



COOPERATIVE COFFEES

NEWSLETTER

A Cooperative Coffees Newsletter for and about FAIR TRADE

Issue No. 5

November 2004

Cooperative Coffees Celebrates its 2004 AGM in Montreal, Canada

by Bill Harris and Monika Firl

The Cooperative Coffees 2004 Annual Meeting was held Sept 9 - 12 in the fun-filled city of Montreal, Canada. We hosted a full house with early confirmations from most of our Cooperative Coffees members. This meeting is our annual opportunity to get to know new members and to get back in touch with existing members from our far-flung network, while reviewing the year. "Great work was done and much valuable communication took place at the meeting," said Mike Mays of Heine Brothers' Coffee. "I am proud to be a part of Cooperative Coffees..."

The meeting began on Thursday with a "Green Day" - including a cupping table of our green beans from all sources, and a first-ever Cooperative Coffees Roaster's Cup of Excellence, sponsored by Coffee Labs International.



In cupping for a good roast, you want to look for a roast that brings out the greatest flavor potential the bean has to offer; add to that enhancing the body and bringing out the aromas, and you've got a winning technique!

This was an opportunity for our members to meet Mane Alves, who cups and qualifies each of the coffees we buy, as well as share opinions and comments on coffee sources and the different techniques our members use to roast it.

"The idea of the competition is in fact mostly about learning from one another," Alves said, while stepping us through cupping the winning roasts. "There are some excellent roasts here, and you will see that the finalists were all very close in scores, but with different nuances in the taste profile."

Coffee Lab International & Cooperative Coffees 1st Annual Roasters Cup of Excellence AWARDS and the winners are.....

Espresso:	Peace Coffee, Espresso Roast Larry's Beans, Secret Espresso Blend #17 Just Coffee, Electric Monkey
Single Origin:	Peace Coffee – OROMIA, Yirgacheffe, Ethiopia Café Campesino – Apecaform, San Marcos, Guatemala Higher Grounds – Maya Vinic, Chiapas, Mexico
Blends:	Bongo Java, Mystic Blend Heine Brothers, Mountain Dream Larry's Beans, Cowboy Blend

Following the cupping we heard presentations and shared information about our current coffee cooperative partners and the local contexts in which they work, as well as discussing new prospects. This year we had the good fortune to have Adolfo Garces, representing Fondo Paez, in our midst to help us understand the complexities of life for the Indigenous Paeces communities in Cauca, Colombia.

“Indigenous are 12 percent of the Colombians displaced,” Garces explained. “This number is dramatic when you consider that they represent less than 1 percent of the country’s total population. In 2002, more than 12,500 indigenous had to leave their ancestral territories because of pressure from the armed groups.”

Scheduled to coincide with our meeting Saturday morning, we facilitated together with TransFair Canada a Roundtable discussion on new directions within the broader Fair Trade movement. In the spirit of better understanding the potential impact for Fair Trade in the future, we discussed topics such as: Promoting Fair Trade Organizations versus Fair Trade Products; Coordinating our Efforts to Build Fair Trade in Canada; and Recent Trends and Developments within FLO. This was an opportunity to learn about changes in the marketplace, and to share opinions, suggestions and concerns regarding Fair Trade developments and to help us plot our own future course.

But the central objective for our Annual Meeting is to have several full days together to discuss face to face our challenges and review our advances to date. This meeting is our annual opportunity to get a full report on the business at hand. It is a time to review the year's operations – including financials, growth and committee work – as well as to elect our new board and officers.

We were delighted to sense the renewed energy of our members and to see the enthusiasm with which individuals and companies have stepped forward to take on additional responsibilities in growing this extraordinary cooperative experience.

In the process, founding members were pleased to share the news about growth. Cooperative Coffees has seen coffee sales climbing a hefty 50 percent each year. Our current challenges now hover around issues such as creating and maintaining appropriate systems to accommodate our growing cooperative! Each member has contributed with suggestions and models to help us come up with strategic alternatives in planning for our future.

