

International Cooperative Alliance

P. E. Weeraman

Cooperative Education
—Progress or Perish



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The International Cooperative Alliance

is one of the oldest of existing international voluntary bodies. It is a world-wide confederation of cooperative organisations of all types. Founded by the International Cooperative Congress held in London in 1895, it has now (1970) 142 affiliates spread over 60 countries and serving over 255 million members at the primary level. It is the only international organisation entirely and exclusively dedicated to the promotion of Cooperation in all parts of the world.

Besides the Head Office of the ICA, which is in London, there are two other offices of the ICA, viz., the Regional Office & Education Centre for South-East Asia located in New Delhi, India, and the Office for East and Central Africa at Moshi, Tanzania. The Regional Office in New Delhi was started in 1960 and the office in Moshi in 1968.

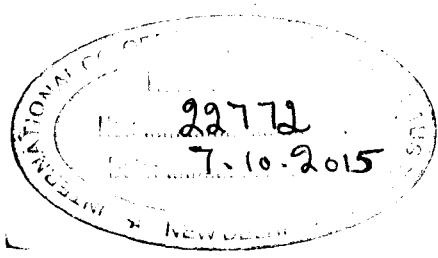
The main tasks of the Regional Office & Education Centre are to develop the general activities of the Alliance in the Region, to act as a link between the ICA and its affiliated national movements, to represent the Alliance in its consultative relations with the regional establishments of the United Nations and other international organisations, to promote economic relations amongst member-movements, including trading across national boundaries, to help in the supply of technical assistance, to conduct educational activities for the movements in the Region and to bring out publications on the various aspects of cooperative development.

A greater part of the activities of the Regional Office & Education Centre are supported by the Swedish Cooperative Movement and the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA). The Regional Office has so far conducted over 80 educational programmes of various types. These were attended by nearly 2,000 participants from the different countries of the South-East Asian Region.

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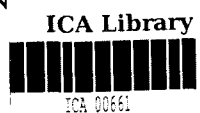
COOPERATIVE EDUCATION : PROGRESS OR PERISH

P. E. WEERAMAN
ICA Regional Director for
South-East Asia



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INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE ALLIANCE
REGIONAL OFFICE & EDUCATION CENTRE FOR SOUTH EAST ASIA
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Cooperative Education : Progress or Perish*

I am grateful to the Cooperative Federation of Western Australia for the high honour they have done me in inviting me to present a paper on "Cooperative Education—Progress or Perish" on this auspicious occasion. I am conscious of the privilege I have of addressing the oldest State Cooperative Federation in Australia.

Education—A Cooperative Principle

The importance of education for the success of Cooperation has been acknowledged by cooperators from the very start of Cooperative Movement.

The Rochdale Pioneers included education in their famous Principles. That cooperative education is vital for the very survival of the Movement has been stated with the strongest possible emphasis by the Principles Commission in its Report to the Vienna Congress of the ICA in 1966.

*Paper presented to the Annual State Conference of the Cooperative Federation of Western Australia, on Monday, the 24th March 1969.

In recommending the adoption of education as a Principle of Cooperation to be embodied in the rules of the ICA, the Principles Commission says that "all cooperative societies should make provision for the education of their members, officers and employees and of the general public in the principles and techniques of Cooperation, both economic and democratic" and this recommendation was unanimously accepted by the Vienna Congress.

Cooperation—Its Meaning

"Cooperation" means in its ordinary sense "working together", from the Latin verb "Cooperare". In its special sense it means a form of organisation wherein persons associate voluntarily on terms of equality in order to secure the satisfaction of a common need of some economic advantage. (*Calvert*)

A cooperative society is an association of persons grappling with the same economic difficulties, who are voluntarily associated on a basis of equal rights and obligations to solve these common difficulties. This they do by conducting at their own risk an undertaking to which they have transferred one or more of their economic functions corresponding to their economic needs and by utilising this undertaking for their common material and moral benefit.

