

Volume I Issue 5

August 1978

# Senate passes bank bill

The National Consumer Co-operative Bank Act passed the Senate by a vote of 60 to 33 on July 13, 1978. The House of Representatives passed its companion bill a year ago. Senators Jackson and Magnuson both voted in favor.

This bill will create a National Consumer Co-operative Bank which will loan money at current market interest rates to cooperatives and guarantee such loans from other sources. In order to be eligible for loans a co-op must operate on a not-for-profit basis, must have a "sound organizational structure and future income prospects to permit full repayment of the loan," must be ineligible for loans from other sources, and meet other technical structural requirements. The bank will originally be funded by the Federal government and governed by a board appointed by the President. However, as co-ops borrow from the bank they will also be required to buy stock in the bank such that the board will eventually consist almost entirely of co-op representatives. The bill contains provisions to prevent control by any one organization or class of organizations, i.e. housing co-ops, food co-ops, etc.

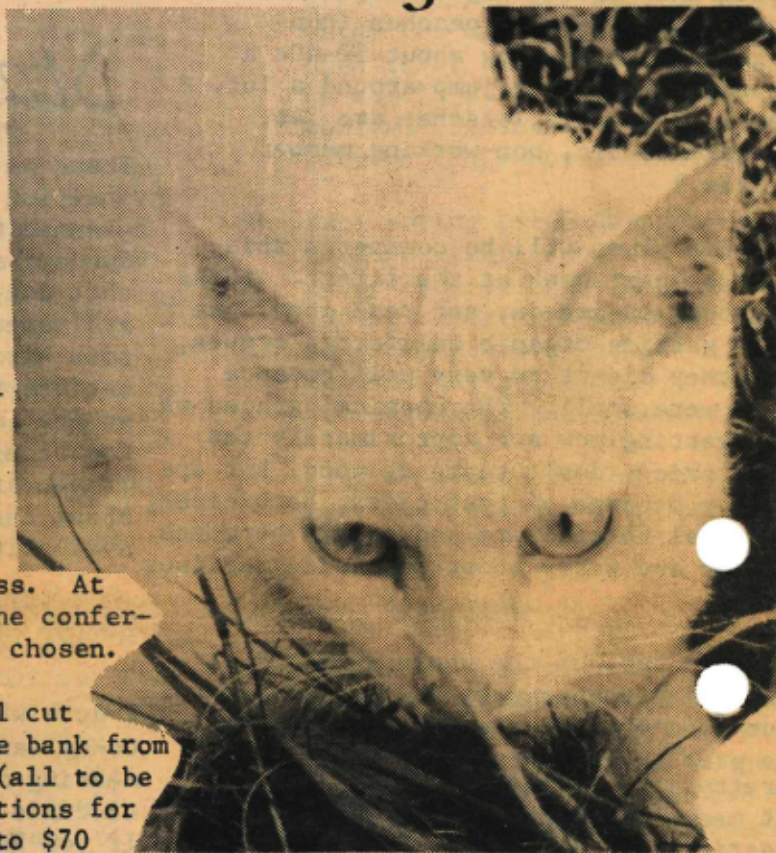
The bill also creates an Office of Self-Help and Technical Assistance which will provide training, information and assistance on co-op operation and management, will do and sponsor research in areas of interest to co-ops and consumers, and will be permitted to make some loans at lowered interest rates to co-ops that serve low income people.

Because the Senate version differs from the version of the bill passed by the House of Representatives, it will now have to go into a conference committee which will make the necessary compromises and return the bill to both houses for approval. Carter is expected to approve the bill as he came out recently in support of it. After this work is completed the House and Senate will then need to vote to appropriate the funds.

This could be a lengthy process. At this writing the members of the conference committee have yet to be chosen.

The Senate version of the bill cut government allocations for the bank from \$500 million to \$300 million (all to be eventually repaid) and allocations for the office from \$250 million to \$70 million as well as other changes. Nevertheless, it provides a powerful tool for the development of cooperatives. Proponents of the bill see the development of co-ops as a potential solution. Nevertheless, it provides a powerful tool for the development of cooperatives. Proponents of the bill see the development of co-ops as a potential solution or partial solution for problems ranging from inflation to the quality of consumer goods and services to the lack of consumer control over what goods and services are available. It is hoped that government investment in co-ops will pay for itself by decreasing needs for other forms of government assistance programs. Opponent of this bill saw it as another financial responsibility of the government, a program funded by the taxpayers which would be a serious threat to other small businesses (a clause was added to protect small businesses) and a foolish way to invest government money (are we sure we want to lend money to those kinds of people?).

