

WORKER CO-OPS

volume 4 / number 2

NEWSLETTER

Worker co-ops witness remarkable growth in Québec

Claude Carbonneau

Worker co-ops have existed for some time in Québec. In the 1940's, forestry co-ops were popular. At the same time, however, worker co-ops never took up a place in the heart of the Québec co-operative movement. This situation has changed radically in the last few years.

Worker co-ops grow 12% annually since 1979

In five years, worker co-ops have become the second co-operative sector in terms of growth. Like housing co-ops, they are, in fact, the only sector to show a real growth. Since 1979, worker co-ops have had an annual growth rate averaging around 12%. By December 31, 1983, they numbered 145, of which about 50 are forestry co-operatives.

The poor economic situation is mainly responsible for this new popularity. Factory closures motivated workers to find original solutions to their problems. In a number of cases, the workers considered the co-operative model as a means to recover the company. Also, more and more skilled workers have formed together into co-ops to offer their services widely.

In this manner, a network of six diesel repair and heavy equipment co-operatives has arisen in four regions of Québec. They have formed into a federation in order to negotiate with the major North American manufacturers. They are now planning to extend this network to other regions of the province.

Worker co-ops move into retail sales in liquor stores

Already active in several sectors

(school buses, courier services, towing, textiles, printing, etc.), worker co-ops will soon be able to move into the important sector of retail trade. The government has recently proposed an amendment to the co-operative legislation to enable the establishment of retail co-operatives ("coopératives de commerce"). This refers primarily to the workers of la Société des alcools du Québec (SAQ) for whom the government had proposed regrouping into co-ops to buy the SAQ outlets.

It appears that the plan will enable the establishment of co-operatives for all types of retail trade.

Québec's SDC develops worker co-ops at a rapid pace

Established in 1979 to supply financial assistance and competent technical services for co-operative development, the SDC, la Société de Développement Coopératif, has been called upon to invest in more than 100 worker co-op proposals. In six years, the SDC has received 334 requests from these co-operatives. It has authorized 105 investments for a total of \$6.7 million.

Lately, the Québec government has given new authority to SDC. One of the priorities committed to it is an explicit concern for worker co-ops. From now on, SDC will guarantee loans that the co-operatives can negotiate through financial institutions. These loans will primarily assist in the capitalization of enterprises, in advance of the members investing in their co-operative. As well, SDC will be able to assume a part or the whole of the interest on these loans.

The co-operatives can also rely on support from co-operative and community management groups ("Groupes

de gestion coopératifs et communautaires"). These are groups of resource people created by the government to assist the workers in their operations. We can expect that worker co-ops will continue to spring up over the next few years.

Claude Carbonneau is L'agent de communication, Société de développement coopératif, 430, chemin, Sainte-Foy, Québec, G1S 2J5. 418-687-9221 (french translation by Joanne Lindsay).

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A Modest Proposal: Co-operation Among Co-ops

Jack Quarter

A striking feature of the co-operative movement in Canada is the lack of integration among the various sectors. Though this is in part a response to the unique needs of each sector, it limits the benefits that could evolve from co-operation.

Here is a possible direction for collaboration between housing and worker co-ops which could be mutually beneficial.

Integrated approach is advocated

Housing co-ops have some members of modest means who either are unemployed or who desire stable employment. Worker co-ops encourage co-operatively owned businesses. One problem, among many, in the development of worker co-ops is the establishment of stable markets. This is not simply a problem for worker co-ops, but for small businesses in general. This is one reason why their survival rate is so low.

If worker co-ops could be established from among housing co-op members to service stable markets in that sector, the enterprises should lead to a mutually beneficial marriage. This would create work opportunities for housing co-op members and also lead to the development of worker co-ops.

Service co-ops could capture housing co-op markets

What possibilities exist? In the Toronto area, some needs in housing co-ops are house cleaning services for private units, maintenance and pest control. Let us take house cleaning as an example.

In the past few years, several privately owned franchises (e.g., Molly's Maids) have evolved. Each company has different cleaning arrangements, but as a rule the charge for cleaning a private dwelling is between \$35 and \$40 (usually a half day's work) with less than half of the money going to the cleaners.

The attraction of employment through these companies is the guarantee of regular work. The franchises are able to attract a market for their employees through central advertising, using part of the overhead for this purpose.

If housing co-ops were willing to

set up a worker co-op or series of worker co-ops for this same purpose, it would provide gainful self-employment for some members in servicing other members. Also, since the service would be primarily in-house, the overhead should be less than that incurred by the franchises, meaning greater benefit to both parties.

Maintenance or repair to existing housing co-operatives (one of the other areas of need) also could be a potentially useful way of building bridges to the labour movement — something that will have to occur, if the worker co-ops are to take off.

Val Scott, education co-ordinator of the Canadian Federation of Labour, (the umbrella organization for the construction unions) is particularly interested in finding ways that unemployed construction workers can be organized into worker co-operatives.

Housing co-ops could benefit by encouraging the development of worker co-ops to do maintenance or building repairs. Reliable workers would be available for repairs. This would also give the worker co-op sector a boost.

Before feasibility studies could be considered, there would have to be some interest from leaders of the housing sector.

The more general issue is assisting worker co-ops to develop stable markets. Currently, Co-operative Work (the Toronto-based development group) is undertaking a pilot project in which it is assisting Dreadnaught, a small graphics and design worker co-op, to market its services among other co-ops (primarily large, established co-ops).

If this arrangement works out, it will open the door for marketing assistance to other worker co-operatives, and for Co-operative Work undertaking marketing as one of its services.

Co-operative work is still experimenting with this idea as one means of assisting worker co-operatives to develop stable markets. It is an extremely important matter, if there is to be a high survival rate among worker co-operatives. ■

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Petty Harbour co-op represents community interests

Skip McCarthy

Last winter, the small fishing community of Petty Harbour, Newfoundland, faced the grim prospect of an impending fishing season with no processing plants to deliver to. The Fisherman's Committee, originally organized in 1957, held a series of meetings which resulted in their decision in December to form the Petty Harbour Fishermen's Producer Co-operative. This was seen to be a way to save employment and, moreover, as a means to try to deal with processing surplus fish during the summer glut period.

