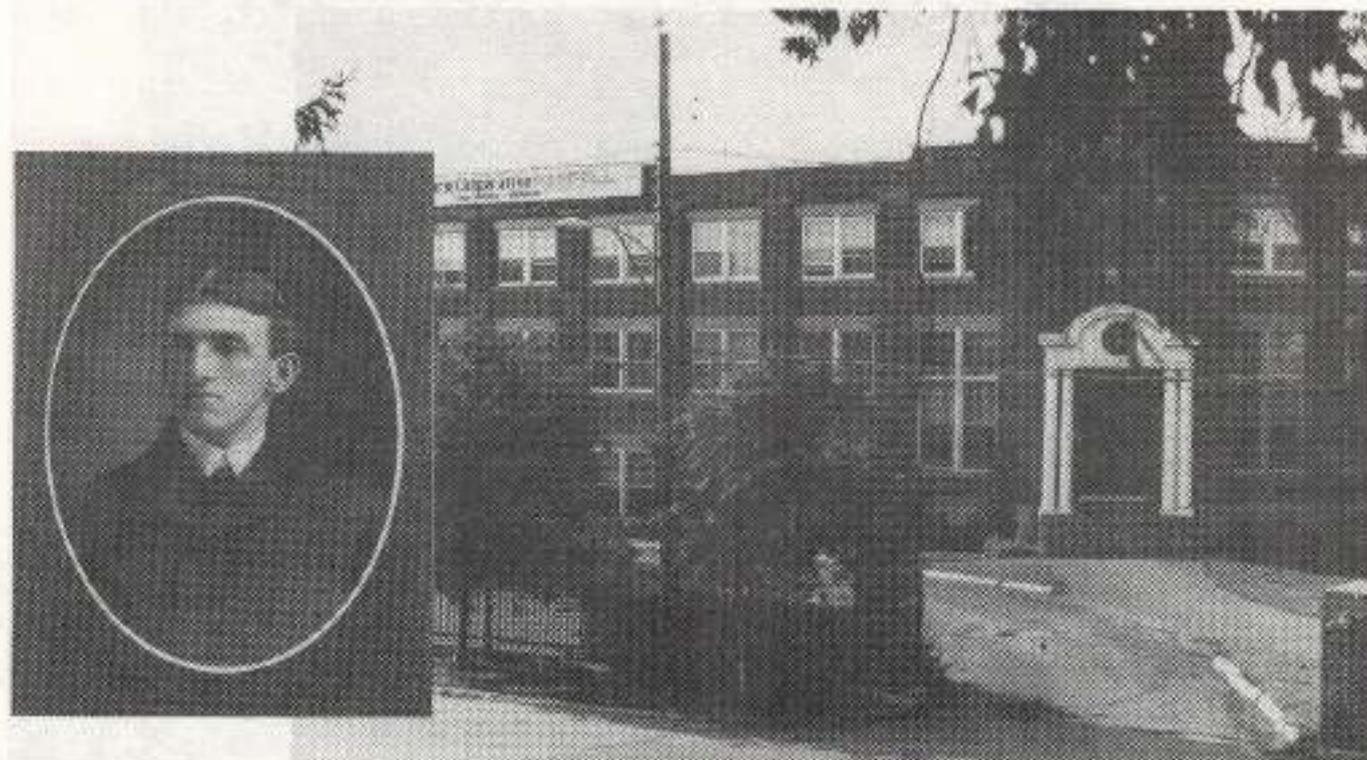
was to prosper economically under Communist control, expanding its number of stores and adding a bakery, dairy and boarding house, it was nevertheless politically marginalized and, in the final analysis, unsuccessful. Eventually, a new co-op — 'The Consumers Co-operative Society Limited' — created by Workers' rivals and run by former manager, Charles Haapanen, who had returned from the United States, acquired greater support because it publicly stressed its political loyalty. Particularly after World War II and at the start of the Cold War, The Workers' Co-op became a lone cry in the northern wilderness, as its laudable but prosaic resolutions on issues such as world peace and the atom bomb met with indifference, if not outright hostility.

Inevitably, The Workers' Co-op found it difficult to retain supporters, even among its old allies who no longer wished to advertise their political affiliations. The Workers' Co-op's dwindling membership, old but resolute, were still ready and willing to fight, but the rheto-

ric about class struggle was evocative of another time when there was no responsive government or strong unions. Steeped in political ideology, the members were unwilling to run the operation simply as an economic enterprise. Ironically, The Workers' Co-op assumed the role it had previously despised of others: utopian idealism without regard to reality. Unable to adapt to change, it was reduced to a single small store in South Porcupine, which held on tenaciously but was finally forced to close in 1980. With it went what had once been a primary institution of mutual self-help for the ethnic working class in northeastern Ontario and one of the more unique operations in Canadian co-operative history.

This article is adapted by the author from his thesis research. He has published a longer piece on The Workers' Co-operative of New Ontario which can be found in *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 1985. Peter Vasiladis can be contacted at 6 Averill Crescent, Willowdale, Ontario M2M 2A9; (416) 226-2263.

As in France and England, Québec unions and worker-production co-operatives were intimately linked in defending the concerns of workers. The worker co-operative permitted unionized workers to support themselves during long strikes.



James John Harpell, founder of the oldest surviving worker co-op in Canada.

Worker co-operatives in Québec from 1865

By Alain Bridault and Ginette Lafrenière

In 1865, Québec's first worker co-operative — "La coopérative de construction de Québec" — provided work for approximately 40 people.¹ This co-operative was part of the "Société des charpentiers de navire," which itself was founded in 1861 and was comprised of about 750 members. At that time naval construction for the British Empire brought prosperity to Canada's eastern ports. A co-operative bakery was created by the "Grande Association," a worker organization founded in 1867 by Médéric Lanctot. With the influence of The Knights of Labour, we can observe a concerted effort in Québec to develop worker-production co-operatives.

As in France and England, Québec unions and worker-production co-operatives were intimately linked in defending the concerns of workers. The worker co-operative permitted unionized workers to support themselves during long strikes. Historians have noted many examples of striking workers forming worker co-operatives: the first luggage co-operative in 1887, the Franklin Co-operative Press in 1888, a co-operative of shoemakers in 1887, the Point-Saint Charles industrial co-operative in 1886, and a cigar production co-operative in 1893. Other than the cigar co-operative which endured to the 1930s, these first worker co-operatives rapidly disappeared.

After the founding of the Labour Party in 1904 and after the election of the first Labour parliamentarian, A.T. Lépine, and with the influence of the European movements, the socialist-labour movement received a second wind. A "socialist commune" was established in Montréal in 1907. The socialist leader, Albert Saint-Martin, and a nucleus of militants created Québec's version of Rochdale. It included the esperanto co-operative (two co-operative stores), a collective farm (the Kanado) started in 1914, a newspaper "Spartakus," and a printing press which later became a co-operative in 1932. A labour university was also created but disallowed in 1933.

These first experimental worker co-operatives did not enjoy a future. Unlike France and Italy, Québec did not have the necessary support system for co-operatives. It is important to remember that up until the first world war French-Canadian society was predominantly rural. The other co-operative movements which took hold at the time corresponded to the sociological needs of the people: credit unions (financial co-operatives) that provided credit and protection against usury and marketing and purchasing co-operatives for farmers. Therefore, worker co-operatives directed at the craftspersons and labourers of urban centres corresponded to the specific needs of only a small proletarianized minority. It is important to note that the strong influence of the Catholic Church and its virulent anti-socialist campaigns did manage to contain any tendency towards the development of worker co-operatives during this period.