This year’s new Board of Directors includes:

- **Larry Larson, Chair**
Larry's Beans – Raleigh, NC
- **Michael King, Vice-Chair**
Bean North – Whitehorse, Yukon
- **Jody Treter, Treasurer**
Higher Grounds Trading – Leland, MI
- **Gary Heine, Secretary**
Heine Brothers' Coffee – Louisville, KY
- **Stephane Kordahi,**
Café Rico – Montreal, Québec
- **Thomas Johnson**
Cloudforest Initiatives – Minneapolis, MN
- **Dean Cycon**
Dean's Beans – Orange, MA
- **Matt Earley**
Just Coffee Madison, WI
- **Scott Patterson**
Peace Coffee – Minneapolis, MN

Financial Highlights for Fiscal Year 2003-04

Cooperative Coffees recently completed another record year in terms of pounds of coffee shipped, sales of green coffee and profits. Sales grew to \$1,861,000 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2004, marking our 4th consecutive year of 50%+ annual growth. Profits more than doubled to \$67,000. The membership voted to continue our policy of retaining the maximum allowed profits in the cooperative as equity in order to continue building a solid balance sheet and financing our growth. The 17 roaster-members of Cooperative Coffees have now contributed equity investments of more than \$214,000 to our rapidly growing cooperative. CC sold 991,000 pounds of fair trade, organic green coffee in FY2003-04 and is budgeting 1,350,000 pounds in sales during the current year.

Funding for our growth was secured from a variety of familiar sources. The National Cooperative Bank Development fund continues to supply the majority of our working capital via a \$500,000 line of credit and \$175,000 term loan. EcoLogic Finance provides most of our pre-financing for farmer cooperatives through factoring arrangements. In July, 2004 we also secured a \$250,000 peak-season line of credit from EcoLogic for inventory financing.

Las Abejas and Maya Vinic: US / Canadian Promotion and Marketing Tour

by Monika Firl

Jose Perez Vazquez and Marcario Arias Gomez, Presidents of the Board of Directors of the civil organization Las Abejas and of their sister Coffee Cooperative Maya Vinic, respectively, participated in a whirlwind speaking tour of conferences and consumer education presentations from Chicago to Quebec City with stops along the way at *Higher Grounds Trading Co* in Traverse City, MI, *Just Coffee* in Madison, WI, *Alternative Grounds* in Toronto, ON and *Café Rico* in Montreal, QC.

“This was an excellent opportunity for coffee consumers throughout the U.S. and Canada to better understand how the purchase of fair trade coffee directly supports community sustainability and indigenous rights in coffee growing regions,” said Chris Treter of Higher Grounds Trading Co, and one of the primary organizers of the tour. “With each presentation, North Americans were left inspired by the growers’ story but also energized to spread the sale of fair trade coffee in their region.”

It was also a chance to help raise consciousness about the on-going political strife in their communities, the local development alternatives being promoted, and in particular highlight the role that Fair Trade has been able to play in the reconstruction of communities affected by the violence and political turmoil in Chiapas. Las Abejas is an indigenous faith based organization committed to working non-violently for peace in Chiapas. The Abejas have been particularly affected by the "low-intensity" war in Chiapas. The plight of their communities came to the public eye in the aftermath of the infamous Acteal Massacre, where 45 men, women and children were killed by paramilitary forces and thousands more displaced from their homes. Many point to changes to the Mexican Constitutional affecting land rights as a major root of the on-going conflict. The Mexican Government was obligated to make these changes in order to qualify for entrance into NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement).

Abejas leaders began to reorganize soon after the massacre and founded the Abejas-based coffee cooperative Maya Vinic. Despite many members being expelled from their homes, having lost direct access to their lands and only with



Despite the hardships, members of Las Abejas did not lose site of their faith. Brick by brick they constructed a mausoleum in honor of their martyrs, and reconstructed their own shattered lives.

Calendar of Activities Highlights:

- Oct. 13** Presenting at Michigan Univ. Ann Arbor
- Oct. 14** Meeting with Higher Grounds Trading Traverse City, MI,
- Oct. 15** Keynote speaker at the Great Lakes Bioneers Conference (workshops following)
- Oct. 16** Fair Trade Workshops at Bioneers conf.
- thru 18** St. Michael's Church: Suttons Bay, Michigan
- Oct. 18** Presentation at Cup of Justice Conference – Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Oct. 20** Events with Just Coffee. Madison, WI
- thru 22**
- Oct. 23** Keynote Address at Another World is Possible Conference: Chicago, Illinois
- Oct. 25** Presentation at Depaul University. Chicago
- Oct. 26** Presentation with Alternative Grounds, in Toronto, ON Canada
- Oct. 28** Arrival in Montreal - UQAM Conference Multi-disciplinary Conference hosted by *Chaire de la Economie Humaniste*
- Oct. 29** McGill University
- Oct. 30** FT presentation at Cafe Rico.
- Oct. 31** Drive to Quebec, visit farmer organizations Via Campesina and Plan Nagua
- Nov 1** Presentation, Tam-Tam Cafe, Quebec City

the help of national and international solidarity and accompaniment were able to harvest their coffee since 1997, members of Maya Vinic have been unrelenting in their attempts to create a grassroots response to their dire economic situation.

