

COOP ORGANIZATION PROPOSAL
TO RE-STRUCTURE THE COOP SYSTEM

The coops are giving birth to a new revolutionary force. This revolutionary force has before it the unfinished business of setting the masses of workers in motion around issues which directly affect their lives. All issues which affect the existence of the masses of workers have their origin in the economic system of capitalism: for instance, high inflation rate, massive unemployment, energy and food shortages, adulterated food, economic exploitation and social oppression based on class, race and sex, etc. Since these issues directly affect the masses of working class people and their origins are traced to the economic system of capitalism, it is our task to help further the working class struggle toward the overthrow of monopoly capitalism; not only by furnishing nutritional and cheap food, but most importantly -- the task of getting ourselves together theoretically and organizationally for serious farmer and worker struggle.

We now present to you our thoughts and program on the transformation of the coops into a tool to aid this struggle.

The organization of the warehouse has a different relations of production than capitalistic enterprises. Why? Because the means of production are not privately owned, therefore there is no such thing as (1) owner (2) shop manager (3) foreman (4) shop workers. In short, there is a socialist form of ownership and in relations of production. For example if one will seek employment at a warehouse other than the People's Warehouse one will go the following:

- I. Go to the prospective company which is privately owned and fill out an application for employment. On the application tell of your educational history.
 - A. Are you a high school or college graduate or are you in vocational school or have you had vocational training?
 - B. Are you male or female?
 - C. Are you white, black or "other"?
 - D. List specialized training: technical or non-technical.
 - E. Do you have knowledge of warehouse equipment and machinery?In spite of these questions there is usually a lot of favoritism and discrimination in who gets the job.
- II. What position are you seeking?
 - A. Managerial. In considering the relations of production, those who occupy managerial positions usually by the "rule of thumb" identify very strongly with the capitalist system of economic exploitation because they are closest to the owners who own the means of production which include land, factories, buildings, machinery, natural resources, etc. In other words managers take instructions from the owners of the means of production and they in turn--give instructions, coach, motivate, and reprimand those underneath them. The position managers hold in relations of production give them direct identification with the owners of the means of production.
 - B. Clerical. Secretary, file clerk, bookkeeper, etc. In comparing the managerial with the clerical position in relations of production, clerical workers unlike managerial workers don't hold a position which will allow them to have a vested interest in the privately owned means of production such as making a high salary, receiving special bonuses, buying selective stocks in the company, etc. Also they do not control other people but are under control of the management. Besides the significant function clerical work holds in production, socially the position is more respectable than working on an assembly line in a factory or on the warehouse floor.

C. Shop worker. The position shop workers hold is at the heart of production. The shop worker has neither a vested interest in the company (except seniority which means he or she will be the last to be laid-off) nor socially respectable position. But the shop worker holds the crucial position in production.

The capitalist relations of production are based on private property--the ownership of the means of production. As always the workers who are at the heart of production receive less pay for their labor-power and as the division of labor moves up the pyramid of production money gets appropriated very selectively to create tensions within the working class. This method of appropriation-exploitation is designed to keep workers fighting workers and not uniting to change the relations of production which will mean--socialist workers revolution.

The relations of production at the People's Warehouse is not based on private property, but on social ownership by a certain class of people, and one's employment at the Warehouse is based on accepting a class ideology. If one seeks employment at the People's Warehouse one will go the warehouse meeting as opposed to going to the office. One's employment is then determined by--(1) if one is socially acceptable in the coop establishment of social circles, such as, being a friend of somebody who's "in", (2) is there an opening?, and (3) if one is not "sponsored" by somebody then one must spend a long time "hanging around" without getting paid before one can get in... and even the acceptability for hanging around is dependent on social acceptance (4) if one is ideologically acceptable on the line that natural and organic foods are going to play a major role in the revolution (5) if one is pushing the line "the alternative way" which is a camouflage for bourgeois individualism. It is true that a couple of individuals have been accepted who do not totally meet (4) and (5), but these exceptions prove the rule. Those who do not themselves EAT natural and organic foods are forced to accept and push this line in warehouse activities and receive criticism for not themselves eating this way... usually behind their backs. And those who do not accept and push "the alternative way" have been constantly struggled against. (6) There is one other qualification which helps one get a job in the People's Warehouse --being a woman. There is a constant effort to get more women working in the warehouse so that the warehouse will not "appear" sexist. This hiring is again done on the basis of social acceptance, etc., and very few working class women have gained admittance or been sought after.

