

IN SEARCH OF A CO-OP THINK TANK

10 Years of the Consumers' Co-operative Institute, Japan 1989-1999

The Consumers* Co-operative Institute, Japan

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Professor Emeritus Tsutomu OUCHI, Chairman, CCIJ Board

Looking back over these 10 years of the CCIJ, I deeply feel that we have experienced drastic changes in Japan's social and economic situation and in the consumer co-operative movement. When the CCIJ was established, Japan was widely seen as the number one economic power, flourishing in a bubble economy. Consumer co-operatives continued to grow in contrast to the declining position of their counterparts in Europe and North America.

In recent years, however, Japan' economy has been seriously setback and the pessimistic view that the economy will further deteriorate has spread. Among these setbacks, the most worrying is a number of scandals including profiteering and mismanagement in the co-operative movement that has largely damaging the trust and reliability of co-ops among its members and the society at large. If co-operatives can not take corrective actions based on their original ideal, their slogan of

co-operation toward the 21st century will end up being empty words.

Under such circumstances our institute has also taken a thorny path in this decade. Although having started out with relatively ample funds for developing various large-scale projects, the financial condition of the institute is now sagging because of the long-standing recession and the unprecedented low interest rate. This has forced us to focus only on priority projects and we now must ask researchers and participants at events for contributions. I believe, however, that the quality of our research has not been lowered, but I am afraid that the institute cannot meet the expectations of its corporate and individual members.

In view of this situation, CCIJ is now trying to achieve its mission by grasping the changes in consumers' lifestyles and needs. In order to be able to make suggestions to co-ops on how to handle these changes, CCIJ is conducting various in-depth studies on how to improve management and governance for better services to members, how to create a work environment where workers can be fulfilled and provide the best service, and how to promote members' participation in decision etc. We are determined to conduct more effective studies to help co-operatives overcome the current difficulties. I would like to invite our members to share their opinions so that the institute can provide adequate advice and together we can make further advancement in co-operative studies.

Greeting from Mr. Shigenori TAKEMOTO, JCCU President

On behalf of the Japanese Consumers Co-operative Union (JCCU), I would like to express my heartfelt congratulations to the CCIJ on its 10th anniversary.

This institute was established in accordance with the decision of JCCU's 4th Mid-term Plan in 1987. JCCU's aim was to create its own think tank in order to clarify the direction of consumer co-operatives which were facing a drastically changing social and economic situation, and to study socio-economic problems that affect a wide range of citizens.

In the process of establishing the CCIJ, Professor Tadashi FUKUTAKE, the main founder of the CCIJ suddenly died. We were grateful for the strenuous efforts of Chairman OUCHI, the Board, Council members, and many researchers and staff who carried us through this misfortune.

During this decade, the CCIJ has conducted studies based on two pillars: the management/organizations of consumer co-operatives and the quality of life of consumers. The findings of these studies have been published in the Journal of the CCIJ and in a series of reports disseminated at national conferences, symposiums and seminars.

Recently I think it is very important that the CCIJ has made various suggestions on the issues of corporate governance in consumer co-operatives. I highly appreciate the role of the CCIJ in suggesting directions for consumer co-operatives by linking theory with practice.

In finding a message from Mr. Shiro ASANO, Governor of Miyagi Prefecture, who had contributed to the foundation of this institute as the Chief Official in charge of consumer co-operatives at the Welfare Ministry, I also feel the passage of 10 years.

In concluding, I hope that the CCIJ will continue to be a guidepost for consumer co-operatives toward the 21st century.

10 Years of the CCIJ

1989: Incorporating the CCIJ as a Foundation

The CCIJ was created as a successor to the Living Problems Institute (LPI), founded by the university co-operatives in 1968. The LPI had published a series on co-operative theory and created the Consumer Life Institute, which was authorized by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government in 1974. The consumer co-operatives faced a variety of problems during the rapid economic expansion of the 1970s and 1980s. To cope with this situation, there was growing expectation to organize joint interdisciplinary research and create a new institute with wider areas of studies.

In 1984, the JCCU's 3rd Mid-term Plan proposed to establish a new institute and the 4th Mid-term Plan in 1987 prompted its establishment. The basic plan of the CCIJ was decided by JCCU's Board in November 1987, while the originators council was formed in July, 1988.

In the meanwhile, Professor Tadashi FUKUTAKE, the main founder of CCIJ, suddenly passed away. Professor Emeritus Tsutomu OUCHI succeeded him in preparations for the institute. Thus the CCIJ was established as a private organization in October 1989 and was then approved as a foundation by the Ministry of Health and Welfare in November of that year.

