

CICOPA SECRETARY GENERAL: USFWC HAS MADE “IMPRESSIVE ACHIEVEMENTS IN A SHORT TIME”

Bruno Roelants sends his congratulations

All worker cooperative organizations, from the first case recorded in history (the French worker cooperative organization, established in 1884), have started in a humble fashion, with scarce resources. The USFWC was no exception when it was established 10 years ago. In addition, considering the enormous size and population of the US, the challenge was particularly great, and the structure of the organization was not at all obvious to design, let alone to implement. Looking back, and considering these daunting challenges, the USFWC has attained impressive achievements in such a short time.

First, it has established itself as the legitimate representative body for US worker cooperatives, in the eyes of the worker-members, of the wider US cooperative movement, of government and other US actors, and of the international cooperative movement: the USFWC is now a fundamental member of CICOPA and of CICOPA-Americas, where its president, Rebecca Kemble, also president of CICOPA-North America, represents the US movement.

At the same time, since its establishment, the USFWC has understood that it also needed to foster the development of cooperatives, not just represent them. And this is where the establishment of the Democracy at Work Institute and the Democracy at Work Network has provided the tools to both do education and research and provide a concrete development service to the grassroots co-ops. These two basic functions, representation and development-plus-networking, are usually those which are gradually developed by the cooperative systems at national and/or sub-national (state, province...) level. The merit of USFWC is to have laid solid bases on both fronts in only 10 years and across the US. Sincerely, when I met the founders on several occasions in the years just before the establishment of the federation, I did not expect that things would go so quickly.

Now, I really look forward to see the USFWC and the US worker cooperative movement in 10 years! Congratulations to all of you!

Bruno Roelants
CICOPA secretary general