The Second Wave: Forestry Co-operatives

When the Antigonish movement started its study groups during the Great Depression, not only did it influence the creation of forestry and fishing co-operatives in Nova Scotia, but also in the Acadian peninsula and amongst French Canadian communities on the other side of the Baie des Chaleurs in Gaspésie. The first forestry co-operative was founded in 1938 in Grande-Vallée. By 1970, 166 forestry co-operatives had been created in such places as Gaspésie, Saguenay lac St-Jean, on the North coast, in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, and in the Appalachians.² Forestry co-operatives were created primarily in rural areas where public forests constituted close to 90 per cent of woodland. Most survived only a few years; others, however, are

more than 30 years old today with multi-million dollar sales. The workforce for these forestry co-operatives consisted of subsistence farmers who wanted to supplement their meager earnings. At that time, outside the rich agricultural lands of the Saint-Laurence basin, farming was subsistence only — a few cows and animals, and a large garden. Other than some revenues from the sale of cream to small co-operative creameries which survived up until the 1960s, an essential part of the habitants' income came from the labour of father and sons in the large timber yards during winter. The paper mills, which exploited the large concessions granted by the government for public forests, contracted the timber-cutting to "jobbers" who in turn hired the lumberjacks. They lived in unhealthy quarters and worked for pitiful wages based upon the cords of wood that they cut. Even today, the Irving timberyards in New Brunswick continue this type of exploitation.

The forestry co-operatives were created to fight against exploitation. Often encouraged by the parish priest, they entered successfully into competition with the jobbers. However, the original forestry co-operatives differed from other forms of worker co-operatives in several ways. Some forestry co-operatives were similar to agricultural co-operatives, that is, semi-autonomous owners co-operating in the marketing of wood and

in the purchase of machinery. Others did not even own basic machinery. They could be described as manpower co-operatives (a term used by the International Bureau of Labour), similar to the Italian "Braccianti" agricultural co-operatives.

The modern forestry co-operatives in Québec differ from their forerunners because they are mature businesses with a strong membership base and with considerable assets in equipment, factories, etc. Yet they, too, remain apart from the other worker co-operatives of the province. The 32 forestry co-operatives and their 3300 members have formed their own organization, a council, rather than joining the provincial federation.

The Post-War: An Exceptional Case, Harpell³

In 1945, James-John Harpell, philanthropist and proprietor of printing presses in Toronto and Saint-Anne de Bellevue, decided at the time of his retirement to bring the businesses under the control of his workers by converting them into worker co-operatives — The Garden City Press Co-operative in Toronto and Harpell's Co-operative in Québec (the latter being changed to the French name, "L'imprimerie coopérative Harpell," in 1977). James J. Harpell's vision extended far beyond the

Garden City Press, 1920.





creation of a worker co-operative. Like Robert Owen of New Lanark, Harpell also created a model community in Ste-Anne de Bellevue in 1919 for the press workers. Developed as a "garden city," in the image of its European and American counterparts, this community was part of Harpell's heritage to his workers. In 1922, Harpell also founded the Institute of Industrial Arts for professional and continuing education of the workers.

The Harpell Co-operative Press was exceptional because it was created from the conversion of a healthy business. It was for a long time the largest Canadian worker co-operative both in terms of revenues and its working members. In 1986 it had nearly 200 workers and about \$12 million of sales.

A Second Exceptional Case: Tricofil

In 1973, when the Regent Knitting textile factory of St-Jérôme closed its doors, the workers decided to buy the factory in order to save their jobs. Similar to the LIP in France and the Meridian Motorcycle in England, Tricofil became, because of intense publicity, a cause célèbre. Tricofil was, at the beginning of the 1970s, seen as the finest example of a self-managed firm. This experience revived the worker co-operative movement in Québec and the role of organized labour in worker co-operatives. Even though Tricofil did not become incorporated as a worker co-operative till the very end of its existence in 1981, its ultimate failure as a business was a setback to the movement. The disenchantment following Tricofil was due in part to

expectations that were raised.

Quebec Labour Co-operatives in the 1980s

Due to the Québec government's actions in establishing both a special-aid program and a specific legislative framework, worker co-operative development took off during the 1980s. By 1985, 178 worker co-operatives with 7,341 members were registered. They furnished around five per cent of the total of small-business manufacturers and roughly 0.4 per cent of the total of Québec workers. Other noteworthy characteristics are as follows:

1. Of 178 co-operatives, 104 were founded between 1981 and 1986, 33 between 1975 and 1986, and 41 between 1940 and 1976.
2. The co-operatives are predominantly in the primary sector (natural resources) and the service sector.
3. Worker co-operatives are found predominantly in the peripheral regions of the province. The large region of Montréal has only 23 co-operatives, 22 per cent the total. Similar numbers are found in Saguenay and in Abitibi.
4. With the exception of forestry and taxi co-operatives, worker co-operatives are comprised of very small businesses.
5. These co-operatives undertake what we call the "second market of work." The work is often seasonal and may have other uncertainties associated with it.
6. Financing of worker co-operatives differs in the 1980s as opposed to the 1970s. The federal and provincial grants represent but a small part of the financing obtained in the 1980s. Worker co-

operatives have sought help from financial institutions, mainly because of loan guarantees from La Société de développement des coopératives, a provincial government agency.

It is important to note that 35 large co-operatives undertake 90 per cent of the total business and have around 40 per cent of the total members. These are the oldest co-operatives. (Twenty are more than 10 years old.) They are, by and large, forestry co-operatives which operate in the hinterlands of Québec.

An Analysis of the Contemporary Movement

The current development of worker co-operatives in Québec and Europe is a relatively new social phenomenon which has accompanied the change from an industrial to a post-industrial society. Various social groups are beginning to utilize the co-operative way of work to defend their socio-economic interests. We distinguish four social layers which contain a potential for the creation of worker co-operatives.

The "Traditional" Craftsperson

Traditional craftspersons constituted the majority of members in the French movement prior to the boom in worker co-operatives. They can be found in construction, public works, and printing. In Québec, the labour legislation in construction (the union monopoly on hiring) limited the creation of worker co-operatives in this sector, but the forestry co-operatives have attracted these types of "artisans."

These "free labourers," according to the expression used in the past century, have been hurt by the computer revolution which has wiped out certain jobs. In the printing industry, the typographers — the labour aristocracy of the past century — were almost wiped out in one decade.

Workers of the "Weak" Sectors

There are many examples of the closing of factories being prevented by the formation of worker co-operatives. In weak sectors of the economy, such as the textile industry, the labour co-operative is a means of job maintenance. There are many examples both in Québec and in Europe: the buyout of Tricofil by the FTQ, the LIP adventure in France, the conversion of Manufrance by the CGT, and Meridian Motorcycle in England. During the 1970s a new category of worker co-operatives was created that

was no longer craft-like but industrial. These factory workers form the most important contingent of new members of worker co-operatives.

The White Collar "Neo-craftspersons"

White collar neo-craftspersons and intellectual workers are another group that is revitalizing the worker co-operative movement. They are in all new trades which treat information like merchandise, the artistic trades, and notably the professions.

They are the heirs of the blue-collar craftspersons. It is amongst the neo-craftspersons that the co-operative vitality is strongest. They are the ones who animated the self-management wave of the 1970s and who developed a growing demand for improved quality of life at work and in other endeavours. It is amongst this group that a new culture ferments — a culture of quality and dignity rather than dependence, and a culture of difference rather than normality. These ideals exist even though this class is comparatively privileged. The renaissance of worker co-operatives in Europe during the 1970s is a direct product of the cultural revolution of the 1960s brought forth

by students and workers of high professional qualification. This new "salaried elite" is similar to the "labour elite" or craftspersons of the last century. Like the labour elite it is utilizing the worker co-operative as a specific mode of work organization.

The "Non-class"

Finally there exists what Gorz called the "non-class," the new "lumpen proletariat," an increasing mass comprised of structurally unemployed and "marginal" workers.

This "social layer" is the target of government policies that favour the creation of worker co-operatives as institutions of "social daycare." Because the more disadvantaged of the non-class do not participate in the labour force, their mobilization is very difficult.