Union co-operates with co-op

To get the co-op started, an initial subscription of \$55,000 was raised

from 88 local fishermen. The Newfoundland Fishermen, Food and Allied Workers Union gave its blessing to the effort by agreeing to a temporary exemption for the Petty Harbour Co-op's operations. The experimental relationship with the union would continue to be monitored by George Chafe, who has served on the union executive, and other NFFA members who are also co-op members.

Originally, the fishermen submitted bids and attempted to revive one of the closed plants. Although the Petty Harbour Co-op was unsuccessful in its bid to take over the defunct Newfoundland Food Processors operation, it has established a plant

of its own. (The NFP plant was reopened under one of the former managers of the bankrupt firm.)

The opening of the new co-op plant, capable of handling 30,000 to 40,000 pounds a day was made possible through the transfer of another local processing license held by a local supermarket owner.

Prospects improve for Petty Harbour

The fact that prospects for this community of 800 located south of St. John's should be much brighter this summer is due in no small part to the efforts of Tom Best, the chairman, and the other members of the Petty Harbour Fishermen's Committee. They have mustered the support of most of the community, not only the fishermen but also the women and men whose employment as shore workers was also at stake.

Not only does the co-op have its own plant which can process part of the members catch, but the private owner of the re-opened Petty Harbour Fisheries plant must also deal with the co-op members to supply his plant.

This is a community which has shown strong initiative in exercising the co-op option in its determination to survive. The Petty Harbour co-op can also be seen as an important example of the potential strength of joint trade union-co-operative development strategies.

Skip McCarthy will be taking a position at the Centre for Co-operative Studies, University of Saskatchewan, in the fall, 1984. ■

CRS Workers' Co-op, Part 2: Management structure and growth

Dana Weber

In our last issue, Worker Co-ops west coast editor described the conditions under which CRS has operated during its eight year history. Dana Weber continues in Part 2 with a look at the management and growth issues.

Evolving Management Structure and Style

CRS management structure and approach to decision-making usually played catch-up with the technical challenges we faced.

From 1976-78, when CRS consisted of the bakery, the cannery and the food wholesaler, the entire membership of the co-op met once a week to discuss co-op wide issues. The working collective in each enterprise also met weekly to discuss particular industry issues. This theoretical distinction was often not adhered to in practice. There was a lot of discussion about industry-specific issues at general meetings; policy formulation was often confused with administrative detail.

This sort of confusion was typical of a management style where delegation was practiced only minimally, lines of authority were unclear and follow-through was poor. Issues often came to co-op meetings in chaotic form

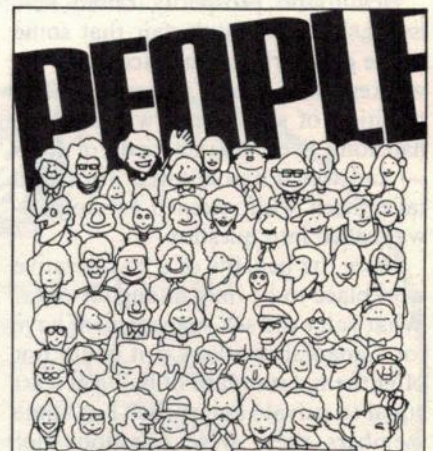
without sufficient prior research or advance preparation. In the absence of formal authority, vocal or senior members held informal power.

However, policy decisions were recorded and adhered to; administrative tasks such as accounting were consolidated at the co-op level; and there was a growing sense of professionalism among the membership which was reflected in operations.

The co-op also began to use *ad hoc* committees to research and explore specific issues. One of these examined the structure of the co-op itself. It identified many of the deficiencies and established a set of principles upon which any new system would have to rest. These included, among others:

- recognition of the importance of advance preparation and timely information in making key decisions;
- the delegation of complex issues and tasks to small groups;
- the need for clearly defined lines of accountability and communication between various levels of the co-op's structure;
- the separation of policy-making and administration;
- the recognition of management as

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CRS Workers' Co-op, Part 2: Management structure and growth

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necessary work to be done during regular working hours.

The last point signalled a move away from the tradition of self-sacrifice which demanded that one work long hours in production and then take one's share of the management burden home or attend meetings at night.

On the basis of these principles the co-op established four standing committees: personnel, planning, finance and co-ordination. Their powers and duties were outlined. Those of the general meeting were redefined, while general meetings were reduced in frequency from weekly to monthly and their procedures tightened.

As problems were encountered in actual practice, the structure was refined somewhat, but overall the delegation of complex tasks to specialized working groups of qualified individuals had improved our planning capacity, our financial controls and our ability to anticipate problems rather than merely respond to them. The structure served us well until 1982, when a formal board of directors with more delegated powers was created to oversee the co-op's affairs between general meetings.

Better internal control meant proportionately greater control over our business environment, and the co-op prospered.

Growth Creates New Issues

New-found prosperity raised new issues. It seemed only fair that some of the prosperity should accrue to the workers who made it possible. The tradition of subsistence wages which had long been characteristic of CRS — and which had allowed it to capitalize itself with retained earnings — was called into question.

Were the benefits of a co-operative workplace to be only intangible ones? What value did self-management have for Canadian workers if it could not offer them a standard of living at least equal to private enterprise? For some members these were questions not only of personal philosophy but political strategy. In retrospect, it seems inevitable that the balance would begin to tilt more toward the individual worker.

Wages and benefits improved steadily through 1980-81. Among the latter

were four weeks' paid vacation, fully paid medical and dental plans and maternity or paternity leave. Members were encouraged to take work-related courses at the co-op's expense, and the co-op held periodic internal educational events as well.

