

Members of the Arghand Cooperative hand-mold soap stones, crafted to look like polished marble. This democratically-controlled, multi-ethnic cooperative provides Afghan women and men with an economic alternative to the opium trade. photo: Arghand



# CO-OPS & PEACE

*A Century of Unity*

BY ANDREW MCLEOD

**T**he United Nations has declared 2012 to be the International Year of Cooperatives, and the IYC provides an opportunity to reflect on ways that our movement supports the broader aims of the UN. Economic and social development is important, but the UN was originally formed in the aftermath of World War II, and its four main purposes include, “to keep peace throughout the world, (and) to develop friendly relations among nations.”

Likewise, the International Cooperative Alliance Statutes includes among its own objectives, “to promote sustainable human development and to further the economic and social progress of people thereby contributing to international peace and security.”

These two global bodies obviously have much opportunity for collaboration. While the UN provides a direct venue for work among governments, the ICA builds—and repairs—bridges between societies, even when their respective governments are not working well together.

As Senator George Mitchell observes in a special “My View” column (see page 8), cooperatives can contribute to peace by bringing together people who share as well as common economic interests despite conflict.

This peace dividend for cooperatives is not merely incidental. An economy with cooperatives will tend to distribute wealth more evenly, reducing the poverty and

resentment that often fuels conflict. And cooperative organizations have been building peace for nearly a century.

## Origins of Cooperative Peacemaking

The International Cooperative Alliance was founded in 1895, and is among the world’s oldest international organizations. Its members have included cooperative movements representing nations on both sides of both World Wars and the Cold War.

What’s more, the ICA has had a consistent public position of support for peace since 1913, when 600 delegates from 355 organizations in 24 countries unanimously passed a peace resolution in Glasgow, Scotland.

After the First World War, the ICA compiled a report of how the national cooperative movements had fared during the great conflict. Although many national

movements had supported their respective government’s efforts against the governments of fellow members, the common experiences described in the report served the cause of reconciliation.

World War II was more difficult for the ICA, as fascist governments often absorbed or corrupted cooperatives in their territory. And the Cold War saw serious disagreement over what level of communist government involvement was permissible, while cooperatives in the United States were sometimes suspected of pro-Soviet sympathies.

Through these challenges the movement has survived and thrived. Cooperatives are a proven method of bringing people together—both within and among nations. Co-ops have helped create the conditions for peace throughout the world, and this can be illustrated by a few current examples.

## The 1913 International Co-operative Alliance Glasgow Peace Resolution

That this Congress fully endorses the action recently taken by the Executive and Central Committees of the International Co-operative Alliance in order to manifest that it is in the interests of the cooperators of all countries to do their best to uphold peace. The Congress emphasises once more that the maintenance of peace and goodwill among all nations constitutes an essential condition for the development of co-operation and the realisation of those ends, which are aimed at by this movement.

The Congress further desires to impress upon the public opinion of all nations the fact that the reasons for the continuance of armaments and the possibility of international conflicts will disappear as the social and economic life of every nation becomes organized according to co-operative principles, and that, therefore, the progress of cooperation forms one of the most valuable guarantees for the preservation of the world’s peace. The Congress, therefore exhorts the people of every country to join our movement and strengthen their power.”

## Cooperation in Current Conflicts

Even while the United States is embroiled in ongoing conflicts, work continues to bring cooperative enterprise to Iraq and Afghanistan with support from cooperative organizations as well as concerned individuals and government agencies.

The World Council of Credit Unions has been building cooperative finance in Afghanistan since 2004. The populace generally has poor access to formal banking, and women have especially limited options. But WOCCU has worked with support from the US Agency for International Development to educate the Afghan people about the ways that cooperative finance is in alignment with Islamic Shariah law, which among other things prohibits paying interest.

