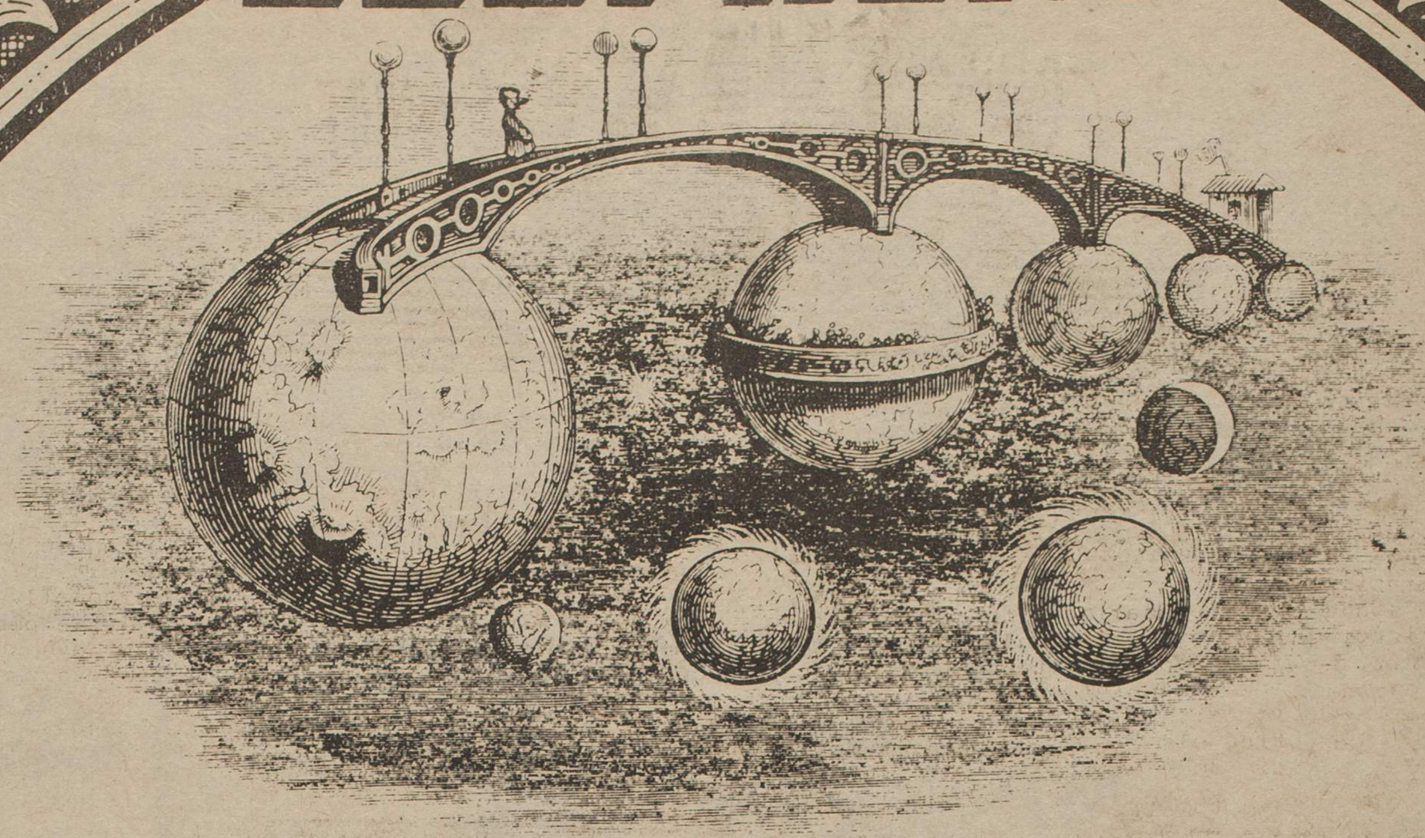
COOPNEWS



TOFU TRANSITION

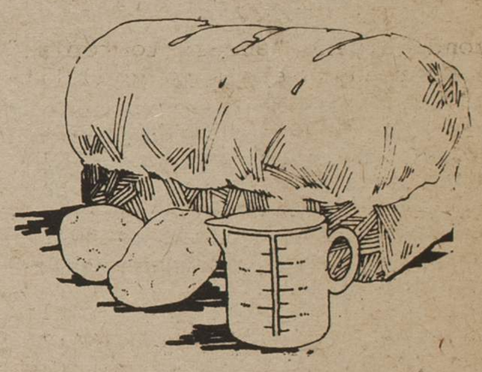
by Diane Luber

The time has come to bid farewell to Thom Leonard. Thom, who came to Lawrence in September, brought with him sea vegetables, miso, tofu, and sourdough bread. Thom is returning to Fayetteville to work with a friend who recently opened a tofu shop. Rumor has it that demand for tofu in Fayetteville is so great that they will be making it in a "large cast iron, porcelain coated cooking vessel" (otherwise known as a bathtub)! Thom also plans to begin making miso, conduct tofu and miso classes, farm, and distribute miso starter and nigari in the Midwest. When asked for his parting thoughts on our co-op, Thom said that it was the best organized and had the most member participation of any co-op he had been involved with. And last of all, "it was fun."

TOM GALEN

Tom Ingle and Galen Tarman will be making tofu in Thom's place. Both are familiar faces at Sister Kettle having worked there since August. Galen credits his interest in tofu to Diet for a Small Planet. Tom is anxious to explore the potential of soybeans. And, of course, both need to make a living. They plan to supply the co-op with 40 cakes of tofu every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, as well as supply Sister Kettle and a natural foods store in Kansas City. They have had to raise the price of tofu by 5¢ but we think the effort is well worth it. They also plan to produce and sell soy milk (look for a sign-up sheet in the co-op). Give them your support in the coming weeks.

We will continue to obtain miso and sea vegetables from the Co-op Warehouse in Fayetteville. So while we will be losing Thom, we will still carry tofu, sea vegetables, and miso. As for sourdough bread, Thom has left starter with some co-op members but it will be a long time before they will be able to match the result of 6 years of bread-making experience.



HIGHER PRODUCE PRICES

What's Behind Them?

by Chuck Magerl

Unstable weather conditions and the rumblings of a land reform revolt in Mexico have contributed to higher than usual produce prices this winter. But speculation suggests that today's above-average prices will become the rule rather than the exception in future seasons.

The major produce areas of the United States are being affected by wide fluctuations in temperature and rainfall. Florida's winter crops of citrus fruits, tomatoes, squash, peppers, and greens have been destroyed by January's freeze. California, enjoying warm temperatures, has had problems with too much and not enough rain this year. At one point, fields were too wet, making it difficult for harvesting machines to drive through the mud and some produce rotted from the moisture. Droughts have also plagued some areas. Water-rationing has come to regions around San Francisco and the State Water Board is faced with implementing cutbacks in irrigation supplies. But these unusual conditions may indicate the normal climate to come.

