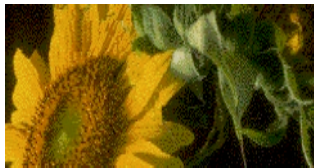


The Future of Co-operatives?

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Leonard Cohen (1992): The Future

'And now the wheels of heaven stop;
You feel the devil's riding crop;
Get ready for the future:
It is murder.'

Social Economy Framework

- 1) Co-operative businesses
- 2) Co-operative social services

1) Co-operative Businesses

- Earn their revenues from the sale of services to their members and the public
- Credit unions, farm and other marketing co-operatives, consumer retail/wholesale co-operatives, worker co-operatives
- Most memberships, revenues, assets

Co-operatives Secretariat: 1996 & 2004

- 'The 1996 statistics are based on data from 5,627 non-financial co-operatives having over 4.8 million members, a combined volume of business of \$27.8 billion and assets of \$15.1 billion'
- 'The 2004 statistics are based on survey results received from 5,753 non-financial co-operatives representing 5.6 million members, \$27.5 billion in total revenues and \$17.5 billion in assets'

Credit Unions/ Caisses Populaires Differ

- ‘In 1996, they reported total assets of \$104 billion, a raise of 4% compared with 1995. Québec is accounting for over 50% of the total.’
- ‘Credit unions and *caisses populaires* reported assets of \$168.9 billion in 2004, an increase of 8.9 per cent over 2003. Québec accounts for 47.5 per cent.’

Membership Participation Challenge

- Excepting worker co-operatives and farm-marketing co-operatives, co-operative businesses have relatively inactive memberships
- Management-run organizations

2) Co-operative Social Services

- Co-operatives that rely in part upon government programs to get started and for ongoing support
- Housing, healthcare, homecare, childcare, social and solidarity co-operatives
- About half of all co-operatives, but small part of memberships and revenues

Co-operative Social Services cont'd

- Greatest growth was during the heyday of the federal social housing program – 1974 to 1993.
- Since then, less growth
- Between 1996 and 2004, they went from 44 to 49 percent of all co-operatives

Co-op Social Services

Good News/Bad News

- A relatively active membership
- Cutbacks in government programs create uncertainty about future development

‘The Future Is Murder’

- Co-operative model has proven resilient for 165 years
- Major challenges: demutualization, consolidation into large organizations, weak membership participation for some types, ongoing dependence upon government programs for social service co-operatives, limited growth
- I am cautiously hopeful

The End!!!!