At the same time CRS initiated a more formal and comprehensive induction and orientation program for new members. No investment is required of members, however, and increases in equity come from re-investment of retained earnings. Although CRS usually distributes a portion of any surplus as a bonus on wages, any undistributed surplus goes solely to the co-op as a whole. It does not have a system of "internal capital accounts" for individual members as the Mondragon co-ops do.

Through most of the current recession CRS has continued to expand and has only recently experienced some slackening. During this period, management capability of tenured members has increased along with the challenges faced by the co-op. While these members don't necessarily have commensurate authority. Despite skill differentials, wages remain equal. Is absolute equality necessarily equitable? How do we continue to offer challenging work to experienced members, yet keep the co-op's structure open to participation by new ones?

These are questions for the second ten years. The challenge is to design a structure and operate the co-op in a

way which meets our needs as a competitive business, yet remains true to our democratic purpose.

We hope that this history will be of some use to others who value self-management. Some of what we have experienced will no doubt be unique to our own situation and of limited value elsewhere, but perhaps the lessons we can extract from that experience are more universal:

- the need for a "vision" of a long-term view at the outset;
- the need for commitment — whether social or financial — from members; self interest cannot be the only appeal;
- commitment notwithstanding, there has to be a payoff for early sacrifice;
- the need to balance individual requirements with those of the organization;
- the need for a support network of fraternal organizations.

Finally, whatever changes may yet be made to our management structure and our method of making decisions, the tradition of having a highly educated, informed and involved membership will always be a key strength of our co-op. It was those members who created this history; they will be the ones who invent the future.

A longer version of this history can be obtained from CRS Workers' Co-op, 1239 Odium Dr., Vancouver, B.C. V5L 3L8. An update since 1982 is under discussion. ■

Edmonton worker co-op conference: A rousing success

Laird Hunter

More Than Jobs: A Conference on Worker Co-operatives attracted more than 100 participants to Edmonton. Various sessions examined the worker co-operative as a way to achieve positive alternatives to the present employment situation.

The conference was designed to inform participants about the history of worker co-ops internationally and about their current operation in Canada.

Senator Hazen Argue's opening remarks were received warmly.

The conference began with an examination of the principles which underlie worker co-operatives and the various legal forms through which

they can organize. This was followed by small group discussions, Canadian case studies, sessions on the need for and nature of government assistance and a look at some of the problems associated with organizing, financing and managing worker co-operatives.

Essential to the success of the conference were the resource people recruited from across Canada. Members of Dumont Press Grafex in Kitchener and of the Community Congress for Economic Change and CRS Foods in Vancouver represent just some of the experienced participants present.

The conference provided the spark for the formation of a worker co-op

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Edmonton Worker Co-op Conference: A Rousing Success

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resource group in Alberta and a network which would then be able to assist with the development of worker co-ops there.

In some measure, this is coming to pass. A group of people still continue to meet — discussing possible projects and acting as an advisory committee

to Communitas Inc., an Edmonton resource group, which has initiated a worker co-operatives project.

A post-conference evaluation shows that 80% of the respondents would be interested in working toward setting up a worker co-op.

The rise of the worker co-operative concept in Canada may just happen sooner than everyone expects.

More than Jobs, held on May 11 and 12, was sponsored by Communitas

Inc., the Faculty of Extension at the University of Alberta, the Edmonton Social Planning Council and the Co-operative College of Canada, with financial assistance from a variety of co-operative, government and private sources.

Laird Hunter is an Edmonton-based lawyer specializing in co-op law. He is legal consultant to the Co-operative Housing Federation. ■

Profile:

Grammar and Spelling rate high with Baseline

The following is an article by Jan De Grass, originally published in the January-February, 1984, issue of *Enterprise*, the periodical of the B.C. Credit Union Central.

At a meeting of magazine publishers some time ago, *West Coast Review* editor, Fred Candelaria waxed enthusiastic over his recent find: an organization that nurtured his magazine into print, "and where the typesetters are actually literate."

He indicated that this treasure emanated somewhere from the depths of Pulp Press, a Vancouver publisher, which he aptly described as "a hydra-headed enterprise."

He was referring to Baseline Publication Trades Co-operative, a typesetting and graphic design operation where literacy is indeed important. Good grammar and spelling rate high on their list along with the desire to become co-owner of a workers' co-op, the ability to loan \$500 in personal money to capitalize that co-op and a desire to work in a collective fashion.

It's a strange list of requirements, but then Baseline, like other fledgling worker co-ops, attempts to merge co-operative goals with the sound business practices that will maintain their jobs. The six-member co-op has been in existence since May of 1982, although some of its founding members have worked together for a longer period, under the typesetting arm of a small publishing house known as Pulp Press. Pulp specializes in literary and left-leaning publications, and, more recently, has had success with its Three-Day Novel Writing Contest: culture production in the fast land, if you like.

In the flurry of Pulp's book and publishing world, the low profile typesetting division underwent some identity problems, not to mention financial difficulties. Eventually that unit had ceased business and staff were laid off. Instead of disappearing into the night, some of the unemployed workers decided to risk a bold plan. They bought the division, incorporated as a separate entity, and serviced customers from a new location. That new location is just down the hall from Pulp in a renovated warehouse building at 986 Homer Street, but the separation is more that symbolic.

The new Baseline co-op had no working capital to open up shop and had to be financed by personal loans from the co-owners. Workers deferred wages for the first six months, taking only what they needed to live on and ploughing the rest into start-up costs. Similarly, members went out on another shaky limb when they signed personal guarantees for necessary new typesetting equipment.

The name "Baseline" was chosen from jargon used in typography. In

printing, primary letters, such as a, c, e, m, o and s, align at the bottom along a "base line." The tops of those letters form the "meanline" but, for obvious reasons, meanline lacks the appropriate solid image.

The co-founders selected a workers' co-op as their structure mostly through the efforts of founder and co-op activist David Lach who had prior experience with the concept. Looking back to that time, members recognized that workers' co-ops sounded less intimidating than a "limited partnership," for example. Although shares are nominal (\$10), member-owners are still called on to capitalize their workplace by loans to the organization. After a probationary period a new worker would be asked to contribute a minimum of \$500 in loans, or more, up to an agreed-upon maximum.