Also in Afghanistan, the Arghand Cooperative produces a line of sustainable skincare products, while providing an economic alternative to the opium economy. This co-op was founded by National Public Radio’s correspondent Sarah Chayes, who covered the 2001 US invasion then stayed to help rebuild the country. Arghand’s membership includes men and women of a variety of tribal and ethnic groups working together as equals, with democratic control and equitable pay.

Meanwhile in Iraq, co-ops are under development to help Iraqi farmers in the Abu Ghraib region to make a living through cooperative organizing of both purchasing and marketing. This region was once highly productive farmland, but years of war have severely disrupted both farming activities and access to supplies and markets. So the



Malika is an Afghan widow and mother of three who used a credit union loan to purchase fertilizer and fuel for her farming generator so that she could tend to the idle portion of her farm and increase her family's income.

photo: WOCCU/USAID



These new tractors are powerful tools that will help Iraqi farmers increase production. Here, they await distribution at the University of Baghdad Agriculture College at the grand opening of the Abu Ghraib agricultural cooperatives in March.

photo by 1st Lt. Kurt Rauschenberg

US Department of Agriculture and Baghdad Provincial Reconstruction Team have launched a program called Ag Cooperatives,

which had its grand opening this past March and is providing farmers with better access to inputs and markets.

with the cooperative movement and encouraged co-ops to work for peace and promote their work.

to understand our movement's historical, current and potential contributions to humanity's coexistence.



### NCBA Serves as Ambassador to Muslim World

NCBA is listed in America's Unofficial Ambassadors' directory of organizations which offer opportunities for professionals to volunteer abroad on specialized placements. AUA provides short-term volunteer opportunities in the Muslim World. NCBA's CLUSA International Program works in majority-Muslim nations, including Indonesia and Niger.

### Building a Co-op Peace Institute

Ian MacPherson of Canada and Yehudah Paz of Israel continue to push for more attention to the cooperative peace potential: In 2009 they successfully proposed a resolution at the ICA's General Assembly—online at <http://s.coop/peace2009>—which reaffirmed the ICA's commitment to “the furtherance of peace everywhere in the world and its readiness to contribute actively to its achievement,” called on international bodies like the UN to partner

Now, MacPherson and Paz are taking a new proposal to the ICA general assembly in Cancun, Mexico this November. They seek support for their plans to create the Cooperative Institute for the Promotion of Peace and Social Cohesion, which is intended to work within the framework of ICA policies and resolutions, and to evaluate and demonstrate the importance of cooperatives' commitments to peace.

Conflict becomes more likely as the world's growing population must live with a stable or diminishing resource base. For that reason alone, it is important for cooperators

### Co-op Peace Book Due This Fall

*Co-operatives and the Pursuit of Peace*, edited by Joy Emmanuel and Ian McPherson (New Rochdale Press, 2007) is a collection of writings including presentations from a three-day conference held in Canada in June of 2006, hosted by the British Columbia Institute for Co-operative Studies. A second volume is due out later this year.

### Cooperative Peacemaker Profile: The Legacy of Toyohiko Kagawa

By JIM JONES

Toyohiko Kagawa (1888-1960) was a Christian minister, a labor activist who lived in poverty in the slums of Tokyo, a pacifist who opposed World War II, a tireless co-op organizer and a world-class philosopher. He spoke of “brotherhood economics” that synthesized cooperatives, peace and Christianity as an alternative to capitalism, state socialism and fascism.

Kagawa is revered in Japan as the father of their cooperative movement, and as a founder of some of the earliest cooperative associations, including the Tokyo Students Consumer Cooperative and the Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union. He was a bridge between Japan and the United States during the decades before and after World War II.

Kagawa attended a Christian mission school in his youth, and later studied in the United States at Princeton University. His understanding of the West and his connections through the church led to a series of visits to the United States as well as Europe, China, New Zealand and Australia. On these trips, he often spoke about spiritual concerns, peace and economic cooperation. He had a strong impact wherever he went, often drawing hundreds to his talks.