I will wonder for a long time how a government which I have been in opposition to over most issues for a long time managed to pass a piece of legislation as positive and powerful as this one seems to be, but I must admit (as I hold my breath and wonder, is it really going to work?) that I am pleased.



Many Thanks  
to:

beth h.  
steve n.  
anna s.  
jo f.  
susan k.  
bob t.  
terri t.

and special thanks  
to: Thurston County  
Parks & Rec.



# Produce Update

Local stuff is coming in full force. We are now getting tomatoes, cauliflower, broccoli, cabbage, green onions, carrots, red potatoes (Finnish, I think) and whole lots more, most of it real cheap. We've been getting Yakima fruit at a real low price. Peaches are what is coming in right now. We have been having cling stone, but freestone are just starting to come in. Cherries are gone, at least from Yakima. We can get organic B.C. cherries, but they are real expensive. The Yakima apricots are just about gone. They've stopped picking the first week of August. There may be some from farther up -- Wenatchee or B.C. -- but they will be more expensive as we don't have direct connections up there.

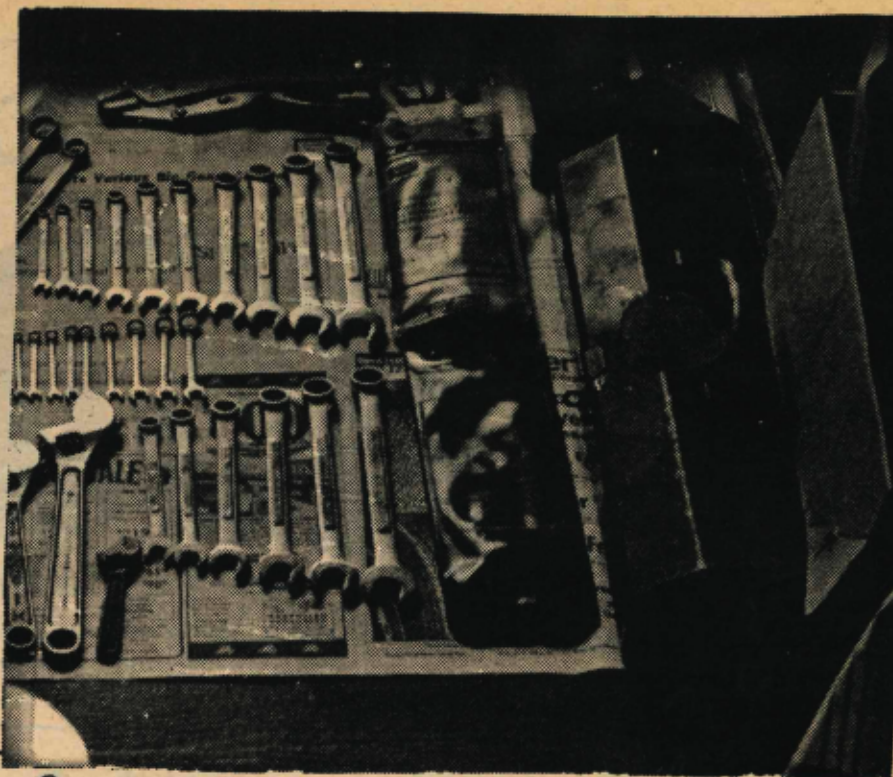
Nectarines are coming in from Yakima. Both nectarines and peaches (non-organic) are running about 30-40¢ a pound, though they jump around a lot. \* (As I write this, peaches are 34¢, nectarines 31¢, non-working member prices.)

Yakima plums will be coming in this week or next week at the latest. Local blueberries are in, and real good. We were getting organic California grapes, but they didn't go very well because they were small. The chemical grapes we are getting now are approximately the same price, don't taste as good, but are bigger because of pesticides, herbicides, chemical fertilizers and growth hormones. Eat up and worry about pesticide residues later.

