

Remembering Ivano Berberini

Ivano Berberini, president of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), passed away on May 6, 2009 after a long illness. He is remembered as a committed advocate for the cooperative movement, peace and disarmament, and international solidarity. He served more than 40 years experience in local, national and international organizations. His cooperative career began in the Italian consumer co-op sector, serving as manager of Coop Modena, and then president of Coop Italia and Co-op Emilia Veneto. In 1996, he was elected president of Legacoop, the cross-sector federation of more than 10,000 cooperatives representing over 5 million members. Mr. Berberini was elected president of the ICA in 2001, a position he held until his passing.

Many of Mr. Berberini's writings are posted on the ICA's website (www.ica.coop). What is clear in these papers is not just his passion for cooperation, but his understanding of our responsibility to take action in the context of a failing global economic system. "The crisis of capitalism," he writes, "is, above all, a moral issue." An antidote, he believed, is a cooperative movement rededicated to its core values and principles while adapting to new challenges.

Mr. Berberini's loss is greatly felt by our movement, his friends, and his family, as shown by the outpouring of appreciation on the ICA's website. It is also clear that he has left a legacy that will continue to inspire and sustain cooperators around the world in their efforts to build a more just, democratic, and sustainable economic system. Mr. Berberini had a sense of purpose that I think will speak to many in the movement: "What must be preserved and constantly renewed," he writes, "is the sense of belonging, that 'creative dissatisfaction' which has motivated entire generations of co-operators to build a better world for everybody."

—Erbin Crowell (erbin@cooperativefund.org)

Quotations from: "Opening Speech for the 8th ICA Asia-Pacific Regional Assembly and 5th Co-operative Forum," Dec. 3, 2008, Hanoi, Vietnam. "For a Modern Image of Co-operation," Ivan Berberini, president, International Co-operative Alliance, July 2006, p. 4.

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