Guidelines for the co-operative enterprise were worked out amongst the group, using information from the Community Business Training courses (skills, education for co-ops and community groups) and through discus-

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Grammar and spelling rate high with Baseline

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sions with CRS Workers' Co-op, a local food wholesaler and bakery with a successful track record amongst workers' co-ops.

Adhering to a co-op structure has brought at least one experience enjoyed, or perhaps suffered, by co-ops everywhere: meetings. The six members meet once a week to plan production schedules, as well as meeting regularly for a three-hour directors' session to thrash out more abstract issues. But the scramble to learn new co-operative skills has not overshadowed professional interest in the product.

I listened while newest Baseline member Aryn Gunn explained the intricacies of "kerning" — how to fine-tune the spaces between the letters. When a fat letter and a thin letter stand side by side in a word, creating an optical illusion of imbalance, they must be delicately adjusted just as one would rearrange flowers in a vase. The uneducated eye would never perceive a difference but might regard the final effect as somehow improved. This is the sort of attention to detail worked out between the human typesetter and a machine like the Compugraphic, that elevates the skill of setting type to a craft — the aesthetic arrangement of typeface on the printed page.

Appreciating the craft of typesetting, however, does not necessarily promise interesting work for the typesetter, explained Gunn. "I enjoyed art and I also wanted to learn a trade so I learned to operate the typesetting machines at a more traditional shop.

Really it was a lot like the typing pool. And there was no emphasis on whether you ever thought about what you were typing..."

Co-founders Helga Martens and Jennifer Patterson pointed out that they had selected Gunn for her position at Baseline precisely because she *did* think about what what she was typesetting. "We're different that way. Your college education is worth something here..."

"Yeah," chimed in apprentice typesetter Pam Woodland. "At least I know my I.Q. is higher than my typing speed." At the time of discussion Woodland was grappling with Baseline's most valuable machine, the Alphatype CRS.

Even in the past decade modern technology has rapidly transformed typography and related industries. In 1886 the invention of the linotype machine first revolutionized an industry that had not advanced greatly since Gutenberg's printing press. Baseline's promotional flyer depicts seventeenth century printers plodding about their machines, by the dim light of candles secured, one hopes, firmly to their heads. The linotype with its slugs of 'hot' metal punched in to three dimensional moulds that printed our daily newspapers in the 1960s, lasted less than a hundred years, and gave way to commercial phototypesetting. This in turn primed us for the micro-technology and the advent of a video display terminal in every newsroom.

Baseline's Alphatype system, with its range of point sizes, quality digital type and compatibility with word processors and computers reflects the necessity of keeping up with the industry.

"Right now, we're compatible with home computers like the Apple," said Martens. "We just finished a job like that. Unfortunately the poor fellow had to lug his whole computer down here, but in the future we hope to link up with the customer's machine via modem."

Technological breakthroughs have also paved the way for more women to begin a career in typesetting. Whereas the old hot type machines were operated by men, women learned to operate keyboards — their typewriters — which later stood them in good stead with the VDT. I noted that four out of the present six members of Baseline are women, indicating some similarities with Makara, a women's typesetting and graphic arts co-op recently out of business.

"Women work for less money," said Patterson. "A man in this industry could become a press operator or production manager and be earning a lot more than this."

Although, as indicated, Baseline salaries are not at industry levels, the co-op does award itself other benefits to make life easier. "There's an education fund," said Patterson, "and we encourage apprenticeship courses at Vancouver Vocational Institute."

The co-op also provides a dental plan, insurance, and a special benefit for those workers with dependents. "Good jobs for good dollars, that's our aim," said Martens. "And we really do have a good group of people. It's comfortable and everyone has some unique thing to contribute to the whole group."

In the corner of the meeting room hums one of Baseline's newest pieces of equipment: an old refrigerator purchased from a graphic arts company that finally folded after 35 years in the business. It's a grim reminder that design and typesetting businesses can be fragile targets in today's economy.

So it is that the co-op is concentrating its energies on survival, finding the right office environment, and paying off the equipment. Their future aspirations are unformed to date. "Just spending three years in one spot," in order to build up their market, will be an achievement.

Although long-term goals are fuzzy, indications are that the job security offered by owning a business in common with like-minded individuals is already fostering an increased sense of responsibility. ■

WORKER OWNED AND MANAGED

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NEWS and NOTES

Regional update

Karen McMillan
Vancouver

Despite optimistic reports in the last issue of the **Worker Co-op Newsletter**, it now seems unlikely that Vancouver's Common Ownership Development Association will be receiving significant core funding from B.C. credit unions in the near future.

CODA's proposal to B.C. Central Credit Union, mentioned in WCNL's last issue, will serve as a basis for ongoing discussion between CODA and the Central, but no money has been made available at this point.

As a result, CODA will now be somewhat more aggressive in seeking fee-for-service work from both new and more established worker co-ops. Discussions between CODA and CCEC Credit Union regarding a joint strategy for co-op development are also planned.

CODA has already provided some organizational development and business planning help to about half a dozen new groups and is hoping at least one will develop into a major project. In our next regional update we'll include an overview of the worker co-op scene in B.C., describing these groups as well as those which are up and running.

Few if any of the CODA's potential clients, however, are starting with the financial resources they require to pay for all the consulting services they need. And it is clear that if regional worker co-op resource groups like CODA are to serve emerging co-ops, they'll need some kind of external support in the first years.

In the meantime, CODA, incorporated as a non-profit society, will also be encouraging individuals and institutions to support co-op development by taking out memberships in the organization at \$20 and \$50 respectively. A subscription to the **Worker Co-op Newsletter** is included in the fee. CODA has produced its own newsletter, as well, to keep members aware of its objects and activities. Readers, especially in B.C., who wish to join CODA, can reach them at 3103 Kingsway, Vancouver V5R 5J9. Telephone (604) 437-9828.

