

**THE COOPERATIVE
MOVEMENT
IN CENTURY 21**



|| JOHN CURL ||

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*“There is nothing new under the
sun.”*

INTRODUCTION

In 2002, the UN General Assembly recognized that cooperatives “are becoming a major factor of economic and social development,” and urged governments to promote their growth by “utilizing and developing fully the potential and contribution of cooperatives for the attainment of social development goals, in particular the eradication of poverty, the generation of full and productive employment and the enhancement of social integration; ... creating a supportive and enabling environment for the development of cooperatives by, inter alia, developing an effective partnership between Governments and the cooperative movement.”¹

The people of the world do not care what you call the economic system as long as it works. For the last century, ideologists of both capitalism and state socialism have made extravagant claims and promises about the superiority of their economic ideas, but the proof has been in the pudding. Neither one has been able to bring peace, prosperity, and social equity to the world on a sustainable basis. That overarching goal has not been accomplished by either economic system, because neither has actually geared to bring it about. Social justice requires full employment, while capitalism structures unemployment and marginalization into the very bones of the system. Capitalism privatizes the world, transforms power and property into money, reduces people to labor or marginalized unemployed, disempowers democracy, and crashes periodically with disastrous consequences. State socialism centralizes power in the hands of bureaucrats, planners, and party hacks, disempowers civil society, and rigidifies into a self-perpetuating overly-centralized establishment which inevitably makes monumental social

planning blunders. The economics of the 21st century must be based on intense practicality, not false ideology.

The cooperative movement of the present and near future operates primarily in the spaces that the corporate system cannot and will not fill. Cooperatives can provide a dignified living for the many millions who would otherwise be unemployed or marginalized. Cooperatives build bridges between people in conflict, as they did between East and West after World War II and during the Cold War. Cooperatives played an important role in the formation of the European Union, and are continuing to build bridges today between Palestinians and Israelis, Bosnians and Serbs, and in conflict areas in Indonesia, India and Sri Lanka.² Cooperatives and social enterprises are the world's best hope of achieving peace, prosperity, and social equity in this new century, and it is there that the eyes of the world need to turn.

The movement for worker cooperatives, workplace democracy, and social enterprises is resurgent around the world today. Grassroots social movements have turned to cooperatives in response to the depredations of globalism and the worldwide deep recession, and in hopes to empower people and improve their living conditions. People band together into cooperatives because they need others to share work, expenses, and expertise, and because they prefer working in a democratic situation. Many of the new social enterprises are arising from spontaneous initiatives of grassroots groups, and many are being organized, coordinated, and backed by non-profit development organizations, governments, and communities. Nonprofits have turned to organizing social enterprises to fulfill social equity missions. Communities and governments have turned to them for economic development.

In the US today, 85 percent of jobs (nongovernment and nonfarm) are in the service sector,³ and these are often

best performed by small enterprises. Startups in this sector do not have to begin with expensive, cutting-edge technological equipment. It is here in particular that cooperatives and other social enterprises are able to successfully set up. This sector will continue to be fertile ground for cooperatives for the foreseeable future. In addition, small industrial and artisanal enterprises also do not require expensive technology, and that is another strong sector in which worker cooperatives and social enterprises operate successfully. But as the size of the firm increases, maintaining direct democracy in the workplace becomes increasingly difficult and complex. Large modern firms based on sophisticated technology, expertise, and management do not lend themselves easily to direct democracy, and efficiency of scale often conflicts with democratic processes. However, worker cooperatives have functioned successfully in medium-sized enterprises.

Today's movement is not focused on transforming large corporations into cooperatives, although it does put workplace democracy and social equity squarely on the table. Larger enterprises are the territory of the labor movement, which has been reduced to an extremely weakened state in the US; only when workers force changes in the labor laws will American unions win the space to put workplace democracy in large enterprises on the immediate agenda. I will not deal with the questions of workplace democracy in larger enterprises in this paper.

Cooperatives are both a natural formation of human interaction and a modern social movement. They are probably the most integral and natural form of organization beyond the family. Without simple economic group cooperation and mutual aid, human society would never have developed. On the other hand, the cooperative movement was one of the first social movements of modern times, with

roots at the beginning of the industrial revolution, and was an integral part of the early labor movement.

A dynamic has always existed between cooperatives as a natural social formation and cooperatives as a social movement. The social movement is based on the natural formation, and on the widespread perception that modern society has interfered with and denied the natural work democracy that humans crave. Market capitalism lauds the employee system as the basis of human freedom but, as most employees understand, the system has also almost always been a tool of oppression and bondage. The cooperative movement aims for liberation from oppressive social stratification and alienation.

