Conversation with Michael Crook

Michael Crook joined us briefly at the end of the AGM Zoom meeting on May 16. He is chair of ICCIC (International Committee for the Promotion of Chinese Industrial Cooperatives) also known as Gung Ho. He introduced the work that Gung Ho has done to support communities in battling the covid-19 outbreak. This is depicted in a short Power Point. We also learnt of the background of his famous parents, and their relationship with Rewi Alley. Read more…

The Crook – Rewi Connection:

1938 David met Rewi in Shanghai. David wanted to report on factory conditions in Shanghai, and was told Rewi was the man to ask. Rewi arranged for a young guide to show David around.

1939 Isabel met Rewi in the Min River valley. He on his way back from Songpan, sourcing yaks wool for blankets, Isabel on her way to Bashilao (Jiarong Tibetan) Village where she was doing anthropology. She had with her a spinning wheel obtained in Chengdu, which Rewi claimed was his invention.

1950 Michael met Rewi as a child, on weekend hikes in Beijing’s Western Hills, and also in summer vacations at Beidaihe.

1987 Isabel and David were invited to join the re-constituted ICCIC. Isabel served as Executive Member.

Michael Crook brief bio:

Born in Beijing, British-Canadian, 1988: volunteer editor of ICCIC English language newsletter; joined as member ca. 1990, appointed to the executive and served as treasurer 1995. Elected Vice Chair 2000; elected Chair 2010

Script for 2-3 minute address to AGM:

1. About ICCIC

ICCIC has been promoting cooperatives and China-foreign friendship since 1939, when Rewi became chief organizer.

This was recognized by Chairman Xi Jinping in 2017, on the occasion of the 120th anniversary of Rewi’s birth. (See quote in PPT)

ICCIC gave generous donations to the Shandan Bailie School after the Shandan earthquake in 2000.

Since its revival in 1987, ICCIC has cooperated with NZCFS in a range of projects. These include a programme promoting cooperative development in NW China from 2006 on, and reconstruction after the Sichuan earthquake in 2008.

Dave Bromwich became executive member of ICCIC in 2006?, and has been Vice Chair since 2010?, NZCFS became a corporate member of ICCIC in 2010? Over the years, a number of members of NZCFS have joined ICCIC.

ICCIC and NZCFS are sister organizations with a common mission to promote friendship and understanding between China and the rest of the world.

1. About the epidemic

ICCIC members have made generous donations in China and abroad. (See PPT)

1. About racism

Many people around the world are looking for someone to blame for the hardship and suffering caused the epidemic. An easy target is “other people”, resulting in some virulent racism, further inflamed by some governments, perhaps to divert attention from their own inadequacy in taking effective measures to combat the epidemic. Many Chinese people around the world have been the victims of this racism. And in response, some people in China want to “fight fire with fire”. But the Chinese government has taken a strong stand against such racism. E.g. the government statement 20200413:

“Chinese government has … "zero tolerance for discriminatory words and actions".”

Let’s work together to fight racism, promote friendship and understanding, especially between China and New Zealand, and in the words of President Xi Jinping, work to build a shared future for mankind.

