

***Cultivating Co-operation:
The Roots Run Deep***

by

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Cultivating Cooperation

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I want to thank the organizers of this conference for inviting me here. I enjoyed very much meeting with friends and colleagues from over the years last night – and for being among so many other kindred spirits.

Winnipeg is a special place in my little world. Elizabeth and I lived here for eight happy years, most of them in a wee house on Cambridge Street, one that we loved very much. Our two children were born in this city. I started my university teaching career at the University of Winnipeg, and I commenced a second career as an elected co-operative official by serving on the board of Red River Co-op and as one of the founding directors of Nor' West Health Co-op. I taught my first course on *The History and Philosophy of Co-operatives* at U of W – Thursday evenings that I remember well and with affection. I learned much from some wise old heads (and some then not so old) in those courses, people from the rich diversity of the Manitoba co-operatives.

This morning I am going to be speaking largely about co-operatives because that is what I was asked to do and because that is what I know the most about. I want to make it clear, though, that I think there are many ways in which people in communities can help themselves; I believe in the full range of possibilities that the Social Economy affords. I believe with equal passion that it is essential that the integrity of the various streams within the Social Economy be maintained and thoughtfully applied in keeping with their own special dynamics – by individuals who for the best of reasons are simply trying to find effective ways to address one or more key contemporary issues or, less attractively in my mind, by those seeking to absorb what they can from anywhere in order to be latter-day prophets.

I believe that each strand of the Social Economy deserves to be respected for its unique contributions. Each needs to be researched, understood and reflected on so that its distinctive characteristics and integrity are maintained, its full and lasting potential grasped. Each should develop in its own ways, at its own pace. There is great value in genuine diversity at the community level. The Social Economy should not be reduced to a miss-mash. Nor, in my view, to make a minor point, should it be conceptualized as a toolbox; its essence runs deeper than that. The idea of the social “tool” often seems to me to place the onus on the doer – the outside agent, the mechanic – and not on the ones who need to do, the people who need to feel the possibilities. The emphasis too easily becomes wrong.

You are fortunate in the co-operative heritage you share in this province, and for the one or two in the room who may not be aware of it I would like to dwell on it; it is one way of thinking about “Cultivating Co-operatives”. I am moved to do so because I believe it is as important to understand our own efforts to build co-operative movements, though, for some less imaginative individuals, going to Portage-la-Prairie, the North End, St. Claud, Steinbeck, and Thompson may not have the same appeal as going to Mondragon, Bologna, Buenos Aires, Manchester and Colombo. There is no accounting for some peoples’ taste.

Seriously, though, my main point is not to discourage such global roaming away from the “Keystone Province” in search of new and different ideas; I would be the last person to do that. Rather, I want to emphasize the importance of more reflection on our own record, its successes and failures; more respect for the work of co-operative pioneers of the distant and recent past. As we all know, we

Canadians – and maybe Canadian co-operators in particular – are always reluctant to recognize the exceptional among us. We forget too easily what has been done; we pass over what the remarkable people around us do every day, including many (I have no doubt) in this room.

From a broader perspective, it is also regrettably true that in recent decades we have been induced to worship competition and to idolize winners; it is no accident that the highly competitive survivor (so-called) reality shows are so popular or that we pay athletes \$10,000,00 a year for teams that, for the most part, usually lose. Routinely, we fail to acknowledge the roles that co-operative behaviour plays in our individual lives and in the effective functioning of our communities.

If we only stopped and looked, we would see that co-operative behaviour overflows in all our lives; in fact, we would not survive without it. You can see people doing it everywhere, often enough without any shame whatsoever: from automatically queuing up, to collaborating in making homes run, to assisting each other at work, to obeying the written and unwritten “rules of the road”, to standing aside to let others go through a door, to watching out for each other in communities where they may be some risks, to helping neighbours in difficulty, to joining together in assist with the processes of planting and harvesting, to making new immigrants feel welcome – the list is very long.

You will be surprised, once you start thinking about human beings that way. You will see that formal co-operatives, registered with the state, are but legal and deepening extensions of instinctive and intentional extensions of what we do in everyday life. We need to make less of the boundary between formal co-operative

legal structures and informal co-operation – spontaneous, traditional, and automatic.