What makes the new resurgence of the cooperative movement different from what came before? To elucidate that question, we need to take a brief look at some of the history of the movement. Since I know the US movement best, I'll focus on that history. Since this is a world-wide movement, I'll also relate US history to some other developments around the world. There are many approaches to the history of the cooperative movement, and various visions of its goals and mission. Every country has its own equally important history. The saga is not simple.

To begin in a traditional American context, Thomas Jefferson wrote, "Whenever there are in a country uncultivated lands and unemployed poor, it is clear that the laws of property have been so far extended as to violate the natural right. The earth is given as a common stock for man to labor and live on."⁴ That was a key concept of Jeffersonian democracy, and the underlying basis for Abraham Lincoln's Homestead Act, which opened millions of square miles of

land to people who were willing to work it. In today's world, we cannot all be small farmers, but these concepts still apply inalienably to the varieties of work as we know it. These ideas form part of the legal and historical basis for the American government providing a supportive environment and enabling infrastructure for cooperatives.

AN OUTLINE HISTORY OF THE COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT IN THE USA⁵

Worker cooperatives were organized by some of the very first North American labor unions in the early 1800s. The earliest unions came out of guilds, which included both masters and journeymen, and structured the industries. They were basically mutual aid organizations. At the point that masters became bosses, the journeymen broke away and formed separate organizations. These developed into what we know as unions. They, too, specialized in mutual aid. In many of the earliest strikes, the journeymen formed worker cooperatives, sometimes temporarily to support themselves during the strike, and sometimes to continue on a permanent basis. These cooperatives were facilitated by the fact that most industrial production was still done with comparatively simple hand tools.

Worker cooperatives became a modern movement with a broad social mission in the 1830s, in reaction to the injustices of the rising capitalist system and the concomitant impoverishment and disempowerment of the working classes. Worker cooperatives were promoted by the first national labor organization, the National Trades' Union (NTU). In the early 1870s, shortly after the Civil War, the National Labor Union (NLU) renewed the American worker

cooperative movement, and honed its mission. In the early 1880s worker cooperatives found their greatest manifestation in the labor movement in the Knights of Labor (KOL), the largest labor organization in the world at that time, which organized a network of almost 200 industrial cooperatives. This was the era of the domination of the great industrialist "robber barons," enormous social strife, and the KOL cooperative movement was in the thick of it.

Dominated by large merchants, bankers, plantation owners and industrialists from early times, the US government was antagonistic to the cooperative movement on the whole. Control of state and local governments varied by place, and regional powers vied for national power. Democracy for ordinary working people was mostly window dressing. People were treated as just labor input in the economic machine. The capitalist system, the conquering ideology in the Civil War that abolished chattel slavery and replaced it with "freedom," was based on a subtler form of bondage in which people rented themselves to other people for specific time periods. The social mechanism used to compel enough people to rent themselves, was poverty. The endless flood of immigrants to America provided a seemingly inexhaustible bounty of willing victims. The union movement was the revolt of the wage slaves.

In the decades after the Civil War, worker cooperatives had become integral to the overall strategy of the labor movement. At the same time as the Knights of Labor fought for higher wages and better working conditions, they were also attempting to construct a vast chain of cooperatives with the mission of abolishing what they called wage slavery, and replacing the capitalist wage system with workplace

democracy in what they called a Cooperative Commonwealth. This concept arose autochthonously in America, parallel to the growth of the socialist movement during the same period to which it was conceptually interrelated. The Cooperative Commonwealth vision was based on free associative enterprises in a regulated market economy with the government relegated to infrastructural functions and public utilities, such as water systems, roads, railroads, etc. This concept was fundamentally distinct from the state socialist concept of the government running the entire economy with all workers as government employees. The Cooperative Commonwealth vision was Jeffersonian.