In the beginning, there were 124 corporate members, while the individual members amounted to 705 including researchers and co-op staff.

1990: Establishing a Think Tank for Consumer Co-operatives Nationwide

The CCIJ started its actual work in 1990. Study Groups were organized by researchers to pursue specific themes for the span of 1 to 3 years. In 1990, three study groups were started: Environmental Problems, the Co-operative System, and Consumers' Livelihood.

An international symposium on "Basic Co-operative Values" was held in November 1990, in Tokyo, in collaboration with JCCU. Mr. S. A. B**K from Sweden who had drafted the major policy document for the ICA Tokyo Congress in 1992 was invited as the keynote speaker.

The statistical survey division of the CCIJ published a report on "Members' Behavior" as commissioned by JCCU, and a report on Campus Co-ops' Insurance Business as commissioned by the National Federation of University Co-operative Associations (NFUCA).

The CCIJ was also commissioned by the Social Welfare and Medicine Corporation to conduct research on "welfare activities of consumer co-operatives" and "training courses for the home care coordinators in consumers co-operatives".

The central theme of the monthly CCIJ Journal for this year was "Waste and Ecology".

In order to promote co-operative study among researchers and practitioners, a research grant scheme was started to give subsidies to selected proposals and this was continued until 1998.

The CCIJ accepted the post of secretariat of the Robert Owen Association, which aimed at promoting the study of co-operative philosophies and practices, while maintaining its unique existence in the world.

To commemorate the late Professor FUKUTAKE, a biannual award in his honor was created for outstanding works in the field of sociology, social welfare and social activities.

The CCIJ managed the finances of the Asian Consumer Co-operative Fund which was created by the JCCU to assist Asian co-ops.

1991: Organizing the First National Research Conference

Mr. Yoshihiro OKAMOTO assumed the position of full-time Director of the CCIJ, while a position for a chief researcher was created. Thus, a system for substantial research and survey activities was begun.

Study Groups on "Consumer Co-operatives' Business and Organization", "Consumer Issues and Rights", and " Environmental Issues" were organized. An International Co-operation Study Group was also established.

The first CCIJ's National Research Conference was held. The theme of the conference was "Business Co-operation Among Consumer Co-operatives". A national symposium on "Basic Co-operative Values" was held in August in Tokyo in collaboration with the JCCU. In this year, a symposium on food safety was also held to examine the effects of agrochemical residues in food.

The CCIJ also conducted several surveys commissioned by the JCCU, the NFUCA and the National Insurance Co-operative Federation for Workers and Consumers (Zenrosai). In addition, the CCIJ collaborated with Kyoto Life and Co-operation Institute, and Sapporo Culture and Life Institute to conduct field research as sponsored by these local consumer co-operatives.

The central theme of the monthly Journal of the CCIJ was "What is an affluent life in terms of the Japanese way of life?" In this year, the CCIJ started publishing "CCIJ Reports", which were booklets dealing with specific themes.

The financial position of the CCIJ was good this year because of higher bank interest rates, which made it possible to increase the number of staff.

1992: Hosting the International Co-operative Research Forum

The ICA 30th Congress was held in Tokyo on October 27 to 30. This Congress had historical meaning because it was the first ICA Congress ever held in Asia. The theme of the conference was basic co-operative values. Preceding the ICA Congress, an International Co-operative Research Forum was held on October 23-25, to discuss "What are viable co-operative models and their contributions toward the future?" The

Preparatory Committee, consisting of the CCIJ and other co-operative institutes, hosted the forum and published its proceedings. In commemoration of these events, the Robert Owen Association published a book titled "Robert Owen and the World of Co-operation" with the CCIJ's support for editing and fundraising.

The CCIJ started new Study Groups on: Food Safety, Local Welfare Services and Large-scale Retail

Store Law and Town planning.

The second National Research Conference was held under the title of "The Future of Consumer Co-operatives". The CCIJ organized a seminar on the financial policy of consumer co-operatives. It also cosponsored local symposia in Sapporo, Kyoto and Fukuoka.

The CCIJ cosponsored symposia on overseas issues such as Welfare and Medical Service in Sweden and the Co-operative Movement in Hungary.

Surveys commissioned by Co-op Hiroshima and Saitama Co-op were conducted. Also, a collaborative survey on "Information Activity among the Population" commissioned by Tokyo Metropolitan Government was undertaken.