The Cooperative "Producers' Union Maya Vinic," currently comprised of some 700 coffee farming families located in 36 highland communities in the municipalities of Chenalhó, Pantelhó and Chalchihuitán, has taken enormous strides forward as a new participant in Fair Trade. Maya Vinic is FLO registered and is currently in the final stages towards organic certification. Since the beginning of their organizational process, Maya Vinic understood the importance of offering excellent quality coffee. They had faith that consumers would be willing to pay a fair price for coffee produced by farmers who cared for the plants and harvested their product in harmony with their Mother Earth. Cooperative Coffees is the first Fair Trade company to purchase Maya Vinic coffee under FLO criteria, and has enjoyed the privilege of accompanying the cooperative's rapid growth and consolidation.

“We are grateful to all the people who have opened their homes and their hearts to us,” said Jose Perez Vazquez. “This has been a once in a lifetime opportunity for us – a very interesting experience.”

Fair Trade Briefs:

Larry's Beans Celebrates 10 Great Years

On Saturday September 25th the crew at Larry's Beans and their 100 closest friends and clients gathered at the coffee warehouse – transformed into a celebration hot spot – replete with stage lighting, candles, fire barrels, music, food and fun. Larry Larson greeted guests in his second hand tuxedo, and beaming smile. Customers and employees danced the night away with music from Milagro Saints and mambo lessons from the Cobo Brothers. Everyone snacked on catered goodies and drank sweet wine and good beer. By the end of the night guests toasted to the past 10 year's of success, to Larry's ability to assemble a team of over-achievers, and to a very bright future for Larry's Beans as an ever-evolving sustainable business. To end the evening, there was also a raffle to benefit Raleigh's own "Operation Cat Nip".

Café Campesino adds New Partner to the Americus, GA Team

Cafe Campesino recently announced that Tripp Pomeroy has joined the Georgia-based roaster and distributor of fair trade, organic coffee as a partner and general manager. Pomeroy brings more than 15 years of experience in international trade and business development to the company, which purchases all of its coffee from small-scale producer cooperatives from around the world. Mr. Pomeroy holds an M.A. in International Development from American University and a B.A. in Political Science from Tufts University. In addition to his administrative capacity, he adds enthusiasm and vigor to the Fair Trade movement in the region. Welcome aboard Tripp!

Bongo Java – Nashville's Best Coffee – "Scene Award" for 11 Years Running!

For the 11th straight year, Bongo World was named "Best Place for Coffee" by the alternative weekly, The Nashville Scene. Bongo Java (which opened in 1993) has taken this award every year from 1994 to 1997. Fido, its sister store (which opened in 1996), has won it every year from 1998 - 2004. Fido recently turned 56 (eight in people years) and celebrated with a Stuffed Animal Hospital. Children of all ages brought their Teddy Bears, stuffed alligators and horses for medical services ranging from a unicorn with a headache to a bunny that needed a skin graft.

Bongo Java was also listed as one of eight places for "Best Coffee" in the USA by Unlimited Magazine (a propaganda vehicle for Marlboro cigarettes, which ironically awarded the smoke-free Bongo Java!).



Las Abejas/Maya Vinic Speaking Tour

During a 3-week tour, it couldn't be all work and no play! Here Jose and Macario of Las Abejas and Maya Vinic, respectively, get a brief respite from their seemingly endless string of presentations and interviews to stretch their legs and see the sights from the top of Mont Royal Park in Montreal.

Happy Birthday to Heine Brothers Coffee

Heine Brothers' Coffee celebrated its 10-year Anniversary this October. The Heine Brothers started their business in 1992 as an espresso cart in an east Louisville grocery store. At that time, they roasted their beans three pounds at a time in a coffee roaster the size of a large mailbox. Their first store opened in October 1994. This month, in addition to celebrating its tenth anniversary, Heine Brothers' Coffee will also celebrate the Grand Opening of their 5th store!

Great New Beans at Cooperative Coffees

CAC Pangoa – Peru; Fondo Paez – Colombia;

EMU Cooperative and Kenya Fair Traders – Kenya

This year Cooperative Coffees is delighted to announce the addition of three, new producer sources to its green bean repertoire. In the 2004 import season we have added Pangoa Coffee from Peru and Fondo Paez Coffee from Colombia, this latter being its first-ever Fair Trade contract and its entry contract into the FLO producer's register. We are also anxiously awaiting the arrival of a first-ever Kenyan Fair Trade coffee, contracted with the EMBU Cooperative in collaboration with Kenya Fair Traders. This coffee is scheduled to land before the year's end, and should be available for sale by 2005.

Stay tuned for the cupping reports of these excellent new coffee sources, as well as announcements for country visits being planned to these new producer additions in partnership with Cooperative Coffees.