This is part of the whole supermarket mentality that causes the degradation of our food system. We expect produce to be pretty, and think that because it's pretty it's better. In actuality, all it means is that it got plenty of deadly pesticides and herbicides dumped on it, and got picked green and tasteless and ripened with gas, and then any that didn't look quite perfect got thrown out and the price goes up for the rest. Fruit is designed to be eaten straight off the tree. Nothing can taste as good as a tree ripened peach, except maybe a tree ripened nectarine. Yet if it gets picked ripe and trucked to the store, people won't buy it. It won't look perfect, it will maybe have a small bruise, or there will be some rotten ones in the box with it, but it will be great tasting. If there is a box of unripe, and therefore goodlooking, ones next to it, which will people buy? The green ones, of course, and never know what they're missing.

\* note from your typist: about those leaping peaches...?

In the last issue of F.O.O.D. News there were two cartoons about cooperative life. We apologize for not giving credit for these cartoons to the book, No Bosses Here: A Manual For Working Collectively, by the 'Vocations for Social Change' collective which is, by the way, an excellent and enjoyable book on the realities of collective process and work. Available at Word of Mouth Books at the Westside Center.



## Staff Openings

There is still a full-time store manager position open at the Co-op. We had planned to hire for this position on Sunday, August 6, but had also decided that due to the extreme imbalance of men and women on the staff, we would postpone hiring until we had received applications from at least three qualified women. At present writing (August 4) we had received no applications from women. If you are interested in finding out about the job, there are job descriptions available at the Co-op office.

## Bookkeeper Wanted

at the Co-op  
minimum wage for 20 hrs/wk.  
lots of meetings to attend!  
plenty of responsibility.  
Some experience would be helpful.  
apply at Co-op office.

## Classifieds

I do a whole lot of writing for the Co-op (articles, letters, pamphlets, meeting minutes). I need a typewriter, electric for good mimeo and ditto masters. If you have one which you are not using and will loan or rent it to me (or the Co-op) at very low cost, contact Beth at the store.



[a note from your anonymous typist: surely there are other Co-op members who, disguised as mild-mannered state workers, Have Access to magic electronic neatwriters such as the one which I am even now pounding out newsletter on during my lunch break. If you are in a similar situation, or have a friend in a similar situation, please consider that for a week of lunchhours -- or less! -- you could get your working membership, save Beth a lot of sore fingers, and keep this newsletter lookin' good. Thank you, and good night.]

## Winter Gardening in the Maritime Northwest

"A very well-gotten-up and useful book."

— Helen and Scott Nearing

In *Winter Gardening in the Maritime Northwest* Binda Colebrook has summarized five years of research and experience in growing fresh vegetables through our mild, wet winters. Included is a detailed discussion of the principles of winter gardening, and a guide to sixty two different vegetables and herbs that can be grown in the year-round garden.

Copies of the book are available directly from Tilth for \$4.50, plus 36¢ postage (Wash. residents add 5.1% sales tax). Group buy rates are also available. We are offering a 30% discount on the book to Tilth Chapters and to co-ops, and a 20% discount to book stores.

For your copy of *Winter Gardening in the Maritime Northwest*, write to:

Tilth, Rt 2, Box 190 A, Arlington WA 98223

also available at  
Word of Mouth Books



from Tilth  
magazine  
Summer  
'78  
issue

Salsify



This is the second of four articles summarizing the evaluation workshops. These workshops were held to answer the need for clarity on many issues within the Co-op that are barely touched on in the more business-oriented meetings. So these workshops created a space to share and to hear each other, perchance to understand.

#### Co-op Community: June 7

This one attempted to clarify the relationship betwixt the Co-op and the community as regards finding possible points of integration, sharing and communication and development of all aspects of the Co-op's role within the community.

#### General discussion:

\* How will the Co-op grow, embodying what aspects of the community? The need to embrace more of the community as a diverse whole was repeatedly expressed. Given our limitations (store size, equipment) how do we prioritize the people we are able to serve; should we pioneer the common ground of good, healthful food for all, or be more responsible to people in need (i.e., lower classes before middle class)? We say we strive for a community base, yet we impose arbitrary and excluding decisions of what to carry. Identified the standard strategy of getting people into co-ops: lowering the food cost (and consequently the quality) to appeal to the average. Getting people to come in for good deals rather than to support an alternative food store.