What is the social, political and economic value of the warehouse and coops? Socially the coops harbor escapists and petty bourgeois elements, economically the coops render a food service to an undefined community and the coops are "non-profit". A word or two must be spoken on the concept of non-profit. Profit is defined as surplus value or unpaid labor, therefore if the coops are non-profit how can they pay subsistence wages and maintain the daily cost of operating and expanding the business? The escapists and petty-bourgeois elements practice economic self-exploitation, that is, working for low wages not to make the boss rich but to perpetuate their idealist revolution by furnishing an undefined community with natural and organic foods. Hence for one to speak of the coops as being non-profit is an indication of not understanding the law of surplus value. Politically, the coops give no meaningful direction, (except the Beanery). It should be very apparent and it is apparent to the progressive elements in the coops that the customers have other needs and drives besides eating. It is here that we now turn our attention to the leadership of the coops.

Revolutionary theory tells us that "everything depends on the conditions, time and place."

"...in order not to err in policy, one must look forward, not backward."

Correct working class leadership "must not be based on the good wishes of outstanding individuals, not on the dictates of 'reason', 'universal morals,' etc., but on the laws of development of society and on the study of these laws."

And correct working class leadership "should not guide itself in its practical activity by casual motives, but by the laws of development of society, and by practical deductions from these laws."

In using the above quotes as a measuring stick of correct leadership, we can immediately recognize how misguided and petty bourgeois the coops leadership is. The coop leadership is attempting to erect petty bourgeois utopian socialism, a dreamworld for a select few, and not to liberate the masses of workers.

IT IS NOT OUR AIM TO BE DIVISIVE NOR ARROGANT. But it also will not do to be liberal with class eliquishness and other bourgeois attitudes. These attitudes divide the coops from, and are arrognat toward, the masses of working people. To the coop leadership, we are addressing the following quotes to tyou and we sincerely hope you will join us in the unfinished task of advancing the working class struggle.

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The new revolutionary force which has emerged withing the coop organization... The working class leadership has now become politically mature and is capable of taking its term of leadership in making the coops face reality. We ask all of you to judge our leadership in both words and deeds. The coop organization has taken a position on socialism, the woman question, on food, alternative structures, and community control of the coops.

1. ON SOCIALISM

We maintain that the coops are socialist in form but not in class content. Their socialism in form is an indication of changes to come in the relations of production within this capitalistic system. Change in the relations of production means the BIRTH OF A NEW SOCIAL SYSTEM which will eventually mean a SOCIALIST WORKER'S REVOLUTION.

What is meant by relations of production? First off, we must understand that capitalism is a system based on private ownership of property--and this includes the means of production. Production means the work that we, the working people in the U.S. and the world, must do to sustain life existence--food, shelter, clothing, etc. The ownership of the means of production means that the capitalist own the industries, land, and natural resources, machinery, buildings, etc., which are the methods used to sustain life existence.

Since the means of production are privately owned, like GM, Standard Oil, Pillsbury, etc., the division of labor is maintained in such a way that the capitalists (the owners of the means of production) can carry on economic exploitation in various degrees depending on the position in the relations of production that (various) classes hold.

An example of the relations of production: the Rockefeller family owns and controls Standard Oil, Their oil companies are so huge in their production operations that the family can't keep control over them by themselves. So they (1) hire lawyers to deal with the legal aspects of production which

involves, among many things, making sure that state and federal laws protect the profit interest of the company; (2) to further guarantee their control, a board of directors functions to tie the company together with other companies and prevent competition. Also the board of directors establishes policies that will yield the most profits. (3) In keeping with these policies, they select a managerial elite to head each company--Standard Oil of California, New Jersey, etc. The managerial elite has the power to hire and fire those underneath them if they don't respect the policies of the board of directors. (4) Supervisors and foremen are responsible for carrying out the crucial details of the policies because they are the ones who apply the pressure directly on the worker, who is the generator of the profit. The profit which the worker generates through the exploitation of her/his labor power goes to enrich the owner of the means of production. As a result a big gap is created between the haves and have-nots.

