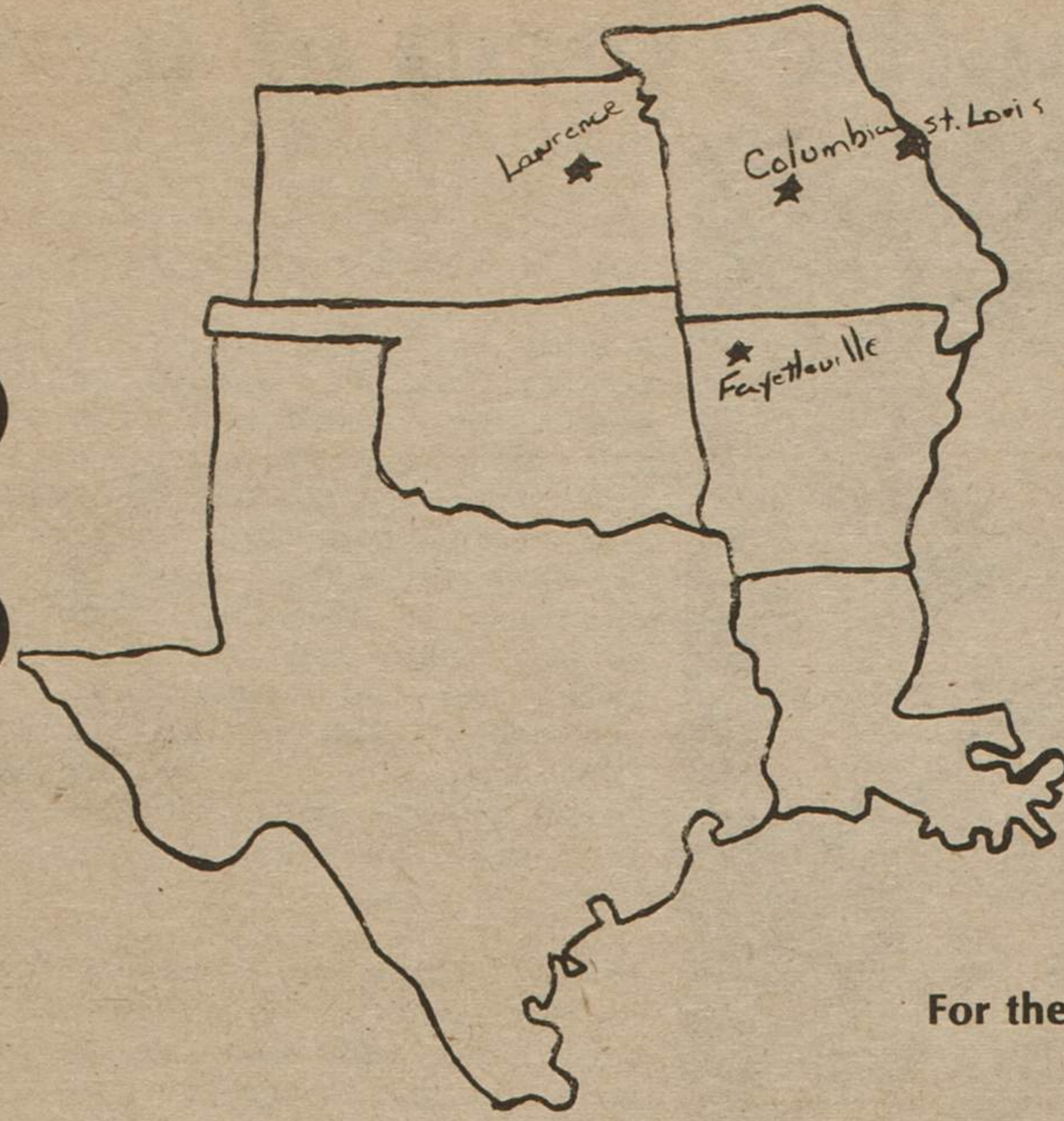


The Community Mercantile Food Co-op belongs to a federation of co-ops operating in the states of Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas, and Louisiana. Together we own/operate/share the Ozark Co-operative Warehouse located in Fayetteville, Arkansas. In the past, representatives of member co-ops have held quarterly meetings which were hosted by a different co-op in the region each time. As our geographical boundaries expand (for instance, to include New Orleans last year), the miles between co-ops has proved to be an obstacle to regular attendance at these meetings. To remedy this, folks at the last federation meeting held in October 1977 divided the federation into five regions. It was suggested that every other federation meeting become a regional meeting instead of a federation-wide meeting. This would hopefully make it easier for more folks to attend and would also strengthen regional cooperation.