\* The need to MOVE! Improving and enlarging of physical space will do wonders. Can draw in more community people in rebuilding our store. There is concern in the seeming contradiction in structural/size esthetics: P.C.C. (clean, large selection, efficient, wonderful) vs the local co-op (small, funky, organically efficient, hip). The Facts About Moving: we're waiting for an ideal location (downtown, on bus line, big, loading dock, etc.) waiting for the Mall to open so the downtown buildings will vacate (a little healthy opportunism). We have financing up to at least \$10,000; research has been intermittently taken on. A group of building seekers will soon be appointed.

## Goal Setting

at least \$10,000; research has been intermittently taken on. A group of building seekers will soon be appointed.

\* Bylaws need to be re-written in a collective process that includes members.

\* There is a need for more education: nutrition vs appearances, more information on food sources, broader perspectives in the Newsletter, possibly a regular column in the Daily O on Nutrition, Community Outreach to high schools, Senior Center, etc.

\* Membership involvement. The work load needs to be shared. We are not a co-op if all the work is continually done by a small nuclear group. Volunteerism vs Professionalism: membership input builds community, but collectives have a tendency to run community food stores cleaner, more efficiently, and stay saner, healthier, happier. Having the time to volunteer is a privilege: many community people are doing other work, much needed work. QUOTE: "All us committed people can't be everywhere, because then we'd be nowhere." One startling realization -- volunteerism is not the only way to participate.

#### CDC Presentation

Jim gave us a presentation on the Community Development Corporation: the groundwork that has been covered so far, and directions that are being taken. The CDC is basically an umbrella organization that will/could create financial and structural foundations for various community businesses. For a more factual description of the CDC, see their handouts and bylaws in the Co-op. In discussing the CDC, concern was raised over the ramifications of its being Federally funded, though it was stated that more emphasis was being placed on establishing a community credit union to finance it. The question of how desirable the centralism such an organization would spread to its subsidiaries was discussed. In closing the discussion, it was suggested that more clear information about the CDC be posted in the Co-op.

This is the third of four articles summarizing the evaluation workshops.

#### Co-op: June 11

Basically focused on bringing the major problems of the Co-op to light.

#### Working Conditions:

Our Co-op is a classic example of the Alternative Exploitation Syndrome.

- cheap food with maximum efficiency at the expense of the sanity and emotional stability of the nuclear group (staff, Board members)
- workers', and consequently the Co-op's, overextension for the sake of cooperativism (the music crescendos at the mention of this word) TOO many directions that need to be taken, are being taken on solely by the staff. The store suffers for this. NEED to share more of the responsibilities.
- unrelenting preoccupation with business that keeps the nuclear group from being able to deal with interpersonal problems, stagnation in group process, frustration with general group dynamics involving store/workers/board/membership.
- need an arbitrator of sorts to help work out group process/-dynamics problems.

#### Political Awareness:

Co-op needs to take more responsibility for its position in the food community -- in the Pacific Northwest, in the world. Responsibility to be supportive of other parts of the Alternative Food System wherever possible in balance with our responsibility to our financial stability.

What is our alternative nature? To provide the cheapest food possible at the expense of workers throughout the world in food production and distribution? Or a solid community co-op the expense of workers throughout the world in food production and distribution? Or a solid community co-op that is concerned about where our food came from; that the human cost in the production and distribution of food is as crucially important as our individual monthly food budgets.

### BLUE HERON BAKERY

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## Ballot Count

The Co-op membership voted on three issues this month from Monday, July 24 through Saturday, July 29. Two of the issues, annual memberships and removing staffing from the bylaws, were repeats from the June ballot because the June ballot and process were so unclear and the votes were so close. Because of the June balloting fiasco it was decided to include on the ballot some information, pros and cons, for each issue so that people who cannot attend meetings can have some information about what they are voting on. Judging from the responses on the July ballots, this attempt at clarification was a success. Of the 98 people who voted at least 15 took the time to give reasons for their votes or alternative ideas on how to deal with the situations at hand. Many people underlined and circled key phrases which expressed their viewpoints. The only issue which seemed unclear to voters was the one regarding staff positions in the bylaws and that issue does involve some technical and complex "rules" we have made to govern our process.

Here are the results of the balloting:

- I. Should the Co-op change from a \$5 individual permanent membership fee to a \$5 annual membership fee? Requires 2/3 vote to pass. Defeated.  
 Yes 53 votes 55.8%  
 No 42 votes 44.2%  
 Abstain 3 votes 3.1%

The reason most people gave for voting against this proposal were 1) many people have bought memberships on the understanding that they were permanent and 2) the Co-op should survive on mark-ups alone as this way people are supporting the store directly in proportion to how much they use it. Other ideas that were offered included the plea for family memberships & a smaller annual renewal fee.