During this same period, between 1866 and the 1890s, American small farmers also organized cooperative movements with similar motivations, strategy, and ends. Thanks to Lincoln's Homestead Act, the rural US was at that time populated widely by freeholding farm families, who organized cooperative movements for purchasing supplies and marketing farm products. Their opponents were the railroads, bankers, and middlemen. The main farmer organizations were first the National Grange (NG) and later the Farmers' Alliance (FA). Parallel to the union movement, the farmer cooperatives saw their mission as organizing an alternative economic structure that would supercede the existing one, a vast network of cooperatives that would be the lever of their liberation from economic oppression. Historian Michael Schwartz called the Farmers' Alliance Exchanges "the most ambitious counterinstitutions ever undertaken by an American protest movement."⁶

As the worker and farmer movements developed, the

consumer cooperative movement formed a third stream of the cooperative movement. The early consumer store movement started independently in America at an early period, but was destroyed by price wars with capitalist competitors. Later consumer cooperatives achieved some success after adopting the British Rochdale system of keeping prices at about market rates and giving rebates to member customers. Cooperative stores run by farmer organizations and unions were notably successful. But the other side to the Rochdale approach was that they ran the stores managerially with the workers employees and not necessarily even co-op members. This approach was expanded into an alternative version of a cooperative commonwealth in which giant consumer cooperatives owned all the factories and farms, and in which the wage system was universalized instead of abolished. By this twist, the consumer cooperative movement abandoned what had been a core goal of the worker cooperative movement: workplace democracy and liberating workers from wage slavery.

The Knights of Labor were defeated in 1886-87 in the wake of the national May Day strike for the 8-hour day in 1886, and the ensuing Haymarket riot and nationwide crackdown. The KOL cooperatives were destroyed at that time by the combined forces of the capitalist system and the government. This was the ultimate triumph of industrial capitalism in the US, and the end of the era when industrial workers thought they could defeat the system economically and supercede capitalism through peaceful competition by building an alternative parallel cooperative system. As the KOL waned, the American labor movement continued on a different footing from the European movement. In most of Europe, the socialist movement and workers parties had become an

accepted part of the political landscape, while in America they were excluded from the mainstream. As historian Kim Voss wrote in *The Making of American Exceptionalism*, "American industrial relations and labor politics are exceptional because in 1886 and 1887 employers won the class struggle."⁷

In rural America, the capitalist defeat of the cooperative system was completed a few years later, when the Farmers' Alliance likewise saw their cooperatives destroyed and their organization defeated.

The FA and the KOL played one last card. Forming a "third party" alliance, they went into electoral politics and were instrumental in organizing the Populist Party. They ultimately joined with the Democrats and narrowly missed electing William Jennings Bryan to the presidency in 1896.⁸

After the demise of the KOL, the surviving American Federation of Labor (AFL) dominated the mainstream US labor movement. The AFL abandoned the idea of abolishing the wage system, and instead focused only on negotiating contracts and working conditions. Some unionists in the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and other organizations continued to fight for industrial freedom and workplace democracy, but instead of building cooperatives they looked to take over the existing industries.

In the 20th century, the consumer cooperative movement became the dominant cooperative philosophy in the US, promoted by the Cooperative League (CL), the most important national coordinating and educational organization. For much of the century, CL excluded worker cooperatives and even farmer marketing cooperatives (though farmer supply purchasing cooperatives were acceptable).

The modern cooperative movement developed

in other industrializing countries at the same time as the US movement. Every country had its own variation, related to its level of industrialization.

France was similar to the US in its focus on worker cooperatives, self-help, and solidarity. The movement in Germany focused on banks and credit for farmers, artisans, and small entrepreneurs. In Italy, it was a diverse mix of worker, farmer, banking, and consumer cooperatives, with the Catholic church ultimately organizing a parallel cooperative movement. The movement in Britain started early, around the same time as the US, and in the 1830s involved artisans, farmers, and unions, but that first movement collapsed. When it revived in the 1840s in Rochdale, it found great success as a consumer movement, and carved out a niche for itself through its core compromise of not threatening the market and abandoning workplace democracy. The British success resulted in consumer cooperative philosophy dominating much of the international cooperative movement as well the US movement during the 20th century, while worker cooperatives and workplace democracy became relegated to the realm of impractical dreamers and radical groups.

THE NEW DEAL AND THE COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT

The Great Depression of the 1930s and the New Deal changed the relationship between government and cooperatives in the US for a generation. While the movement had always had isolated supporters among elected officials, the government as a whole was anything but supportive. With the New Deal, the American cooperative movement won support at the highest level of government for the first time. The New Deal

was also a great backer of the labor movement and adhered to strong government regulation of the capitalist system.

Roosevelt's programs provided enormous help to rural and farmer cooperatives. But urban cooperatives were not a significant part of the programs. Above all, industrial worker cooperatives were excluded. The New Deal drew the line at helping cooperatives that challenged the wage system.

