

## Peace and Equality Through Local and Global Co-operation: An Opportunity for Friends' Work

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It has reasonably been said that:

**There can be no security without peace,  
No peace without equality,  
And no equality without co-operation.**

The vision thus becomes driven by principled, practical co-operation.

It is good to report that The Global Co-operative Commonwealth, a Global Commonwealth of Local Commonwealths - the long desired dream - is now becoming a practical reality. It is a vision of global peace and security, through practical, local and co-active co-operation. Here, I hope to share these recent developments, and give some pointers to some next steps.

These, most recent, developments got under way in 1995, when The International Co-operative Alliance (The ICA) met to refresh the Statement, Principles and Values of The Co-operative Identity (See Box 1).

Four years' later, The (UK's) Co-operative Party agreed to convert this Statement into a practical tool of co-operation, by:

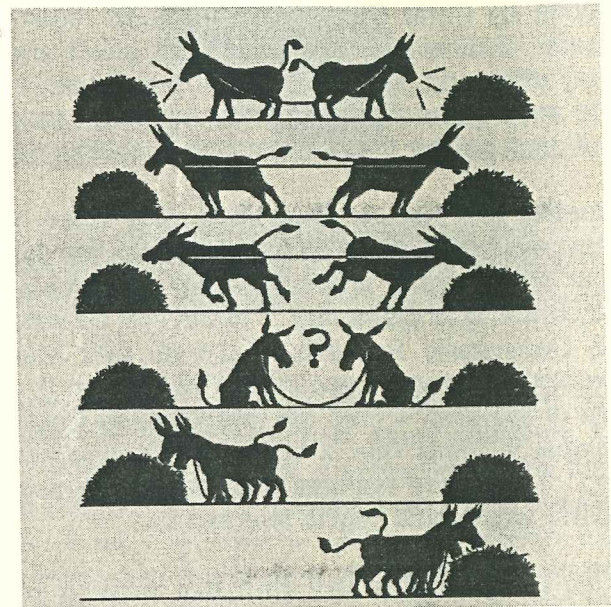
"Inviting all co-operatives to carry out and publish 'Annual Co-operative Audits', to demonstrate their fidelity to the ICA Co-operative Principles and Values" (The Co-operative Party Annual Conference at The Co-operative College, September 1999 Stamford Hall, Leicestershire)

And then, two years later, UK co-operators called for:

"A Co-operatives' Development Fund, to be run according to the ICA Principles and Values, for the financing of new- and existing co-operatives' development so that co-operatives so-financed could take up the 1999 Annual Co-operatives' Audit invitation." (The Co-operative Party Annual Conference, September 2001, Edinburgh, Scotland.)

### 'THE TWO MULES'

A fable for the Nations



**CO-OPERATION  
IS BETTER THAN CONFLICT**

Accordingly, early this year, 'The Co-operative Foundation' was launched to help fulfil this call ('The Co-operative News' 12 January 2002), and, now a new grant and loan fund called 'Co-operative Action' ([jo.bird@co-operativeaction.coop](mailto:jo.bird@co-operativeaction.coop)) has been launched.

These developments work together to form key steps in helping turn The International Co-operative Commonwealth from dream to reality.

Together they help form a global matrix of local co-operation, where sustainable stewardship and community care replaces the two individualist, selfish mechanisms (of ownership and retention by violence, coupled with exploitation and use for profit) as the core motives of feudalism, capitalism and the 'new' informationalism.

(Continued on page 6)

## **Box 1**

### **The International Co-operative Alliance: Statement of the Co-operative Identity**

(Latest Revision, Manchester 1995)

A co-operative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.

Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

#### **Principles**

The co-operative principles are guidelines by which co-operatives put their values into practice.

#### **1st Principle: Voluntary and Open Membership**

Co-operatives are voluntary organisations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

#### **2nd Principle: Democratic Member Control**

Co-operatives are democratic organisations actively controlled by their members. Elected representatives are accountable to the membership.

#### **3rd Principle: Member Economic Participation**

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the co-operative. Members usually receive limited compensation, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for developing their co-operative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

#### **4th Principle: Autonomy and Independence**

Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter to agreements with other organisations, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control and maintain their co-operative autonomy.

#### **5th Principle: Education, Training and Information**

Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, and employees. They also inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

#### **6th Principle: Co-operation among Co-operatives**

Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

#### **7th Principle: Concern for Community**

Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

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(Continued from page 4)

Thus, looking forward, these developments have led to the vision of 'The Co-operative Way' (Box 2). This identifies an economic system in which:

◆ People, together in a healthy global community, are in full control of their lives.

**Box 2**  
**The Fair World Project**  
**The Co-operative Way:**  
**The Fair World Action List**

**'Co-operation, not Coercion'**

Convert competitive, market-based businesses into workplace co-operatives and reorganises monopoly activities as stakeholder co-operatives.