Under the guidance of the state, a new type of organization emerges out of the non-class. These are human resource co-operatives, "groups of co-operative labour," of which we cannot find any historical example in the industrialized countries, except for the Bracchianti co-operatives and luggage handlers of Italy. Auxil-Plus, a homecare worker co-operative in Montreal, and the temporary

These first experimental worker co-operatives did not enjoy a future.

manpower co-operatives in Paris are, in fact, protective organizations for marginal workers. This type of co-operative is undoubtedly destined for greater development where it is possible to harmonize the interests of marginal workers and national and multi-national enterprises and, of course, where the co-operatives do not contradict the interests of the unionized workers in the same sector of the economy.

In conclusion, the small creative "boom" in Québec's worker co-ops at the beginning of the 1980s is finished. It was linked to unemployment provoked by an economic crisis. What remains are the objective structural conditions which have sustained this rebirth of worker co-operatives. It is probable that this young co-operative sector will continue to develop. As to its rhythm and strength, only time will tell.

This article is excerpted from the chapter, "Social History of Worker Co-operatives in Québec", Jack Quarter and George Melnyk (Eds.), Partners in Enterprise: The Worker Ownership Phenomenon, Montreal: Black Rose, 1989 (\$16.95).

Alain Brideault is a researcher at the Centre for Co-operatives (IRECUS), the University of Sherbrooke, and Ginette Lafrenière is a graduate student in that same department. Brideault can be contacted at 1360 Leonard, Apt. 2, Sherbrooke, Quebec J1K 2L6; (819) 569-2434.

¹Most of the historical data concerning the nineteenth century is taken from Paul Vincent, "Les caractéristiques propres des coopératives de travailleurs et leurs conditions historiques d'émergence," Montreal, H. E. C., Centre de Gestion des coopératives, cahier 5-85-3, 1985.

²Benoit Levesque et. al, *Profil Socio-Économique des Co-opératives de Travail au Québec* (Montreal: Université du Québec and the Comité Provincial des Co-opératives de Travail, 1985).

³The information on Harpell taken from Paul Vincent, *L'histoire d'une communauté ouvrière et d'une transformation d'entreprise en coop de travailleurs*, L'imprimerie coopérative Harpell, Montreal, H. E. C., Centre de gestion des coopératives, cahier 5-85-2, 1985.



The modern generation of Québec forestry co-ops, as compared to forestry around 1935 (previous page).

Skeptics about worker co-ops



Photo: Public Archives of Canada

George Keen, Secretary-General of the Co-operative Union of Canada, 1909-1945.

*George Keen and the Co-operative Union of Canada: 1909-1945

By Ian MacPherson

George Keen played a significant role in defining the nature and the orthodoxy of the co-operative movement in English-Canada. Born in Stoke-on-Trent, England, in 1869, he became a clerk and an aspiring lawyer, before immigrating to the industrial city of Brantford in 1904. Two years later he became involved with the local consumer co-operative, and this involvement led him to a life-long commitment to the furtherance of the co-operative movement in English Canada. Keen was, in fact, one

of those relatively rare individuals who could completely devote himself to a cause, even though the personal costs were high, whether measured in economic or psychological terms.

Between 1909 and 1945, Keen served as the General Secretary of the Co-operative Union of Canada, the aspirant national organization of co-operatives in English Canada. Until 1918, Keen did not receive a salary for his labour on behalf of the Union, and after that date he received a modest salary although it was

often in arrears. Despite the weakness of this support, Keen played a vitally-important role in the development of co-operatives in English Canada. He was the main conduit for the importation of British ideas about co-operatives — ideas that significantly shaped the English-Canadian consumer movement — and he was one of the principal exponents of co-operative philosophy in Canada. Thus, in understanding the relative weakness of the worker co-operative sector in Canada, it is important to appreciate George Keen's attitudes towards it. To a significant extent, he helped to define the initial attitudes of the Canadian movement towards issues of worker ownership and control.

Co-operative Commonwealth

Keen was a co-operative utopian; he believed that all economic activities and many social activities should be structured on a co-operative basis. He believed it was possible to create a "Co-operative Commonwealth" in which people, motivated by what he and his mentor George Holyoake called 'associative intelligence,' would build an ideal society based on consumption for use and fair reward for labour. A devout, liberal Catholic, his views were drawn from the theories of the British co-operative movement and the Catholic reform tradition perhaps best associated with the papal encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*. These two traditions did not always mix comfortably, and the issue of worker co-operatives was one example of where they did not.

The dominant British attitude towards worker co-operatives, so well described by Philip Backstrom in *Christian Socialism and Co-operation in Victorian England*, was ultimately unsympathetic. The model that came to dominate the British movement was drawn from businesses of the early Industrial Revolution, with the sole exception being that co-operative managers did not expect, and were not granted, salaries comparable to managers in private companies. In other words, the hierarchical relationships and authoritarian environments typical of early capitalism were perpetuated in British co-operatives, although it is probably true that union-management

relationships were better in co-operatives until at least the middle of the twentieth century.

George Keen absorbed this approach to workplace relationships, although he also advocated, like many other British co-operators, the vital role of trade unions as defenders of worker rights. In fact, he spent much of his career promoting co-operatives, with little success, among Canadian trade unionists. Like Beatrice and Sydney Webb in Great Britain, he believed that the salvation of the working classes lay in three organizations: trade unions, which would protect them in the workplace whether co-operatively owned or not; a party which, like the Labour Party in Great Britain, would defend them in politics; and the co-operative movement which would protect their purchasing power in the marketplace.

Consumer dominance

One other element in Keen's thought affected how he viewed worker co-operatives: his belief in the dominance of the consumer. For Keen, the notion of production-for-use meant that the organ-

The organized consumer, not the producer, should be the controlling force in the economy.

ized consumer, not the producer — whether farmer or manufacturer — should be the controlling force in the economy. Minimum standards of living should be assured and adequate purchasing power should be universally shared, but the underlying guideline for economic development should be the production of more goods at improving quality to a growing number of people. And, indeed, it was this vision of an improving standard of living for all people that Keen believed should motivate co-operators, including those in the working classes.

Keen's first encounter with worker control took place in 1910. Samuel Carter, the first President of the Co-operative Union of Canada, was the successful owner of the Royal Knitting Mills in Guelph. He was a Liberal, very active in local politics, and with a paternalistic interest in the problems of the working classes. Approached by the Town Council in 1910 for ideas about the use of a vacant warehouse it owned, Carter suggested the development of a worker co-partnership which would manufacture furniture. He promoted the idea, apparently with considerable success, among members of the Town Council, the Guelph Trades and Labour Council, and the Guelph Board of Trade. The proposal fell apart, however, because local business people insisted upon a conservative distribution of surpluses to workers and because of difficulties in gaining the support of working people.

14 THE CANADIAN CO-OPERATOR JUNE 1989

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Examples of appeals to working people made by the Co-operative Union of Canada.

The latter problem and the related difficulty of enlisting the support of trade unions for co-operative stores, deepened Keen's apprehensions that the mass of Canadian workers would ever support the co-operative movement.

Another failure

Keen's second encounter with worker control involved another paternalistic attempt at creating a worker co-operative, in this instance fostered by the *Canadian Fund for the Establishment of Integrally Co-operative Associations of Producers (the Robert Owen Foundation)*. This Foundation was funded largely by a group of academics in Toronto during the 1930s, but most particularly by Henri Lassere, an

internationally-known Swiss co-operator who taught at Victoria College, the University of Toronto. Keen served on the Board of the Foundation even though from the beginning he was concerned about the impractical idealism of some of its leaders. In 1932, the Foundation established a co-partnership called "Work-Tops" to manufacture overalls. Lassere invested \$15,000 of his own funds in the enterprise, but it never became successful. In fact, it closed its doors within a year, after the loss of several thousands of dollars. The company failed, in Keen's view, because of the unwillingness of the Foundation's directors to give significant power to the workers; a very complicated financial structure; a lack of business expe-

rience; a failure to collect accounts; high labour costs in a low wage industry; and a weak board of directors. The best of intentions and adequate sums of money were not enough to secure success.

