

The Middlebury Manifesto

We, the Cooperators of the Connecticut River Valley and nearby regions of Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont,

in order to further the ideals of democracy, cooperation, autonomy and education as enshrined in the International Cooperative Principles,

to pursue public as distinct from private happiness,

to reorient the economy from one primarily dedicated to maximizing individual wealth to one calculated to advance the common good,

to promote regional autonomy in food production and other goods essential to human existence,

to strengthen our individual cooperative organizations,

to develop new insights and promote enlightenment about how we might achieve our common purposes,

to act upon our shared concerns about the long term viability of our region and Planet Earth in general as a beautiful and thriving habitat for humans and all other forms of life,

to cultivate the bonds of friendship and mutual respect,

do hereby ordain and establish the *Connecticut Valley Neighboring Co-ops*, an alliance that will

seek and implement opportunities for common commercial activities that would be beneficial to all but inefficient if conducted by individual cooperatives,

share operational and organizational insights that will allow all participating cooperatives to benefit from the work of individual cooperatives,

provide occasions for collective action to build a cooperative economy in our geographic region,

develop leadership and management capacity for our individual cooperatives,

advance the state of knowledge in the fields of economics, finance, the sciences, law, politics, governance, philosophy and the arts, to the extent these disciplines inform our work and shared purposes,

provide a forum for gatherings that will allow us to further our purposes and build human connections, and

engender joy, enthusiasm and optimism among all who come into contact with our organization,

and to further these purposes do mutually pledge that we will devote such resources of our cooperatives as are necessary to advance the values and secure the ends for which we have come together, and that we personally will dedicate ourselves resolutely to this alliance so that cooperation achieves its potential in our region as a transformative mode of human endeavor.

Jo Alexander
Paula Harris
Alex Gyori
Carol Satake
Joey De...
Rebecca Gunn
Patti Waters
Paul Robinson
Sharon L. Mueller
Ken Bundy
Dean Nilan
Clara Lower
Matt...
Rachel...
Paul...
...

"If we appear to seek the unattainable, it has been said, then let it be known that we do so to avoid the unimaginable."
 —Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society, 1962

"Changing times make it critical to find new and renewed ways of understanding and expressing cooperative approaches to business and society. Such new and renewed understandings are best developed on the basis of a deep comprehension of past and present experience. At the same time, imagination is critical."
 —Brett Fairbairn, Three Strategic Concepts for Cooperatives

"But as public happiness depends, in this country, at least, on the personal character of its inhabitants at large, so the promotion of public happiness must, in a great measure, rest on personal exertions. Men [and women] of every description, who wish the end accomplished, must unite to furnish the means."
 —Timothy Dwight, "The True Means of Establishing Public Happiness," 1795

A viable community is made up of neighbors who cherish and protect what they have in common.
 —Wendell Berry, The Idea of a Local Economy

"Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible."
 —Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 29

We must design a system where doing good is like falling off a log, where the natural, everyday acts of works and life accumulate into a better world as a matter of course, not a matter of conscious altruism.
 —Paul Hawken, Ecology of Commerce