

COOP NEWS

Gone are the days when folks would ask if the food coop stayed open during the summer. Perhaps they had associated the coop more with the trendy come-and-go of the student population than with the enduring, human need for food and companionship. As it stands, coop members have been supplying themselves with food for nearly two years. We've made the necessary decisions and have structured a non-profit, cooperative system to provide needs in a way that the profit motivated system really can't.

The Community Mercantile maintains a monetary flow of over \$200,000 annually. But the real value of the Coop is in its role as a focus of community involvement and as a place to enjoy the company of new-found friends. We've discovered the satisfaction of filling our needs without oppressing and depressing reliance on big business or government. And, this process continues year round, summer included.

This summer has been a time of evaluation within the coop as we've struggled with problems of the food business. Several cooler breakdowns plagued us in June and July, resulting in a careful concern for the equipment we use. We've learned to listen to the pace of our machines, anticipate problems

and collectively find a solution to problems.

Little bugs, roaches and moths, gave us fits through the hot weather. We chose to avoid the use of powerful poisons because too little is known about the effects of those poisons on us. Instead, a naturally derived, non-residual spray was used and a calculated remodeling of the store took place to remove the conditions that invite bugs. The carpet was taken out, the floor sanded and painted to make clean-ups easier. Members are urged to show concern and clean-up spills as soon as they happen. Using a powerful spray might have been simpler, but we feel the overall result will be easier to live with.

Cleaning the store to get rid of the bugs involved moving the food to the Ice Company building to the west. The store was also rearranged so that the space could be used more efficiently. A counter by the cash register will make waiting in line a lot less tiring, now that shoppers can set their goods down. Possibly next winter, a second cash register can be added. The newspaper rack was also moved to the front in a neater and more accessible arrangement. In the back, the Credit Union folks packed their ledgers and left for their new office at 1101 1/2 Mass. So, that space can be used to ex-

pand the cool room. The compressor (that noisy thing!) was moved down to the basement to reduce the noise in the store.

The operational decisions this summer were made by the steering committee composed of concerned members and the work collective (the four paid members). Decision making at the coop is a vital indicator of people's involvement, and lately, that involvement seems to be lessening. Perhaps, it's because the coop is operating more smoothly these days and there's no pressing concern for changes. But, more likely and more importantly, is the possibility that members are feeling removed from the decision-making process. And, that's a problem when nearly 2,000 people are involved, as with our coop.

We plan to initiate a program of member polls and in-store question and answer times to supplement the standard practice of evening meetings. Please feel free to offer criticism to work collective members. Our weekly collective meetings contain self-criticism sessions and we're eager to hear how you feel and what you think. Share your comments on the coop with others in our community by writing to the newspaper. We're trying to shape a cooperative society through our ideas and our work.