One of the New Deal's first acts was to set up a Division of Self-Help Cooperatives (under the Federal Emergency Relief Act), providing technical assistance and grants to self-help cooperatives and barter associations.⁹ The "community projects" program in California included cooperative industries such as a wood mill, a tractor assembly plant, a paint factory, and hosiery mills. However, the law stipulated that production facilities set up with FERA funds could not be used in money transactions, while self-help cooperative groups usually tried to include money in their exchange arrangements whenever possible, as well as producing articles for their own use. This provision seriously undercut many self-help co-ops' ability to function, since everyone needed cash badly. In some situations, FERA cooperators could receive pay, but only to produce articles for their own use.

The Farm Credit Administration (FCA) of 1933 set up Banks for Cooperatives, which had a very significant effect on the farmer cooperative movement. With a central bank and twelve district banks, it became a member-controlled system of financing farmer, telephone, and electric cooperatives. After having been set up with government seed-money, the FCA became self-supporting. The banks were not permitted to give assistance to consumer or industrial cooperatives. Banks for Cooperatives became an in-

dispensable institution for organizing and stabilizing farm cooperatives for the rest of the century.¹⁰ The Farm Security Administration (FSA) of 1935, initially part of the Resettlement Administration, set up to combat rural poverty and helped organize 25,000 cooperatives of all types among about 4 million low-income farmers. The Rural Electrification Administration (REA) of 1935 promoted cooperative electrification in rural areas. Only about 10 percent of rural homes had service at that time but through REA loans, local electrification cooperatives served almost 300,000 households, or 40 percent of rural homes by the end of 1939.

While the New Deal's backing of farm cooperatives was instrumental in the rural recovery from the depression, the exclusion of worker and urban cooperatives helped only to maintain working people in a state of disempowerment and dependent on government relief or work programs.

Even though industrial production facilities were sitting idle around the country, the New Deal never supported the idea of workers taking them over with government backing and restarting them as cooperatives. The celebrated wave of factory seizures by workers, beginning with the Flint sitdown strike against General Motors in 1836-37 in which strikers occupied several plants for forty-four days and repelled attacks from the police and National Guard, had union recognition as its goal, and the Flint sitdown ended in GM's recognition of the United Auto Workers. A wave of sit-downs followed, with over 400,000 workers occupying plants and businesses around the country in 1937. The wave faded as the courts and the National Labor Relations Board held that sit-downs were illegal and that sit-down strikers could be fired. In the following decades, many other powerful tools that

American workers used in the 1930s to unionize were taken away.

From the New Deal's beginning, reactionary forces worked tirelessly to stymie it, and succeeded in dismantling it piece by piece after World War II. Few cooperatives survived the war; those that did were attacked by the dogs of McCarthyism, and most were purged of any connection to a social movement. Government regulations over capital, corporations, and the market were removed thread by thread, while worker organizations were diminished and hamstrung by new laws and regulations. Small farmer cooperatives found a fierce enemy in escalating corporate agribusiness.

In the 1960s and 1970s, a new generation rediscovered cooperation, collectivity, and communalism, creating its own structures and definitions inspired by a new political opposition movement and in turn shaping that movement. In a unique way, the Sixties gave new life to a vision of America that, unknown to most to the new visionaries themselves, closely reflected the older cooperators' dreams. Like their forebears, the new co-ops and collectives struggled between their dual identities as "pure and simple" cooperatives and a radical social movement.

The most important milestone for mainstream cooperatives in that period was the chartering of the National Cooperative Bank under President Carter in 1978 to service all types of nonfarm cooperatives.

Shortly thereafter, the country sunk into decades of a long rightward spin under the suffocating cloak of Reaganism and its false promises of prosperity through deregulated capitalism. The bubble finally burst in 2008 and the economy came crashing down.

URBAN HOMESTEAD MOVEMENT IN NEW YORK CITY¹¹

The most successful contemporary radical cooperative movement in the US is a local movement spanning the last four decades and led by an inspiring grassroots spirit of revolt: the building occupations of the urban homestead limited equity cooperative movement in New York City.