In this capitalistic system, there is an irreconcilable contradiction. What is in the best interest of the working class is always in the worst interest of the capitalist class. A direct increase in wages means a direct decrease in profits. What economic depression means to the working class--loss of jobs and the repossession of their material goods by creditors--means the direct opposite to the capitalists, the concentration of their wealth and power. This irreconcilable contradiction can not go on indefinitely. At a crucial point the relations of production change. (1) The means of production are taken out of the hands of the capitalist class, and (2) the working class takes over. Surplus value (profit) is socialized for the benefit of society as a whole and not for private use--selfishness. Thus the relations of production will be socialized and this will correspond with the socialized work in production.

Because of the class content of the coops, they must be viewed as utopian (impossible dreamworld) socialism. Real socialists address themselves to changing the relations of production by the working class and for the working class--which means organizing workers for their historic mission--the creation of a socialist worker's state. Only petty-bourgeois socialists attempt to go-it-alone without the force to assure success, the proletariat.

2. ON THE QUESTION OF FOOD

We take the position that there is no way that the masses of people can get organic food under profit motive system of capitalist agriculture.

In modern times, chemical fertilizer and adulterated food have become as American as cherry pie. The destruction of health and soil by capitalist agriculture will not be ended on any large scale without the end of the profit motive system that causes it. It is absurd and idealistic to think that the coops are a serious threat to the food industry, in fact, the food industry has picked upon many foods popularized by coops and made profits on them. The food industry is monopolistically controlled on a worldwide scale which means (1) fertilizer plants (2) millions of acres of farmland and (3) from planting through all phases of food processing and distribution are controlled by the monopoly capitalists.

Like so many people who are conscious of nutrition, we too like to feed our bodies health food. However, with the political consciousness we have developed we can see very clearly how selfish and exclusive the coops are in maintaining a pure food line which means not trying to get less adulterated versions of the kinds of food that most people eat. Also, coop leadership tries to force the priorities of changing your diet and spending more time in the kitchen on working people. Do working class mothers and fathers have 2-3 hours to devote to cooking after work?

Until we seriously and in a meaningful way address ourselves to the question of monopoly control of the food industry and the forcing of thousands of farm people off the land by agribusiness, we will continue to perpetuate a bourgeois, escapist and non-confrontation trend--the coops.

3. ON WOMEN

Sexism and racism are the bosses' tools, used to divide the working class and to keep us fighting against each other instead of against monopoly capitalism. Women are exploited sexually, racially and as workers. Women work the shittiest jobs and are paid less for those jobs. Women are the last hired, the first fired, and then called "leeches" when they turn to welfare to pay the rent and feed the kids. The work of feeding and caring for workers, and raising new workers is work that the capitalists depend on but women don't even receive minimum wage for these labors.

Since women occupy an oppressed and exploited position in this capitalist system and because they constitute the majority of the population, they represent an explosive revolutionary force. But to actually become a revolutionary socialist force will demand a socialist theory which addresses itself to the different classes of women and the relations of production and control of society. Therefore we strongly support and encourage women to form caucuses in groups, organizations and unions in order to protect their class interests.

Women of bourgeois and petty bourgeois backgrounds experience the contradiction of common oppression with other women and common privilege of their class. This contradiction must be struggled with to move forward in unity with the working class.

The following is a breakdown on women who make up the revolutionary socialist force: third world working class women constitute the strongest and most immediate revolutionary force, not only because they are super-exploited but because the element of racism serves as a cohesive ingredient in binding them together in semi-unity.

Poor and working class white women constitute the revolutionary force in the white women's movement. The working class white women also represent the most immediate revolutionary force in the white working class. It is the poor and working class women who are equipped because of their class position to carry on heavy duty and relentless struggle to take the lead in overthrowing monopoly capitalism--and who because of their exploited and oppressed class position are emerging to take the leadership of the women's movement out of the hands of bourgeois and petty bourgeois women who are unable to move things beyond the reformist aspect of their class position.

4. ON ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURES

Developing and creating alternative structures that differ from capitalist structures is as natural as weaning a baby from its mother at the right point of maturity. However, alternative structures so far have been set up by idealistic and petty-bourgeois elements in an effort to avoid the working class struggle. Therefore these alternative structures have taken on an escapist character.

Moreover, as opposed to alternative structures serving and giving support to the workers movement, they have held high the white flag of peaceful coexistence with the capitalists.

