



Developments

Fall

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INSIDE

The Centre for the Study of Co-operatives Looks to the Future

Fall Highlights

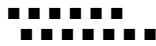
A Major New Book
More Upcoming Publications
Centre Seminar Series

CSC Update

Highlights of the Activities of Centre Staff



Centre for the Study of Co-operatives
University of Saskatchewan



The Centre Looks to the Future with a New Contract and Planning Session

We are extremely pleased to report that negotiations throughout the spring have resulted in the successful renewal of the five-year contract with our sponsors: Credit Union Central, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, Federated Co-operatives Limited, Co-op Trust, The Co-operators, the CUMIS Group, the Government of Saskatchewan and the University of Saskatchewan. The new contract will take us to June 2004.

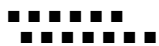
Negotiations were unfailingly positive and we are grateful for the ongoing support and encouragement we receive from the sector. The commitment of our sponsors and the renewal of our partnership with them is an investment in the future. It provides an example of the collaborative relationships that are required to position the co-op sector, the public sector, and the academic community as influential participants in a changing Canadian society and the interdependent world community of tomorrow.

The ongoing support of our sponsors has allowed us to build a solid reputation in the academic community for teaching and research, and among co-operatives and government agencies as an effective resource for direction and advice on the complexities of business and public policy. The new five-year term provides a welcome opportunity for an evaluation

and consolidation of present activities and also for some forward planning.

Anticipating the contract renewal, the advisory board plus Centre faculty and staff came together in early January for an intense planning session to discuss the role and focus of the Centre over the next five years. We discussed a number of broad issues such as faculty renewal, co-operative education, research priorities, a graduate program, outreach activities, international exposure, consulting work, and the profile of the Centre. Faculty and staff then took part in a two-day retreat to formulate a vision for the Centre as well as a detailed, five-year directional plan.

Two issues in particular elicited a spirited response. One was the education initiative, which received general support during the planning session, and which we dealt with in great detail. The second item concerned our vision for the Centre, which came up repeatedly during the planning session even though it was not an agenda item. In response, we generated a succinct, one-page document describing what we see as the Centre's role in the areas of teaching, research, extension, communications, and as a provider of resources to both researchers and the general public. It is reproduced on page three.



The Centre Looks to the Future

The Contract Renewal Planning Session and Retreat

Held on 12 January 1999 at the Faculty Club, the planning session dealt with a number of broad issues, and although the discussion was wide-ranging, certain themes predominated. The following general observations convey the tenor of the conversation.

Changes are occurring within the University of Saskatchewan that will affect the Centre. The significant number of resignations anticipated over the next few years makes **faculty renewal** an important issue, and overall revamping within the university is forcing departments to reassess curricula, programs, and new initiatives. The competition among colleges and departments for positions and funding has released an enormous amount of creative energy and encouraged interdisciplinary projects. As an interdisciplinary institution, the Centre is well-situated within the university's emerging mandate.

There is need for renewal within the Centre itself. With three faculty roughly the same age, at the same stage in their careers, and two of them having been here since the Centre's inception in 1984, there is a degree of homogeneity among present staff. A younger academic or recent graduate would bring some new energy to the Centre. There is also a feeling that we need to develop closer links with other academic units on campus.

There was strong support for a new initiative in **co-op education**. At

the moment, interested students cannot do a specialty in the area of co-ops, and courses taught by Centre faculty are available to students in certain disciplines but not in others. The Centre needs to develop a mechanism to provide a co-op specialty to students pursuing any degree. Suggestions were also made involving a possible MBA program—either a co-op specialization, or integrating co-op issues into existing Commerce courses.

There was equally strong support for our **research activities**, with an emphasis on culture, values, and practical application. Over the years, the Centre has pursued a wide range of academic endeavours, and much of our research also has practical application in the areas of community and rural development, the social and economic impacts of co-ops, and organizational change. According to our research, co-ops play significant roles in smaller communities and inner-city areas; there is a strong connection between co-ops and more marginalized groups in the community. There was a clear sense that the Centre should pursue work in the area of **Aboriginal issues**.

The co-op sector is in an advantageous position in the present environment, and has unique opportunities to respond to various global issues. Indications are that we may be entering a co-operative renaissance, but there needs to be much more work done in this area. Further research would enable us to understand the questions better, help us cope with the changes

we are facing, and identify the issues that need to be addressed.