**'Predistribution, not Redistribution'**

Distribute created wealth through nationally collected, co-operatives taxation, distributed into local, democratically controlled, Community Banks, so, that money and credit are available for responsible wealth creation, environmental care and community development.

**'Global stewardship for needs, not private resources for profits'**

Provide for more human needs (health, education, telecommunications, transport etc.) on a free-at-the-point-of-use basis.

**'Fair, guaranteed incomes for all'**

Introduce guaranteed fair income for all, within upper and lower brackets and, so, do away with personal taxation (income tax, VAT etc).

**'Banking as public service - not as global warfare'**

Abolish money lending and credit-creation for profit.

**'End global exploitation through financial speculation'**

Reintroduce international exchange controls as necessary.

**'All our sisters are our brothers, and all our brothers are our sisters'**

Make capital grants (not loans) to developing countries.

The Fair World Project: for peace, equality and co-operation

And:

◆ Where everyone works for the benefit of all: caring for the long-lived well being of the whole global ecology - and all its inhabitants.

**From Activism to Activity**

For this vision to be implemented it needs to be backed up by local action. Here are some suggestions:

- Generally, discover the world of co-operation, locally and globally.
- Join your local co-op food shop (that way you'll tap into the world of co-operation).
- Help create a local interest-free credit union (that way you'll be challenging usury, locally).
- Join with others to set up a local branch of the Woodcraft Folk. (that way you'll be encouraging peace and co-operation for kids).
- Discuss starting a local group 'The Friends of The Co-operative Ideal' (or some such name), or of The Guild of Co-operators (it does exist), or of The Co-operative Women's Guild (ditto!)
- Lobby for a local 'community greenhouse/ farm/market garden' and a local Community Land Trust (see Dolores Hayden's excellent book 'Redesigning the American Dream' and look on the net for details of 'urban agriculture').
- Consider setting up a local co-housing project (check 'co-housing' on the net).
- Set up a United Nations Association group, join it to the International Co-operative Alliance (getting the 'good groups' to talk with one another).
- Lobby for local free public transport and support your local Libraries.
- Set up a Co-operative Café (as useful meeting/ discussion/ bookshop/ leaflet displaying point).
- Publicise a local 'open round table' at an accessible coffee shop, every week at the same time, as an open-to-all point of conversation. (Ours at The Global Cafe in Golden Square, London, W1, every Wednesday 11-1 for the past six years, has been a god-send to us, as a way of, both, keeping on-track and on-going).

□ Create a Fair World brain storming group, to focus on each action point, (and see what emerges?)

(BTW: all these 'Set up' points will probably be best advanced by a decentralised activity: many hands do make the light work!)

So to reiterate.

It seems true that there can be no security without peace, no peace without equality, and no equality without co-operation: both social and global.

Co-operative relationships, based, as they are, on voluntary, equal, and non-hierarchical rela-

tionships, are both inherently peaceful and exist to pose no threat of violence: to humans, to the planet, and to our co-inhabitants.

Thus, if we can use, modify, and adapt these co-operative resources, then inequality can be eradicated and, thus, peace sustainably delivered.

### What a prospect!

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## The Adivasi: Indigenous wisdom in south India.

The following story was sent by Marion and James Wells-Bruges of Bristol and Frenchay Monthly Meeting. Last January they visited some Non Governmental Organisations in south India. Of their trip they wrote:

*"One of them [the NGOs], ACCORD, works with some Adivasis from five tribes, who own a tea plantation. Their whole culture and economy is based on co-operation rather than competition and ACCORD is trying to devise ways of applying this co-operative approach to trading tea with others. This story is just one example of their attitudes and was related to us by Stan and Mari Thekaekara, activists working with the Adivasi."*

Kariyan, of the Kattunayakan tribe, made a clearing in the jungle and planted ginger. As luck would have it the price for ginger shot up last year from Rs60 to Rs160, and he made a lot of money. He could have bought electronic gadgets or started a ginger farm, or even built a permanent house instead of his thatched mud hut on a mud compound. But he didn't. When people requested money he gave it to them without asking questions. And now it is all gone. Was he naïve and stupid? Alternatively, was he exceptionally altruistic? Does he need lessons in money management? - Or can money be something you share when you have it, like food or water or land?

Our consumerist competitive culture finds it difficult to imagine societies working within other value systems. But Kariyan valued the tribe. If he had gone off on his own, the money would have eventually run out and he would be destitute. As part of the tribe he has security as long as the tribe has security, which means as long as they all act instinctively as he did.

The Adivasi, indigenous tribal people, may have a culture that is more advanced and more sustainable than ours.