CODA has a pamphlet which outlines advantages, responsibilities, what it means to be a worker co-op member and the role of unions. Contact Dana Weber to obtain it.
Saskatoon

The newly created University of Saskatchewan Centre for the Study of Co-operatives opened its facilities on July 1. The centre is jointly funded by the Co-operative sector, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Co-operation and Co-operative Development, and the University of Saskatchewan. Co-operative sector participants include the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, Federated Co-operatives Ltd., the Saskatchewan Co-operative Credit Society Ltd., and the Co-operative College of Canada.

The four full-time staff members will be kept busy meeting the objectives of the centre which include:

- 1) Establishing a program of studies at the undergraduate and graduate levels, with a specific focus on co-operatives and credit unions. The intent is to develop an interdisciplinary degree program in co-operative studies.
- 2) Undertaking research relevant to co-operatives and credit unions and making results available through publications, seminars and curriculum.
- 3) To collaborate in off-campus programs with the Co-operative College of Canada.

The director, Chris Axworthy, is assembling an inter-disciplinary team which will be focusing on third-sector development. Areas of study will include agricultural, financial, housing, native, fisheries and producer co-operatives in Canada and elsewhere.

Chris is interested in contacting other researchers working on third-sector subjects. For further information on the Centre or to share notes on your own activities, write to:

Chris Axworthy
Centre for the Study of
Co-operatives
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7N 0W0
or phone (306) 343-3779

Manitoba

Jay Cowan, Minister of Co-operatives, has held a series of meetings with business, labour, credit unions and the co-operative sector to assess the acceptability of the worker co-op concept as a distinct entity in the Manitoba government's economic development strategy.

The Ministry has hired Doug Davison to carry out a four-part feasibility study to determine the role of worker co-ops. Davison recently undertook a fact finding tour which included: the Beef Terminal, The Big Carrot and CCCS in Toronto; the CUC and CHF in Ottawa and PACE in Philadelphia. From this stage, the Ministry hopes to create development models that apply to Manitoba.

The training of three staff, presently with the Ministry, will be next, followed by the development of four or five demonstration projects. An action-oriented evaluation of the projects will then provide an assessment of those issues germane to worker co-ops as opposed to conventional enterprises.

The results of this study will provide the basis for defining an economic strategy and the level of government involvement in the provision of technical resources, assistance programs and financing for worker co-ops.

Inquiries should be directed to: Vic Hryshko, Director of Research, Department of Co-operatives, #800, 215 Garry Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 3P3.

Co-op Work of Toronto produced a pamphlet to be used as an adjunct to the CUC's materials to promote awareness of worker co-operatives during the federal election. Although written in the heat of the campaign, it was organized so that it would have a useful after life.

Photostats are available with a blank area for any group to put in their own name to complete the artwork and then have it printed locally. *The photostat can be ordered at a cost of \$25 from: Elizabeth Abraham, Dreadnaught Co-operative, 46 Harbord Street, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1G2.*

At last! **Co-op Work** has received approval of a \$26,000 grant under Section 38, Canada Employment Program, to employ three people for six months. It is hoped that these funds will be in operation by October 1 to undertake a feasibility study. The group is also hoping to build basic consulting tools, promotional materials and to seek long-term funding.

During the summer, **Co-op Work** had access to three students through the Co-operative Studies Department at York University. The students have compiled research, articles and case studies for the beginnings of a development manual. *Their findings may be obtained through: Jack Craig, Sociology Department, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Downsview, Ontario. ■*

BOOKS & ARTICLES

PARTICIPATORY AND SELF-MANAGED FIRMS

Evaluating Economic Performance

edited by
Derek C. Jones and Jan Svejnar

This is an uneven collection of 16 articles, most of which seem to be written by and for economists. Some were first presented at the International Symposium on Economic Performance of Participatory and Self-Managed Firms at Hamilton College in 1980.

The book has six parts: an introduction by the editors, a section on issues in the theory and measurement of the performance of participatory firms, case studies of Yugoslavia and of Mondragon, a section on productivity of participatory firms in Western Europe, one on such organizations in Israel, Peru, India and Jamaica, and a concluding essay by Jaroslav Vanek.

Yugoslav firms produce dramatic results

The book includes some chapters such as the theoretical essay by McCain, that are rather technical and cannot readily be interpreted by the lay person. There are some surprises for those familiar chiefly with North America: Sachs reminds us that the 50 largest enterprises in Yugoslavia—employing over 10,000 workers each—provided one third of the industrial employment by 1978 and accounted for half of all industrial sales and assets. The giant firms are organized into semi-autonomous sub-units, usually consisting of fewer than 500 workers. The best chapters are the methodological discussions by Levin and by Espinosa, Thomas' discussion of Mondragon and the conclusion by Vanek.

Standard measures of success can dis-

criminate against worker co-ops

As Levin points out, participatory firms would be expected to have higher productivity than non-participatory ones because in the former, workers will monitor their fellows to prevent shirking, they stand to gain from any profits made, and the firms need to spend less money for supervision and quality control.

Most studies of productivity, according to Levin, measure only the production of market commodities and services. This methodology discriminates against participatory firms, which also produce an important *non-market* output, worker participation. Among the problems of comparison between participatory and non-participatory firms cited by Levin are that many labour-managed firms in capitalist contexts have been established to rescue failing enterprises and may have been marginal from the beginning.

Also, comparisons of differences in productivity between co-operative and capitalist organizations should control for the degree to which each is supported or constrained by the external social/economic/political system.

Third world co-ops face added obstacles

Espinosa says that self-management in developing countries is often seen by governments as a policy vehicle to deal with unemployment and widespread disparities in income distribution. Producers' co-operatives are sometimes used in such countries as tools for planned change by government agencies, which usually assume that his must be done under the direction of official experts and technocrats.

Co-operatives may be encouraged so long as they don't threaten the existing economic system. This was the case with the Jamaican sugar workers' co-operatives discussed by Richards and Williams.