In 1935-36, his most important visit to North America was co-sponsored by both the National Council of Churches and the Cooperative League of the USA—now known as the National Cooperative Business Association. Kagawa spoke tirelessly, appearing before more than 750,000 people in 150 different cities in

the United States and Canada.

Kagawa's speaking tours in the United States, and the role that he played in stimulating both the student and consumer cooperatives in North America are well remembered in Japan, and the idea of jointly celebrating his birth was appreciated on both sides of the Pacific. In the late 1980s, the American Committee for the Kagawa Centennial Project was organized, including members of both co-ops and churches.



This group published *Toyohiko Kagawa: Apostle of Love and Social Justice*, a book by Robert Schildgen.

Clearly, many of the connections between our countries are a direct result of Kagawa's work. His thoughts on “brotherhood economics” resonate today much as they did during the Great Depression. The co-ops in Japan serve as a model that is emulated for providing affordable goods and services in many other countries, just as the North American student housing co-ops have become recognized internationally as a model for others to study. The ties are strong, and on both sides of the Pacific, Toyohiko Kagawa is still our guide.

Jim Jones is a former executive director of NASCO. This article originally appeared in the March/April 2011 issue of *Co-op Voices* and is available at [www.s.coop/jonesonkagawa](http://www.s.coop/jonesonkagawa). The 75th Anniversary of Kagawa's US speaking tour was observed with the Hanover Cooperative's special podcast by David Thompson, available at [www.coopfoodstore.coop/thompson](http://www.coopfoodstore.coop/thompson).



### Excerpt from Cooperative Peace Rings True in a New Century

By JAMES P. WARBASSE

*James P. Warbasse (1866-1957) was the founder of NCBA, formerly known as the Cooperative League of the USA. His 1950 book, Cooperative Peace, is available online at <http://s.coop/cooperativepeace>.*

It is an interesting fact that many books are written which exhibit no knowledge of the cooperative movement but which advocate cooperation as a way to peace and to the solution of world problems. They are by social reformers and philosophers, apparently unaware that the people are doing the very things these authors advocate. In the humdrum world, events are taking place which are not seen by eyes fixed on the skies.

The cooperative method here discussed is neither new nor theoretical. It is an old and tested way of business. At this juncture of history it needs to be understood for its peace-promoting power. The main purpose of this book is to show how the cooperative way not only makes for world peace but is necessary for peace.

The various forms of cooperation are now testing themselves in the world laboratory of change. They all serve a purpose. The fact that this book deals with cooperation from the consumer standpoint does not reflect upon the value and importance of producer and marketing cooperatives. They are performing essential services. The same can be said of profit business in general which in the absence of any better way is making it possible for consumers to get the things they need and for labor to have employment.

The solution of the war problem has

now become an immediate and imperative necessity. It is not enough to say that we owe it to our children and to future generations to prevent war. We owe it to ourselves.

Sentimentality, moral appeal, disarmament conferences, peace pacts, and exhibition of horrors of war have contributed little to the cause of peace. This book examines certain salutary economic tendencies in the consumer cooperative movement which are actually in operation in all countries and across

international borders. In these are seen developing before our eyes the conditions essential to peace. Peace is discovered actually in the making. While this expansion of democracy in the economic field is slow, nevertheless that very slowness may make it substantial. Of all the ways that are looked to as leading toward peace, the slow way in the end may be the quick way.

Expansion of the cooperative method makes for lessening the need for political government. Instead of solving problems by more political government, this book insists that less political government is not only to be desired but is possible.

The time has come to plan for rehabilitation of the world, not by returning to political and economic methods that have gotten it into its troubles, but by using proved methods which make for peace. These methods are applicable to all people and to all economic needs. Already one-fourth the population of the world are having experience in cooperative economy. The world should be ready to renounce its old ways. The time is ripe for a new life of abundance, peace, and justice.