In fact, as you consider how you will undertake your cultivation work, I challenge you to put some time aside to prepare a list of the co-operative activities, consciously and unconsciously performed, little (and big) acts, that you can see around you every day. You might be surprised. Mind you, you should only do so with the greatest care. Don't let others know what you are doing. Write down your examples furtively on sheets otherwise buried in pads of paper. Don't let anybody see the list. Sadly, many people today seeing it will think it odd and conclude you have become addle-headed, confirming their long-held suspicions about your mental state and grasp on reality. You will be seen as a threat to civil order and the public peace more serious and threatening than Joe Zuken, Roland Penner and Bill Kardash ever were (if you don't know who they were, ask someone older near you at coffee break).

In a way, the co-operative alternative is the most radical of all because it dares to question most seriously the various other versions of what is the appropriate distribution of power. Given that, one must hide one's perversions very carefully these days.

Nevertheless, at the risk of public ridicule, I want to consider the Manitoba co-operative record briefly, to understand better the context within which "cultivating co-operatives" might be practiced.

The first point is that this rash of co-operation, this stream of irrational behaviour, did not break out a few years ago. It can be found in what is now

Manitoba for centuries, so many and so blurred that it is not possible to count them accurately. Long before Central Canadians and Europeans paddled the waters near where we meet, the Indigenous peoples of this region used co-operative approaches to enrich their lives, one might even say, to survive. They co-operated within kin networks, sometimes-larger groups, to fish and hunt. They traded up and down the rivers and across the lakes. Many of them, particularly on the Plains, assembled in large groups in the warmer months of the year when food was plentiful and the sharing was easier.

That did not mean there was not violence and turmoil. Unfortunately, no people are immune from that kind of behaviour but, in retrospect, it was not pervasive, systematic, all-inclusive and perpetual. That kind of warfare was the gift of the European civilizations.

We hear echoes of those centuries of co-operative or at least collaborative behaviour in the continuing emphasis on consensus and the appeals of the Indigenous collectivities. We honour the challenging and important work of the many First Nations and Inuit peoples seeking to escape paternalism from without and within; as they strive to create independent and self-reliant societies despite the ravages of poverty and the misplaced enthusiasms by those who came to dominate this land. We acknowledge the informal co-operation that occurs in our First Nations communities on reserves and in our urban places. We applaud the new co-operatives in the northern parts of the province being developed largely by Indigenous Peoples with the help of Arctic Co-operatives, one of the bulwarks of the provincial movement. Though its main focus must always be on the North,

particularly the Arctic. We celebrate the accomplishments of Neechi Foods. We appreciate the efforts of Payuk housing co-operative as it seeks to deal with some of the most pressing social issues of Indigenous peoples living in the North End. We admire the work being done by the Northern Star Worker Co-operative in developing reasonable incomes from the preparation of crafts true to their heritage. We look forward to hearing about the success of the new co-operatives suggested in recent public pronouncements.

By the early nineteenth century, the fur trade had become an important part of the economy in the Canadian West. Part of the reason why it became so important was that it could depend upon both formal and informal co-operation. Trade was formalized through kinds of treaties, among peoples and across cultures. The forts of the trade had military dimensions but that was not their only or perhaps essential purpose; they were primarily for trade. There were chains of supplies that reached across hundreds of miles and numerous cultures. The collaboration, planning and execution of the work within fur trade companies were revolutionary in the business world of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They only succeeded if there was predictability in actions and peaceful relationships among the people involved. The co-operative sides of the fur trade were as important as the competition that tends to dominate our views of how it actually functioned.

Collaboration within the fur trade also created the peoples called the Country-born and the Métis, the off spring of unions between First Nation women and, respectively, English-speaking and French-speaking fur traders. For some sixty years in the nineteenth century, the Métis in particular were the dominant force in

much of this region. Each year the sounds of the ungreased axles of hundreds, sometimes thousands, of their carts could be heard as the annual spring and autumn hunts for buffalo were undertaken, first from Red River then from the banks of many rivers and lakes in Saskatchewan. The organized collaboration of the hunts, in fact, became the core of their collectivity and a focus for their nationalism, the symbol of their unity as a people. It allowed them to build communities as they did, with the land system that still partly shapes settlement along the water routes where they tended to live. Their lives were never secure – their indifference to land ownership in the age of property being one reason – but the stability of their communal life and the sense of association that developed from it should not be ignored.

We too easily assume instability and tensions before the ways of life dominant in our time were fully established. We underestimate and undervalue the communal, collaborative traditions of those who survived and often prospered here before us – or, indeed, how our ancestors lived not that long ago. We would do better if we remembered. The Métis do remember their traditions of community and collectivity with great passion and it informs much of what they attempt to do as people today.