In the mid-1960s, many New York landlords in low-income neighborhoods abandoned their apartment buildings because they did not consider them profitable enough, averaging 38,000 abandoned units a year by the end of the decade. The city foreclosed for non-payment of taxes and serious code violations, and assumed ownership as "landlord of last resort." In 1969, a group of neighbors on East 102nd Street in Manhattan, mainly Puerto Rican families, took over two buildings by direct action and started rehabilitating them through sweat equity as cooperatives. That touched off a direct action tenant movement in other neighborhoods. In 1970, groups of squatters took over vacant buildings on West 15th, 111th, 122nd streets, and along Columbus Avenue around 87th Street, proclaiming the community's right to possession of a place to live. The city reacted by evicting most of the squatters, but public outcry resulted in management control of some of the buildings being granted to community organizations for rehabilitation by the tenants themselves. Several cooperative development nonprofits were formed, including the Urban Homestead Assistance Board (UHAB), which became the most effective organization. In 1973, 286 buildings were slated for urban homesteading, but funding obstacles undercut their efforts. Forty-eight of these buildings were actually completed as homesteaded low-

income limited-equity co-ops.

In the 1980s, New York tenant groups led many squats, taking over abandoned buildings illegally at first and rehabilitating them. By 1981, the city had become the owner by foreclosure of about 8,000 buildings with around 112,000 apartments, 34,000 of the units still occupied. At the urging of housing activist groups, particularly UHAB, the city instituted urban homesteading programs to legally sell the buildings to their squatting tenants for sweat equity and a token payment, with a neighborhood organization or a non-profit development organization often becoming manager during rehabilitation. By 1984, 115 buildings had been bought as limited-equity tenant co-ops under the Tenant Interim Lease Program, with another 92 in process. UHAB provided technical assistance, management training and all-around support. Autonomous groups of squatters continued to take over buildings, with an estimated 500 to 1,000 squatters in 32 buildings on the Lower East Side alone in the 1990s. Hundreds of Latino factory workers and their families squatted in the South Bronx. The city's response changed with the political winds. Some city administrations curtailed the homestead program and evicted many of the squats, but some squatter groups successfully resisted eviction. In the '90s, the city renewed its support of tenant homesteading, and by 2002 over 27,000 New York families were living in homesteaded low-income co-ops. Over the last 30 years, UHAB has worked to successfully transform over 1,300 buildings into limited equity co-ops, and 42 more buildings are currently in their pipeline containing 1,264 units, most of them in Harlem and the Lower East Side.

The urban homestead movement is based in law on

the concepts of squatters' rights and homesteading. Homesteading is by permission, usually on government-owned land or land with no legal owner. The homesteader—like the squatter—gains title to the land in exchange for the sweat equity of working it for a certain time period, usually ten years. In many cases, people who start as squatters become homesteaders. Squatters' rights and homesteading have been part of US and English common law since very early times, and are deeply embedded in American history. With squatting—legally called adverse possession—the squatter takes possession of the land or building without permission of occupancy from the legal owner. Squatters use adverse possession to claim a legal right to land or buildings. The idea is that a person who openly occupies and improves a property for a set amount of time is entitled to ownership, even though that property may have originally not belonged to them. For the first thirty days of occupation, squatters are legally trespassers liable to eviction without cause. During this time, squatters are usually discrete about their presence, but open enough to be able to document their occupation. After thirty days, they gain squatters' rights—or tenants' rights—and in New York thereafter can only be evicted by a court order. At that time, the squatters often openly begin to undertake major renovations or improvements.

The basic concept has been used beyond housing elsewhere in the Americas. The core idea of the Mexican Revolution (1910-17) was "land for those who work it," and that concept was enshrined in the Mexican Constitution as the ejido system of communal property. The Brazilian Constitution (1988) says that land that remains unproductive should be used for a "larger social function."¹²

Brazil's Landless Workers Movement (MST) used that constitutional right as the legal basis for based numerous land occupations. The largest social movement in Latin America today with an estimated 1.5 million members, MST has peacefully occupied unused land since 1985, won land titles for more than 350,000 families in 2,000 settlements, and established about 400 cooperative associations for agricultural production, marketing, services, and credit, as well as constructing houses, schools, and clinics.

RECENT FACTORY OCCUPATIONS

The same core concept has been applied to production and business facilities by the recovered factory movement in Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Mexico, and Venezuela. Most of these started as occupations of shut-down or bankrupted factories and businesses by their workers and communities, and reopened as worker cooperatives. Many of them have received government recognition and support, particularly in Argentina and Venezuela. In Argentina, there are about 200 worker-run cooperative factories and businesses today, most of which started as plant occupations during the economic crisis of 2001-2002.