On January 14 and 15, the Community Mercantile Food Co-op hosted the first meeting for our region which consists of all Kansas Co-ops. Despite bad weather, folks from Topeka, Manhattan, Emporia, Salina, Wichita, Kansas City, and Beloit (as well as two friends from the Fayetteville warehouse) arrived at the Salvation Army Building on Saturday morning. Warehouse news was the first item on the agenda. The warehouse was in the black with \$56,000 in sales in December. Unfortunately a co-op in Memphis went out of business owing the warehouse about \$1900 and prompting a new credit policy. The folks from Fayetteville proposed a raise in wages for the warehouse employees which was accepted.

In the afternoon, Kathi Ruwart and Jim and Sue Kukens of Kansas Organic Producers took the floor to describe their organization and discuss how it and the fed-

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eration might work together to their mutual benefit. They were joined by Pam Scalora of the People's Grocery in Manhattan in reporting on a workshop on food co-ops being held in Manhattan on January 21. Kansas Organic Producers, the People's Grocery, and several other organizations are sponsoring it and another workshop on marketing for farmers to be held in Manhattan on January 28.

The food co-op in Columbia informed us that it was their intention to discuss setting up a Northern warehouse at their regional meeting. In our discussion it was agreed that some items now stocked in Fayetteville might be better kept in a more northerly location to avoid excess shipping from northern suppliers—beans, cheese, many bulk grains, and pasta. Such a major change would greatly affect the truckers' collective which transports food from the warehouse to the

federation co-ops and back so our discussion could not be complete without them. It was obvious that more homework was necessary, but the possibility of a northern warehouse held appeal.

A more free-for-all discussion occupied us the rest of the afternoon. How can we resolve the ideal of each co-op buying food locally with the need to build our warehouse's buying power? Will meat, which is seldom sold in co-ops today, because of their vegetarian bent, be co-op fare tomorrow, especially in view of our state's role in beef production in this country? We are often encouraged to eat foods native to our area, but couldn't the millions of acres devoted to soybeans, wheat, and beef be diversified to include other grains and beans, not to mention fresh fruits and vegetables? Co-ops like to consider themselves allies of the farmer. While it might be true

that we try harder to understand the relationship between production and consumption, we offer little in the way of a market. One person pointed out that the federation's monthly wheat purchase is a small part of even a moderate-sized wheat farm's production. Our lack of storage facilities places the burden of storage, usually shouldered by grain elevators, back on the farmers we purchase from. This realization, while putting a small dent in our co-op egos, also strengthened our resolve to unite our idealism with reality.

After a break for supper, everyone came back together for a travelogue of China shown by Betsy and Duane Evans of Fanshen Farm, the Community Mercantile's wheat and soybean suppliers. They went to China in January 1974 with a group of Kansas farmers. China has made great strides in the areas of agriculture and co-operation which many of us find inspiring.

Sunday morning we met at Sister Kettle Cafe for a delicious breakfast, moved to the Community Mercantile where visitors picked up a few treats for the drive home, and we renewed our commitments to the federation and each other. We returned to our individual co-ops feeling a little stronger and less isolated, having shared our problems, goals, and hopes. See you in April in Tahlequah, Oklahoma for the next federation meeting.

SPEAKER VISITS ORGANIC FARMERS

Dr. William Lockeretz of the Center for the Biology of Natural Systems, Washington University, St. Louis, Mo., will be the featured speaker at the annual meeting of the Kansas Organic Producers. Dr. Lockeretz and his team are in the third year of a 5 year study, designed to compare the economic performance and energy usage of organic and conventional farms in the Midwest. Results of the study so far indicate that organic and conventional farms produce approximately the same net return to the farmer, while organic farms use considerably less fossil-fuel energy in producing crops.

Dr. Lockeretz has spoken to organizations world-wide about the study, believed to be the first of its kind ever conducted in the United States.

The meeting will be held in Salina, Ks., on February 11, 1978, at the University Methodist Church, 1507 S. Santa Fe. The Kansas Organic Producers election of officers and other organization business will begin at 10:00 AM, followed by a pot luck dinner for the noon meal. Dr. Lockeretz will speak directly following lunch. The public is invited to attend the afternoon meeting at no charge.

Diane Luber (left) and Linda Harvey double check an order form at the co-op. Linda was hired as a new worker at the store last month.



rolf!!

Robert Skupny finds the deep massage technique of Rolfing enervating, like a mean goose.



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