A cooperative society, therefore, has a nature *sui generis*. It is a special form of business organisation which differs considerably from any other form of business organisation. It is neither a public nor a profit-seeking organisation. Its principal feature is that it eliminates economic exploitation and substitutes the notion of organised service for that of struggle for profit and domination. (*Fauquet*)

Basic Results of Cooperation

I shall not tire my audience by explaining the principles and practices of Cooperation nor would I explain the results of cooperative activity except to mention just two points. Firstly, when the middlemen are eliminated by cooperative effort the producers will get more for their produce whilst the consumers of that same produce will get it cheaper. This paradoxical but nevertheless true situation is made possible by the elimination of the middlemen's profit and adding a part of it to the producer's income whilst the balance remains uncharged to the consumer so that the producers get more and

the consumers pay less for the same article. Secondly, cooperators in their search for the most satisfactory solution of their common economic problems are led not only to organise the common undertaking in the best way possible but also to impose on themselves the most detailed rules regarding their methods of operating. Whilst each member preserves his autonomy he freely accepts a discipline "in the interests of himself and all of his fellow-members." Thus by a single motion Cooperation raises the people's standard, materially as well as morally. If Cooperation fails in its moral task it will also fail in its economic one. Both are dependent upon the discipline mentioned above. This discipline is sustained by the bond of fellowship which is present in the cooperative society from the very start, but it "needs consolidation and development through education if it is to bear full fruit." (*Fauquet*)

Conviction—a Primary Need

This brings me to the very question posed to me in the title of this paper. The discipline required of the members of a cooperative society is one that has to be accepted voluntarily. The member has to be convinced that it is in the interests of himself and of his fellow members and that this discipline has to be consolidated and developed if it is to bear full fruit. For both the original conviction of necessity to freely accept a discipline as well as the subsequent consolidation and development of that discipline, education is absolutely necessary. Progress, therefore, depends upon this education and without education cooperation will deviate into other forms and so perish.

Cooperation is a non-profit system of production and trade based upon mutual self-help and voluntarily organised in the interests of the whole community. The characteristics of mutuality and voluntariness that form the basis of Cooperation cannot exist without conviction; and, conviction cannot be there without a proper appreciation of what Cooperation means.

Education—Vital

As stated by the Principles Commission "Cooperation as a form of mutual aid appeals to other motives than man's selfish or self-regarding impulses or obedience to duly-constituted authority. Collective self-discipline is not a wild or self-propagating, but a cultivated growth. Cooperation requires of those who would practise it effectively,

the acceptance of new ideas, new standards of conduct, new habits of thought and behaviour, based on the superior values of cooperative association. No cooperative institution, therefore, can be indifferent, in its own interest and for its own survival, to the need for educating its members in appropriate way". Thus it will be seen that cooperative education is vital to the very existence of the Cooperative Movement.

Just as much as conviction is essential for the existence of the Cooperative Movement, its success is dependent upon the efficiency with which cooperatives discharge their duties. The efficiency essential to success cannot be acquired without education. Thus, both for conviction as regards the desirability of Cooperation and for efficiency in the discharge of a cooperative society's duties, education is a prerequisite.

Cooperative Education is Continuous

"For the purposes of Cooperation, however", says the Principles Commission, "education needs to be defined in a very broad sense which includes academic education of more than one kind but much besides. It includes both what people learn and how they learn it. Every phase of experience, which adds to people's knowledge, develops their faculties and skill, widens their outlook, trains them to work harmoniously and effectively with their fellows and inspires them to fulfil their responsibilities as men or women and citizens, can have educational significance for Cooperation".

Cooperative education is a life-long process and all persons engaged in cooperation need to participate in this process of education and re-education. These persons could be divided into three groups. First, the members in whose interests cooperatives are established and who collectively exercise supreme authority over them. Second, the office-holders, both the elected representatives of the members and the professionals employed by the cooperatives. Third, the people who are potentially, rather than actually, cooperators—the greater public still outside the Movement's membership.