Hierarchical structures

Aside from casual contacts with the Gardenvale Co-operative Press of J.J. Harpell, these were the only experiences Keen had with workers' control in his 36 years as General Secretary. However, these experiences reinforced his acceptance of the British movement's view that workers would enhance their control and protect themselves through consumer societies, their political parties and trades unions.

Keen became something of an authority on management within consumer societies, a kind of business which by its nature tends towards hierarchical structures and strong control mechanisms. Finally, Keen was always impressed by the materialistic nature of North American society, a materialism he believed was as deeply implanted in the working classes as it was among the business classes. He did not believe this materialism, even for small groups of workers, could easily be eradicated in his lifetime.

George Keen, therefore, was skeptical about the efficacy of worker co-operatives, as much as he wished to believe in them. For him, their time was far in the future, and he consequently did not spend much time promoting them or informing Canadians about their success. Surprisingly, though, he was very much influenced by the liberal Catholicism that encouraged worker co-operatives in Europe and, no less than Moses Coady, he was convinced that co-operatives were the best way to liberate the poor and powerless. He logically should have championed worker co-operatives even in an hostile environment. He seldom did, and consequently the Co-operative Union, which had considerable moral influence, if little real power, never embraced a cause which should have commanded its interest.

Ian MacPherson is Chair of the History Department at the University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia. He has written numerous books and articles on the co-operative movement in English Canada.



Samuel Carter, first president of the Co-operative Union of Canada.

In Robert Owen's Shadow

David Dale of New Lanark

By David J. McLaren, Heatherbank Press, Glasgow, 1983, 119 pp., £2.50

Reviewed by Jack Quarter

■ Last summer I visited New Lanark, a Scottish community made famous by Robert Owen during the early nineteenth century. There, I came across a provocative book, *David Dale of New Lanark*, and had lunch with its author, David McLaren, who argues that Robert Owen's role in New Lanark has been exaggerated.

New Lanark was founded in 1785 by David Dale in partnership with Richard Arkwright, the controversial inventor of spinning jenny. This partnership was quickly dissolved, and New Lanark advanced under Dale's management. By the late 1790s, its accomplishments had become internationally recognized:

"The Visitors Book contains the signatures of students, advocates, writers, Peers, ministers, soldiers and schoolmasters from such far-flung places as Norway, Jamaica, New York, Germany, Spain, India and Geneva...it seems only fair to say that what had been called 'Owen's New Lanark'...ought really to be called 'Dale's New Lanark'."

From humble beginnings, Dale accumulated great wealth as an importer of cotton and manufacturer of cotton goods and as the first Glasgow agent of the Royal Bank of Scotland. He was known for his philanthropy and for his benevolence toward his employees. When the first cotton mill at New Lanark burned down in 1785, he continued to pay his employees' wages until production resumed.

The idea of a factory-community was not Dale's invention; according to McLaren, others had preceeded him by at least 15 years. Nevertheless, under Dale's proprietorship, New Lanark



New Lanark, Scotland, the model community that Robert Owen made famous.

achieved a quality of life that was far superior to the norms for the late eighteenth century. The inhabitants were well-fed and had relatively congenial living conditions. The death rate was low, and high standards of hygiene protected the community against smallpox and cholera, both of which were widespread in Glasgow at that time.

Schooling was free and made available during the daytime for children under six (something unprecedented at that time). Apprentices went to school in the evening. "The children were taught the three Rs and church music as well as

practical skills (embroidering), hygiene and so on." Religion was also taught.

The school served not only the factory workers but also the surrounding village, its enrollment reaching 507 by 1796. Based on their achievement, students progressed through grades and generally stayed in school until their fifteenth year.

Enter Robert Owen

On June 15, 1798, Robert Owen visited New Lanark. A year later, he returned with two partners (Manchester businessmen) with an offer to purchase. He was also to become Dale's son-in-law follow-

**"When Dale sold
New Lanark to
Robert Owen in 1799,
he sold not only a
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but a place which
had from its
outset a tradition
of providing good
accommodation and
living conditions and
also a school."**

ing marriage to Dale's daughter, Caroline. The advantageous terms of purchase of New Lanark reflected Owen's special relationship to Dale, and in addition, Owen "gained access to plenty of trading capital through Dale's association with the Royal Bank."

However, Owen's interest in New Lanark was less of a business venture and more of an opportunity to prove his theory that human beings were molded by their environment. For the next 25 years, he managed the community through a style that historians referred to as "paternalistic" and "autocratic"; of more importance, he undertook some bold education initiatives and made New Lanark famous through his writings.

In Owen's interpretation, he was responsible for building New Lanark into a model community. Upon his initial visit in 1798, he described it as "a primitive manufacturing Scotch village and four mills for spinning cotton." McLaren, however, argues that Owen never recognized Dale's contribution and greatly exaggerated his own:

"When Dale sold New Lanark to Robert Owen in 1799, he sold not only a profitable enterprise, but a place which had from its outset a tradition of provid-

ing good accommodation and living conditions and also a school. What Owen provided was undoubtedly superior so far as schooling was concerned, but the credit has to go to Dale for establishing a school which served the community surrounding the mills."

McLaren's interpretation of New Lanark causes the reader to reflect upon Robert Owen's contribution to this period of history. Even though Owen was involved in many social activities, New Lanark was the primary project upon which he built his reputation. None of the Owenite communes succeeded, and the

British co-operative movement adopted an approach (consumer co-ops) of which Owen had been critical. Yet Owen was a controversial and unorthodox figure in his time. In the words of one of his biographers John Harrison, he "provided a kind of reservoir from which different groups and individuals drew ideas and inspiration which they applied as they chose. Working men and co-operators, for instance, repudiated Owen's authoritarianism and millenarianism but drew upon his social theories and anti-capitalist arguments."

Apparently then, New Lanark was founded by David Dale, who passed it over to his son-in-law, Robert Owen added to the community and publicized it. More importantly, New Lanark served as an inspiration for Owen's social theories.

New Lanark is currently being reconstructed under the guidance of the New Lanark Conservation Trust. Persons interested in visiting should contact Lorna Davidson, New Lanark Conservation Trust, New Lanark Mills, Lanark ML11 9DB, Scotland; (0555) 61345. McLaren's book is available at New Lanark for £2.50 plus £1.50 post age.

Robert Owen's management methods Published by The New Lanark Conservation Trust

Robert Owen came to New Lanark in 1800, already an accomplished cotton-mill manager. He achieved world-wide fame for his success in New Lanark, both for the social experiments he introduced in the village and the business organization of the mills.

Owen wished to improve the efficiency of the mill workers, but unlike his contemporary mill owners he did not believe in physical punishment. Instead he introduced the "Silent Monitor" as an in-

novative means of behaviour control.

Owen's monitor was a small 4-sided block of wood which hung next to each person's machine. The colour facing out indicated the person's conduct. It was the job of the Superintendent of each department to set the monitor, though each worker could appeal to Owen, or the Master of the Mill. 'Books of Character' were used to keep a record of the conduct of the workers.

White — Super excellence in conduct

Yellow — Moderate goodness

Blue — A neutral state of morals

Black — Excessive naughtiness

Owen wrote in his autobiography:

At the commencement of this new method of recording character, the great majority were black, many blue, and a few yellow; gradually the black diminished and were succeeded by the blue and the blue was gradually succeeded by the yellow, and some, but at first very few, were white.