The central theme of the monthly Journal of the CCIJ was "Thinking About What Consumer Co-operatives Should Be". The CCIJ took over the former JCCU quarterly publication on food safety titled "NETWORK". The book titled "New Era of Co-operatives" was published in this year.

An exchange meeting among consumer co-operative research institutes was started to create a nationwide research network.

1993: Formulating the First Mid-term Plan

After six months of discussion, the CCIJ Board, in March 1993, decided its Mid-term Plan for 1993-1995 which stressed the study of co-operative's roles in promoting social justice and how they can be effective in overcoming the dichotomy which separates member organization and business operations. It also aimed for the CCIJ to become the center of information on consumer problems and consumer co-operatives.

A Study Group on "Consumers Co-operative Organizations and Business" organized two Working Groups on Basic Theory and Management Theory. New Study Groups were also organized on "Retail Business in Town planning" and "Labor Problems in Consumer Co-operatives."

The third National Research Conference was held under the theme "Co-operative Management at a Turning Point". A symposium on Food Safety was held in Tokyo while a series of symposia on Consumers Rights were organized. Training courses for home care coordinators were held in Tokyo and Osaka. Basic theory courses were organized around six lectures each on Japan's economy, Japan's society and management theory.

The Research Group of Co-operative Financing was started by a group of researchers and practitioners of co-operative financial institutions such as labor banks, agricultural co-operatives and credit banks. The CCIJ provided the secretarial services.

This year's central theme of the monthly Journal of the CCIJ was "How to put basic values into practice". The CCIJ also collaborated with the JCCU in translating and publishing S. A. B**K's book named "Co-operative Values in a Changing World". It also published a book titled "Thinking of what consumer co-operatives should be".

1994: Fifth Anniversary and Communicating with Overseas Research Institutes

To commemorate its 5th Anniversary, the CCIJ organized a symposium and reception party while cosponsoring many local conferences. It also published a leaflet titled, "Five Years of the CCIJ in Search of Co-operation and Networking of Knowledge". The publication of CCIJ News in English was started on a quarterly basis to improve communication with overseas co-operative institutes and universities.

The Basic Theory Working Group and Management Working Group continued their studies while the Study Group on Labor Problems in Consumer Co-operatives conducted opinion surveys by sending questionnaires to both management staff and trade union officers, and published a report. Other Study Groups conducted a study on Changing Family Life, Children's Eating Habits, Consumers Organizations, Foodstuff and Agriculture, Deregulation and Taxation, Rice Problems etc.

The fourth National Research Conference was held under the theme "Work Styles and the Roles of Co-operative Employees in a New Era". A symposium was held to commemorate the 5th Anniversary of the CCIJ.

The CCIJ cosponsored the Symposium on the Distribution System and Consumer Co-operatives in Europe by Prof. Leigh SPARKS of Stirling University.

The surveys conducted by CCIJ included one on members' consciousness as commissioned by the JCCU and Zenrosai, one on resource and energy saving activities commissioned by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, and one on green life as commissioned by the agricultural co-operative institute.

The central theme of the monthly CCIJ Journal this year was "Thinking of Work in Consumer Co-operatives". The CCIJ also published four books titled "Theory of Consumers Co-operative Law", "How to deal with Ecological Problem?", "How to put Basic Values into Practice?" and "Work Styles and Roles of Co-operative Employees".

1995: Summing up the Research Findings

The CCIJ focused on summing up their research findings, strengthening their international activities and upgrading their library/archives.

Some Study Groups reorganized their research projects. The Study Group on Consumers Co-operative Organization and Business summed up their findings of three years, while the Study Group on Labor Problems in Consumer Co-operatives was transformed to deal with employee's quality of work. The Study Group on Consumer Rights published a report on the response of consumer organizations and co-operatives to consumer issues.

The fifth National Research Conference was held under the theme "Co-operative Management at a Turning Point". A Symposium on Social Economy was held, while a Conference on Co-ops and Politics was organized in Sapporo to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Co-op Sapporo. A

Symposium focusing on the Dietary Life of Children was also held.

Training courses for home care coordinators were organized while the CCIJ received subsidies to conduct a pilot project for creating networks for home care activities.

This year the emphasis was placed on how to strengthen international activities. An open forum was organized on the topics: the revision of the ICA Principles, co-operatives in North America, Europe and Asia, and social economy. The English version of Five Years of the CCIJ was published. The CCIJ conducted six surveys on various topics, including "Sanchoku" or the direct transaction between consumers and food producers, as commissioned by the JCCU.