A major obstacle for co-operatives (as well as locally controlled non-participatory enterprises) in developing countries is the imbalance created when the economy is opened up to the world market of goods and capital. Balance of payments crises in third world nations lead to calls for help to such agencies as the International Monetary Fund. IMF conditions for granting loans usually include abolition of import controls, curtailment of government spending on social projects and devaluation of the currency, making life even harder for the masses

of the poor.

The only clear beneficiaries of "free trade" are generally the transnational corporations.

Vanek provides some excellent guideposts for the movement for self-management. Probably more fruitful than rescuing failing firms by transforming them into workers co-ops, he says, would be to focus on setting up new firms using new products and new technologies in the spirit of participation.

Vanek sees the need for academicians to re-orient themselves to new paradigms. He likens much of contemporary economics to a ship of fools—economic research is not only excessively technical but fundamentally irrelevant to the concern of building a world based on social justice.

The three principles he suggests as the basis for the movement are participation, praxis and dialogue. Dialogue implies that research be participatory, that industrial researchers co-operate with "ordinary" workers in setting research goals. Participation means in part that "decision making should be optimally decentralized by application of devolution of power to such levels that dialogue and direct participation are always possible." Praxis progression is essentially consciousness raising along the lines suggested by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, where the last step leads to action for change.

The application of the "law" of participation, says Vanek, implies the abolition of capitalism. Education and popularization can become major instruments of a peaceful revolution leading to a participatory democratic society.

Participatory and Self-Managed Firms: Evaluating Economic Performance, edited by Derek C. Jones and Jan Svejnar, D.C. Health Co., Lexington, Ma., 1982.

Frank Lindenfeld teaches sociology at Cheyney State College in Pennsylvania.

Recent Publications

Paul Jones

If you are interested in reviewing any of the publications listed below, or have suggestions for inclusion on this list, contact me at 167 Carlton Street, Toronto, M5A 2K3, (416) 961-0114. Wherever possible we provide reviewers with complimentary copies from the publishers, but sometimes we have to

—continued on page 9

loan reviewers our personal copies. Space consideration in the newsletters do not allow us to print all reviews. We reserve the right to ask for extensive revisions or not to print a review at all.

Future Bread: How Retail Workers Ransomed Their Jobs and Lives — with A Guide to Co-operative Ownership

by Dennis Clark and Merry Guben
Published by O & O Investment Fund, Inc.,
119 Cuthbert St., Philadelphia, PA 19106, U.S.A.
160 pp, footnotes, index, \$6.95(U.S.), 1983

Co-published by Local 1357 of the United Food and Commercial Workers, this clearly written paperback describes how a group of supermarket workers in Philadelphia joined with their union to acquire and operate the stores that A & P was abandoning. Part two is designed as a general guide for others wishing to set up a worker co-operative, with detailed illustrations of the financial and organizational models.

Workers' Self-Management in the United States, by Christopher Eaton Gunn, published by Cornell University Press, 124 Roberts Place, Ithaca, New York, 14850, 1984, 251 pp., index, biblio., appendices, \$32.50 (Can.)

A recent publication, by one of Vanek's students, this is the first major review of the American experience. There are three sections to the book — Part I: a theoretical and historical study; Part II: a series of case studies of forest workers' co-ops, plywood co-ops, Rath Packing and Denver Yellow Cab; Part III: lessons to be drawn from the case studies. It is academically thorough, yet easy to read.

The Industrial Co-operative Association, 249 Elm Street, Somerville M.A., 02144, U.S.A., a group mentioned here before, has four new publications that are useful to those interested in the legal structure of their co-operative:

The Democratic Corporation: The New Worker Co-operative Statute in Massachusetts, by David Ellerman and Peter Pitegoff, 1983, 31 pp. \$3.00 (U.S.). This is a law review article explaining the components, such as internal accounts, membership provisions, etc. of the new Massachusetts law on worker co-operatives.

Theory of Legal Structure: Worker Co-operatives, by David Ellerman, 1983, 38 pp., \$5.50 (U.S.). This is a simplified, theoretical overview based on Ellerman's earlier works. Topics include the "Labour Theory of Property" and "Restructuring the Conventional Ownership Bundle".

ICA Model Bylaws for a Workers' Co-operative (Version II) \$70.00 (U.S.) (\$45.00 for members), 1983. This is a much improved update of their original models, which groups around the world have found so useful. As well as the bylaws, there are extremely useful annotations, and a full explanation of the internal accounts system.

Structuring Employee Owned and Democratically Controlled Businesses, by Robert Gips, 60 pp., \$4.00 (U.S.), 1982. This paper describes and compares the legal structure of ESOPs, democratic ESOPs and democratic worker co-operatives. It includes detailed legal criticism.

The Workers Co-operative Handbook: A comprehensive guide to setting up a workers' co-op, by Peter Cockerton and Anna Whyatt, published by ICOM, available from the Corner House Bookshop, 14 Endell Street, London, WC2, U.K.; 1984, 128 pp., biblio., appendices, £4.20 (postage incl.).

Written by two of the authors of Britain's earlier and successful handbook on worker co-ops, this version is a completely new publication, reflecting the lessons learned over the past four years. The first part of the book is simplified and issue oriented, while the technical and legal details have been moved into the extensive appendices. Designed as a guide to all aspects of setting up a co-op, it is a useful introductory volume to the British style of worker co-ops.

The National Center for Employee Ownership, 927 South Walter Reed Drive, #6, Arlington, Va., 22204, U.S.A., is a group not mentioned before here. It has a series of publications and a newsletter that covers a broader range, (i.e., includes ESOPs), than just worker co-operatives. Some publications include:

Employee Ownership: A Comprehensive Bibliography, 1982, 58 pp., \$13.00 (U.S.) — a varied list of films, books and newspaper articles. Includes lists on eight case studies.

Annual Resource Guide, \$14.00 (U.S.) — lists their member consultants, key organizations and publications.

An Employee Buyout Handbook, \$25.00 (U.S.) 1983, 79 pp., — a detailed, step-by-step guide to evaluating whether an employee buyout is a feasible option.