The U.K. 16

Developing Successful Worker Co-operatives

By Chris Cornforth, Alan Thomas, Jenny Lewis, and Roger Spear, Sage Publications, 1988, 245 pp.

Reviewed by Donna Huffman

Developing Successful Worker Co-operatives is an important addition to the literature. This book is based on in-depth case studies of 16 worker co-operatives in the United Kingdom, most of which have been developed in the past five years as a result of the numerous local CDAs (Co-operative Development Agencies).

Developing Successful Worker Co-operatives is not the best title that could have been given to the book, however. Relatively little of the book focuses on efforts to develop worker co-operatives, although the final chapter makes some important recommendations for action. Instead, the book concentrates on the experience of existing worker co-operatives: their economic importance; the external factors which affect them; the motivation of their workers in forming the business; and whether degeneration into capitalist modes of operation is inevitable.

The conclusions on all counts are cautiously optimistic: that worker co-ops can be as economically successful as other businesses formed under similar circumstances; that they serve their members' needs well, despite the costs of working collectively; that degeneration from co-operative goals is not inevitable; and that local development agencies can be effective in assisting their development. (Statistics quoted in the book show that on average, two worker co-ops were formed for each CDA staff member per year.)

Unique approach

This book is unique in several ways which make it especially useful to practitioners. It is based on in-depth studies of the co-operatives and interviews with workers and managers, not just on public



Photo by Hugo Dixon

PAPERBACK LTD — recycled paper distributors, London, England; one of the new generation of British worker co-ops.

relations-type tours. It recognizes the costs of working co-operatively as well as its benefits. It provides answers to a lot of previously unanswered questions, such as how worker co-operatives are managed. It attempts to take the "member's" point of view, arguing that worker co-operatives have not succeeded if they do not meet the needs of the members, be they job creation, collective work or ideological goals. Finally, it is based on a wide range of worker co-operative experiences, including takeover co-operatives, professional-services co-operatives, job-creation co-operatives and alternative co-operatives. This range was made possible by the large numbers of worker co-operatives created in the United Kingdom in the past few

years. The authors point out, however, that it will be necessary to re-evaluate these co-ops after they've been operating for at least 10 years.

Motivations important

The motivations of members are often a blend of commitment to an ideological viewpoint and the need to create jobs and earn a living. The authors understand that the performance of worker co-operatives cannot be examined outside of the context of these motivations. Collective decision-making is an important goal in many of these co-operatives, but at the same time members realize the inefficiencies of full participation at every level of operation. The worker co-operatives described in the book are chal-

lenged by the need to balance the benefits of involving every member in every decision with the efficiencies of setting up a hierarchical organization which removes members from many types of decisions.

There are interesting discussions on the role of the managers, the rotation of job responsibilities and decisions by the membership. Some of the co-operatives suffered from being overly dependent on a manager's expertise, while others suffered from inexperienced management and poor decisions early in the co-operative's life.

Parallels

Parallels to Nova Scotia and other parts of Canada can be drawn from this book. The co-ops studied were not large industrial co-operatives with well developed financial and marketing systems such as in Mondragon. They generally were small, poorly-capitalized operations, founded by their members with relatively little help from outside and with little contact with other worker co-operatives. In Canada, much needs to be accomplished in terms of developing a national support system, where worker co-operatives and development agencies can share resources, develop common programs and become a common voice in advocating for worker co-operatives as an option for business development.

The worker co-operatives described in this book have had to find their own way by learning largely through "trial and error." Through books like this one, hopefully new worker co-operatives will be able to learn from the mistakes of these co-operatives and avoid many of their problems.

Donna Huffman is research director of the Innovations Project, St. Francis of Xavier University Extension, Antigonish, Nova Scotia B2G 1C0; (902) 867-5165.

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EN RÉVISION

Sommaire

Campus Coopératives
page 2

Éditorial
page 3

Une nouvelle loi
page 4 et 5

Rapport Maheu Noiseaux
pages 6 et 7

Les brèves
page 8 et 9

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Le 13 juin dernier, la CDR de Montréal présentait, à l'École des Hautes Études Commerciales, les résultats de la première promotion de son Programme Campus Coopératives. Des six projets retenus au départ, quatre nouvelles entreprises sont nées dans plusieurs secteurs de la vie économique: l'informatique, l'éditique, les services de garde et l'horticulture.

La CDR a profité de cette occasion pour annoncer le début d'une deuxième promotion prévue pour octobre prochain et pour lancer la campagne de recrutement de ces nouveaux projets.

PHOTOS: Jean-François Lablanc



La nouvelle coopérative **SOURIGARDE**: Jocelyne Arbié, Daniel Martel et Daniëlle Désilets.



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Réaménager le «coffre d'outils»

Ça gronde, ça écrit, ça discute, ça «comite», ça recherche, ça bouille. Depuis janvier 1989 la course au réaménagement du «coffre d'outils» est débutée.

Le «coffre d'outils» c'est les moyens légaux, fiscaux et financiers qui font que les coopératives se créent, se développent et demeurent des coopératives. Ces moyens sont donc la Loi des coopératives, la Société de développement des coopératives et le Régime d'investissement coopératif. De plus, l'interprétation fiscale du ministère du Revenu vient compléter la panoplie étatique. Le «coffre d'outils» comprend aussi des moyens qui appartiennent au mouvement.

L'ensemble de cette effervescence a pour objectif de réaménager l'intervention de l'État face au développement des coopératives de travail. Le magazine Coop de travail salue les initiatives qui ont pour but le réaménagement nécessaire.

Dans ce sens, que le C.C.Q. dépose un mémoire au nom de l'ensemble du mouvement coopératif sur le rôle de l'État face au développement coopératif et le réaménagement des outils, c'est une démarche qu'appui Coop de travail.

Que la Direction générale des coopératives organise une consultation sur la Loi des coopératives et sur les moyens de développement mis en place par le gouvernement; c'est une démarche qu'appui Coop de travail.

Que le C.C.Q. ait commandé une étude sur la capitalisation des coopératives, c'est une démarche qu'appui Coop de travail.

Devant l'importance du débat pour le développement futur des coopératives de travail Coop de travail a consacré ce numéro à la loi et la fiscalité coopératives.

Cependant, par les idées avancées jusqu'à présent, il semble qu'il faudra plusieurs formes de discussions pour que d'un débat, on passe à une véritable stratégie de développement des coopératives de travail appuyée par les moyens légaux et fiscaux adéquats.

Le Comité d'orientation

Pour une loi adaptée à la réalité des coopératives de travail

La Direction des coopératives a dernièrement entrepris une consultation portant, entre autres, sur les impacts de la «Loi sur les coopératives» sur le développement des coopératives de travail. Dans ce contexte, la Coopérative de développement régional (CDR) de Montréal lui a présenté plusieurs propositions de modifications. On retrouvera dans cet article les grandes lignes des modifications proposées. Ces quelques notes préliminaires pourront, on l'espère, contribuer à alimenter le débat.

On entend souvent dire que la «Loi sur les coopératives» est conçue en fonction des coopératives de consommateurs et des coopératives agricoles et que certains aspects sont inadéquats dans un contexte de coopérative de travail. On entend aussi parler de la fiscalité qui pourrait être un frein au développement des coopératives de travail. Regardons d'un peu plus près différents aspects de ces questions. Certains ont présenté la coopérative de travail comme une entreprise où les gens vont con-



Le ministre, monsieur Pierre MacDonald a commandé une vaste consultation sur la Loi sur les coopératives. Rendra-t-il la formule coopérative de travail plus attrayante pour les entrepreneurs? C'est notre souhait.

sommer un emploi pendant une longue période, avant de se retirer du marché du travail. La réalité est cependant toute autre. Il s'agit très souvent d'un groupe d'entrepreneurs qui se donnent une entreprise pour exercer leur métier de façon démocratique pendant une période de temps donnée. On parle donc de gens qui construisent une entreprise et qui peuvent la quitter au bout de quelques années. La loi doit tenir compte de cette réalité et permettre, en cours d'opération de l'entreprise, ou lors d'un arrêt éventuel des activités, que chaque membre puisse toucher à la part de richesse qu'il a contribué à créer.