More traditionally, we date the beginning of co-operatives with the settlement process. They can be found within the enthusiasms of agricultural societies, which began in this province in 1872. They were a part of the programme of the Patrons of Husbandry (or the Grange as it was popularly called), which came to Manitoba in the same decade. *The Nor' West Farmer*, which began publication in

1883, carried reports about co-operatives and elsewhere. The agrarian press of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had a remarkable international perspective; reading rural residents could readily find out about co-operative developments in other lands. The Manitoba and North West Farmer's Union was formed in the west of what was then called the postage stamp province in 1883, the same year that a co-op store apparently opened in Winnipeg. In the 1890s the Patrons of Industry swept rural areas of the province, helping to create local grain elevators, organizing the procurement of farm supplies, and revolutionizing politics. In the same decade, the federal government started to send the Dairy Commissioner westward and as a result small local dairies, some co-operatively owned, were organized in Manitoba and the Territories.

In short, as in many other parts of the world, co-operatives in western Canada were integral to the settlement process. Whenever people migrate – as individuals or as part of kin groups – they are vulnerable. That truism, for example, is readily demonstrated in the history of the Mennonite peoples, beginning with their formal and informal co-operative practices on the Eastern and Western Reserves and the creation of the Mennonite Mutual Insurance Company, the forerunner of today's Red River Mutual in 1874. They became strong supporters of consumer co-ops in the twentieth century and particularly of credit unions from the 1930s onward. In fact, the Mennonite contribution to the development of credit unions here, across western Canada and in parts of Ontario is a major theme in the history of that movement. Their pragmatic and non-judgmental approach to fostering co-operatives in the Global South through the Mennonite Central

Committee in the latter years of the twentieth century is remarkable. They have a proud history of community responsibility and engagement.

Other immigrant groups played significant roles in the development of co-operatives, in many instances bringing with them experiences with co-operatives in their original homelands: for example, English and Scots with consumer co-ops, Ukrainians, Germans, and Polish people with credit co-operatives. It is not surprising then that they would start similar organisations in their new homelands, in Manitoba and further west. Unfortunately, we know little about the contributions of Continental Europeans and how much they were derived from experiences before they came here – the language barriers have produced a distorted view of the co-operative past.

It is obviously true, however, that the co-operative model has been and is being used effectively used by recently-arrived Canadians . It will be, I understand, be further demonstrated throughout this conference. It is exciting to learn about the work of Nyam Nyam and Aksyon Ng Ating Kabataan, modern versions of old efforts to retain and explain cultures brought to this land from other places. They remind me of not dissimilar efforts by Ukrainian, Polish, and German groups of a few years ago, some of them through co-operative organisations, such as Carpathia Credit Union.

Looking back, the growth of co-operatives was significantly associated with the rapid population shifts associated with increases in the provincial population, urban as well as rural. The most celebrated immigration boom, of course, occurred between the mid-1890s and 1914, though the current immigration flows are

certainly significant. People on the move in search of new opportunities, whether travelling alone, in families, or as part of “chain migrations” from declining communities in other lands, naturally engage in considerable co-operative behaviour, spontaneous, traditional and sometimes formal. Doing so is a natural way – perhaps the only way – to overcome the complexities that major transitions impose.

In Manitoba, some of the forms of collaboration and co-operation are deeply embedded in the practices and legends of rural life: barn raising, planting bees, and threshing. They were essential for the organizing of local schools, the building of community halls, the development of fair grounds, and the organisation of churches.

It is too easily ignored, however, how recent arrivals in towns and cities also organize associations to bring people together for social and economic purpose, sometimes within churches and in fraternal organisations or as part of political activism. The most important manifestation of this form of associational co-operation would ultimately be seen in the way in which the credit union movement developed in its early years: the ethnic and religious bonds were especially important. It can be seen in other examples as well.

When we moved here in the late 1960s, I wondered about the delivery trucks for People’s Dairy; it was, I thought, an unusual name. To be honest, living in River Heights, I did not see them often, but they were common on the streets of the North End. People’s Dairy, for those who do not know about it, was a business organized and run by Marxists; the dairy contributed regularly to the Communist Party (under its various names) from its beginnings within the Ukrainian Farmers-Labour

Temple in 1928 until it closed its doors in the mid 1990s. It was a big employer, at its height employing over 150 people. It is a remarkable story considering the pressures, external and internal, under which it functioned. It stands as a symbol of the diversity, ethnic and political, one could find readily in the Manitoba movement. Jim Mochoruk and Nancy Kardash have written the history of People's Dairy. I commend it to you, whether you agree with the politics it discusses or not, as one of the best – and certainly the most visually interesting – history of a local co-op I have had the pleasure of reading.

