



UNITED STATES COOPERATIVES AND THE ICA

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It should be no surprise that United States cooperatives have supported ICA from its very beginning. They were represented by three delegates and five visitors at the August 1895 International Cooperative Congress in London and an American served on the ICA's first Central Committee. Since then distinguished Americans cooperators have been "at the ICA table" as delegates and members of the ICA Central Committee and its Board of Directors. Today as ICA celebrates 125 years of dedicated support of cooperatives throughout the world, we may ask what led to this strong US-ICA connection.

By the end of the 19th century many American cooperators had traveled to Europe to learn about its cooperatives in agriculture, banking, and consumer goods and services. They established international trade connections and were deeply committed to the establishment of commercial enterprises based on mutual self-help, democratic control and economic and social justice. They saw the value of developing a strong international voice and custodian for these values. ICA is the organization that provides the platform for the world's cooperatives to discuss the common and fundamental core of our identity, our current value and how our principles can and should be adapted over time. Today there are literally tens of thousands of American cooperatives whose businesses are based on the Cooperative Principles and Values as protected and supported throughout the world by the ICA.

The vast and measurable accomplishments of ICA in supporting cooperative international trade economic development, education and women's and workers' rights in an ever increasing variety of industries have been crucial to the US support of ICA. At the same time, it is important to recognize an enduring belief that has motivated that support.

In 1913 the Glasgow ICA Congress, delegates feared a coming war in Europe and passed a resolution recognizing the role cooperatives and cooperators had in preventing it. Shortly before the end of World War 1 in 1918, American cooperatives held their first national congress. Dr. James Warbasse, founder of the Cooperative League of the USA (later the National Cooperative Business Association), encouraged delegates to read the 1913 Glasgow Resolution and realize, "how sincere and how practical a force for world harmony is Cooperation. It embraces two absolutely essential elements: control of trade as an economic force and the ideal of human brotherhood as a moral force."

Year after year since then American cooperatives, their leaders and their members have believed as stated in the 2006 ICA Declaration that cooperatives "...promote the cause of Peace and sustainable human development and promote social and economic progress of people through the model of cooperative enterprise that will contribute to peace..." On behalf of their millions of members the US Delegation to the ICA General Assembly in Kigali last year, the United States delegates enthusiastically supported the Declaration on Positive Peace Through Cooperatives. Beyond all the other advantages of the 125 year partnership between American cooperatives and the ICA, the opportunity to collaborate through ICA with

the worlds' cooperatives to pursue activities that foster positive peace has been its most enduring value and is its most positive future.