Our position: we will encourage and support alternative structures if they will serve working class interests as opposed to the interest of a handful of escapists who don't pose any threat to the social order.

5. ON COMMUNITY CONTROL OF THE COOPS

In theory this concept is very appealing but in practice it has only been a deception, except at the Beanery.

The line "community control" was never officially defined by any of the coops in the context of what community was allowed to control the coops--black, Indian, middle class whites, hippies, etc.--until the Beanery workers defined their base of legitimacy--the hard core working class. "We are optimistic that the hard core or primary working class will continue to bring us their mandate--away with class snobbishness, cultism, food purists, and on with stocking the type of food which is nutritional and cheap."

Contradictory as it might seem, it is very clear from hindsight that the line of community control was well defined by the petty bourgeois leadership. Having not written or verbally defined what community they based their legitimacy on, they in fact said exactly what community they were not for--"in reality, the community they speak of is the community which they have alienated, a community which is not composed of their class, and a community they have utter class contempt for--this is the working class." (Taken from the Beanery Policy paper.)

"Everything is in a constant state of motion, change and renewal." This applies concretely to the line of community control which was progressive, as deceptive as it was, in the early days of coop history, in that it did rally and put large numbers of petty bourgeois people in motion in a collective effort to develop the coops to the stage where they are today. However, the concept of community control can not offer direction to the form of struggle which is presently under way, so the concept has become outdated.

Based on our present-day struggle, we have raised the concept worker's control.

But--this should not be interpreted as so many coop people interpret it: as a bunch of petty bourgeois idealists setting up their own "collective" small business that has contempt for "straight workers" and hides from the overall class struggle.

Worker's control must be based on and aimed towards the whole working class controlling all the means of production of society--otherwise it does not build class solidarity but degenerates into a utopian small business partnership--private property all over again.

LONG LIVE THE WORKING CLASS STRUGGLE

FARMERS AND WORKERS HAVE THE SAME ENEMY--MONOPOLY CAPITALISM

AWAY WITH RACISM AND MALE DOMINATION OF WOMEN

PEACE AND PROSPERITY TO THE WORKING MASSES

WORKERS CONTROL AND OWNERSHIP OF THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION

ALL STRUGGLES ARE CLASS STRUGGLES

AND

ALL ROADS MUST LEAD TO A SOCIALIST WORKERS' REVOLUTION!

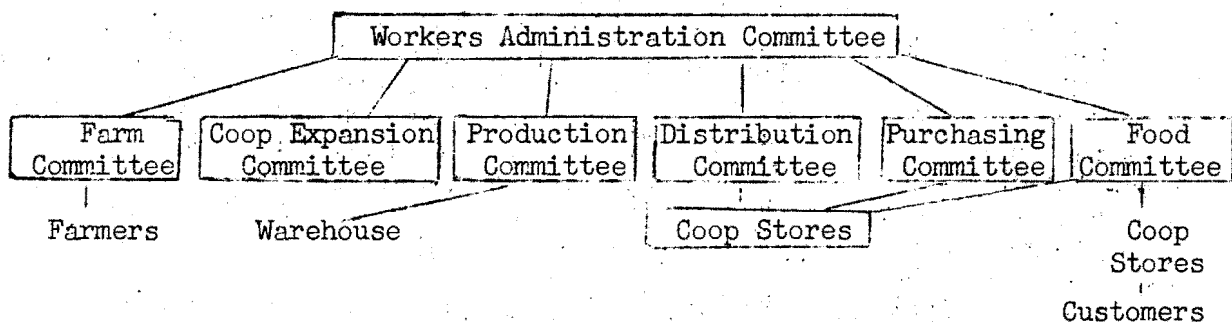
In the overall restructuring of the coops and the warehouse, the Worker's Administration Committee will give and exercise leadership in order to bring the coops out of isolation and into the arena of the working class struggle.

The Worker's Administration Committee has adopted the principle of Democratic Centralism as the only correct way to exercise leadership. The principle of Democratic Centralism is "starting from the desire for unity (within an organization or party), distinguishing between right or wrong through criticism or struggle, and arriving at a new unity on a new basis."

Democratic Centralism is an exclusive right of revolutionary organizations. No bourgeois organizations can ever hope to incorporate the principle of Democratic Centralism, because it depends on mutual relations and mutual ~~trust~~ ~~between different sets of interests~~ trust.