The CCIJ Report became a quarterly publication and a Report on the Survey of Consumer Organizations was published.

1996: The Second Mid-term Plan

The CCIJ's Board decided the second Mid-term Plan for 1996-2000. According to this plan, research at the institute was reorganized.

The Study Group on Management Strategy was created to promote management reform, aiming to study methods of reconciliation between individuals and organizations. The findings were shown in the sixth National Research Conference which was held under the theme "Human-oriented Management". The Study Group on Co-operative Economy discussed the participatory system, while the Study Groups on Retail Business in Town Planning conducted a questionnaire survey on the shopping arcade in Fukui City where the symposium was held. The International Co-operation Study Group took up various issues ranging from fair trade to Spanish consumer co-operatives.

In the field of international exchange, several symposia were organized. Among these, Mr. I. BARBERINI from the Italian Lega Co-op gave a lecture on the European consumer co-operative movement. Professor V. PESTOFF of Stockholm University presented a lecture on the roles of NPOs and co-operatives in a mixed welfare system while Professor S. WORTHINGTON of Staffordshire University reported on the outstanding financial services of the Co-operative Bank in the UK.

The 1st Co-operative Welfare Forum was held by the CCIJ, the National Federation of Agricultural Co-ops and the Japanese Council of Social Welfare. The CCIJ cosponsored the local symposium on the Co-op's Regional Strategy to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of Kyoritsusha Co-op.

The CCIJ conducted surveys on the current status of the consumer participatory distribution system as commissioned by the Tokyo Metropolitan government.

The books titled "Creating Enjoyable Dietary Life for Children", "Co-operative Management at a Turning Point" and "Learning from the Success and Failure of Consumer Co-operatives in Europe and North America" were published.

1997: Investigating Governance and Management

The CCIJ organized a project team on Management of Consumer Co-operatives to suggest policies for their innovation. This project team was renamed the Corporate Governance Research Unit which helped organize a National Research Conference.

The International Co-operation Study Group organized open forums on such topics as corporate governance and co-operatives in Asia. Moreover, a special international seminar on corporate governance in co-operatives was held, inviting Professor Roger SPEAR of the Open University in the UK.

The Study Group on Co-operative Economy conducted an overseas survey using the financial support of the Toyota Foundation. The Study Group on Employees' Quality of Work conducted a comparative study of Miyagi Co-op, Chiba Co-op and Summit Store Ltd. The Research Team on Fresh Food in Co-ops made inquiries on the handling of produce and published the recommendation for improved handling.

The seventh National Research Conference was held under the theme "Corporate Governance and Management in Consumer Co-operatives" with more than 240 participants.

The CCIJ conducted a nationwide membership survey, commissioned by the JCCU, whereby 4,304 answers were collected out of 6,000 questionnaires.

The CCIJ continued to publish the monthly Journal of the CCIJ, the quarterly CCIJ Report and the NETWORK. It published a book "Theory and Practice of Non-profit and Co-operative Sector".

In May, the composition of the Board was reorganized to include younger board members and add specialties in the areas of management, marketing and corporate analysis, which had not been sufficiently covered before. Mr. OKAMOTO retired as the Director of the CCIJ and was replaced by Mr. Takeyoshi FUJIOKA.

1998: Reorganization of the Study Groups and the Move to the New Office

During this year, four Study Groups concluded their work by publishing reports or recommendations. On the other hand, three new Study Groups were formed on the Quality of Life, Corporate Governance and Business Innovation through Members Participation.

In the field of international exchange, the International Co-operation Study Group organized open forums inviting foreign speakers. Lectures included: "On the Future of the Co-operative Business", by Professor Johnston BIRCHALL of Brunel University, "On Co-operative Governance in Germany", by professor Hans M*NKNER of Marburg University and "On Community Co-operatives in the UK", by Mr. Charles CATTEL of the ICOM. The social balance sheets of the Italian co-ops was also another topic of interest.

An International Conference on "The Role of Non-profit and Co-operative Organizations in the Post Welfare States" was held in Tokyo with participation from seven European researchers.

The eighth National Research Conference was held under the theme "Making Good Work for Good Business with Members Participation". An analysis based on three case studies were presented.

With subsidies from the Social Welfare and Medicine Corporation the CCIJ planned and implemented two model projects on "The Feasibility of Using Co-operative Shops for Community Day Services" and "Networking of Medical and Social Services Provided by Consumer Co-operatives".

The CCIJ was commissioned several surveys by the JCCU, Zenrosai, primary co-ops and the Economic Planning Agency (Government).