Fortunately for you, I don't have time to march blow-by-blow, nuance-by-
nuance, through the history of the provincial movement over the last hundred years, so I will content myself with making a few points about different aspects of the provincial movement.

There were two major efforts to develop co-operatives between 1900 and 1929, one so successful it produced a confusing array of grain marketing organisations and a remarkable number of other farm marketing co-operatives; the other a more dogged story, that of building the consumer movement.

The rapid growth of the farmers' movements that began at the turn of the last century was a major development in the regional history. It shook governments, contributed significantly to the definition of the regional consciousness, and provided a powerful strand within the provincial and regional co-operative movements – one that continues despite the setbacks caused by the demutualization of the pools.

I would like to highlight four aspects of the development of the farmers' movement by considering issues, all of which can be seen in the history of what started as the Grain Growers' Grain Company. The GGG was the first attempt to form a co-operative for the marketing of grain; it was organized in 1906. It grew out of farmer complaints about the way in which grain was evaluated and measured, how much the farmers were paid (especially in comparison with the grain merchants who for example on Wellington Crescent), and how grain was sold and shipped on the international market.

The early history of the GGG provides considerable scope for understanding the dynamics of co-operatives in their formative and stabilizing years. Two men played particularly dominant roles in the company's early history. They were Ed Partridge and Tom Crerar. Partridge was, by all measures, a charismatic figure, the Sage of Sintaluta, a man who led the campaign against the railways and the grain merchants from the mid-1990s onward. Fiery-eyed, passionate, stubborn and articulate, he was, I would argue, the spark plug behind the company's formation. In contrast, Tom Crerar was clear-eyed, calm, and calculating, steeped in the liberal values of many of the people of Russell, Manitoba, where his home was located. He became an organisation man, albeit one with strong values drawn from an individualistic mind-set. The two men disagreed over a number of things, disagreements that echo through other co-operatives as they develop: how should surpluses be distributed? What should be the relationships with governments? How should democratic practices be defined and fostered? These are not uncommon subjects in many new and developing co-operatives.

Second, the two men and the GGG generally were dealing with some of the big issues of the day. Our society, I think, tends to trivialize and patronize what co-operatives and co-operators try to do. In this case, however, there is no doubt that the movement, admittedly often through people with imperfect understanding of how co-operatives should function, was engaged with powerful forces and complex, important developments.

I think the same applies to many of the issues co-operators in other circumstances also confront. People tend to underestimate and certainly undervalue what co-operative enthusiasts are about, just as most people in Rochdale did when a few working class people opened a store in December 1844.

Third, the successful formation of the GGG encouraged two waves of similar organisations in all three Prairie Provinces. One sees this kind of development repeatedly within the co-operative world. One successful experiment stimulates several imitations; rival organisations develop; leaders with competing ambitions emerge; debates over orthodoxy are engaged; and unity becomes difficult to achieve. I would be surprised if such a pattern was not evident in Manitoba today.

Fourth, and on a more positive note, the early years of the GGG (it became the United Grain Growers in 1917) provided a wonderful vision of what the co-operative possibilities could be, largely through the pages of *The Grain Growers Guide*. Edited first by Partridge, it was edited from 1910 to 1935 by George Chipman, a Nova Scotian who came west as a schoolteacher. Until the early 1920s, it was noteworthy for its support of a variety of co-operative causes. It helped spark the formation of buying clubs and local consumer co-ops, popularized the idea of

cooperative banking, encouraged women to organize poultry co-ops, and promoted “Co-operation” among young people.

Whenever I encountered students skeptical about co-operatives and Co-operation while I taught at U of W, I would send them to do a paper on some subject that involved the *Guide*. The frankly ulterior motive in doing so was usually rewarded, if not by the many articles than by the cartoons of Arch Dale, one of the greatest in a long line of superb political cartoonists in Canada. *The Guide* stands as one of the best examples of the kind of vision often associated with new co-operatives, the ideas and approaches that can still have potency long after institutionalization has tended to dampen dreams and reduce possibilities.