Three Groups to be Educated

Both the first and second groups should be educated to possess the knowledge that is required in them. They must have knowledge not

only of the special forms of Cooperation in which they are engaged but also of the economic and social environments in which their societies operate. They must be trained in cooperative conduct and behaviour. They must acquire technical skill. The elected officers must have a great deal of business knowledge. The professionals must be, at least, as competent as those engaged on the corresponding levels of the private and public sectors of the economy. The employees must have the best available training in the appropriate techniques. Similarly, and this is not so obvious, the members and their representatives need to be trained to use the democratic processes of Cooperation skilfully and effectively to their society's advantage.

The third group, the greater public still outside the Movement, must be kept better informed than in the past about the aims of the Cooperative Movement, its organisation and methods, its achievements and its plans for the future. Further, when the Cooperative Movement has a point of view, justified by its own experience, which needs to be put in the interests of the whole body of consumers or producers on an issue of public policy it should speak out with clarity and force. "The battle for the acceptance of cooperative ideas has to be fought in the intellectual as well as the economic field."

Responsibility of Cooperative Institutions

The education of these three groups is a necessary responsibility of cooperative institutions. The expansion of national systems of public instruction will not relieve the Cooperative Movement of the educational responsibility it alone can discharge of "educating people in the ideals of Cooperation and the proper methods of applying its principles in given circumstances".

The responsibility devolves mainly upon the unions and federations at the secondary and tertiary levels to provide all kinds of assistance which will ensure that there is in every locality "a nucleus of alert, reasonably well-informed cooperators with an outlook extending beyond the area of their primary society".

The Movement's educational standards must be constantly rising if they are to match those of the outside world. The structural changes which the Movement in many countries is now being obliged to make, with all the concentration and conduct of large scale operations they entail, demand at the highest level personnel with experience in and

training of management and administration equal to the best employed elsewhere. Apart from problems of recruitment, remuneration and promotion, the emergence of the problem of cooperative education is evidence that the time has come when the Cooperative Movement has to regard its educational activity much more seriously than it has often done in the past.

I would take this opportunity at this stage to offer my congratulations to the Cooperative Federation of Western Australia on its comprehensive education and staff training scheme which provides training for the staff at all levels, as well as the directors and the members. The efforts of the Cooperative Federation of Australia to raise funds for cooperative development overseas is another matter worthy of the highest commendation.

Need for Strengthening Unions

To revert to my theme, the main question before the Cooperators of the world is how they should satisfy the need for intensive as well as extensive cooperative education. This could be done best by strengthening unions and federations which undertake promotion and supervisory functions such as the Cooperative Federation of Australia at the national level and the International Cooperative Alliance at the international level.

If Coöperation is to prosper, and, what is more important, remain true to itself and not deviate into other forms, both the material and moral values of Cooperation must be "living realities in the activity and behaviour of coöperators." These values are closely bound up with Cooperation's healthy development.

U.N. Resolution

This naturally raises the question: *Why is Cooperation necessary for progress?* Unless Cooperation is necessary, cooperative education would not be necessary.

The world was never in greater need of a Cooperative Movement than at the present time. The need to raise living standards, especially in the developing countries, has emphasized the role that Cooperation can play in this regard. The need for governments to assist the Cooperative Movements in these countries is so very pressing that recently

the General Assembly of the United Nations passed a Resolution by 111 votes For, no votes Against, and no Abstentions, "recognising the important role of the Cooperative Movement in the development of various schemes of production and distribution including agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, manufacturing, housing, credit institutions, education and health services" and "that the promotion of the Cooperative Movement in accordance with local needs could contribute to the implementation of the goals of the Second United Nations Development Decade" and "also that a lack of skilled and experienced personnel is at present one of the most important obstacles to the development of the Cooperative Movement in developing countries" and inviting "Member-States that have traditions and experience in that regard to provide increasing help, including staff teaching, to developing countries which request it in the field of Cooperative Movement". This means that not only the developed Cooperative Movements but even the Governments of States having cooperative traditions and experience should provide increased help to developing countries in the field of Cooperative Movement.