The Industrial Common Ownership Movement (ICOM) in England has started a new series of publications, and revamped the format for their newsletter. The books are designed as useful guides to starting and operating worker co-operatives, and are distributed by the Corner House Bookshop, 14 Endell St., London, WC2, U.K. Three of the five items published to date are:

The Co-operative Way: Worker Co-ops in France, Spain and Eastern Europe, 84 pp., £3.25, 1983, consists of three items previously published as pamphlets: Antoine Anten on French worker co-ops, Alastair Campbell on Mondragon, 1980, and Campbell's article on co-operatives in eastern Europe.

Trade Unions and Co-ops, 24 pp, 70 pence, 1983, a series of three short items written by co-operators and trade unionists on potential relationships between unions and worker co-ops, such as criteria for trade union support.

Co-op Management and Employment: Running a workers co-op by John Berry and Mark Roberts, 84 pp, 1984, £3.80 draws on two case studies to illustrate the problems and solutions arising from the relationship between the co-op and its members; how to make decisions, run meetings, recruit new members, etc. The booklet also has a discussion of the employment law implications of co-op membership.

Write to the bookshop for a complete list of their publications. A new edition to Cockerton's original *Workers Co-operative Handbook* is due out in May, *The New Co-operator*, the revamped newsletter of ICOM, is a very effective mix of worker co-op profiles, news of publications and meetings, and opinion pieces. It appears to come out quarterly, and a calendar year subscription includes ICOM's annual report and news of new publications. Write to ICOM, Membership Department, 7-8, The Corn Exchange, Leeds, LS1 7BP, U.K., a "publication subscription" is £5 (seamail), £7 (air-mail). ■

INTERNATIONAL

Local Co-operative Development Agencies in the U.K. Leonora Stettner

The last seven years have witnessed a remarkable expansion in numbers of worker co-operatives in the United Kingdom — from fewer than 50 in 1977 to almost 1000 in 1984, with new ones being registered almost daily.

Over this same period the number of local co-operative development agencies (cda's) set up to promote worker co-operatives has increased to almost 100.

These figures indicate — and actual experience confirms — that there has been a clear causal relationship between these two developments. Hence, it seems worthwhile, briefly, to sketch the nature and methods of the local cda's. **The paragraphs that follow are based on information collected from sixteen of the cda's, as well as from discussions with staff members of the national Co-operative Development Agency.**

Economic decline provided motivation

The impetus in forming cooperative development agencies has been the sense of shared adversity by people in local communities as a result of industrial decline in their areas. This decline resulted in unemployment, outmigration (with loss of skills and flight of investment capital), loss of incomes,

and deprivation of essential social services and facilities, particularly for minority groups like women and ethnic workers.

All these factors in turn have led to an awareness of the need for greater control by workers over their own jobs.

Local leaders were initiators

In practically all cases the initiative to change the situation has come from local leaders who decided to bring together concerned people in the community to discuss their common problems and to form steering committees for specific action programs.

These leaders have come from such local co-operative organizations as consumer co-operatives, the co-operative bank, Co-operative Party officials, trade unions, city and/or county councils, local businessmen, housing or residents' associations, local MP's, polytechnics in the area and various voluntary community and social welfare organizations.

Geographic scope should correspond to local governments

Most cda's cover a city or borough, though a few extend to surrounding areas of cities or even to a county.

The most effective geographic unit for a local group is probably one that corresponds to the local authority area. This provides more effective collaboration with local councils and more likelihood of democratic control of the group's work.

There may, in some cases, be cogent arguments for regional groupings which can provide more specialized services and more effective political lobbying, but even in such

instances there is still likely to be a need for smaller local groups to complement the regional work.

Legal basis differs

The majority of cda's appear to be registered under the Companies Act as companies limited by guarantee. This means that no share capital is involved, and that the agency can qualify as a charitable organization for tax purposes.

On the other hand, a few of the larger cda's register under the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts which can cover not only trading co-operatives but also societies where business is conducted for the benefit of the community.

Structure

Cda's are controlled by management committees elected by the cda's members. The composition of the committees varies; in most cases they include representatives of:

- the member worker co-operatives
- other co-operatives (consumer, housing, co-operative bank, etc.) in the area
- local city and/or county councils
- employees of the co-operative development agency
- various local community organizations

Staffing

Over half of the cda's are staffed by one to five full-time development officers, plus administrators and legal experts who may work part-time. The rest of the agencies make do with voluntary help, but in most cases they are actively seeking funding for full-time staff.

Internal finance

Most cda's levy modest subscription fees on their members — at lower levels for interested individuals and new co-operatives, and higher fees based on the number of employees for established co-operatives and other member organizations.

Several cda's are considering introduction of revolving funds based on subscriptions of fixed proportions of profits for member worker co-operatives. This would enable "cross subsidization" of the kind already practiced (and here articulated by) the Association of North West Workers' Industries (Skelmersdale):

- continued on page 11

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n- "Since overall financial resources
are controlled by a combination of
worker interests from various enter-
prises together with political, trade
union and co-operative representatives,
it has been possible for one enterprise
to subsidise another at critical times.
When such decisions were taken, they
were not always seen to be in the
immediate interests of the group of
workers who were then in profit and
therefore called upon to make the sub-
sidy. In other words, the structure
makes it possible for the interests of
the workers in the enterprises in gen-
eral to override the perceived interests
of one specific group of workers at a
particular time."

Activities vary considerably

There is no prescribed pattern of
activities for local cda's and they vary
considerably from area to area. Never-
theless at least the following have
been undertaken by most of the exist-
ing groups:

- publicity (articles, leaflets, speech-
es, fairs and festivals, newsletters,
press campaigns, lobbying Council
officers, etc.);
- core functions, i.e., advice on
legal, tax, financial, training, acc-
ounting, organizational methods,
marketing, purchasing and other
matters;
- help with feasibility studies and
applications for funding;
- forging links with trade unions
and local community groups;
- exhibitions at local job centres;
- training courses, evening classes
for co-operators;
- public meetings, seminars, confer-
ences;
- maintaining registers of available
local experts;
- help in finding premises;
- bringing together potential co-
operators.