Two things make democratic centralism work. One is democracy. The body of an organization and its mass base must be free to fully express their criticisms of policies and programs, and their assessments of the situation and information must be actively sought out and responded to. Obviously any decision made on incomplete or incorrect information will be doomed to failure. The second important aspect of democratic centralism is centralization, the collectivization of leadership and centralization of information, analysis, policy and programs. This aspect implies discipline and unity. Once a decision has been made, the organization members must act as one to carry it out, recognizing that their limited perspective might not be the whole picture, and that their views must ultimately submit to the views of the organization as a whole. The minority must submit to the majority. The ultimate test of decisions and leadership is how they work out in practice, and how they are accepted by the masses. Democratic Centralism can function correctly only if the responsibilities of democracy and discipline are equally shouldered.

RE-STRUCTURING THE WAREHOUSE



The warehouse along with the coops is in drastic need of re-structuring in order to:

1. Do its job more effectively and efficiently
2. Make it easier for people who are not "in" the present coop social circles to enter the warehouse
3. Make the warehouse fit for aiding the workers and farmers struggle against monopoly capitalism.

Therefore, we propose to set up a number of committees to simplify and assign responsibility for various warehouse operations.

THE WORKER'S ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE will be the coordinating link between the other committees. Each other committee will have its staff on the WAS. The WAC has a functional purpose to coordinate production and business activities around the coop system and out of town and state.

THE FARM COMMITTEE is set up to investigate the farmers struggle and agribusiness to find out how much work and resources we are going to need to link up the farm struggle with the workers struggle to further the development of the revolutionary workers struggle.

The task of the farm committee is to search for sources of food among potential revolutionary farmers. If the coops are going to effect meaningful social and economic changes then it is indispensable for us to develop a revolutionary base in farm areas. This doesn't necessarily mean hippie farms.

A detailed farm program will be mapped out toward accomplishing this goal. However, there will be practical overlapping of the farm, distribution and purchasing committees.

PURCHASING COMMITTEE: This committee is set up to buy warehouse stock and supplies. This committee is very crucial because it can keep the warehouse in a financial hole or keep it financially stable. Unlike past practices, the purchasing committee must ask the following questions:

1. How much can we afford to pay
2. How much are others paying
3. How much can we buy it for elsewhere
4. How badly does the supplier need the business
5. What is our potential business for the item
6. Convenience of getting the item
7. Storage space available
8. Credit terms.
9. Considering all the foregoing, how much should the item cost

Also unlike in the past we will not operate on moral judgement. The purchasing committee will buy it as demanded by coop customers, after all, we aren't serving our own self-interest. On the other hand, purchasing will not be done arbitrarily: we will establish a purchasing policy.

PRODUCTION COMMITTEE: This committee is set up to deal with the internal organization of the warehouse work. We will ask for the input of all warehouse workers toward establishing standard methods which will greatly improve our efficiency in production. We already know that class attitudes which are counterproductive are prevalent among some workers and must be changed. Also we will ascertain what are non-standard and sub-standard practices in the light of the fact that we are socialist workers.

DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE: This committee is set up to (1) distribute food from the warehouse to the twin cities coop stores (2) distribute food from the warehouse to warehouses within the midwestern region (3) communication-distributing information to other places on subjects dealing with the coop movement and (4) trucking. The major features are coordination and communication with other warehouses and coops. Here there will be much practical overlapping with the purchasing committee on the details of ordering for and shipping to other places.

FOOD COMMITTEE: This committee has a very unique function in that it will be established in every coop store to politicize people around revolutionary concepts. The farm and food committees are the only two committees that are political in character and serve to build a bridge from the coops to farmers and the working class.

Unlike in the past, the control and direction of the warehouse will not come exclusively from the warehouse collective. Workers as well as customers from the coop stores will have their place on the purchasing, distribution,

and food committees, and farmers will have their place on the farm committee. The Worker's Administration Committee will likewise not be all warehouse workers.

COME TO A MEETING TO DISCUSS THIS TRANSFORMATION SUNDAY MORNING AT 10:30A.M.
AT WALKER CHURCH AT THE CORNER OF 16th AVENUE SOUTH AND 31st STREET EAST
IN MINNEAPOLIS.

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