I would, at this point, draw your attention to the worthy example in this direction set by the Commonwealth Government of Australia and the State Government of Western Australia by organising, in collaboration with the Cooperative Federation of Australia and the ICA, the Group Study Course in Establishment and Management of Cooperatives in Australia which will follow immediately after this Annual State Conference of Western Australia.

The United Nations Resolution mentioned above could be taken as a commendation of the step taken well in advance of it to afford to the developing Cooperative Movements of Asia a wonderful opportunity of learning at first hand the results of Cooperation in Australia. On behalf of the ICA, I would offer to the Commonwealth Government of Australia, the State Government of Western Australia and to the Australian nation our most grateful thanks for arranging the Study Course. I have no doubt that the developing movements represented here will not be slow to profit from what their representatives see and learn from the Cooperators of Australia.

State and Cooperative Development

Governments are now committed by this resolution to provide this help. In this connection it is necessary to point out that governments

in the developing countries are already following a policy of active promotion of the Cooperative Movement. Although such association with the government results in the creation of certain wrong attitudes in the members, the alternative of waiting till the people themselves, on their own initiative, set up cooperative societies would be disastrous in these countries. This would mean that the solutions which Cooperation alone can offer will not be available for many more years to come. Therefore, government sponsorship has been accepted as a must in the case of the developing countries in spite of the danger of such sponsorship leading to management by the government, negating the principle that a cooperative society is an independent group. Furthermore, in the developing countries the governments have control of even the internal affairs of cooperative societies for the purpose of guiding them. Also, cooperative societies are being harnessed more and more by the governments of these countries for the implementation of their schemes of national development. As true national development depends upon the development of the small producer and consumer whose problems of credit and marketing can be solved only by the cooperative society, the implementation of schemes of national development must necessarily be done through cooperative societies. Therefore, the association of governments with Cooperative Movements is to be welcomed, but in this association cooperatives should be equal and willing partners in a common effort. Nothing should be undertaken that will compromise the independence and character of the cooperative society. Cooperative education is necessary to ensure this.

Cooperation—Revolution without “R”

It is Cooperation alone that gives pride of place to the human personality and recognises the right of a human being to so order his forces that he leaves no room for another to profit from his needs whilst himself abstaining from exploiting another's need for his selfish ends. Cooperation seeks to establish an economic order in which, in the words of an early Cooperator, “I shall have my hand in no man's pocket and no man shall have his hand in mine”.

Cooperation is in short a social revolution of a fundamental nature. By cooperating men cease to exploit one another's needs and instead join hands to solve their common economic problems for their own social and economic betterment. It is a joint effort at self-help which is of mutual benefit to the whole community as any headway

made by the Cooperative Movement has a direct effect on production and trade in the public and private sectors as well bringing to the general public served by these sectors certain benefits which cannot be withheld any longer.

Cooperation, however, is a revolution without the "R"—the trials and tribulations associated with normal revolutions because the revolution that Cooperation brings about develops by natural process when action is taken in accordance with Cooperative Principles.

The ingredients of this revolution are : (i) men desist from exploiting one another's needs and instead cooperate for the benefit of themselves and the whole community; (ii) men associate on a basis of equality as human beings having the same economic needs and not as owners of capital with rights in proportion to the capital contributed by them and therefore they exercise power and control over their undertaking democratically; (iii) control over the economy by capitalists and middlemen is substituted by the control of the economy by producers and consumers; (iv) capital ceases to earn profits and is reduced to the position of a wage-earner—an earner of interest limited to a rate that is deemed fair and reasonable; and (v) profit is eliminated by the arrangement that the customers as members have the right to take back the trading surplus in proportion to their participation in the transactions of the society.

Why Cooperative Education ?