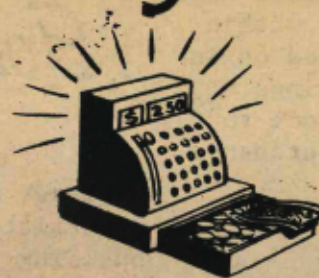
- II. Should the number of staff positions be removed from the Bylaws? Requires 2/3 vote to pass. Passed.  
 Yes 6 votes 72.1%  
 No 24 votes 27.9%  
 Abstain 12 votes 12.2%

The high percentage of abstentions on this issue indicates that its meaning and implications are unclear to many people. Basically, it simplifies staff change process and gives more power to the general membership meeting, staff and board of directors. But there are still stringent controls on power, which is probably why this Bylaw change passed.

- III. Should the Co-op hire a fourth full-time store manager in August? Requires simple majority to pass. Passed.  
 Yes 76 votes 81.7%  
 No 17 votes 18.3%  
 Abstain 5 votes 5.1%

This issue drew by far the most responses. Several people expressed concern about low pay and overwork for staff members and appreciation for the staff's level of dedication and hard work. Many people felt that it is essential to have more membership involvement. However, ideas about how to go about recruiting this involvement were scarce and unspecific. The exception to this is the proposal for mandatory work, an all-volunteer membership, an idea which has met with very strong disapproval from the membership in the past. Some people proposed cutting the full-time position to part time or merging it with the bookkeeping position. Such changes and compromises are always possibilities, partially dependent upon the changing needs and skills of the staff members.

Proposals for balloting are made at the monthly general membership meetings which are held the third Tuesdays of each month at 7:30 p.m. (7:00 for people who need background information on agenda items) at the Senior Center across the street from the Co-op. Ballots will be available in the store the following Monday morning and will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. the following Saturday unless the membership decides to extend the balloting period.



## Register

## Involvement

The Co-op has a new electronic cash register. The primary reason for making such an investment is that it can, in the long run, save the Co-op a good deal of money by providing information on sales by department. This information can be used along with purchasing information and periodic store inventories to help the staff evaluate purchasing and dispensing so as to minimize losses.

The effectiveness of this whole system is dependent upon reliably accurate cashiering. Therefore, the staff feels that it is necessary to limit cashiering to staff members and well-trained regular cashiers. By this we mean cashiers who have been fully acquainted with use of the register and scale and who are committed to working in the store at least once every two weeks to keep in practice and acquainted with current prices and policies. The staff will keep a list of who these people are. No one else will be permitted to use the cash register. If you are interested in being a cashier, please talk to the staff about it. Hopefully a cashier's manual will be available soon.



## WHERE IS YOUR Co-op MONEY GOING?

### THE F.O.O.D. CO-OP INCOME STATEMENT

JULY 1978

Sales	19,234.
Cost of Goods Sold	16,716.
Gross Profit: 13.1%	2,518.
Expenses	
rent	200.
Depreciation	95.
Wages	1,225.
Payroll taxes	185.
Utilities	80.
Telephone	88.
Supplies	37.
Insurance	23.
Taxes & Licenses	263.
Maintenance, Repair	22.
Bottle Account	13.
Misc.	20.
Newsletter	82.
Truck Expense	5.
	2,338
Net Profit	180.

The Co-op needs money. We now are in a financial bind. This co-op was losing money ever since it opened until last month. Then, during one of the slowest months of the year, we actually made a small profit. But we are still in debt. With the new mark-up, we will make enough money to gradually pay back these debts, but we don't have enough to pay back the ones we owe right now.

What we need is to borrow money. Long term loans would be nice, but what we need most urgently is short-term money to make it through the summer slow season. If we don't get money, we will have to pay back the debts by liquidating inventory -- which means there won't be as much food on the shelves for us to buy, and the Co-op sales go down, and we go deeper in debt. Meanwhile, we as shoppers have to go somewhere else for the food. The only alternative is to find enough capital for the Co-op to be properly stocked so we can produce enough income to gradually pay off debts and become financially solvent.