

# CO-OP REORGANIZATION: A REPORT...

At the end of the last General Membership Meeting, when we decided to move, a committee was formed to reorganize the structure of the co-op. The need for restructuring is apparent to anyone who has followed the events that led to our decision. The Catch-22 went as follows: under the current by-laws, any decision affecting the co-op has to be made by the general membership at a meeting. When the idea of moving was presented and a call made for a decision, approximately 50 people balked, and justifiably, because they didn't feel they could commit the other 350 or so households to such a far-reaching decision. But it is unreasonable to believe we will represent every household unless we make meeting attendance mandatory, which we can't realistically do either.

This boils down to differences in the members' levels of commitment to the idea of cooperation. At the extreme end of the continuum,

some view the co-op as a store where they can buy good food, relatively cheap for a minimum amount of involvement. Others are actively involved and committed to the co-operative community as an alternative to a profit-oriented store. As indicated by participation, many of us tend toward the uninvolved end of the continuum, while the expressed goal of co-op membership is to move us to the other end, through the education of involvement. Apparently our present structure doesn't accomplish this very well; we think because it doesn't readily allow for much participation beyond the two hour work requirement.

With these thoughts in mind, the Reorganization Committee addressed itself to these questions: How can we change the structure of the co-op to allow more members to become involved in the store's operation and decision-making and still leave room for those members who are only committed to the extent of the basic work re-

quirement? How should the decision-making structure be set up to facilitate both membership participation and a more efficient and responsive process? What should be the responsibilities and privileges of membership?

Presented here is an outline of the committee's proposal for organizing the work and membership participation in our co-operative which will be presented at the June 6 General Membership Meeting for discussion and hopefully a decision. The concept behind this proposal is that decision-making power is directly dependent upon a member's level of involvement. This proposal also shifts more responsibility back to involved members, decreasing the work load on the work collective and decentralizing decision-making. Hopefully, it will make our decision-making procedures more responsive, foster more friendly and smaller groups within the co-op, and create an atmosphere in which it will be easi-



er to educate each other in the art of co-operation, and more particularly, about good food, good health, and self-reliance.

## ...AND A PROPOSAL

### MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS AND PRIVILEGES

- 1) Households are defined as any group of 5 or fewer adults sharing food purchasing and preparation. An adult is anyone physically capable of assuming work responsibility at the store for the household.
- 2) Each household must work 4 hours/month (two 2 hour shifts as a "free lancer" without decision-making powers) or belong to one work team (and thus gain decision-making powers). If more than one person in a household wants decision-making power, he or she may belong to a (possibly different) work team, but no work credit will be given the household for this.
- 3) Households may pay \$4.00 (i.e., \$2.00/hr.) in place of working a given 2 hour shift, but are encouraged to pay what their job would pay for this time. However, \$4.00 is the minimum and this option (paying instead of working) is available to a household at most 4 times in a 6 month period.
- 4) If any household "no-shows" four 2 hour shifts in a 6 month period, their membership is cancelled.
- 5) It is hoped that the amount of time spent participating in a work team will be about the same as that spent by a "free lancer" working at the store. However, work team members have

additional responsibility and for this reason they have decision-making power.

### WORK TEAMS

- 1) Ten to twelve work teams will be set up, initially by the work collective and present inventory people, to separate various blocks of work in the store into small, self-run, friendly groups. A tentative list of work teams is: Clean-up, Cheese, Produce, Teas and Spices, Grains, Beans, Clerks, Dairy Products, Orientation and Newsletter, etc.
- 2) Responsibilities will include ordering, receiving orders, stocking, packaging, cutting, etc. Total responsibility for a given area lies with the work team.
- 3) Initially anyone wishing to be on a work team must make a 4 month commitment to a specific team, and this commitment may begin at any time. Later this time requirement may be shortened or lengthened if necessary by the steering committee.
- 4) Each team has one vote in the steering committee, though any number of work team members (or anyone else in the co-op) may attend a steering committee meeting.
- 5) One member of each work team is responsible for computing work credit and stamping member cards. Work requirements are set by each work team for its members, though if there is too little or too much work for the team members, the steering committee will make overall adjustments.
- 6) Each team will have a contact person to facilitate communication between the store coordinators and work team members.
- 7) Decisions within a work team are made by consensus if possible, otherwise by vote.

### Co-OP move CONT...



the second alternative involves the Co-op store operations remaining in our present location until we were forced to move, some remodeling would have to take place in our existing site. But the biggest obstacle to the North Lawrence alternatives was transportation - 1) moving goods should we decide to use the space for storage, and 2) moving people on foot or on bicycles across the treacherous bridge should we move the entire store there. We were still grappling with that when a new development presented itself.

The second bank that we had approached agreed to loan the Kansas City woman who originally agreed to co-sign our loan the money to buy Off-the-Wall Hall. In turn, she agreed to sell it to the Co-op at no profit to herself. The finance committee met immediately to pull together the research nec-

essary to present this new alternative to the general membership.

The latest word now is that McKinney-Mason are reconsidering whether or not to sell Off-the-Wall Hall. It's all beginning to smack a little of "As the World Turns" but the moral to the story is...

YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO MISS THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING AT 6:30 ON MONDAY, JUNE 6th, AT THE COMMUNITY BUILDING, 11th AND VERMONT! Whether the Co-op will buy/move/remodel will be decided. Whether the \$10 assessment per adult member is made mandatory will be decided. A new model of work and decision-making that will affect your participation in the Co-op will be presented and decided upon. (See page 8). One thing's certain - the Co-op won't be the same Tuesday morning.

AS WE GO TO PRESS - Business may have slowed down a bit now that summer has hit, but new developments in regard to our co-op's future location seem to be cropping up almost hourly. The Culligan building to the south of us changed hands within the past week. And Mrs. Smith who owns the building the co-op presently occupies announced intention to sell Friday (June 8). With these new developments, the urgency of buying a building strikes home.

**MAGIC CARPET DRY CLEANERS**

\*We dryclean your rugs and carpets  
NO SOAP OR STEAM TRADES for goods or services WELCOMED\*

**842-9159**

### STEERING COMMITTEE

- 1) The steering committee will make decisions on such issues as: store policy, price mark-ups, membership requirements, store location changes, high cost expenditures, major stocking changes, etc.
- 2) Steering committee decisions are made by consensus if possible, otherwise by vote.
- 3) The only voting members of the steering committee are the designated work team representatives. Anyone, of course, may attend steering committee meetings to discuss issues, but only the work team representatives have decision-making power.
- 4) One person from each work team must make a 4 month commitment to the steering committee.



### Good Money

PUBLIC NOTICE NEEDS DISTRIBUTORS AND STREET HAWKERS TO HELP INCREASE CIRCULATION

YOU BUY THE PAPER FOR 12½¢ AND SELL IT FOR A QUARTER. FOR MORE DETAILS, CALL 842-5657 OR COME BY 1101½ MASSACHUSETTS.