



# COOP NEWS

By CHUCK MAGERL ----- FOR THE WORK COLLECTIVE

The early August clean-up and remodeling at the coop never really went as planned and the resulting confusion deserves mention. Using seemingly logical processes, we decided to close the first week of August, traditionally a low sales time, so we thought we wouldn't lose too much income. As it happened, we were closed for two weeks and needed a \$1,000 loan from the credit union to set things on an even keel again. We made some mistakes.

Perhaps we can consider the situation in terms of labor and capital, work and money. In choosing the first week of August to remodel, we were concerned with money. But early August is also a low energy time in terms of labor, and operating on a volunteer basis, that can be a crippler. The members didn't provide the necessary labor; work

wasn't completed. We remained closed an extra week and vital income was lost. The credit union was called on to help us through.

In fact, if it hadn't been for the cooperative concern of several members, the store would still be struggling. In time of need, thanks to Ed Boles, Bob Burford, Larry Mulhern, Dale Nimz, Carol & Leroy Chittenden, Richard Linker, Diane Luber and Paul Johnson. Also, we're very grateful for the show of support from the credit union. (Check them out, they're great folks!)

The error in closing time was aggravated by an ineffective work collective. For the four collective members, the two week remodeling included three vacations, assisting an out-of-town birth, a four-day illness, and emotional fatigue. These represent

both a lack of foresight and incredibly bad luck. Fortunately, several coop members stepped in to guide things through.

The confusion is just now subsiding. Items are getting restocked, inventory control is functioning smoothly, the blanks and no-shows on the work calendar are declining, and our loan is being repaid.

One thing we have learned through this struggle is to value our labor. Cooperative labor is the determining factor of our store and everyone's part is necessary. Cooperative buying may provide cheap food, but cooperative labor provides an active psychological satisfaction without which we couldn't carry on.

By SUSIE HANNA

# COOL BREEZE

A cool breeze was blowing through the trees of South Park. The same old group of Coop members who always come to membership meetings began trickling in with covered vegetarian dishes. Seventeen Coopers had attended the steering committee meeting on Sept. 18; a surprisingly large number. Only 14 persons attended the general meeting Sept. 21. Policy decisions were made any way.

The main topic of discussion was reorientation. The membership voted to require one member from each household to attend a reorientation meeting in October. If a member doesn't want to come to reorientation, they can sell their \$5 share in the Coop before Oct. 1. Otherwise, their membership is void on Nov. 1 if they fail to attend reorientation.

The reorientation meetings will be a bit like revival or pep talk meetings to let people know how valuable their participation is.

"We run on volunteer energy," Molly VanHee explained. "That's what keeps us going, or sliding."

Reorientation will educate members about their Coop--why the Coop exists, how it works and will also help to determine how many people are still actively involved.

"We'll assume that those who don't come to orientation aren't interested," Patty Spencer said. "We've been carrying inactive people and their lack of interest as long as we can. Also, to keep active and informed members, we have to inform them."

Ten to twelve meetings are scheduled in October. Only those who joined prior to June 1 are required to go. Members who join after June 1, are already required to attend an orientation session.

The membership also voted to require households of 5 to 10 people to work 4 hours and households of more than 10 to work 6 hours each month. Before, no limit was set on the number in a household. Households of more than five persons will also have to pay a \$10 membership when they join; households with 5 or less will still pay \$5.

The City's plan to redevelop the 600 block of Mass. was discussed and the members voted to form a committee to investigate the city's plans and develop an alternative plan. A general membership meeting will be called by the committee to discuss action by the Coop. Anyone wanting to be a part of the committee, contact one of the work collective.

Ed Boles announced that 200 bushels of organically-grown wheat had been bought with the help of a Credit Union loan, from the Fanshen Farm in Leavenworth County. The farm invited Coop members for a tour this Fall. Details will be announced later. The wheat will be ground at the Naramore farm, Route 3, and will be sold for about 20 cents a pound in the Coop.

The meeting closed shortly after sundown and, full of fine food, we parted and left the park, knowing December weather would force the next quarterly meeting inside.



## Announcing . . .

### Community Mercantile

STORE 843-8577  
HOURS: M-W-F 10-6  
T-Th 10-7  
SAT. 10-5



Don't forget to attend one of the reorientation meetings in October!

Steering Committee potluck meetings are once a month & are open to all Coopers.

The Community Mercantile Credit Union optimistically announces another general membership meeting. On Thursday, Oct. 28, we will meet at the Public Library at 7 p.m. for policy discussion, officers' election, and criticisms and comments on our nine months of operation.

Attendance at the last meeting in the spring was rather dismal. Hopefully this fall meeting will draw more than 15 people from a membership of over 150. Three officer positions will be up for election by the members, and several policy changes will be considered. Committee and financial reports will top the agenda for the evening so please mark this meeting on your calendar. If you are not yet a member, but are interested in a non-profit, cooperative banking system, visit or phone our office. Remember, we're not in it for the money.

A new person has been selected to join the coop work collective to coordinate the operation of the store and other coop projects. Diane Luber was chosen by the present collective members and approved by the steering committee and general membership at the last meeting.

Diane will replace Sue Fryant. (Sue resigned to devote time to the collectively-owned and operated Sister Kettle Cafe.) Six coop members applied for the position. Diane has spent a couple years doing organizing work with the People's Energy Project, has lived in Lawrence for 7 years and has a concern and enthusiasm to further the work of the coop. Her involvement with the collective is eagerly anticipated to aid the hectic pace of the store's operation.

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