Pour ce, il faut tout d'abord introduire le concept d'une réserve générale relativement facul-

tative. Les seuls versements obligatoires à cette réserve seraient les excédents provenant des opérations avec des non-membres. Les membres pourraient cependant décider, en assemblée annuelle, de verser une plus grande part de leurs excédents à ce capital collectif indivisible, et il pourrait y avoir des avantages fiscaux pour cette contribution à un patrimoine productif que nul ne pourra s'approprier individuellement.

Un autre élément à mettre en place serait un poste d'EXCÉDENTS NON RÉPARTIS (ENR), comparable, dans une certaine mesure, avec les bénéfices non répartis (BNR) des compagnies. La part des surplus annuels qui n'est pas versée à la réserve ni distribuée sous forme de ristourne se retrouve dans les excédents non répartis (ENR), qui s'ajoutent à l'Avoir de la coopérative. Une fois par année, selon une mécanique qui reste à définir, on évalue la part de cet ENR qui sera éventuellement attribuée à chaque membre, et que celui-ci pourra toucher, à certaines conditions lors de son départ de l'entreprise.

L'existence des ENR permet aux membres de capitaliser leur entreprise, sans avoir à le faire par le biais d'une réserve impartageable. La tendance à se répartir chaque année les surplus de l'entreprise sera alors moins forte.

La Direction des coopératives du ministère de l'Industrie, du Commerce et de la Technologie

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Gouvernement du Québec
Ministère de l'Industrie, du Commerce
et de la Technologie

suite à la page 5

Il sera important de veiller à ce que la fiscalité globale d'une coopérative de travail ne soit pas désavantagée par rapport à la fiscalité globale d'une compagnie

suite de la page 4

Les surplus ré-investis dans l'entreprise sous cette forme ne seront plus imposés dans les mains des membres (comme c'est le cas actuellement pour les ristournes ré-investies en capital social). L'entreprise est imposée à son taux marginal, généralement moindre que celui des membres, et le membre sera imposé lorsqu'il touchera effectivement sa part d'ENR.

Afin de demeurer cohérent dans ce souci de partager équitablement la richesse créée, il faudra voir à reconnaître aux membres une part de la plus-value de l'entreprise, tout au moins en ce qui a trait à la plus-value de la valeur marchande des actifs tangibles de l'entreprise. Dans le même esprit, il faudrait abolir l'article 185 qui consacre la dévolution désintéressée de l'actif net en cas de liquidation.

Quelques autres articles de la loi seraient à réévaluer. Ainsi, mentionnons le fait qu'il est impossible, à l'heure actuelle pour une corporation sans but lucratif de procéder à une continuation légale en coopérative de travail. Il y a pourtant une demande de ce côté.

L'article 224.2 qui parle de la période d'essai des membres de la coopérative n'est pas clair dans sa formulation. Il devrait indiquer clairement qu'après une période maximum d'un an la coopérative doit inviter le membre en probation à faire une demande d'admission comme membre. Et que la coopérative statuera, en fonction de ses

propres intérêts et règlements, sur:

- 1) l'acceptation éventuelle du travailleur comme membre;
- 2) le maintien du statut de travailleur en cas de refus du travailleur de devenir membre ou de non-acceptation par la coopérative du travailleur comme membre.

Au niveau de la fiscalité, il sera important de veiller à ce que la fiscalité globale d'une coopérative de travail (impôt de la coopérative et de ses membres) ne soit pas désavantagée par rapport à la fiscalité globale d'une compagnie (impôt de la compagnie et de ses actionnaires).

En ce qui a trait au Régime d'investissement coopératif (RIC), il a tout intérêt à être ré-aménagé pour devenir réellement intéressant. Les contraintes actuelles du RIC forcent les membres à laisser dans l'entreprise sous forme de réserve indivisible des sommes plus élevées que les avantages fiscaux consentis. Afin d'assurer au gouvernement une permanence du capital, et d'assurer aux travailleurs un réel avantage, la contrainte au remboursement de parts privilégiées émises dans le cadre du RIC devrait être, non plus un accroissement de 50% de la réserve générale, mais le maintien du niveau de l'ensemble de l'Avoir après émission.

Les coopératives de travail, entreprises à but lucratif, ont leur particularités par rapport aux compagnies. Mais elles ont aussi leurs particularités par rapport aux autres types de co-

opératives. Une loi sur les coopératives qui veut s'assurer de ne pas être un frein au dévelop-

pement des coopératives de travail a avantage à en tenir compte.



Monsieur Marc-André Leboeuf, Directeur du support aux promoteurs de la Coopérative de développement régional de Montréal, a participé activement à la consultation sur la réforme de la Loi sur les coopératives. Sa longue expérience sur le terrain fait de lui un expert sur le sujet.

PHOTO: Jean-François Leblanc

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Le financement des coopératives

Maheu Noiseux dépose ses conclusions au CCQ

À l'assemblée générale du Conseil de la coopération du Québec, la Société-conseil Maheu Noiseux a présenté les conclusions de sa recherche portant sur le financement des coopératives. Le rapport sommaire rappelle que le contrôle diffus, lié à la nature coopérative, rebute les prêteurs et qu'il leur est plus facile d'évaluer la capacité de remboursement d'une société à capital-actions. Le seul palliatif, à leur avis, semble être le mécanisme de garantie externe. La Société de développement des coopératives jouit d'un tel mécanisme. Cependant ses investissements auprès des coopératives diminuent de 2 millions de \$ par année depuis 1985-86. Le rapport conclut que la S.D.C., étant sous le contrôle de l'État, est devenue un instrument d'intervention politique spécialisé. On propose donc que les coopératives créent leur propre organisme de garantie de prêts. En plus de la création de ce Fonds de croissance des coopératives, on propose, pour améliorer le financement externe, d'élargir le Régime d'investissement coopératif aux institutions financières associées aux coopératives et si opportun, au grand public.

D'autres possibilités sont énumérées.

- 1) Quant à la fiscalité, on suggère de demander l'exemption d'impôt pour les coopératives, l'impôt différé pour les ristournes réinvesties, l'imposition à titre de dividendes pour les ristournes encaissées.
- 2) Rendre la réserve partageable et distribuée au membre quittant la coopérative, sur la base du total des transactions qu'il a effectuées avec celle-ci.
- 3) Favoriser les liens entre les coopératives et le Fonds de solidarité de la F.T.Q., pour que celui-ci y investisse en parts privilégiées.

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M.M. Claude Béland, président du Mouvement Desjardins et élu administrateur au C.C.Q. et Magella St-Pierre, nouveau secrétaire général de cet organisme furent des auditeurs attentifs lors du dépôt du rapport Maheu Noiseux.

- 4) On suggère de demander l'aide gouvernementale telle que le versement à la coopérative des primes d'assurance-chômage résiduelles d'un chômeur qui se joint à elle et une subvention à la capitalisation égale à 20% de l'apport des membres.

En conclusion, le rapport suggère de prioriser les suggestions suivantes.