External support is gained from a wide variety of sources

The most significant external sup-
port for cda's has been funding of
co-operative development officers by
local authorities drawing on State
funds under Section 3 of the Inner
Urban Areas Act. Over half of the
existing 100 or so cda's have been
helped in this way so far, and the
number is steadily increasing.

Also, local authorities can fund
voluntary bodies out of the rates; and
cda's have benefitted from this provi-

sion in a large number of cases.

Local authorities have also helped
several cda's by providing premises
at nominal rents, by funding consul-
tancy studies, by making loans for
buildings and various advisory services.

In addition it is sometimes possible
for cda's to obtain help from chari-
ties. Small sums may also occasion-
ally be donated by trade unions and
the consumer co-operative movement
including particularly the Co-opera-
tive Bank.

Finally, for established co-opera-
tive development groups, member
co-operatives may be a potentially
significant source of funds, either as
straightforward contributors to the
work of the group or as payments for
services rendered by it.

It should also be mentioned that
increasingly the national Co-operative
Development Agency is collaborating
with the network of local cda's by faci-
ilitating an exchange of information and
experience between cda's and by mak-
ing its advisory services available to
potential co-operators referred to it by
local cda's.

Local cda's promote local successes and vice versa

The experience of recent years
demonstrates that the formation of
local co-operative development agen-
cies designed to advise and promote
the development of worker cooperatives
has been a major factor in the rapid
expansion in numbers of such co-
operatives. It is clear that the cda's
are firmly based in, and linked to, the
local communities which they serve.
Their members are residents of the
community. They direct their efforts
towards provision of services and

goods obviously needed by the com-
munity. They are concerned to pre-
serve local skills and foster industrial
expansion designed to provide local
employment and raise living stand-
ards in the community. And they
make full use of volunteer workers
and the services of community orga-
nizations.

Their obvious success appears to
confirm what I have written earlier:
"Experience so far...appears to con-
firm the thesis that the most effective
form of economic and social develop-
ment is one that integrates the com-
munity approach with the co-operative
form of organization." Leonora Stett-
ner, *Community Co-operatives, Their
Potential for Rural and Urban Devel-
opment, The Plunkett Foundation for
Co-operative Studies, Oxford, 1981.*

EVENTS

Conferences

The Guilford College Democratic
Management Program has sponsored
a conference to be held October 12-
14 in Greensboro, North Carolina.
The National Employee-Ownership
and Participation Conference for Edu-
cators will be academically oriented
with speakers invited from several dis-
ciplines of higher education and pap-
ers and progress reports from employ-
ee-owned companies.

Papers will include — the effects of
employee-ownership/participation on
productivity, profitability, staff morale,
satisfaction, innovativeness, techno-
logical development; decision-making

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within employee-owned firms compared to traditional companies; legislation, legal and tax issues; long-term and national trends in employee ownership; case studies; the experience in other countries; proposals for new or improved procedures of employee-ownership or self-management; and proposed or existing curricula and programs in colleges and universities.

More information on registration costs, travel, and copies of the conference proceedings can be obtained from: *William Stevens, Ph.D., Chairman, Department of Management, Guilford College, 5800 West Friendly Avenue, Greensboro, North Carolina 27410. Phone: 919-292-5511.*

NB: Canadians presenting papers are Jack Quarter, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and Richard Long, University of Saskatchewan.

Academia at its best

The Learned Societies Conference, held last June at Guelph University, Ontario, was an opportunity for academics and students of co-operation to hold the long-awaited second meeting of the Canadian Association for Co-operative Studies — L'Association Canadienne pour les Etudes Co-operatives (CACS—ACEC).

Concerns expressed at the second meeting were that too much time had elapsed since the founding of the Association during the Co-operative Future Directions Conference in 1982, and that action was needed to realize the potential of a research network in third sector studies. Many professors and students, as well as individuals and groups working outside "academia", have continued to be interested in a forum for sharing ideas and information on co-operatives.

The need for serious comparative research and analysis of co-operatives was addressed by Skip McCarthy, the meeting's organizer and a Ph.D. student at Carleton University.

The main feature was a presentation by Jack Craig, professor in Co-operative Studies at York University, who has been working with the Tanzanian Co-operative College on the revival of the Co-op Union model, i.e., decentralized, in Tanzanian agriculture. This represents a major deviation from the dominant state-like model used by Tanzania since independence.

During the discussion, participants who included the former advisor to President Nyerere, Grif Cunningham of York University, agreed that CACS—

ACEC would be a useful forum to integrate the micro-level study of organizations with the constraints imposed by the overall political economy.

Chris Axworthy, director of the new Centre for the Study of Co-operatives at the University of Saskatchewan, discussed the objectives of the Centre and its relationship to CACS—ACEC. Finally, the Association moved its secretariat to Saskatoon and is in the able hands of Skip Kutz and Chris Axworthy who will be planning the Association's future events along with Jack Craig, president, and Rudy Cujes of St. Francis Xavier, vice-president. *Inquiries and membership applications should be addressed to: Skip Kutz, Co-operative College, 141—105th Street West, Saskatoon, S7N 1N8, 306-343-3779.*

The Task Force Report: Opposition parties react

On May 29, 1984 the National Task

Force on Co-operative Development, composed of representatives from CUC and CCC, published its report and presented it to the government. It met with the caucuses of the two opposition parties.

During both sessions the focus of attention was on worker co-ops. Opposition M.P.s, Tory and NDP, were interested in exploring the concept in considerable detail. This was particularly the case with B.C. members, where unemployment and economic strife were viewed as particularly intense. Thus the community development and the productivity enhancing aspects of worker co-ops were of greatest interest.

Aside from worker co-ops, the suggestion of health care co-ops and the sector's capital formation needs received the most attention.

Within the CUC, discussions are proceeding as to how best to follow-up on the report. Worker co-ops are high on the list for the next board meeting in September. ■

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