

## Who was Alex Laidlaw?

Dr. Alex Laidlaw was a well known figure in the Canadian and international co-operative movement. He was a co-operative activist in his home province of Nova Scotia. He studied at St. Francis Xavier University, a university whose extension department was famous for adult and co-operative education, as well as organizing co-ops. He was a colleague of such Nova Scotia co-op organizers and activists as Fr. Moses Coady and Fr. Jimmy Tompkins.

Prior to coming to Ottawa in 1958 he was connected to several international agencies and taught adult education in India and Sri Lanka.



Alex Laidlaw was interested in the development of all kinds of co-operatives, including housing, consumer and credit. He was general secretary of the Co-operative Union of Canada for 10 years. During that time he assisted in the founding of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. He also served on the board of directors of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Alex Laidlaw wrote several books dealing with the co-operative movement, including one on housing co-operatives for Canadians, Housing You Can Afford. In 1978-9 he headed Project 2000, a global study of the future role of co-operatives. The study culminated with a world congress of the International Co-operative Alliance at which he gave the major address on co-operative values.

Alex Laidlaw had a profound understanding of the grass roots co-operatives and was unstinting in his support and advocacy for them. Alex Laidlaw was pleased that a local housing co-operative in Ottawa asked to use his name for their co-op in 1978. Two other housing co-operatives in other parts of Canada are also named after him. Alex Laidlaw died in 1980.

*Peter Trotscha*