There were a number of concerns about the **profile** of the Centre within the university, the co-op sector, and the community at large. It was felt that we need to do more to make our presence known. There is an opportunity to build on our core competency as a focal point for co-op work being done across the country, with strong connections in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Québec, Nova Scotia, and networked to a variety of resources around the world.

Emphasis was placed on the necessity of **co-ordinating activities**, and avoiding overlap or duplication of activities among co-op centres and chairs in the four western provinces. The Centre is often considered the hub of co-op activity in western Canada, and maintaining lines of communication and our advantageous long-term relationships are crucial.

At the end of the day it was clear that the Centre should maintain the excellence of its present initiatives and set out in **new directions** as well. There is a need, therefore, to set priorities and allocate resources.

Though not an agenda item, the Centre's **strategic plan and vision** was a recurring theme, suggesting that it needed to be revised and updated. The resulting document (facing page) grew out of the two-day retreat held in early February 1999 at the Willows in Saskatoon. It encapsulates the discussions conducted during the planning session and retreat.

Stakeholders are invited to comment on the details of our strategic plan and vision outlined on page three, as well as on any other matters in this newsletter.

The Centre for the Study of Co-operatives is an interdisciplinary centre of higher learning that provides people with conceptual and informational tools to understand co-operatives and to develop them as solutions to economic and social needs.

The Centre's work has two main aspects: the creation of knowledge, and its dissemination. These tasks are not separable, since interaction with students, co-operative members, and the public raises questions and problems that spur new research, and unlocks local knowledge that deepens our understanding of co-operatives.

Creation of Knowledge and Involvement with Learners

The Centre works to create new, original knowledge about co-operatives.

Theoretical and Conceptual Research

The Centre generates new knowledge about co-operatives. This research will be relevant to problems and issues the co-op sector faces. It will also ask fundamental questions, including those no one else wants to ask. Theoretical and conceptual research is important because urgent problems arise when traditional ways of thinking no longer work.

Postgraduate Research and Education

An important part of the Centre's role will be the training of graduate students, who conduct research in their own right, with guidance from Centre staff, and go on to careers in co-ops, government, or educational institutions where this knowledge is useful.

Applied Research

The Centre will undertake and aggressively pursue specific research for the co-operative sector and for community groups interested in co-ops. Since the Centre cannot serve all needs, it must be selective in the projects it chooses, and favour those that significantly contribute to the creation of new knowledge and are complementary to the Centre's conceptual research.

Resource Centre

The Centre will build a comprehensive research library and resource centre supporting analysis, study, and reflection concerning co-operatives.

The Centre works to disseminate knowledge about co-operatives to those who can use it.

Undergraduate and Extension Education

The Centre will be a leader in co-operative education, both through classes for credit at the University of Saskatchewan and through education beyond the campus boundaries.

Information and Communications

The Centre will develop communications strategies to ensure that its expertise and research results are fully utilized and understood.

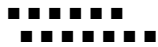
- The Centre will become a leader in the delivery and independent publication of co-operative materials using the full range of delivery methods (both print and electronic).
- The Centre will become a leader in applications of computer and Internet technology to co-operative education and communications.

Working Co-operatively

The Centre will develop close links with its sponsors and other co-operatives, with provincial and federal agencies, and with other academics and institutions involved in co-operative research and education. The Centre will co-ordinate with other institutes to achieve synergies and reduce duplication. We will pursue an especially close relationship with our host institution, the University of Saskatchewan.

The Centre and its stakeholders envision a future in which people are empowered through co-operatives —among other solutions—to develop an economy and society that are democratic, participatory, responsive, creative, diverse, productive, and sustainable.
In pursuing this vision we are guided by the co-operative values of voluntarism, mutualism, egalitarianism and equity, solidarity, practicality, and transparency.

When people in Saskatchewan or Canada or other parts of the world have a question about co-operatives, the Centre will be one of the first places they think of to find the answer.



Fall Highlights

A Major New Book

The Centre is pleased to announce the forthcoming publication of a significant new book: *Memory, Mutual Aid, and the Millennium: Canadian Co-operatives in the Year 2000*, edited by Brett, Nora, and Ian MacPherson. In twenty-four essays spanning the history of the co-op movement in Canada, the collection focusses on the issue of how the Canadian movement undertakes and adjusts to change, and also reflects on the diversity of past and present leadership.