The monthly Journal carried special issues each month. The publication of the quarterly review named "NETWORK" was discontinued. Preparation was made to create the CCIJ web site.

In November the CCIJ's office moved to Plaza F which is co-owned by the Housewives' Association and the JCCU and located in the center of Tokyo.

1999: Tenth Anniversary and Toward the New Millennium

The CCIJ celebrated its tenth anniversary this year, organizing some projects and events including: an Anniversary Symposium and reception party, the publishing of a "Researchers Directory," and Tenth Anniversary Booklets in both Japanese and English, and the establishment of the CCIJ Award.

A new Study Groups started on the Changing Socio-economic System and the Roles of Consumer Co-operatives. Voluntary research groups were also organized on the verification system of direct producer/consumer transactions and dietary life.

The ninth National Research Conference was held under the theme "The Drastic Change in Dietary Life and the Tasks of Co-operative Business". The emphasis was placed on the rapidly changing patterns of diets of young people. A special report based on group interviews conducted by the Study Groups on the Quality of Life attracted both the attention of participants and the media alike.

The CCIJ held the tenth Anniversary Symposium and reception party in November in Yokohama City where Chairman OUCHI gave a special lecture on the "Third Way and the Co-operative Community." In addition the CCIJ also cosponsored 11 local symposia in collaboration with the primary and secondary consumer co-ops throughout Japan.

A web site was set up to provide information updated on a monthly basis. An electronic database is being created in the library/archives to provide easier access to information. A book titled "Non-profit and Co-operative Sector in the Welfare Society" was published.

Entering the new Millennium, the CCIJ is expected to: grow as a think tank, contribute to solving the current and structural problems facing consumer co-operatives nationwide, through investigating the change in consumers' lifestyle, the organization and business of consumer co-operatives and co-operative's roles in society at large. It plans to formulate a new Mid-term Plan for 2001-2005.

Greetings from Overseas

Counteract to Crisis to Build a New Cycle of Life

Mr. Ivano BARBERINI, President of Legacoop, Italy

The strengthening of the deep sense of friendship between us, represents the most intense memory of my visit to your country.

There is a strong link between us which lies upon the common objective to search for new ways to give future development to the co-operative movement.

My participation in the 1997 Conference was a great experience, and an important occasion of learning. I particularly appreciated the attention you put on the ever-increasing necessity to promote knowledge.

According to the guidelines approved on the occasion of our recent Congress, our present task aims to "rethink co-operation so that it can grow in a free market and in a good society".

Today we look at the future with more strength and confidence. We have learned from our history, made of successes, as well as of defeats, that the main task is to be able to counteract crisis and draw from them the right energy to build a new cycle of life.

Its Own Models of Consumer Co-operation

Prof. Ian MACPHERSON, Victoria University, Canada

It is with great pleasure that I extend warmest greetings to the meetings marking the tenth anniversary of the Consumers' Co-operative Institute. Consumer co-operators around the world are faced by great challenges as they try to build a consumer society based upon intelligent consumption.

During the last ten years, through the development of its own models of consumer co-operation, its diligent search for appropriate values, its discussions with co-operators around the world, and its concern for best practices, the Japanese consumer movement has made a vitally-important contribution to the international movement. May the next ten years be as fruitful!

Greetings from Germany on the occasion of CCIJ's 10th Anniversary

Prof. Hans-H. M*NKNER, Marburg University, Germany

Long gone are the times when Japanese co-operators traveled to Europe and in particular to Germany, to study the newest trends of co-operative development. Especially with regard to consumer co-operatives, there is nothing much left to discover in Germany for the Japanese visitor, except for learning from mistakes. Today, it is more rewarding for the German co-operator to study new developments of co-operatives in Japan and this is what I have done during the past several years. I am using this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to my Japanese colleagues, who have given me the chance to see and discuss what co-operatives are doing in Japan.

In the course of my studies during the last several years I often looked into two publications: The Comprehensive Analysis of Consumer Co-operatives in Japan, edited by Hidekazu NOMURA and Isao TAKAMURA's "Principles of Co-operative Management". These two books offer a vivid picture of Japanese co-operatives in action, trying to cope with changing socio-economic conditions, to assume new roles and to satisfy new needs of their members, e.g. by offering food articles and other consumer goods that meet strict quality standards that are both healthy for the body and for the environment, and by providing preventive health care and other health services at affordable rates to their members. For a German wine drinker who simply believes in the purity of wine produced by German wine growers co-operatives, it was a surprise to learn that no German wine would be placed on the shelves of a Japanese Consumer co-operative without having been tested and found to be free of any chemical additives.