- 1) Obtenir l'admissibilité des parts des coopératives aux Régimes Enregistrés d'Épargne Retraite.
- 2) Créer un ou des organismes de garantie d'emprunt.
- 3) Élargir le Régime d'investissement coopératif, au moins aux institutions financières associées aux coopératives et peut-être au grand public.
- 4) Déterminer un mécanisme qui permette de maintenir constant le pouvoir d'achat des parts sociales et créer un gain de capital nominal non-imposable.
- 5) Faire des représentations pour que la S.D.C. s'oriente principalement vers l'aide au démarrage des coopératives dans tous les secteurs de la coopération.
- 6) Créer un organisme dédié à fournir du capital de risque aux coopératives.

suite à la page 7

On ne peut ni enrichir la coopérative au détriment de ses membres, ni enrichir les membres au détriment de leur coopérative

suite de la page 6

Commentaires

Les résultats présentés énumèrent davantage des pistes qu'un énoncé d'une politique fiscale et de financement appropriés aux coopératives. La recherche révèle des lacunes fondamentales importantes.

La première est sa méconnaissance de l'histoire coopérative québécoise. La proposition la plus importante est celle de la création d'un Fonds de croissance pour les coopératives, faisant appel à l'épargne des ménages et des institutions. À toute fin pratique, ceci équivaut à demander au Mouvement Desjardins d'assumer financièrement le développement coopératif, vu la quasi absence chronique des autres institutions financières du mouvement. L'histoire récente des coopératives de pêcheries et de consommation nous indique que telle n'est plus son intention. La présence d'organismes tels que la S.I.D., C.I.D., Tremplin 2000 permettraient pourtant de tels investissements coopératifs. Il faut rappeler que récemment le Mouvement Desjardins était un partenaire dans la S.D.C.. Il est difficile de croire qu'il en ait été éliminé sans son consentement.

Le mouvement coopératif doit-il assumer seul le financement de son développement? Le risque paraît trop élevé qu'il soit contraint à des difficultés à cause de la débâcle financière d'un secteur coopératif. Ceci est vrai pour le Mouvement Desjar-

dins et davantage pour les autres mouvements sectoriels. Même à Mondragon, la Caja Laboral Popular se désengage de plus en plus de cette voie. Doit-on risquer de plus que le gouvernement vidange dans le mouvement coopératif son rôle d'appui et ses interventions?

Pourtant des transformations importantes prennent place au Québec. La tendance est à la création de Fonds d'investissement locaux, régionaux et même provincial. Les partenaires sont visibles: le Mouvement Desjardins, la Caisse de dépôts et de placement, le Fonds de solidarité et possiblement les municipalités. Ces Fonds devraient être accessibles aux coopératives en autant qu'il existe un minimum de confiance envers cette forme d'organisation.

La proposition n'a de sens que si la vogue est la création de Fonds d'investissement spécialisés. Spécialisation par secteur, localité, forme d'organisation, type d'investisseurs, etc. Le Québec semble trop petit pour un tel enchevêtrement de Fonds d'investissement.

Quant à la S.D.C., sa confusion vient certes de certaines politiques gouvernementales, mais en grande partie de son inefficacité interne. Les revendications depuis plus d'un an de nombres d'intervenants en font état. Le mémoire écarté à l'assemblée générale du C.C.Q. est explicite sur ce point.

La seconde lacune de la recherche est son ignorance des spécificités sectorielles. L'étude

traite de l'ensemble coopératif qui n'est de fait que l'union de spécificités sectorielles. La problématique coopérative varie selon la taille des coopératives et le type de sociétariat. Il apparaît impossible de concilier dans une même stratégie les besoins de nos coopératives de travail et d'une coopérative de la taille d'Agropur.

La troisième lacune est l'ignorance de la spécificité coopérative de travail. La coopérative de travail ne s'aborde pas comme une compagnie. Il faut articuler une stratégie globale qui interrelie sociétaire et coopérative. On ne peut ni enrichir la coopérative au détriment de ses membres, ni enrichir les membres au détriment de leur coopérative. Toute politique fiscale et de financement doit rechercher un tel équilibre. Il faut rappeler que lors d'un emprunt, ce n'est pas la coopérative qui paie l'intérêt mais le sociétaire. La coopérative n'est que l'instrument de gestion. La nuance est de taille et mérite attention. Elle remet en cause la proposition consistant à élargir

le RIC aux investisseurs externes. Parce que le RIC oblige la création d'une réserve au moins équivalente à 50% des investissements, donc à la renonciation par le sociétaire d'une partie importante des gains que son entreprise va générer, le RIC est discriminatoire envers le sociétaire. Les dirigeants coopératifs informés et soucieux de leurs sociétaires ne publicisent par le RIC. Dans les conditions actuelles, rendre le RIC accessible aux investisseurs externes accroît de façon importante les pertes des sociétaires. C'est une proposition qu'il faut proscrire.

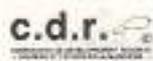
Le rapport préliminaire et sommaire soumis à l'assemblée générale du C.C.Q. lance des pistes mais n'articule aucun plan stratégique. La revue du CIRTEC «Coopératives et développement» est, nous semble-t-il, allée beaucoup plus loin dans l'énumération des pistes. 100 000\$ plus tard, on en est encore aux balbutiements!

Jean-Claude Guérard



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Activités en Gaspésie

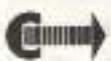
La Coopérative de développement régional Gaspésie/Les Îles reprend ses activités après plus de 18 mois d'arrêt et ce grâce à l'apport financier du M.E.Q. et du M.E.E.S., par le biais d'un programme parrainé par les commissions scolaires de notre région et le Collège de la Gaspésie. Une entente de service intervenue entre la Coopérative de développement régional Gaspésie/Les Îles et le Groupe ressource en logement collectif de la Gaspésie et des Îles-de-la-Madeleine nous a permis de mettre en place un Groupe conseil, lequel a pu profiter du soutien tant technique qu'administratif des trois points de service du Groupe ressource en logement collectif de la Gaspésie et des Îles-de-la-Madeleine soit: Maria dans la Baie des Chaleurs, Gaspé et Cap-aux-Meules au Îles-de-la-Madeleine. Les résultats des sessions d'information et de sensibilisation aux principes coopératifs, pour la création d'entreprise, n'ont pas tardé à se faire sentir car, malgré une équipe restreinte (2 personnes) et un échéancier d'à peine huit mois, trois coopératives de travail ont vu le jour en Gaspésie, totalisant la création de plus de 30 nouveaux emplois à temps plein et nous avons en réserve des demandes pour trois autres projets de création d'entreprise coopérative pour l'automne. Toutefois, malgré cette performance, notre avenir semble précaire, car même si nous répondons à un besoin économique pour une région aussi peu nantie que la nôtre, nous ne sommes pas encore assurés d'un financement de base adéquat car le ministère de l'Industrie, du Commerce et de la Technologie ne semble pas prendre vraiment au sérieux le travail accompli et c'est plus que dommage. Notre région déjà fortement pénalisée l'est encore plus, compte tenu du fait que l'entrepreneuriat, quoique très vivant, ne peut émerger faute de capitaux de base ce qui réduit considérablement nos chances de créer des emplois, de maintenir notre



L'équipe de la Gaspésie et les Îles-de-la-Madeleine: Jules Lemieux G.R.T., Luc Potvin G.R.T., Hélène Jomphe G.R.T., Michèle Allard C.D.R., André Tremblay G.R.T. et Alain Bernatchez C.D.R.

population de jeunes en région et par conséquent d'augmenter nos chances de stabilité économique.

Nos budgets actuels permettent au Groupe conseil d'être à l'oeuvre jusqu'à la fin juin 1989. Une nouvelle demande auprès du M.E.Q. et du M.E.E.S. sera présentée, c'est actuellement notre seule voie de financement. La Coopérative de développement régional Gaspésie/Les Îles demeurera active dans sa recherche de financement, si les résultats ne sont pas probants à l'automne 1989, nous nous verrons de nouveau dans l'obligation de réduire considérablement nos interventions en espérant des jours meilleurs pour l'entreprise coopérative et les travailleurs et travailleuses de notre région. Histoire à suivre ...



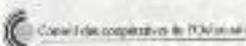
Le prix Excelsions pour Circonférence

La Chambre de Commerce du Grand Joliette vient de décerner à Circonférence le prix Excelsions dans la catégorie Nouvelle Entreprise.

