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February 1992

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Sharon Lord Gaber

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

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Lord Gaber, Sharon, "Review of "Co-operatives and Community Development: Economics in Social Perspective" by Brett Fairbairn, June Bold, Murray Fulton, Lou Hammond Ketilson, and Daniel Ish" (1992). *Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*. 57.
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Co-operatives and Community Development: Economics in Social Perspective. Brett Fairbairn, June Bold, Murray Fulton, Lou Hammond Ketilson, and Daniel Ish. Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, University of Saskatchewan, 1991. x + 141 pp. Figures, tables, notes and bibliography. (ISBN 088880-249-8).

For residents of rural towns throughout the United States and Canada, particularly in the Great Plains region, the issues of economic survival and community sustainability are paramount. Brett Fairbairn and colleagues book about cooperatives reintroduces an old strategy for community development. Their concept is that cooperatives are an “alternative kind of

development”—well-suited to the needs of rural communities. The book is derived from the authors’ concern for community development in Saskatchewan.

The book is divided into six chapters. Although not identified as such, the first three chapters serve to convince the reader that cooperatives are a good and viable mechanism for community development. These chapters seem to make up the meat of the book. Chapters 4 and 5 identify methods used in cooperatives, and Chapter 6 serves as a synthesis and reinforcement. In addition, a prologue and epilogue of hypothetical community scenarios illuminating the problems without, and the benefits with, cooperatives provide illustrative examples.

In the chapters that are structured to teach the reader about the value of cooperatives, the nature of “the problem” is introduced in Chapter 1. This chapter explains that the crisis in rural communities results from global economic restructuring. Cooperatives, as a type of community development, are suggested as a “community-based” response to the changed local economy. “Community development involves the process of education and empowerment by which local people take control and responsibility for what used to be done to them.”

Chapter 2 further elaborates the social and economic importance of a cooperative to community economics and vitality. A cooperative recirculates its surplus within the community, providing not only economic benefits but also social benefits. It is also able to maintain and obtain goods and services for the community that a pure market economy might not provide. Local control and the social importance of cooperatives are also identified as assets.

Chapter 3 introduces the simplistic “rusty bucket” model of community economic development as a way of explaining the reasons why some communities have not been recirculating wealth within their locale. According to this model there are economic inflows to the community and there are leakages, or lost opportunities, escaping the economic activity of the community. This chapter goes on to describe individualistic and collective approaches to community development. As might be guessed, the collective approach is considered preferable and is identified as a possible way of reducing leakages from the community.

Chapters 4 and 5 introduce two methods to help communities more effectively operate a cooperative. Chapter 4 acknowledges that the cooperative's democratic values includes a greater number of community stakeholders' interests and indicates that cooperative management should reflect these interests. Chapter 5 suggests a social audit as a method for a cooperative to better understand "areas of social concern" related to their enterprise and their community. Unlike other chapters, this section actually provides an elucidation of how this social audit might be conducted. Six types of social audits, a 14 step plan for undertaking social action, and six categories for social objectives are identified. For any group, or town, seeking to develop a cooperative these would prove helpful.

The final chapter serves to reinforce what has already been discussed and remind the reader that "[A] co-operative that takes pains to insure that its own development benefits its host community in all possible ways will find the benefits returning in further strength and growth." In all, the book is spirited and enthusiastic about their concept, but severely lacking in specific contemporary evidence as to how cooperatives have been successful in rural community development. Individuals, groups and/or towns interested in learning about the concept of cooperatives would do well in reading this book. **Sharon Lord Gaber**, *Department of Community and Regional Planning, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*.