Some Japanese methods applied for enhancing active member participation in decision making and control of their co-operatives and for improving consumer education as well as the use of co-operatives as pressure groups for presenting complaints and requests to local government (for instance concerning control of tap-water quality), were new to me. I was also impressed by the attempt of Coop Kanagawa to set an example of environment conscious management by introducing delivery vans with hybrid (Electro-diesel) engines, to reduce pollution in the city of Yokohama.

There is another aspect to mention when talking about experience gained by a co-operator traveling to Japan. In Germany, links between co-operatives and universities have existed for more than 70 years and we are proud of our 9 co-operative research institutes representing what we call "Co-operative Science". Many people in Europe believe that this is a typical German feature. Visits to Japan reveal that similar institutes exist, but with some important differences. While in Germany there is a clear division of tasks: University professors deal with research, publications and academic teaching using their university institutes funded by the contributions of co-operatives, in Japan large co-operatives have established their own research institutes while co-operatives are organized among students at universities, which does not prevent some professors from offering courses in co-operative studies. To me, the Japanese way has the advantage of taking co-operative activities and experience directly to the students, rather than teaching co-operative subjects in academic courses.

As a regular reader of JCCU's "Co-operative Japan Information" and during my last visits to Japan I learned that there are serious problems in some Japanese co-operatives. What I heard sounded quite familiar to me, having studied the causes of failure of the last large German consumer co-operative, Coop Dortmund-Kassel, which went into liquidation last year. But I was positively surprised that in Japan, co-operative problems were openly discussed rather than hidden, that co-operative solidarity was activated to deal with these problems and that stern measures are taken to find solutions.

Those who believe that "Co-operative Science" is a typically German invention will be taught otherwise, when taking a closer look at CCIJ and the many Japanese university professors of various disciplines dealing with co-operative subjects. In their efforts to find solutions to what at first sight appears to be practical problems, but which in fact are often symptoms of fundamental

conceptual issues, it appears to me that our Japanese colleagues apply scientific methods of analysis and development of remedies with better results than in Germany, where approximation of co-operative enterprise to the company model blurs the vision for specifically co-operative problems, such as methods to generate active member participation, to implement the object of member promotion and to measure success in this regard.

The CCIJ as a think tank of JCCU and other co-operative research groups appear to play a central role in bringing about these positive features of modern Japanese co-operative thought and practice. After having completed ten years of successful work I am sending my congratulations. I am looking forward to continued fruitful collaboration with the CCIJ during the next decade.

The Most Memorable Trips to the CCIJ

Prof. Victor PESTOFF, S*dert*rn University, Sweden

I had the great pleasure of visiting the CCIJ on each of my three trips to Tokyo. The CCIJ first hosted me in September 1996, when my book on the established Swedish co-operatives was translated to Japanese. This was truly one of the most memorable trips of my life.

In 1998, I spent half a year in Kanazawa and also visited the CCIJ in March for a conference on co-operative research. My third trip to Tokyo was at the beginning of September 1998, when I participated in an International Conference hosted by the CCIJ. Both of these conferences were very interesting.

Thus, I have many fond and warm memories of the CCIJ and Tokyo. I want, therefore, to send my fraternal congratulates to the CCIJ on its tenth anniversary and to wish you equal success during the next ten years in promoting both co-operative research and international understanding.

Innovations, Energy and Vitality

Prof. Roger SPEAR, Open University, U.K. (Chair of the ICA Research Committee)

On the tenth anniversary of the Consumers* Co-operative Institute of Japan I am delighted to write a few words of greetings to congratulate them and the Japanese Co-operative Movement on their achievements.

I visited Japan for the first time in 1998, and I was impressed both by the warmth of my welcome and by the level of discussions about co-operative issues that I encountered amongst co-operative members, managers and researchers during my visit.

I also found the Japanese co-operative experience of tremendous interest, partly because of its innovations (e.g. in the welfare initiatives of the Seikatsu Club, and the involvement of member/patients in the Saitama Medical Co-op), but also because of its energy and vitality. My overall feeling was that we need to know more about this experience.

I feel that strong participation of Japanese researchers and managers in our research conferences of

the ICA has improved our knowledge about the dynamics of co-operation, and I am sure that the JCCU's key role in helping form the Asian Research Committee will also strengthen the international dialogue.

We wish you another 10 years of success and innovative co-operation.