Beginning with memory, the book examines aspects of the lives of such visionary leaders as Alphonse Desjardins, George Keen and Violet McNaughton, William Halsall and J.J. Siemens, and Moses Coady and Alexander Laidlaw. Moving into the present, it takes a comprehensive look at the current state of the Canadian movement, covering such diverse subjects as the health-care sector

in Québec, housing co-ops, the status of women in Canadian co-ops, the Chéticamp and Evangeline experiences, and a photo essay on the activities of the CCA abroad. Looking to the future, essays ruminate on such topics as the emergence of a new co-operative paradigm, the growing relevance of co-op values and education, and the challenges of marketing co-operation in a global society.

The book offers an extraordinary range and diversity of insights and opinions, reinforcing past experience that Canadian co-operators have much to contribute to the thinking of the international movement.

More Upcoming Publications

We have five publications forthcoming in our booklet series and an inspiring, book-length case study of SANASA, Sri Lanka's credit union system, undertaken in conjunction with the CCA.

Brett Fairbairn's *Prairie Connections and Reflections* deals with the history, present, and future of co-op education, detailing both the rise of the large co-op-

erative systems on the Prairies and the role played by the Association of Co-operative Educators. A second booklet, by David Leland of Red River Community College, outlines a proposal for a car-sharing co-op in Winnipeg. And we have a series of three booklets by researcher Andrea Harris and Centre Director Murray Fulton devoted to farm machinery co-ops. The booklets examine a new co-op model used in Québec, the financial benefits of a co-op structure to Saskatchewan farmers, and lessons from the Québec and Saskatchewan experiences. Publications can be purchased directly from the Centre.

Centre Seminar Series

The Centre's seminar series is designed to showcase our current and ongoing research projects, as well as that of others in complementary fields. Murray gave the first presentation, titled "Interdisciplinarity and a Problem-Based Approach to Economic and Social Development" on 19 October. Others will follow on a monthly basis.

UPDATE

Murray's research and extension work remains focussed on co-operatives and the agricultural industry, including member commitment, New Generation Co-ops, producer benefits of genetically modified crops, state trading enterprises, product quality, and rail transportation.

Brett's book on the history of the co-op movement in Germany is well underway. He is finalizing an international comparative analysis of the role of the state in co-op development, focussing on the US and Australian experiences, and has presented recent papers on the ideological bases of the reconstruction of co-ops in postwar East and West Germany, and the impact on co-operative thought in these countries.

Lou is on leave from the Centre and has assumed responsibilities in her home college as an associate dean. She contin-

ues her connection with Centre activities on a limited basis.

Byron returned in July from his research leave in France and is working on a number of projects involving online communities, education, and rural co-operatives in developing countries.

Michael's sabbatical in Costa Rica and Chile ended in August. He is fulfilling his year's teaching commitments during the fall term and will return to South America in January to continue his study of the role of co-operatives in sustainable rural development.

Nora's recent projects have included the annual report, a new Centre booklet, project management of a book on Sri Lanka's SANASA model to be published in co-operation with CCA, and this newsletter. She continues work on our major fall publication, *Memory, Mutual Aid, and the Millennium: Canadian Co-operatives in the Year 2000*.

Rachel left us in August for a position as chief librarian for the Medicine

Hat Public Library. Though we miss her greatly, we have found an excellent replacement in Carol Shepstone, who comes to us, most recently, from Prince Albert's library system, and previous to that, from UBC libraries.

Marianne, our office manager, began a year's maternity leave in October. She has been replaced by Jo Anne Ellis, who has worked on campus for a number of years. Karen will continue as our half-time secretary.

Roger, our Education Program Development Officer, has succumbed to the enticements of his research and joined the ranks of the Centre's interdisciplinary graduate students to pursue an MA. His associates are Rochelle (Rocky) Smith, who is working on her PhD, and Peter Sprague, who is doing an MA.

Visit our web site at <http://coop-studies.usask.ca> for more information about the Centre and links to over two hundred co-operative organizations around the world.

CSC *Developments* is published periodically by the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives. This edition was written by Mona Holmlund and Nora Russell; Nora also did the editing and typesetting. Send correspondence to: Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, Room 196, 101 Diefenbaker Place, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon SK Canada S7N 5B8. Phone: (306) 966-8509 • Fax: (306) 966-8517 • E-mail: coop.studies@usask.ca or russelln@duke.usask.ca • Web site: <http://coop-studies.usask.ca>



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