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Many weather observers see this period as signalling the transition from the stable climate patterns of this century to earlier patterns marked by wide fluctuations in temperature and rainfall. Lengthy discussions of climate trends are headline stories in farm publications these days and short mentions are making the city papers.

Reid Bryson, a University of Wisconsin climate expert, studied the effects of the major weather shifts he forsees in the next 20 years and contributed to the CIA study of world climate and national security released last year. Prof. Bryson indicated long-term changes in rainfall amount particularly on the African and Asian continents but also in North America. The major threat, of course, is to the world food supply.

Another factor in winter food supply that's not receiving much publicity is the mysterious land revolt in Mexico. Large U.S. corporations bought immense tracts of prime agricultural land in northern and western Mexico during the past 10 years and employed the farmers they displaced as cheap field labor. The U.S. market for fresh vegetables was tempting for these corporations; in fact half of the winter vegetables sold in America were from Mexico. But the situation is changing as the Mexican farmers take action.

The farmers in several states have forcibly reclaimed their land from foreign corporations. Their struggle is a matter of life and death. And last year over 100 farmers were killed in battles with army and private police while reclaiming 60,000 acres. In addition, Peter Baird and Ed McCaughan of the North American Congress on Latin America, report that in 1975 alone 792 people, mostly children, died in one state from diarrhea and dehydration. There is neither medical insurance nor a rural health plan for farm workers. The rising level of desperation has prompted chaos and strikes, stopping production on many farms and the lower supply has been reflected in slightly higher consumer prices at the Co-op and supermarkets.

Our alternative to relying on and supporting these situations? Our goals should include greenhouse production near Lawrence and a concerted effort to preserve summer garden surplus. Chuck Marr, the Kansas extension specialist on vegetable production, recently stated he sees the eastern Kansas region becoming a prime all-around food-producing area for the whole nation. Perhaps we could start by meeting the food needs of Kansans.

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