The emphasis placed by the United Nations resolution on the importance of providing increasing help including staff teaching to developing countries in the field of Cooperative Movement poses the question: Why Cooperative Education?

The purport of cooperative education is the development of cooperative equality in men and women. The aim of cooperation is not merely to set up an economic organisation complying with certain principles or to control the economy. The movement seeks to do something more *viz.*, to substitute for the profit-making regime a cooperative system organised in the interests of the whole community and based upon mutual self-help.

If the Cooperative Movement has an important role to play in the development of various fields of production and distribution as has

been so categorically stated by the highest council of the world, then education to ensure cooperative conviction as well as efficiency in cooperative undertakings is a must.

The Tasks of Cooperative Educators

Our tasks in this direction have been classified as self-preservation, self-direction and self-reproduction (*Marshall*). These are the tasks that arise out of the nature and needs of the Cooperative Movement of today. Self-preservation is what we should do for the very survival of the movement and for the development of the movement so that cooperative service is at least as good as any other that could be found elsewhere. Self-direction is the will and the power of cooperators to take charge of cooperative organisations and to determine the course of their movement in the best interests of the whole community. Education towards developing the will and the capacity for self-direction is our second task. Here cooperators must steer clear of the faddist, the un-informed enthusiast and also the conservative who would not brook any change in the pattern of cooperative development set up already. Just as much as the fundamental tenets of Cooperation never change as a living movement its outward aspects, namely its organisational methods and practices, must develop and change. It will be necessary to assess the situation and adapt the cooperative instrument to be in tune with the needs of a fast changing economy whilst maintaining its basic cooperative quality. This way lies the road to the best results from Cooperation; for in the words of a former Cooperative Commissioner of Ceylon, "Cooperation is a very adaptable instrument—and it is the one economic method that applies in all circumstances". (*De Soyza*)

The third task is that of self-reproduction. As so succinctly stated by the Principles Commission the spirit of Cooperation "has to be awakened and renewed in every fresh generation that takes over the work of the Movement from its predecessors. That awakening and renewal depend, more than anything, upon the care and assiduity with which each generation keeps the torch of education aflame". Thus the Cooperative Movement will progress only if cooperators give due attention to cooperative education. If there be no cooperative education before long the Cooperative Movement will lose its distinctive character and force, and, with its disappearance from the world the only hope of establishing economic democracy will have been lost with-

out which political democracy will be of no avail. Thus we may conclude that cooperative education is the *sine-qua-non* of progress and that without cooperative education the movement as well as democracy must perish. Cooperative education is the only oil that will keep the cooperative torch aflame.

Cooperative education, as said by the Principles Commission, is, in fact, the Principle which makes possible the effective observance and application of the other Principles of Cooperation.

In conclusion, I wish to quote from the great Rabindranath Tagore, one of India's earliest students of Cooperation :

“The Cooperative principle tells us that, in the field of man's livelihood, only when he arrives at this truth can he get rid of his poverty, and not by any external means. And the manhood of man is at length honoured by the enunciation of this principle. Cooperation is an ideal, not a mere system, and therefore it can give rise to innumerable methods of its application. It leads us into no blind alley; for at every step it communes with our spirit. And so, it seemed to me in its wake would come, not merely food, but the goddess of plenty herself, in whom all kinds of material food are established in an essential moral oneness.”

The Role of the Cooperative Movement in Economic and Social Development*

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY TAKING into consideration the necessity of mobilising all means aimed at economic and social development of individual countries and, in particular, developing countries,

RECOGNISING the important role of the Cooperative Movement in the development of various fields of production and distribution, including agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, manufacturing, housing, credit institution, education and health services,

RECOGNISING that the promotion of the Cooperative Movement in accordance with local needs could contribute to the implementation of the goals of the second United Nations Development Decade,

*United Nations General Assembly Resolution No. 2459/XXIII of 20th December, 1968.

