

22nd February 2022

Divvy

“The need for international solidarity and multinational cooperation is more conspicuous than ever. The Norwegian Nobel Committee has decided to award the Nobel Peace Prize for 2020 to the World Food Programme (WFP) for its efforts to combat hunger, for its contribution to bettering conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas, and for acting as a driving force in efforts to prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict.”

Nobel Peace Prize Committee, Peace Prize announcement, October 2020

The supermarket in Bowmore on Islay is run by “The Co-op”. It’s the same in Port Seton, and “The Co-op” is a familiar store for many people. When I was young, my granny shopped in “The Co”, as she knew it. She was a Co-op “member”, and everything purchased affected her dividend – her “divvy” pay-out – from her weekly shopping to the expenses of a funeral. Her number was *three-double-nothing-two-four*. “Don’t forget,” was my granny’s mantra when I was sent out for shopping. My mother’s “store number”, incidentally, was 1868. She made sure she got her dividend too.

The Cooperative movement was about cooperation, and the shared benefits – “the divvy” – of people doing things together. The father of the cooperative movement is considered to be Robert Owen in the first half of the 19th century. Owen, a Welshman who made his fortune in the cotton trade, believed in putting his workers in a good environment with access to education for themselves and their children. These ideas were put into effect successfully in the cotton mills of New Lanark, and it was there that the first co-operative store was opened. Others, such as Dr William King, made these ideas more workable, and helped working class people set up cooperatives for themselves. The Co-op stores in which I shop here and at home are the product of such healthy principles and fundamentals.

The Nobel citation quoted above instances the importance of “cooperation”, in this case “international solidarity and multinational cooperation”. From Brexit to the Ukraine, from Afghanistan to any place of tension and disturbance, cooperation is crucial. We all get “a divvy” from that, especially the hungry, marginalised and fearful. Let’s pray that the principles of solidarity and cooperation are enshrined in *all* we do, for the good of everyone, whatever their number might be.

A prayer for today

“Bind us together, Lord, bind us together, O bind us together in love.”

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