



COOP NEWS

By Patti Spencer-----for the work collective

I thought that the recent reorientation program at the Mercantile was a resounding success. The work collective was in a down place about the store when we initiated the program, and people have justifiably criticized us for the negative way in which we presented the idea.

But the response was great. Over 270 households attended the 12 sessions. While some meetings were definitely better than others, and some people attended merely to maintain their memberships, I

think the store (meaning all of us) has benefited greatly from the program. There has recently been more interest in the store, more energy for the co-op.

We had lost sight of what we're doing. We're co-operating to change our lives. Sure it's often frustrating- we're certainly no batch of angels and we're having to deal with each other. Sure, the change is often fairly subtle, but we just have our

toe in the door. We'll keep growing if we keep talking to each other, exchanging ideas and criticisms.

We're doing something pretty solid - providing good food for ourselves, paying attention to the ecology of how we get that good food, and paying a reasonable price.

The future can be even more important. See you at the December 2nd general meeting.

THEY EAT HORSES, DON'T THEY?

By Diane Luber

For those co-op members who give of themselves above and beyond the call of duty, the co-op is seldom a dull undertaking. As if the process of reorienting most of the membership during October didn't shake things up enough, another controversial topic crept quietly into the store and landed with both feet (or should I say "drumsticks") in our ice cream freezer. No, you weren't hallucinating last Saturday when you saw a frozen chicken next to that pint of Holy Cow Carob Mint. CHICKEN in our CO-OP!?! How did it get there? And, perhaps more importantly, should it be there?



In this particular chicken and egg case, the eggs came first. The co-ops organic egg supplier serves only our co-op. In an attempt to keep up with our demand for eggs, he has at times in the past obtained more chickens. In spite of his attempts, the almost over 170 dozen eggs he delivers every Friday seldom last until the following Tuesday. Chickens do not lay eggs forever. There comes a time when the cost of feeding and caring for chickens outweighs the benefits (or eggs) produced. When our egg supplier reached that point with some of his chickens, he approached the work collective (store coordinators) with the idea of passing these organic stewing hens onto the meat-eating members of our co-op. The work collective

responded by placing a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board. Pre-ordered frozen chickens would be delivered with our eggs on Friday (beginning October 22). They would be picked up and paid for on Saturday by those members who had ordered them. No sooner had the first frozen chicken passed through the portals of the Community Mercantile than a special steering committee meeting was called to discuss co-op meat policies at 3:30pm on November 31 in the Public Library.

Fifteen co-op members participated in the meeting. Bob Purford, one of the initiators of the meeting, presented four questions to be discussed:

1. Shall we carry, store, disseminate, promote chicken meat in or through our co-op?
2. Shall we be involved in the procurement, storing, and distribution of any meat or meat product through our co-op?
3. Shall we stock, provide, and promote other items (sugar, packaged goods, canned goods, non-food items, etc.) through our co-op? Should we actively seek suppliers, producers, brokers, or dealers who can provide such?
4. Should we be actively engaged in consciousness raising concerning food (more so than at present), in research concerning the items we currently stock or pre-order (their content, use and alternatives), and in research concerning proposed items?

Bob advocated the co-op be a "granary rather than grocery store that stocks items that can't be found elsewhere" keeping "the time-bound custom" of not stocking meat. He then made the following proposal: "As of today (November 31), no work collective time, members' energies, store equipment or space be spent in special stocking of these chickens. The Community Bulletin Board and the Public Notice (free classified ads) are available for any individual information and should be used."

Annabelle Nelson added that it is inconsistent for the food co-op to educate people to eat natural foods low on the food chain and to stock chicken at the same time.

"It is one thing to educate, but another thing to dictate," responded Anna Berger. Besides, Anna pointed out, "this topic is passe" since the co-op already stocks milk, cheese, and potentially fertilized eggs. Since people can't get "clean meat" elsewhere (unless they have contacts with organic farmers), the co-op is doing its members a service by stocking these chickens.



Patti Spencer admitted the work collective may have been operating outside the boundaries of its authority when it set up the chicken ordering system. However, handling the chickens was not seen as an effort by the co-op to carry meat. Rather, it was an effort to be ecologically responsible for our actions. Carrying (or eating) eggs entails dealing with the chickens. Too often, she said, this society allows us to pass on our responsibility for decision-making, pollution, etc. to someone else.

Chuck Magerl put forth the work collective proposal that a chicken-buying club be substituted for the present pre-order system. Persons wishing to order chickens would pay \$2.00 per chicken in advance. If the chickens cost less, people would be reimbursed when the chickens were picked up on Saturday. Any chickens not picked up by closing on Saturday would be given to Penn House. This procedure would minimize the work collective's involvement and also limit the time the chickens would be in the store.

Several members expressed feelings ranging from uneasiness to outrage at the idea of handling the chickens. Some, while approving of the chickens as a special case, were concerned about setting a precedent for handling meat. Others considered not carrying eggs as a way of not having to deal with chickens. One person suggested that those



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