RECOGNISING also that a lack of skilled and experienced personnel is at present one of the most important obstacles to the development of the Cooperative Movement in developing countries,

REQUESTS the Economic and Social Council to consider, in connection with the preparations for the second United Nations Development Decade, the question of the role of the Cooperative Movement in economic and social development.

INVITES member states that have traditions and experience in that regard to provide increasing help, including staff teaching to developing countries which request it in the field of Cooperative Movement.

REQUESTS the International Labour Organisation, other specialised agencies concerned and the International Cooperative Alliance to render increased assistance within their possibilities in the realisation of the objectives of the present resolution.

The Cooperative Development Decade*

The 24th Triennial Congress of the ICA held in Hamburg in September 1969 gave a warm welcome to the recent Resolution of the United Nations which recognises the important role of the Cooperative Movement in meeting the social and economic problems of developing countries.

This welcome was explicit in one of the main Resolutions adopted by the Congress, but in addition many other debates and decisions were closely related to that same question. There can be no doubt that Cooperators are showing a greatly increased interest in the problems of development and a greater willingness to mobilise and apply their resources to that end.

Efforts hitherto made in these matters by Cooperative Movements, by Governments and by the United Nations have been piecemeal and

*Reproduced from "*ICA Information Bulletin*" April 1970 issue.

uncoordinated. The Alliance sees the United Nations Resolution as the occasion for supplying five stimuli which have until now been lacking or inadequate :

1. A call to action, on a coordinated world-wide front, for the development of Cooperatives in order to accelerate social and economic growth;
2. A challenge to the Cooperative Movements of the developed countries to provide increased technical assistance to co-operatives;
3. A challenge to the Cooperative Movements of the developing countries to formulate more clearly their short and long term needs for assistance;
4. A stimulus to Governments of donor nations to work more closely with their own Cooperative Movements in aiding developing countries; and,
5. The opportunity for the UN Agencies to coordinate their cooperative programmes not only with each other, but also with the ICA and the bilateral assistance programmes both of Governments and of Cooperative Movements.

In many developing countries the cooperative form of enterprise is already firmly established and accepted by Governments as one of the most effective methods in respect of major sectors of economic and social development. There have been conspicuous examples of success; but problems have emerged and the overall position is one of progress that is steady but much too slow in view of the urgency of development needs. Clearly, concerted and coordinated efforts are required in order to accelerate the pace of cooperative development.

Accordingly, the ICA has decided to launch a ten-year programme of enhanced activity in developing countries. Known as the Cooperative Development Decade (CDD), this will coincide with the UN Second Development Decade (1971-1980).

The objective is the planned promotion of cooperative activities of all appropriate kinds in developing countries. It is hoped to involve all interested agencies—the ICA itself and its member-organisations,

and its Auxiliary bodies and Regional Offices, other non-government organisations, the UN Specialised Agencies, Governments, and National Cooperative Movements.

At its January, 1970 Meeting, the ICA Executive designated the Technical Assistance Sub-Committee as the planning body for the Decade. The ICA Secretariat is now drafting a detailed programme for the Decade which will be submitted to the Meeting of the Technical Assistance Sub-Committee for its consideration on 2nd June, 1970. The Technical Assistance Sub-Committee will then make recommendations to the full Executive which meets on the following days.

In broad outline, it is envisaged that the first two years of the Decade will be known as the Planning Phase, and will be devoted to a series of basic studies and surveys which could point the way to an Action Programme. The following eight years, known as the Operational Phase, would be used for implementing the Action Programme.

This will be a comprehensive effort requiring the full collaboration of cooperative members, officials and leaders at all levels of the Movements. In particular it will necessitate intensive consultation with those in the developing countries who are most familiar with the problems and the needs of their Cooperators. For this reason, the ICA Regional Office for South-East Asia plans to seek the views of its Advisory Council at every stage in the evolution of the Cooperative Development Decade. We hope and trust that both the national Movements of the area and the Regional Office itself will learn much and benefit greatly from this mutual effort.

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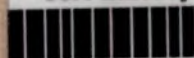
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