

Statement on Co-operative Identity

Journals 82 and 83 have considered progress in the review of current "ICA Co-operative Principles" as amended in 1966 and below is the final official Draft which will be submitted to the Alliance Congress in September 1995. This is followed by two essays of analysis and assessment by Mr. G.J. Melmoth and Dr. Peter Davis.

Final Official Draft of Statement

Definition

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.

Values

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

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 controlled by their members who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to their members. In primary Co-operatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and Co-operatives at other levels are also organised in a democratic manner.

3rd Principle: Member Economic Participation

Members contribute equitably to and control the capital of their Co-operative. They usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the Co-operative; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the Co-operative; and supporting other activities as approved by membership.

4th Principle: Autonomy and Independence

Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their

members. If they enter into agreements with other organisations (including governments) or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by the members and maintain their Co-operative independence.

5th Principle: Education, Training and Information

Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their Co-operatives. They 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

While focusing on member needs and wishes, Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities.

In Passing

"The ICA Principles can be put in effect to some extent by some key personnel in a Co-operative society, even when other staff and most members are left ignorant about them, because they are the practical rules of conducting the society on the dimension of a social group. On the other hand, basic Values are something that work fundamentally in the mind of an individual person".

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Co-operative College and Nihon University,
Japan - Journal 69, September 1990*