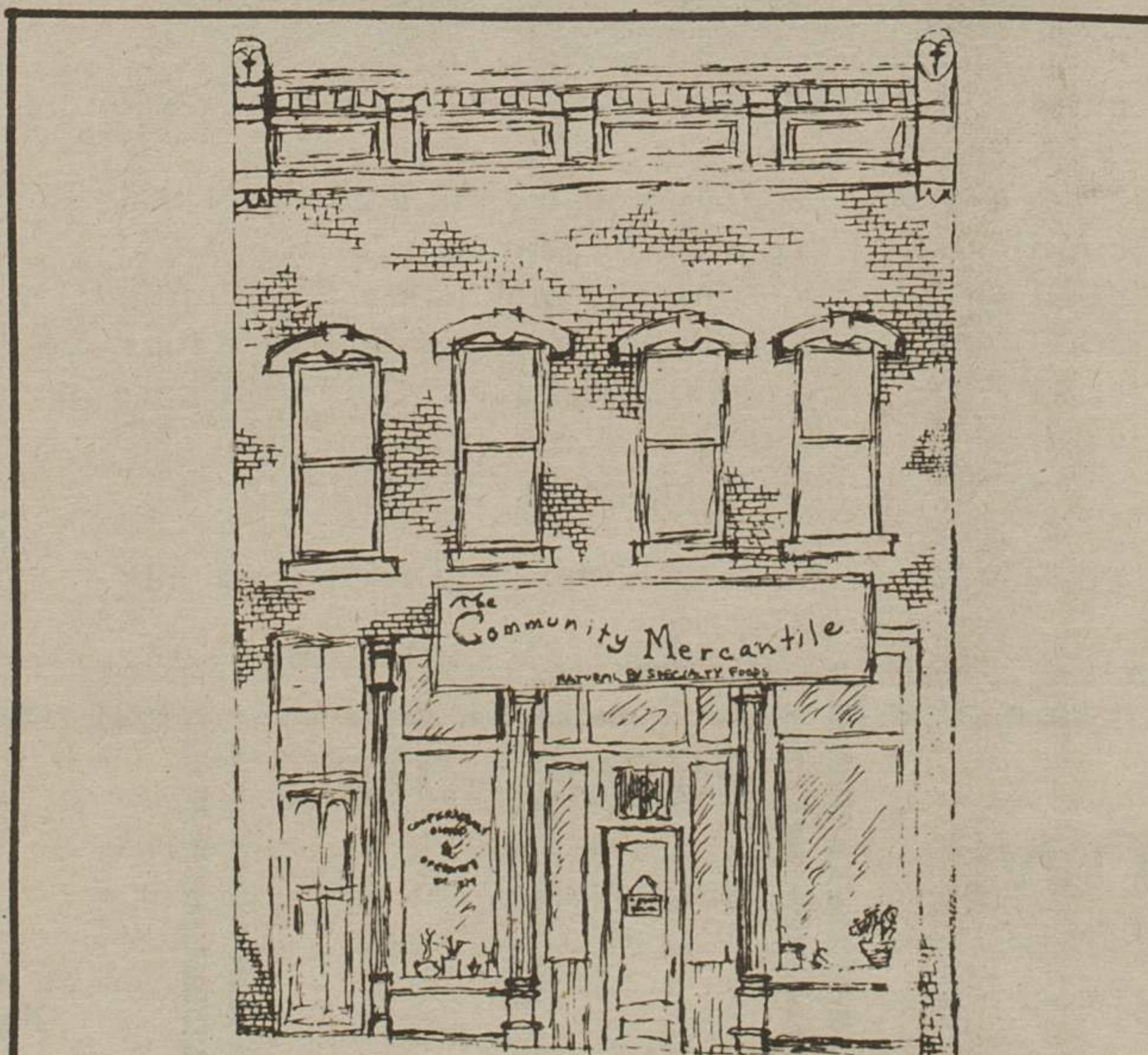
THE CREDIT UNION



In November 1975, after months of meetings, discussions, and paperwork, the Community Mercantile Credit Union was incorporated as a non-profit entity. The organizers of the C. M. C. U. saw a definite need for an alternative to the local financial institutions. Credit was hard to come by for many worthwhile needs and projects. People who did not live up to the bank's expectations of "good citizens" were often denied services, or charged high interest on loans. Women and people of different lifestyles suffered because of this institutionalized discriminatory behavior. The C. M. C. U. was formed by people seeking a more equitable, or egalitarian way to deal with the concepts of money and its every day use.

The past nine months have been both busy and satisfying for your Credit Union officers. We've seen the acceptance of the Credit Union grow along with our knowledge of how to operate a financial organization. In July we had our first official audit by the Kansas Credit Union Administration, a crucial test of our operations. We passed with many supportive comments and praise from the auditors. A real good feeling. We know we have many areas to grow in and many places to improve.

To the other members we, the officers, give our thanks for your patience and support. Continued constructive criticism, interest, and suggestions are crucial for our growth. To those of you who are not now members of the Credit Union, we urge you to join us in the struggle for economic democracy. Our bylaws state that membership is open to "all members and employees of the Community



During the early August shutdown and anti-roach campaign, a few much-needed remodeling and space/activity changes happened THANKS to several unnamed member-workers. Some of these doings have been in the works for a while, others were more seat-of-the-pants in nature. All told, it's good to realize that our store can improve along several avenues of need. Changes to come include enlarging the cool room, improving bulk food storage, organizing the office and other back room space, making a sitting place up front, ... you are welcome to speak up and/or fess up and do some of it. Here's hoping the recent minor changes will make our store work better, and help keep us together.

Mercantile Food Co-op, members of their families, and organizations of such persons." If you wish to join with us and the above statement doesn't include you, come by our office and we will work it out.

Any questions?

Credit Unions are, on the simplest level, financial cooperatives, allowed by law to offer services much like the local banks, and more. Being



a cooperative it is both owned and operated by its members, utilizing democratic principles in its operations. All officers are volunteers elected by the members at an annual meeting.

Deposits in the Credit Union are regarded as shares in the corporation. However, different than most corporations, members receive only one vote no matter how many shares they own.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE MONEY I DEPOSIT?

These deposits are recycled through the community in the form of low interest loans (currently 12% per annum compared to banks 14 - 18%, and higher for loan companies). As the loans are repaid, the interest is used to pay for the Credit Union's daily expenses, for services provided to the members, to establish reserve funds as required by law, and to pay dividends (interest) on the members' shares.

Expense sheets, balance sheets, and financial statements are posted every month in the Credit Union office and will be printed in the Public Notice.

ARE CREDIT UNION SHARES INSURED?

Your Credit Union shares are insured up to \$40,000 per account by the S. S. C. U., an organization similar to the F. D. I. C. We also carry a \$1,000,000 fidelity and faithful performance bond covering all officials and any employees. This covers robbery, dishonesty, etc. There are also legal requirements pertaining to reserves for bad loans, what money may be invested in, and yearly audits by government auditors.

ARE THERE OTHER CREDIT UNIONS?

The Community Mercantile Credit Union is a member of the Kansas Credit Union League. The League represents the 270 credit unions in Kansas, with a

(continued on page 16)