The most important grain marketing co-operative for the province for many years, though, was the Manitoba Pool. Let me just make three observations about the history of that organisations. First, it was remarkable, given the opposition and competition in this province, that Manitoba Pool became the important organisation that it was for several decades. It is a tribute to the leadership it had throughout much of its history. It is also the result of some remarkable thought emanating from the diversity of rural Manitoba. That dimension of the Pool’s history can perhaps be most readily recovered by looking for the writings of John T. Hull, who produced many reports, government submissions, and pamphlets for the Manitoba Pool and the co-operative marketing system from the 1920s through the 1950s. I commend his writings to you. Strong co-operatives rely on strong thought, a truism that was lost in much of the Canadian movement from the 1970s onward, when the emphasis on financial performance became so prominent, the only thing that mattered.

My second point is that the Pool should not be judged only on its economic performance. I do not think that it was mere coincidence that the pools flourished when they were committed and resourceful supporters of rural life. While not underestimating the impact of changing economic realities, I also think it is important to realize that their decline started when they lessened those commitments. Moreover, the pools were bulwarks of local communities through their democratic practices, their uses of field staffs, their training of local officials. It is very difficult to measure the costs for local communities when the pools demutualized. As far as I know, no one has tried to do so. Nor have I read a thorough explanation for why demutualization actually occurred. I suspect there were alternatives if they had been pursued in a timely manner, if structural issues had been addressed more directly and aggressively, and if institutional loyalties had not interfered. Someday we will fully understand and if I have missed something that has been written I would appreciate knowing about it.

Third, though it was a big blow to the provincial and national co-operative movement, the flight of the pools did not end rural co-operation. There are several older agricultural co-operatives, such as the Honey Producers and Granny's Poultry that continue and that prosper. The co-operative movement still serves many rural residents well, just as it has for generations.

In recent times, too, there is in Manitoba, as elsewhere, a remarkable burst of co-operative activism around the production and sale of organic foods, support for local farmers, farmers markets, and the production of slow food. Much of this new form of agriculture (which, incidentally conforms to an old co-operative idea of

bringing producers and consumers closer together through mutual understanding and support) involves informal and formal cooperative relationships. The debunkers of this kind of development point out that it produces more expensive food and reaches only a small proportion of the population. This in some ways may be true but, on balance, I think it is an important development for the following reasons among many:

- It engages young people in impressive numbers
- It can produce healthier food
- It is less destructive of our land resources, a not inconsiderable factor in a world teetering on the brink of overpopulation
- It reduces pressure on transportation systems already threatened by the problems of the petroleum industry now and in the future.

There is much life in the rural areas of Manitoba, as there has been for well over a century. There is every reason to think that it will continue. There is a growing interest in biofuels and New Generation Co-operatives as well as the development of rural social services using co-operative models. Co-operatives may become more important for First Nations peoples on reserves seeking to develop their economic possibilities within their communal traditions.

In contrast to the way in which agricultural co-operatives burst onto the provincial scene over the last century or so, the consumer movement (which started at the same time approximately) went through a slower development. Small groups, many of them drawn essentially from among immigrants, started many stores over the years, most frequently during inflationary periods or times of general economic

challenges. They struggled to work together and the history of the development of the Manitoba Co-operative Wholesale, from its formation in 1927 through the first twenty years of its life was a struggle that demonstrated many of the problems inherent in trying to form central co-operative organisations. During the latter stages of the Great Depression and in the 1940s, however, stable stores developed in several rural communities and small towns. In 1937 Red River Co-operative was formed in Winnipeg, but the challenges of developing a consumer co-op in the province's major city have always been intimidating.

The mainstream, traditional consumer movement in Manitoba has become a vital force in Canadian co-operative circles. It has produced a stream of leaders, such as Gordon Sinclair, Ed Klassen, and Glen Tully, who have provided important leadership over the last four decades, not only in this province and within Federated Co-operatives but also within the Canadian movement more generally. The provincial movement, as revealed through the pages of Brett Fairbairn's valuable book on the co-operative retailing system in western Canada, is noteworthy for its over-all solid economic performance, its contributions to local communities and to the provincial movement generally. Within its history can be found many of the key issues for consumer co-operation: how to work at creating greater unity among strong local institutions, how to develop within urban contexts, how to encourage collaboration among different kinds of co-operative organisations, how to sustain democratic practice and strong social commitments, how to balance social commitments with economic performance, how to respond to the relentless competition of the retail trades, and how to create ways for local co-ops to expand

prudently. They are not issues that can easily be dealt with; they are not issues the provincial movement has dealt with perfectly; nor has any other. They are the ongoing issues of consumer co-operation everywhere.

