

## ICA DG Report

August 2006

### Co-ops and mutuals - more unites us than separates us!

Since the last Digest I have been in Peru and Ireland – part of a particularly busy time – from travelling point of view.

Travelling in itself isn't necessarily a good thing. Apart from the obvious physical demands I am not always convinced, in this technological age, that attending conferences and making speeches is the most effective use of my/our time. However recent events have shown that physical meetings have their place.

The peace issue couldn't be more relevant at this time and the conference in Canada as reported in Digest 50 is proof of that.

Similarly the Americas Regional Assembly in Peru was an especially well attended event concentrate in on the issue of maximise in co-op business. We are really moving on this them now and I am sure it will be reiterated at the other ICA Regional Assemblies in Colombo, Arusha and Manchester.

I also spoke at the WOCCU Conference in Dublin, along with ICA DG, Maria Elena Chavez – a very impressive affair. Nearly 2000 delegates with a very large contingent from the US, but also a very “co-operative” event.

Everyone wanted to be part of the co-operative movement and I was very well received. Credit Unions, as evidenced there, are very proud of their co-operative credentials. As possibly the fastest growing part of the worldwide co-operative movement, it is very timely that we rekindle our strong connections.

Both conferences dealt with the issue of mutualisation as opposed to co-operation. Elsewhere in these columns a discussion is emerging on how close our two movements should be. Indeed already in parts of ICA mutuals are an important part, for example, in insurance.

Perhaps it is time to think about even closer links – far more connects us than separates us. Mutuals also tend to be an easy target for takeover bids from the private sector so some extra support from us would not go amiss.

Next month sees ICA's first Board Strategic Planning meeting as recommended by the Governance Report at the General Assembly.

Given all the other changes currently being examined by the Regionalisation Working Group – and hopefully we are close to a solution with regard to Europe, a strategic plan is crucial to ensure that ICA does not get lost in its own reorganisation!

But seriously, direction and focus are essential ingredients to ensure co-operative principles and values are strongly represented in an increasingly troubled and hostile world. Perhaps a new era of togetherness will emerge. In writing this I am reminded of the old adage 'Unity is Strength'. It couldn't be more relevant today.