The recent wave of factory occupations was next taken up in Ontario in 2007, when Canadian workers occupied three plants that were shutting down, and forced the owners to honor their severance agreements, but there was no plan to reopen these factories as cooperatives. The spirit arrived in the US in December 2008 in Chicago, when over 200 workers, members of United Electrical Workers (UE), staged a factory occupation at the shut-down Republic Window and Doors plant, demanding their vacation and severance

pay, or that the factory continue its operations.¹³ They were given only three days notice of the shut-down, not the sixty days required under federal and state law, and the management refused to negotiate with the workers' union about the closure. After six days of occupation, Bank of America and other lenders to Republic agreed to pay the workers the approximately \$2 million owed to them. Meanwhile, the workers explored ways to restart the factory, including the possibility of a worker cooperative, and set up a "Windows of Opportunity Fund" to provide technical assistance and study this and other possibilities for re-starting production. But a union representative explained that "the fact that no real movement of worker-run enterprises exists in the US makes this option much more difficult at this point."

Instead of reopening as a worker cooperative, a firm specializing in "green" energy efficient windows bought Republic Windows in February 2009, and a union spokesman said that the new owner will offer jobs to all laid-off workers at the reopened plant. Nonetheless, that the UE union at Republic seriously considered a worker cooperative is an excellent sign. Historically, many unions have feared their position would be weakened by worker cooperatives because they blur the line between workers and management. The labor movement, at least on the international level, has moved beyond that stasis today. The International Labour Organization (ILO), affiliated with the UN, strongly supports worker cooperatives today as a strategy to achieve full employment, and is working closely with the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), which represents the international cooperative movement. While the new cooperative movement is currently still embryonic in the US, it has the potential of becom-

ing that “real movement” whose lack the worker at Republic Windows bemoaned.

Today, production and business facilities sit idle all over the US, while the sector of unemployed swells. The government has mortgaged our grandchildren’s future to bail out the banking system with little in return, for the most part to those same banks which own title to the idle production facilities. It would seem perhaps a small step for the US government to become “landlord of last resort” like the City of New York, and open tens of thousands of shuttered business, idle factories, and closed plants to worker cooperatives in exchange for sweat equity. That is a great stimulus plan that the economy sorely needs.

CONCLUSION

Today’s cooperative movement has centuries of history behind it. At the same time, it is also a new movement of a new generation. Like every social equity movement, the cooperative movement rises and subsides, and its deeper goals cannot be permanently achieved because society is always changing: all social goals must be constantly renewed, and all social movements must go through cycles of renewal.

Today’s movement differs in several aspects from the cooperative movement as it was not long ago:

it has returned to its mission of democratizing the workplace;

- it encompasses experimental structures of social enterprises;
- it is included by diverse nonprofits as part of their mission strategy;
- it has increased its worldwide character, with the

international movement having stronger influence over national movements;

- it is re forging a close alliance with the labor movement;
- it has returned to direct action activism with housing, land, business, and factory occupations;
- it is achieving the backing of government in creating a supportive and enabling environment for the development of cooperatives;
- it is part of an international strategy, coordinated by the UN, to reorganize the world economy with the cooperative sector a permanent part, helping to provide full employment for the unemployed and marginalized people of the world.

NOTES

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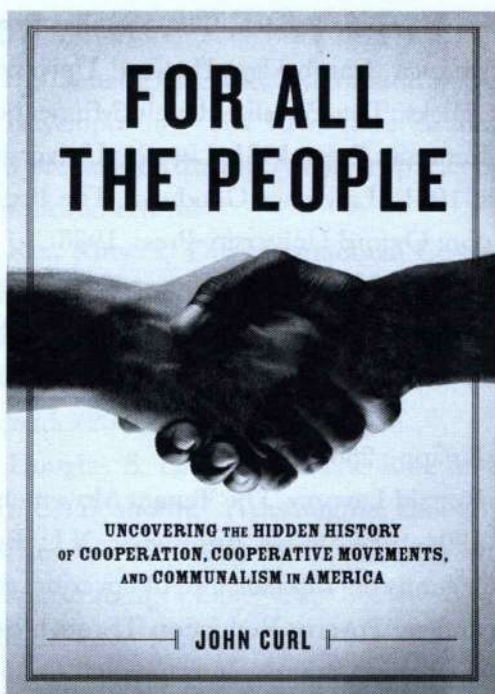
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It is the cooperation of working people that has brought the best of the United States to life. Cooperatives have played a vital role throughout the American saga, starting in its formative years. A staggering 120 million Americans belong to cooperatives today -- yet the existence of such a movement, and its dramatic and stirring story, remain all but ignored by most historians.

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