Fondée à Joliette en 1987, cette coopérative de travail est issue du dynamisme de cinq intervenants d'expérience. Dès le départ, Circonférence met au service des organisations et des entreprises une banque de ressources orientées vers l'efficacité organisationnelle et aptes à diriger ou à soutenir diverses activités de consultation, d'animation, d'organisation, de formation, de rédaction, de soutien à l'intégration au travail et de support au développement.

Circonférence a déjà à son actif plus de cent interventions auprès de regroupements régionaux et provinciaux, d'institutions financières, d'organismes de développement, de services publics, de table de concertation et de groupes socio-communautaires.

Ce prix Excelsions est une belle marque de reconnaissance et d'encouragement pour cette équipe de jeunes entrepreneurs novateurs, qui en plus de s'appliquer à sa co-gestion, réussit à installer dans la région et ailleurs un créneau de nouveaux services professionnels et sur mesure.



Un bilan positif

Au terme de son année financière le Conseil des coopératives de l'Outaouais (CCO) a recruté dix nouvelles coopératives-membres. De plus, neuf coopératives ont été créées dont huit coopératives de travail et une coopérative de consommation. Le CCO représente 65% des 102 coopératives actives dans la région de l'Outaouais.



Conseil des coopératives de l'Outaouais

Coopérative de transformation de cèdre

Des travailleurs oeuvrant dans la transformation de cèdre se sont regroupés pour former la Coopérative de transformation de cèdre de l'Outaouais. Cette coopérative de travailleurs actionnaires et la coopérative forestière PICANOC détiendront respectivement 25% et 8% des actions des Industries Ced-bee Inc., entreprise qui se spécialisera dans la production de bardeaux de cèdre.

Le principal promoteur du projet, monsieur Richard Pépin, s'est mérité une bourse de 25 000\$ pour avoir présenté le meilleur plan d'affaires dans le cadre du cours-concours «Devenez entrepreneur» parrainé par la Fondation de l'entrepreneuriat de l'Outaouais.

L'entreprise emploiera environ 35 personnes et nécessitera des investissements de l'ordre de 1,2 million de dollars. Les travaux de construction de l'usine débuteront à l'automne 1989.



Conseil des coopératives de l'Outaouais

Le CCO prévoit un fonds de capital de risque

Au cours de son assemblée générale annuelle le président du Conseil des coopératives de l'Outaouais, monsieur Réjean Laflamme a souligné que pour le nouvel exercice financier l'organisme devra, d'une part, participer à la mise sur pied d'un fonds régional de capital de risque qui se prêtera au développement d'entreprise à base participative. D'autre part, le Conseil veut intégrer le concept de développement durable dans son plan d'action comme vient de le faire le Mouvement Desjardins avec la publication de son option environnementale. À cet égard, le CCO vient d'initier deux projets dans les secteurs reflétant bien cette préoccupation. Il s'agit d'un projet de compostage de résidus d'entreprises papetières ainsi qu'un projet de culture biologique en serres.

Conseil des coopératives de l'Outaouais Une question de fric

Une quarantaine de participants ont assisté au séminaire «Une question de fric» tenu samedi le 27 mai 1989 par le Conseil des coopératives de l'Outaouais.

Ce séminaire a permis de présenter les outils de financement disponibles actuellement afin de démarrer ou de consolider une entreprise.

Il a également fait ressortir deux outils dont l'Outaouais pourrait se servir pour fortifier et diversifier son économie. D'une part, il y a la Société de placement dans l'entreprise québécoise (S.P.E.Q.) qui permet de mobiliser des fonds rapidement pour des entreprises prometteuses et d'autre part, un fonds de capital de risque.

Formule intéressante par sa flexibilité, son démarrage facile et surtout les avantages fiscaux qui y sont liés, elle est limitée, cependant, à certains secteurs; d'où la nécessité d'un autre outil complémentaire soit le fonds de capital de risque régional, pour couvrir tous les secteurs d'activités et tous les secteurs géographiques.

Ailleurs au Québec, les collectivités se prévalent déjà de ces outils afin de pouvoir investir des mises de fonds importantes dans leurs P.M.E. locales. Des efforts ont été déployés dans notre région pour la mise sur pied d'un fonds de capital de risque. Il faut compléter le processus afin de ne pas prendre de retard sur les autres régions du Québec.

Toutefois, comme l'a indiqué M. Dupon-Hébert du Fonds de solidarité, «le fonds de capital de risque ne remplacera pas l'initiative locale et les mises

de fonds des entrepreneurs locaux». Cet outil peut cependant aider à la mise sur pied et l'expansion d'entreprises de taille intéressante que les entrepreneurs non épaulés ne pourraient réaliser par eux-mêmes.

Notons enfin que le partage des informations et des idées ainsi que la réflexion commune qui a eu lieu lors du séminaire «Une question de fric» ont permis de voir des perspectives nouvelles de développement en région. Les participants ont bénéficié d'exemples concrets, vécus dans l'Outaouais, illustrant cette prise en mains de notre développement économique. Dans la conjoncture actuelle il faut que nous innovions afin de mettre en place une infrastructure entrepreneuriale permettant l'essor de l'économie régionale et un développement durable.



Parmi les conférenciers «Une question de fric», on retrouve de gauche à droite MM. Richard Pépin, directeur général de Ced-bec Inc.; Michel Dupon-Hébert, Fonds de solidarité des travailleurs du Québec; Gilles Bégin, directeur général du C.C.O.; Richard Messier, président de la Fédération québécoise des coopératives de travail; Guy Deschênes, président de BOISACO; Serge Regnault de la S.D.I. et Jean-Claude Guérard, professeur aux H.E.C.. M. Léon Lajoie absent lors de la prise de photo.

L'assemblée générale du CQRCDR



Le 27 juin dernier le Conseil Québécois du regroupement des coopératives de développement régional (CQRCDR) a tenu son assemblée générale annuelle à Montréal. Les délégués des six CDR membres ont eu l'occasion de prendre connaissance du bilan des activités réalisées au cours de la dernière année et d'adopter le plan d'action de la deuxième année. Comme l'a souligné le président, monsieur Jean-Claude Guérard, pour cette seconde année, «le CQRCDR devra intensifier son travail dans la réalisation utile des expérimentations dans le cadre du programme d'aide à l'innovation. Son Conseil d'administration aura la tâche de décider du futur rôle du CQRCDR, comme lieu de coordination et de soutien de nos actions dans nos régions respectives.»

Le nouveau Conseil d'administration est formé de Jean-Claude Guérard, président, Réjean Laflamme, vice-président, Pierre Allard, Viateur Beaupré, Juliette Bonneville, Armand Lajeunesse et Gilles Paquette.

Naissance d'une nouvelle coopérative

Grâce au support du Conseil des coopératives de l'Outaouais, des étudiants en orthopédagogie ont mis sur pied une coopérative d'enseignement adapté «La Coopérative des services orthopédagogiques de l'Outaouais».

Lors de la conférence de presse qui a marqué l'événement, madame Mireille E. Landry a précisé les grandes orientations de la coopérative.

«L'important, a-t-elle dit est de chercher à valoriser l'enfant qui a accumulé plusieurs échecs jusqu'à maintenant. Pour ce faire, nous cherchons à lui faire réaliser des réussites significatives à ses yeux. Il est alors de première importance de chercher à mettre en valeur ses forces et ses talents. Notre aide, en ce sens, repose sur des principes simples mais essentiels c'est-à-dire sur le respect de l'enfant comme personne et comme apprenant dans tout ce que cela comporte» a-t-elle souligné en terminant.

On pourra entrer en communication avec l'une des responsables en téléphonant au (819) 568-2677. Où l'on se fera un plaisir de donner de plus amples renseignements.



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