The Manitoba credit union movement began with the creation of the first *caisse populaire* by Father Arthur Benoit in St. Malo in 1937. It was followed by the creation of *caisses* in several other essentially Francophone communities over the following fifteen years. The *caisses* became crucially important in helping to sustain the economic vitality of Francophone communities. They carry with them a responsibility for helping to defend and promote the cultural distinctiveness of an historic set of communities, a kind of social commitment that co-operatives are particularly capable of undertaking; they do so in many countries around the world. We should appreciate their capacity to do so more than we generally do. The roles of culture within co-operatives can be a vitally important one and there is much to be learned from the Manitoba experience, not least in examining the history of the province's *caisses*.

The province's credit union movement is one of the pillars of the provincial movement. It has always been a very diverse set of organisations, reflecting the province's regional makeup, rural and urban needs, and ethnic loyalties. It has been buffeted by debates over national associations and priorities; on a personal level, I remember particularly well how effectively it coped with the problems of the 1980s when many financial institutions faced serious difficulties. It has coped with periods of adversity with remarkable determination and fortitude. It has continued to grow despite economic cycles, providing a full range of financial services in the towns and

cities of the province and being the only financial institution in over sixty small communities. Its social contributions vary significantly, from assisting with educational and social events to being sparkplugs for community economic development. The contributions of Assiniboine Credit Union to CED are particularly noteworthy; in some ways it is the most committed Canadian credit union to that kind of activity. It supports a remarkably consistent and imaginative set of programmes; a model I believe many more credit unions should emulate.

Let me close by making two observations, unfortunately very briefly. I am struck by the social contributions that the Manitoba movement has made over the years – and continues to make. Manitoba has always shown leadership in the co-operative housing field, starting with a remarkable experiment at 139 Roslyn Road at the end of World War Two. As described by Michael Welton, it was a remarkable effort to create a community. It was followed, of course by Willow Park, the first major continuing co-operative in Canada and by Nor' West Health co-operative.

Along with many other outsiders, I am impressed by the surge in co-operative activism in recent years within Manitoba. I don't think any other province outside of Quebec matches it, though I know I will encounter objections to that statement from some people in a province to the west of you. The roles of young people in alternative food production and distribution, in developing Mondragon book store, and in encouraging energy conservation is impressive and heartening. The pace of new co-operative development is greater than anywhere else in Canada if the statistics I have seen are correct. The relationships with government seem to be among the best in Canada. The developing relationship with the University of

Winnipeg is very promising and I hope the possibility it offers will be seized with enthusiasm. We need more people and places devoted to Co-operative Studies. I believe the greatest challenge confronting the co-operative movement this century has been in the creation and distribution of knowledge. Manitoba is well placed to make a major contribution to efforts to respond to that challenge.

So why did I take you through all this? Partly, of course, it is because I believe a little history each day is good for you. It sharpens the mind, shakes the categories, and stirs the complacencies. Too much, of course, is not a good thing. It causes you to lose hair as well as friends who weary of your enthusiasms. It causes you to misplace your glasses as you take them off to read in strange places. It leads to absent-mindedness and confusions over (of all things) dates, to obscure mutterings (I am told) as you sleep. Carried to an extreme, it becomes an incurable disease, demanding that you stare up at old buildings trying to understand the decorations that adorn them and the architecture they reflect, to musing over dusty manuscripts, and to reflecting in awe and disgust at the sublimity and the stupidities of the human story.

I hope the forgoing, though, has demonstrated a number of points if not for complete agreement than at least for discussion.

- Co-operation is an important theme in the province's history
- The Manitoba movement is remarkably diverse
- The Manitoba movement should be proud of its creative contributions to co-operative development and of its leadership in the national movement

- There is currently a remarkable new wave of co-operative activism and enthusiasm within the province
- The co-operative movement is helping to address a series of major issues in the province, notably the challenges confronting Indigenous peoples, immigrants, youth, and the delivery of health services

Mostly, though, it was to remind us all, not least me, that though the changing scenery seems to suggest always we are going somewhere different, the reality is that the road winds down old paths alternatively beautiful and ugly, shaped by the honourable and the less than that, disfigured by unacceptable competition, but salvaged by both individual accomplishment and, particularly by what we do together. May your work prosper. May you cultivate well today and tomorrow. May you enrich your own lives and those of others through what you undertake in the spirit of mutuality.